



NEWS FEED

MEDIA AND THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

CATECHISM

2493 - 2497

2488 - 2489

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:16

John 8:31 -32

Matthew 5:37

1 John 1:5 -7

KEY CONCEPTS

The Eighth Commandment is “thou shall not bear false witness.”

Lies tear at our ability to trust each other as a community and society.

A virtuous life online only works if we protect our own dignity.

GOAL OF THIS NIGHT

The goal of this Life Night is to help the teens understand the importance of perception through social media. This night will also challenge the teens to be people of integrity when they use technology and to commit to using media in a healthy moderation.

ABOUT THIS NIGHT

More and more, media is becoming a bigger part of our everyday lives. This Life Night seeks to help the teens understand how media and the Eighth Commandment work together. The night will begin with a friendly competition between small groups to come up with the best “status updates” for different topics. Following the competition, the teaching for the night will challenge the teens to use media with responsibility and integrity. In small groups, the teens will discuss their use of media and create a plan that helps them limit the amount of time using media. Finally, the night will close with a reflection on Pope Benedict XVI’s message on the role of media in our current culture.

PARENTAL NOTICE

Whether or not you are on Facebook, social media has become a very big part of everyday life. For teens, social media sites are a default when they are bored or working on a project or homework. The majority of their “friends,” or followers, they’ve never met. As parents, it is important to keep an ongoing and open conversation about your teen’s use of social media. At Life Night this week, we are discussing the Eighth Commandment as it relates to media. We will challenge the teens to be people of integrity and use media in moderation with honesty and dignity. Here are a few discussion questions for the week:

1. What role do Facebook or other social media sites play in your life?
2. Do you feel more connected to your friends on Facebook than our family?
3. In what ways can I help you moderate your use of social media and technology?
4. How do you see the Eighth Commandment as a good guardrail for the use of media?

ENVIRONMENT

This environment is all about social media. On the walls around the meeting space, create “status updates” from your Core Members. These updates can also come from the teens throughout the week. On a screen, have a live Twitter feed from Core and teens. Create hashtags (i.e #LifeNight) for your teens to use in their Twitter updates. Create large logos from the current major social media sites out of cardboard or poster board and hang them in the front of the room.

GATHER

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

(5 min)

The youth minister should gather all the teens together, welcome them to Life Night, and lead an opening prayer. He or she should introduce any teens at Life Night for the first time.

STATUS UPDATE

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Instruct the teens to get into groups of five or six. Give each group three half sheets of poster board and a sharpie. Instruct the teens that they will create “status updates” or “tweets” for three different topics (suggestions and examples below). Their updates or tweets cannot be more than 140 characters (letters). The group will work together to create the update or tweet and will then submit it. The status updates will be posted on the wall. After all three rounds, give each teen three cards with the word “like” on them. Group by group, instruct the teens to read each round of updates and vote for one status out of every round by placing their “like” under what they think is the best status. The teens cannot vote for their group’s status. After all the teens have voted, reveal the winners of each round and award them a prize.

Suggested Topics:

- Sum up the day’s Gospel reading (ex: Jesus multiplied bread and fish and fed thousands. And there were still leftovers).
- Recap the last Life Night (ex: Purity, Integrity, Holiness).
- Sum up the Ten Commandments in ten words (ex: God said it, we do it. Love God, love neighbor).

PROCLAIM

"NEWS FEED" TEACHING

(10 min)

The teaching for the Life Night will look at the Eighth Commandment and the responsibility of the media. The teaching will also challenge the teens to be witnesses of truth and integrity both in their relationships and in their use of media.

DON'T BEAR FALSE WITNESS

Since televisions were first sold, there's one kind of series that's always seemed to grab viewers: cop shows. The tension of watching a detective track down his suspect, put the pieces together, and book the bad guy is totally captivating.

