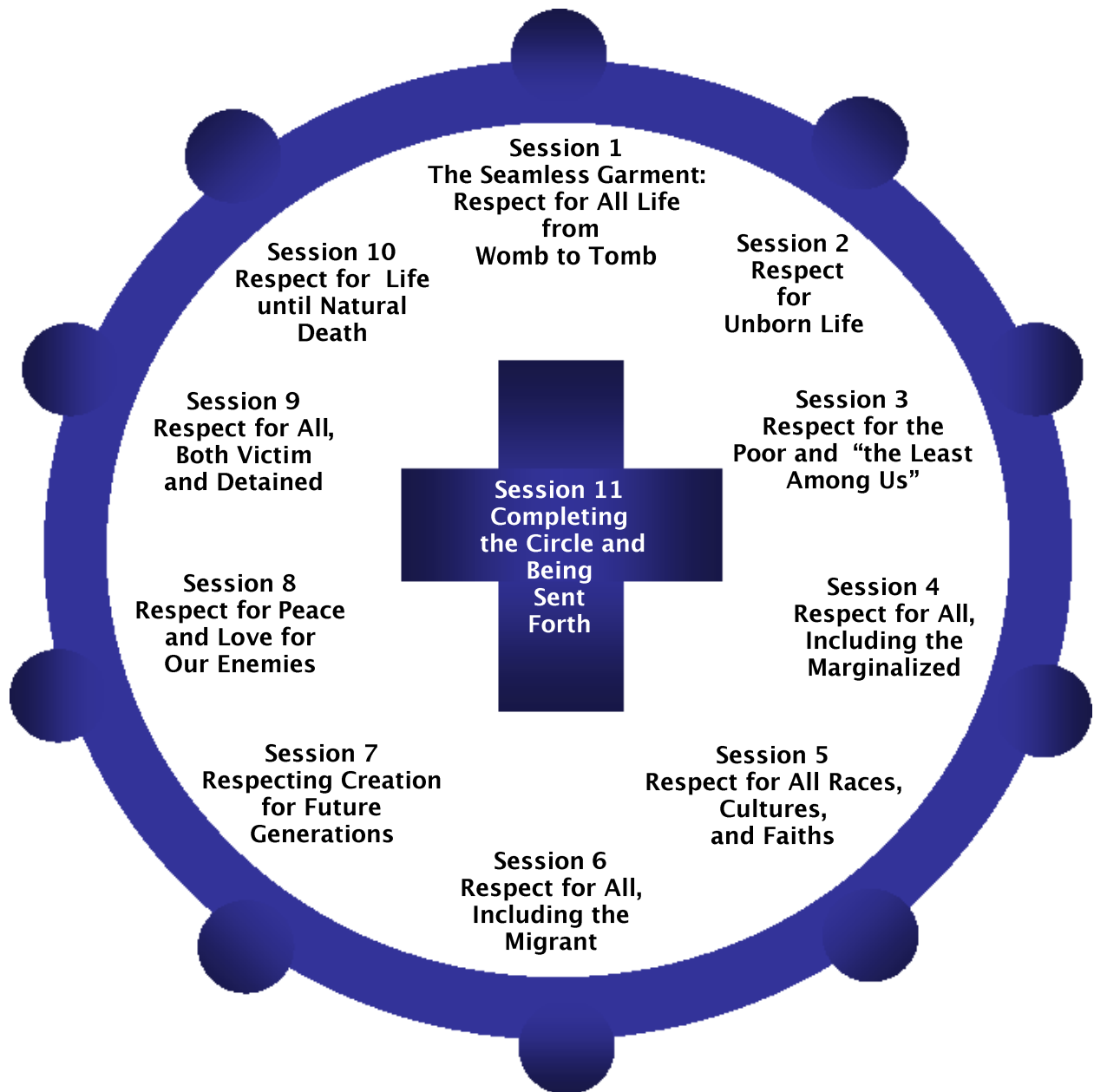


THE CIRCLE OF LIFE JOURNEY



www.circleoflifejourney.org

The **CIRCLE OF LIFE JOURNEY**

OVERVIEW

This series is not a class, a lecture series or a training session . . . it is really all about taking a journey – a journey into your own heart, mind, and soul. It is a journey we will take together “*growing in faith through sharing*” by reflection, study, discussion, and prayer.

