

ADULT G.R.A.C.E. SESSION—FEBRUARY 2010—CATHOLIC MORAL LIFE:
TRUTHFULNESS

[Divide whole group into three subgroups; each subgroup have own facilitator but the process will be similar in each subgroup.]

6:40 – 6:55

INTRO ACTIVITY: HONESTY IN AMERICA ACTIVITY (See G.O.F. material)

1. Gallup surveys since 1999 have asked a statistically significant number of adult Americans to rate the honesty of a variety of professions on a 5 point scale from “very high” to “very low”. Though only one had significant majority of very high or high responses, all the top ones at least reached 50%]

2. Using your sheets, rank them from one to ten as you would see it. [Have them visible in no particular order on a board somewhere.

--Go through and rate them by asking how many had each one in the top five [mark in pencil]

--take the top three and have group come to consensus on which belongs on top,etc.

--take next four and do the same

--take last three and do the same

NB: Generate discussion as going through on why they see integrity/honesty in these professions and have someone write on board qualities as they are mentioned

Why are such attributes important? What happens if not present? Where else in society do we see such attributes, maybe not entire professions but specific situations?

6:55 – 7:20

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THEIR OWN WISDOM: CASE SCENARIOS ON HONESTY

1. Divide subgroup into small pods of 4-6.

2. Instructions for what to do In the subgroup are on the reverse side of the Honesty in America sheet. Each pod follow the instructions to come up with a difficult scenario, where legitimate responses might go in more than one direction. Make it challenging. Come up with reasonable alternatives to the scenario and for each, list potential short and long term consequences if the action goes in that direction. Put all of this on some poster board

3. Each pod presents their scenario/dilemma to the whole subgroup. Let discussion on various responses take place, elicit some key issues that are surfacing [have someone write these on the larger board as they are named.]

--whole truth vs.partial truth; white lies; mental reservation; social courtesies; being a witness especially to children; justification for not telling truth; etc.

7:20 – 7:25 BREAK

7:25 – 8:00

CATHOLIC WISDOM AND THE 8TH COMMANDMENT

1. Have them recite the full 8th commandment and as do so, have someone write it on board/paper: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

2. Go through the original biblical context [Exodus 20: 16] of what it meant to bear false witness at trial or to accuse someone falsely. The social and personal costs.

3. Extend this commandment to all the ways we fail to be truthful, use truth wrongly, harm the truth:

--already on sheets on the board, along with definitions, but before revealing them, get group to mention some and give definitions/why they are violations of the truth, perhaps ways that it can be challenging to avoid some of them

--then reveal the list [not meant to be exhaustive] and go through a couple that haven't yet been mentioned.

--Which of these is easiest to avoid in your opinion and why?

--which are the hardest to avoid, in your opinion, and why?

4. Cover very briefly the approach of Augustine and others: the importance never to lie, lying is always wrong because we are made in the image and likeness of God and distort that image when we lie.

→ focus on the vocation to witness to the truth in a world that shades/avoids/outright contradicts truth; how we value witnesses to truth, who stand up to falsehoods that are harming others [Franz Jaegerstetter and his martyrdom rather than serve Nazism]

5. Cover very briefly the Catholic social teaching approach: the importance of always looking at the dignity of the persons involved and a person's right to the truth and our duty to provide it, if a matter of their dignity: [CCC 2489]: "the good and safety of others, respect for privacy, and the common good" are sufficient reasons for "being silent about what ought not to be known" or for using "discreet language".

→ focus on need to protect, promote the dignity of every person and the common good of society.

6. Issues:

a. Obligation to tell/live the truth, even if it is to our disadvantage to do so. How keep a spirit of honesty and truthfulness alive in the midst of contentious situations/people? [American politics?]

b. What about limit situations? Social 'white lies'; mental reservations?

c. Using truth in a harmful way; gossip, meanness of spirit: truth is both justice and love not one or the other.

7. Focusing on the virtue truthfulness rather than the sin of lying

Have them do the exercise from Generations handout: Take the 8th commandment, use "I" instead of "Thou" and make it a positive statement on truth: "I shall live truthfully each day, no matter the cost..etc."

--elicit some of the positive statements they have come up; qualities of this virtue, some of the cost, difficulties, etc.

--virtue of truthfulness and integrity means it can become second nature to us but only through a series of character forming choices, so that we don't agonize over the situation. Choosing to be a person of truth, integrity, honesty, etc.

7:55 – 8:00

SUMMARY:

1. It is a question of being truthful people, who embody the virtues of integrity and honesty in all relationships, more than one of "Is this a lie?" But it takes vigilance, choice, attentiveness to really embrace this in a consistent way.
2. There is often a cost involved in being /acting as truthful people in situations but truthfulness is a type of witness to God and is to be highly valued.
3. the tradition keeps both streams of teaching—focusing on lying as a violation of being in the image of God and therefore all falsehood is wrong; focusing on the common good and dignity of the human person intended by God and being truthful within that context.
4. Truth can emerge in many ways, not just words: in actions, in art and beauty,

8:00 – 8:10

PERSONAL REFLECTION dWITH A JOURNAL IN THE CHURCH, TYING TRUTHFULNESS INTO THE LENTEN SEASON

8:10 – 8:15

TAKE HOME MATERIAL

--go through all the material, especially the home activities, but also the wonderful pamphlets for Lent being give to them

END WITH PRAYER AS A LARGE GROUP IN CHURCH.