



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania

Developing Moral Maturity – Part 5 HABITS OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

Moral maturity builds upon skills of heart, mind, and action. In addition, Christian maturity or conscience integrates Christian principles and prayerful discernment in the decision-making process. Parents and teachers help children to develop a moral mentality by fostering these five habits. This newsletter focuses on Habits of Christian Principles.

God is love. We were created by God who wills us to recognize ourselves as persons created in the image of God. Translation? We were created by love itself, for love, to be love, to give love, and to receive love. When we act in love we experience happiness and we create it for others. Our human dignity requires us “to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses or by mere external constraint.” (Church in the Modern World, #17).

Conscience is the capacity for discerning the truly loving thing to do. It calls us “to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, [telling us] inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that” (Church in the Modern World, #16). All people have this capacity but, like every other capacity, it must be formed and informed gradually and continually. Catholic Christians view Jesus Christ as the source and model of conscience formation. They accept the person, life, and teachings of Jesus and his church as the criteria for understanding what love looks like in the concrete circumstances of daily living.

By modeling a moral life and teaching the foundations of Christian love, parents and teachers guide children to moral maturity. Children who cultivate the habit of living according to the following foundations evolve into spiritually mature, moral persons.

EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Jesus explained that his guiding principle was to do the will of his Father: to be love in the world. He demonstrated love through availability, healing, forgiveness, integrity, prayerfulness, compassion, unconditional acceptance, mercy, and dignity for all. He welcomed sinners, initiated conversation, and comforted people in their grief.

GOSPEL

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John present the teachings of Jesus like, “Judge not, lest you be judged.” “Whatever you do to the least of my people, you do to me,” “If you love me, keep my commandments,” “If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, go first to be reconciled with your brother”.

TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE LAW OF LOVE
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2052-2557*)

Fostering loving relationship is the primary principle of moral living. The Ten Commandments are particular examples of love.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength”: **(Commandments 1-3)**: Honor God. Honor God’s name. Keep holy the Sabbath.

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” **(Commandments 4-10)**: Honor parents/authority. Preserve life. Respect human sexuality in thought and action. Be honest. Be truthful. Respect human relationships. Avoid envy and greed.

BEATITUDES

(*MT. 5:3-12*)

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1716-1729)

Attitudes of being that cultivate true happiness include: • simplicity, • meekness, • passion for social justice, • extending mercy, • single-hearted focus, • purity of intention/integrity, • reconciliation, and • loving so deeply that you mourn loss.

MORAL VIRTUES

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1805-1809, 1833-1839*)

“Stable dispositions of the intellect and will that govern our acts, order our passions, and guide our conduct in accordance with reason and faith” (CCC, 1834): prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.

WORKS OF MERCY

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2447*)

Aid your neighbor in spiritual and bodily necessities. **Spiritual works**: instruct, advise, console, comfort, forgive, bear wrongs patiently, pray for the living and the dead. **Corporal works**: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned, shelter the homeless, bury the dead.

PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2422, 2423*)

Seven key themes define social justice:

- sacredness of life and dignity of the human person,
- call to community and responsibility to the common good,
- rights and duties of human persons,
- option for the poor and vulnerable,
- dignity of work and the rights of workers,
- solidarity of the human family, and
- stewardship for creation.

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