It is a journey that is faith-based and rooted in the Gospels.

It is a journey

to learn about

pray about and

form our individual consciences about

– the Consistent Ethic of Life

that is at the core of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church.

Deep within our consciences we discover a law which we have not laid upon ourselves and which we must obey. Its voice, ever calling us to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells us inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that. For we have in our hearts a law inscribed by God. Our dignity rests in observing this law, and by it we will be judged.

Our conscience is our most secret core, and our sanctuary. There we are alone with God whose voice echoes in our depths. By conscience, in a wonderful way, that law is made known which is fulfilled in the love of God and of one's neighbor.

Through loyalty to conscience, Christians are joined to others in the search for truth and for the right solution to so many moral problems which arise both in the life of individuals and from social relationships.

“On the Church in the Modern World” *Gaudium et Spes* #16

Prior to each session participants read and reflect on one or two *Catholic Update* articles related to a specific life-related theme. Then the participants come together for prayer, scripture, faith-sharing, and discussion on the readings and the given topic. Each session begins with a prayerful video meditation that summarizes the topic, along with a related Scripture passage. Faith sharing and discussion follow and the session closes with a prayer specifically linked to the weekly theme. If desired, an additional short video or a speaker can be included to address some of the topics. The Circle of Life Journey's format is designed to gently foster the unfolding of a deeper appreciation of the sacredness and dignity of life in all its forms while calling forth a reconciling spirit of humility, openness and prayer.

We Hope You Will Embark on the Journey !

The program is scheduled to be offered in 2011 at Our Mother of Sorrows Parish on Sunday afternoons at 1:30 – 3:30 pm (Jan 30 – Apr 10). Participants from all parishes are welcome.

CIRCLE OF LIFE JOURNEY

SESSION OUTLINE

- Session 1 - The Seamless Garment
(consistent life ethic, Catholic morality today, forming one's conscience)
- Session 2 - Respect for Unborn Life
(stem-cell research, abortion)
- Session 3 - Respect for the Poor and "The Least Among Us"
(poverty, hunger, homelessness, AIDS)
- Session 4- Respect for All, Including the Marginalized
(compassion for the marginalized, Church teaching on homosexuality)
- Session 5 - Respect for All Races, Cultures, and Faiths
(racial prejudice, other stereotypes)
- Session 6 - Respect for All, Including the Migrant
(immigration, "Strangers No Longer," border orphans)
- Session 7- Respecting Creation for Future Generations
(environment, consumerism, living simply)
- Session 8 - Respect for Peace, and Love for Our Enemies
(what is "just war" today, nonviolence)
- Session 9 - Respect for All, Both Victim and Detained
(death penalty, compassion for the victims, detention ministry)
- Session 10- Respect for Life until Natural Death
(euthanasia, assisted suicide)
- Session 11- Completing the Circle & Being Sent Forth
(faithful citizenship, bringing moral vision to public life)

CIRCLE OF LIFE JOURNEY SESSIONS: SUGGESTED OUTLINE

1. After everyone is assembled, begin by calling everyone to prayer and silent reflection on the topic for a few moments. Perhaps wrap up this segment up with a spontaneous vocal prayer that asks for grace to have a “charitable dialogue” in a “reconciling spirit of humility, openness and prayer ” (i.e., see the Consistent Ethic of Life Committee’s Mission Statement on the inside back cover of the Prayer Journal.)

2. Have someone read the Scripture(s) for the session. The verses are listed in the Prayer Journal.

3. Play the DVD Meditation The video should begin on its own as soon as you put it in the DVD player. It will keep repeating after it ends, so stop it after the credits at the very end.