Exodus 20:16

And then there's the courtroom drama that soon follows. Experts are called in, lawyers make big speeches, and judges bang their gavels. But what really makes those courtroom scenes interesting is watching people get up on the witness stand. The testimony of each witness is what fills in the questions left in each episode's mystery... it's where the real tension happens.

When we think of witnesses, I'm sure a lot of us think of courtrooms and legal cases like those TV shows. But one of the Commandments – the Eighth Commandment – tells us that we should never bear false witness against each other.

We were made for the truth. Think about it: it's natural to say what's actually true, but it takes a real decision to invent and tell a lie. When Adam and Eve lied to God and turned on each other, they began the chain of our sinfulness that is dishonesty.

Lies tear at our ability to trust each other as a community and society. We are called, as Catholics, to seek and live the truth; not just the small truths of each day, but also the Truth of Jesus Christ.

LIVING AND WITNESSING TRUTH

As we've seen this semester, the Commandments aren't simply big "no" signs telling us what to avoid; each one is a call to action for a virtue. This Eighth Commandment calls us to live a life of sincerity and honesty – things that the world might consider weaknesses.

1 Peter 3:15

CCC 2467

CCC 2475

(They considered Christ weak when they put Him on a cross...and He's King.)

Obviously, witnessing the truth means that we're going to avoid sins of dishonesty, and it means that we're meant to be the trustworthy

people you think of when you think of holiness. Sometimes those situations aren't always about straight-up lies, either; cheating, exaggerating, and slandering (talking trash) are all examples of dishonest living. A lot of times, we don't tell all out black and white lies; we just blur the edges a little bit, pulling the black and white into a sort of gray. When we do that so we can lift ourselves up or put others down, we're leaving behind the virtue of honesty. Sucking up to people in charge, being over-flattering, or "forgetting" mistakes to make ourselves look better all put us ahead of the truth. That's not what we're called to as followers of the Truth.

Beyond avoiding those sins of dishonesty, there's another area in which witnessing to truth challenges us each day: actually witnessing. We aren't silent Christians; we have a reason for our hope. When our eyes, ears, and hearts are open, we can recognize the many ways God calls us to evangelize each day. Those moments can be some of the most challenging of our spiritual lives, but those same moments are also when we're called to live in truth and speak simply about who the Truth is.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEDIA

One of the big ways we get information, whether true or not, is through the media. Those who gather and give information throughout the world have the responsibility to make sure that information is truthful. While respecting proper authority and the rights of individuals, information is meant to be free – governments and journalists should not lie to people about what's going on.

CCC 2500

CCC 2496

The Church stands against the idea of a totalitarian government that doesn't give people the freedom of thought or information that they deserve. Even with our mistakes in the past, a theocracy – a country run by a religion – will never be the goal of the Church. Only in a free society, where people's freedom to know the truth is allowed, is their free will actually respected.

Artists are also called to truth in the same way that newsmakers, storytellers, and politicians are. Truth, art, and beauty are all linked together – the solar system is beautiful in part because we know it actually works; we're a part of it. God's moments of artistic flair reflect He who is truth.

Sacred art – church art – is designed to literally reflect the stories and virtues of the Creator. It's easy to see how that's supposed to show truth. But in our other art – our music, film, books, shows, plays,

whatever it is – we have to make sure that what we’re saying is something that’s true. Does that mean every play written has to have a happy ending? No. But the plays that seem to tap into our deepest being, the ones that have the most weight, are the ones that recognize truth.

And it’s not just people who create art and media that have to be on the lookout; it’s all of us who consume those things as well. The Catechism talks about the need for us to form our consciences and tastes for media to line up with God’s will. What we consume affects us – it’s just like food: you are what you consume. When we feed ourselves a steady diet of media that says “money is happiness,” or “you’re not good enough,” eventually we’ll start to believe it. We should always be on the lookout for what our music, movies, books, and shows are really saying, so we can surround ourselves with things that lead us to Him.