(Note – the music for the Session 1 Meditation continues on for several minutes after the AMEN. Prior to starting the video, you may want to alert the group about this and invite them to close their eyes and allow the music to draw them into prayer until the music stops and the video ends.)

4. Then someone -- or the entire group -- can be invited to read the prayer, poem, or short reading that is provided in the Prayer Journal for each session.
5. Here you can insert any additional programmatic items that may be available (such as the Seamless Garment video for Session 1).
6. Now you can get into the main DISCUSSION of the *Catholic Update* readings. This can be totally open-ended or focused around the *Reflection Questions* in the Prayer Journal or the questions at the end of the *Updates* themselves (often these are the same questions as in the *Updates*).
7. If you split into smaller groups to discuss, you can call everyone together to share what was said – otherwise wrap the discussion up in whatever way works.
8. A nice way to close the session is to say together the **Respect Life Prayer** (which was written by Msgr Tom, by the way). It is on the second to last page of the Prayer Journal.

NOTE: For some topics, prayer cards closely linked to the session topic are available and can be distributed to participants to take home, or they can be used as part of the closing prayer.

9. Lastly, distribute the Updates for the next session.

A note on the Prayer Journal:

The Journal can be used by individuals for writing notes or comments down about the readings at home – or for taking notes during the session itself – or it can just be left blank! When we ran our Summer program, people used them in different ways – but having the Journal helped to tie the sessions together into a cohesive whole and keep people focused.

Summer 2007 Circle of Life Journey Evaluation Report

Thirteen Evaluation Forms were turned in. Numbers (instead of names) are assigned to the comments below so you can match each comment to a specific (anonymous) person. Respondent #12's signed letter is attached at the end.

1. What did you learn or gain from your participation in the Circle of Life Journey? Has the program inspired you to think more deeply or differently, consider taking action or making some changes, etc? If so, how?

- 1—A deeper conversion of life / a need for more action within OMOS
- 2— Greater insight into some of the issues / Motivation to work harder & speak out
- 3—Found end-of-life info very useful / Poverty group session was very good
- 4—End of Life Ethics – I can help someone in a more loving way at the end of their life. I don't feel pressured now when someone is faced with death – take care of family members / This program made me want more information – through prayer I will make changes in my everyday life – This program must continue!
- 5— Positive outlook on ALL of the issues. Definitely food for thought! Awareness of the need to change & get involved & help others do so. / A challenge to live one's life to the fullest!
- 6—I learned new aspects of some of the issues. Some issues I would like to take action on. It gave me a new awareness. Two issues that I feel called to do – Blessed Nuno Society & the Haiti Project
- 7—I learned a lot and gained more knowledge of how people feel about what goes on in our own town.
- 8—Yes to all of the above. Many insights about all the issues presented.
- 9—I am not fearful any more to say that my son is homosexual. I will fight for my granddaughter's rights as a mentally ill person. I will continue to help children – Bless Nuno Society / Help the Resource teacher at OMOS
- 10—The program opened up my eyes and heart to reach out and take action to help and be more supportive to those in need, making changes in my lifestyle so that I can provide to the less fortunate.
- 11—An awareness regarding the various aspects in the Circle of Life. Topics were great. Some such as embryonic stem cell research & euthanasia / assisted suicide, I had little knowledge. The talk by Carolyn from Casa de la Luz was great. I really learned a lot of new things that I had never considered. The input from others in the discussion groups gave me a new perspective on certain topics.
- 12—(See attached letter) Excerpt: I got the most out of Carolyn's talk, because her Harp music goes beyond just playing music. There is a lot of therapy in it for the dying and the family and friends of the dying.)
- 13—Unfortunately I missed several meetings / I would like to attend again.