There’s one more area where this commandment on truth teaches us a lesson for our daily lives, and it can hit pretty close to home: social media. For some reason, when we get behind a keyboard, the rules of society and morality start to melt a little bit. Maybe online we’re a little taller, fitter...older. But the Eighth Commandment tells us it’s a sin to be dishonest, whether in “real” life or online. We have to be honest about who we are – and about who others are. It’s tempting to slander people who annoy us or who we don’t like online, because we can get away with a lot when we’re anonymous. But those sins don’t get erased just because they’re digital. We have to live out our faith on and offline.

(Just tell them you’re going to put up a slideshow of their profile pictures and statuses and see what happens.)

So if we are supposed to live lives of virtue online – being honest about ourselves, lifting others up, and refusing to join the culture of cutdowns – how do we keep ourselves from getting taken advantage of? A virtuous, true life online only works if we protect our own dignity. Some things should stay private, and some can be shared with our friends, but we have to be smart and secure about what we’re sharing online. You can be an open book – just think about how many pages you want to write on. Challenge yourself to not only share yourself in your social media, but also the truth of the Gospel you believe in.

(Check out your Diocesan or Parish policies on social media and web presence before the talk.)



BREAK

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

(20 min)

After the teaching, break the teens back up into small groups. Begin the group with an opening prayer. Use the following questions as a guide to your discussion:

- About how many hours a day would you say you spend using some type of media?
- How has the media influenced your view on certain events? (Give an example from current news.)
- Why do you think the Church is so passionate about the use of media?
- When using things like Facebook, do you represent yourself with truth and integrity? Or have you lied about who you are or participated in tearing others down?
- What is one change you could make to use media to build up God's Kingdom?

MEDIA PLAN CHALLENGE

(10 min)

Whether the computer or television, teens spend a lot of time in front of screens. After the small group discussion, the group will come up with a plan to help limit the amount of time they are consumed with social media and television. This challenge is not to say that Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, or television is bad, but that these things must be used with prudence and moderation. Helping the teens limit their use of media will give them more time for prayer, family, and studying. Use the following as a guide to help the group brainstorm a realistic guideline for their own use of media:

- How much time, on school nights, will we allow ourselves to watch TV?
- How much time, on weekends, will we allow ourselves to watch TV?
- How much time, on any day, will we allow ourselves to be spending on Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc?
- What is one extra spiritual thing we can add to our day?
- How can we hold each other accountable to using media in a holy way?

SEND

RECAP OF LIFE NIGHT

(5 min)

Gather the groups back together. Invite a few groups to share their media plan challenge. Recap the Life Night by reminding the teens that the Eighth Commandment challenges us to live lives of truth. In a unique way it calls all Christians to use media as a way to communicate truth and build up God's Kingdom.

FROM POPE BENEDICT XVI

(10 min)

Each year in January, the Church celebrates World Communications Day. On this day, the Pope gives a special directive on the use of media and communications in our world. For this particular Send, ask the teens to spend a few minutes reflecting on the words of Pope Benedict XVI in regards to the role of the youth in the use of media today. Set a tone of prayer by lowering the lights and asking the teens to get into a comfortable posture of prayer. The youth minister should begin the time of prayer by asking God to open the teens' ears and to speak truth about their role in using media. Have four different Core Members read different segments of the Holy Father's message. At the conclusion of the message, the youth minister should invite those teens who are ready to answer the Holy Father's call to stand as a sign of their commitment. The youth minister should close the time of prayer asking the Holy Spirit to give the teens courage to be witnesses of truth and integrity. Close the night with the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

CONCLUSION

ADAPTING THIS NIGHT

If the group is too large for small groups, invite three or four teens up for the gather competition. The rest of the group can vote on the best status by giving a “thumbs up.”

Invite a teacher from the local Catholic high school to give the teaching for this night.

Before leaving, give each teen a copy of the reflection from Pope Benedict XVI to read and reflect on during the week

GOING DEEPER

Use different social media sites this week to remind the teens of their call to use media with integrity and responsibility.

Post the small groups’ media challenges in the youth room as a way to hold the teens accountable to their commitments.