2. Please comment in general on the effectiveness of the format of the program:

- 1—A very easy format to follow / enjoyed the speakers & videos
- 4—They were all effective. I like things to read and be prepared for next class. I was inspired by all material.
- 8—All very good to help me think through the issues

Use of Catholic Update readings: 2—Best part of the program / 3—good / 5—GREAT / 6—good / 7—Very interesting! / 11—A must. Provides the info we need & are not aware of / 12—pretty good

The journal (how did you use it?): 2—did not use / 3—not much / 6—Used it before and during program to take notes / 7—The prayer & questions made me think about . . . possibilities / 9—To meditate – to study – to organize my thoughts / 10—Reading with my family / 11—A great tool in helping to recall info for discussions / 12—I'm not a good writer, so I didn't use it alot

Opening & closing prayers: 2—OK / 3—good / 5—Terrific / 6—good / 7—very inspiring / 9—Prayer is extremely effective / 10—beautiful / 11—Helps to focus our direction for the meeting and after / 12—Good

Powerpoint meditations: 2—Excellent, fantastic, well done, powerful / 3—excellent / 5—Amazing / 6—good / 7—Thoughtful & prayerful / 9—Extremely effective / 10—beautiful / 11—Outstanding. Use them again. / 12—Excellent

Videos: 2—Good selection / 3—good / 5—The Best / 6—good / 7—very interesting / 9—Very effective / 10—Inspiring / 11—Good choices. Using these sources enhances the program. / 12—most were good. except Seamless Garment

Speakers: 2—Very good / 3—great / 6—great / 7—Very good speakers / 9—Very effective / 11—Very good. Especially liked Carolyn from Casa do la Luz Hospice / 12—good

Small group discussions: 2—Too much time in discussion, would rather longer presentations / 3—very good, excellent group leaders / 5—enjoyable / 6—some were great, some not so great / 7—this was my favorite because it was more personal / 9—Short, yet effective / 11-Input from others always gives one new insights & others' perspectives / 12—So-So

Take-home materials (prayer cards, follow-up articles, etc.): 2—OK / 3—good / 6—great / 7—Very Good! / 9—It will take time to really comprehend all the material / 10—gave out to my family, friends

3. Did you ever visit the Circle of Life Journey webpage at www.omoscl.org? If yes, how useful was it?

Eight said “NO” & of these, one said “I will do so” / Two said “YES” & one of these said “very useful”

4. What would you have liked in the program that wasn't addressed?

2—Human trafficking

6—I felt like there was no real ideas/direction on how to make definite changes. All seemed to acknowledge these issues needed action, but no real definite ways to make changes

7—More about the Homebound & Lonely!

9—Divorce - these people feel marginalized – Many stay away from the Church after divorce – I was involved with the Diocese for the Divorced fro 8 years

11—I think the format & topics were excellent

12—Attitudes toward life begins before conception. We should address the evil of artificial contraception.

5. Would you recommend the program to others if we offer it again? Yes = 11 Maybe = 1 No = 0

If so, please comment on the 11-week length of the program (too short, too long, just right, etc.)

“Just right” = 6 respondents *Other comments:* “Just a little too long; prefer 8-9 weeks” / “Maybe on Fridays” / “too much material for 1 1/2 hours” / “Excellent. The time frame during the summer is great – usually a lull in activities”

If so, please comment on the time the program was held (continue to hold it after the Wed Peace & Justice Mass, offer on another weekday evening, offer it on a weekend, etc.)

“Continue to hold after the peace-justice. It flows with the issue” / “Very good and appropriate after the Wed Mass, but might be good to offer on weekend or other night next time” / “good time” / “good time” / “perfect “ / “I think Wednesdays were good – especially since it was summer”

6. What suggestions do you have for improving the program overall?

1—(time) too fast / 2--Less discussion, longer presentations / 3—very well prepared and presented /

5—Get more speakers on each topic / 9—It was great / 11—Nice to be able to pick up materials at the Parish office or read them online at the website – vacations & Wednesday conflicts
