



GOODNESS

PREPARATION FOR ASH WEDNESDAY



yahad.mt

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ABOUT THIS SESSION

This session aims to explore the theme of virtue and being virtuous people. The session doesn't go into too much depth but aims to be an introductory session to the rest of the series.

GOAL

- The goal of this session is to reflect on what it means to be an honest citizen and virtuous person.

RESOURCES NEEDED

- Shoeboxes with creative contents (refer to activity below)
- Room divider or sheet (refer to activity below)
- Papers and pens

SCRIPTURE

- Matthew 6:1, 16-18

GOODNESS
Summary & Team Overview

Welcoming & Opening
Prayer

Box of Lies

Our World

Role Play Debate

Teaching

One Minute Papers

Closing & Prayer

SEE

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)

Activity: Box of Lies (20 mins)

This game originated on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8vNn0WfUnY>

Resources needed:

- Boxes with creative things to put in boxes for the game (watch video for ideas)
- Room divider or sheet

How to play the game:

- Choose 2 contestants, one to be the guesser and the other to describe what's in the box or a lie.
- Set up a divider between 2 contestants facing one another, leaving the top open for the 2 contestants to be able to see one another's faces.
- Have the first contestant choose a box.
- Have them explain or lie and give a made up explanation to the other contestant of the contents of their box.
- Their opponent will guess whether they are telling the truth or lying.
- This game could go on as long as you wish, depending on how many boxes you have prepared.

Reflection on the Activity (5 mins)

- How could you tell when the contestants were lying?
- Who surprised you the most with their 'performance' in this game?
- How is this game like real life?
- Why do you think people aren't honest?

Our World

Every year, the Maltese people give large sums of money to different charities. We can all visualize the line-up of people with large cheques on our TV screens every Christmas. However, the principle of solidarity which gels a society together and without which all slogans about "being in this together" are null and vacuous, is not lived primarily by giving donations to worthy causes. In Malta, data published in parliament in 2021, indicates that an estimated half a billion euros worth of taxes went undeclared over a 10-year period.¹

¹ <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/half-a-billion-in-undeclared-taxes-over-10-years.879143>

JUDGE

Watch: Small Talk, Goodness (3 min)

<https://youtu.be/4awrCe0YOQ0>

Discussion (10 min)

Role Play Debate

- Have the young people split into groups of 3.
- In each group, one person needs to take on the role of a “good person,” another one of a “bad person,” and someone as a “inbetween” person (ie. not perfectly good, but not bad either).
- Each young person has to answer the following questions in their role:
 - Are you a good person? Why?
 - What makes someone “good”?
- The young people can ask each other other questions too.
- After allowing around 5 mins of debate, ask the young people to share what they consider attributes of a “good person” and a “bad person” to be.

Teaching: Being Good vs Looking Good (15 min)

St Paul tells us “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is

admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”²

What is meant by a “virtue”?

- A virtue is an interior disposition, a **positive habit**, a passion that has been placed at the service of the good.
- “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). That means that we must change, we must become more perfect, on our way to God. By our human abilities we can do that only in fits and starts. With his grace God supports the human virtues and gives us, above and beyond that, the theological virtues.³

By definition, a virtuous person is someone who does good even when no one is looking and who acts from a sense of one’s own dignity and that of others.

“The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.”⁴

“The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.” St. Gregory of Nyssa

In recent years, in place of virtue, we have witnessed the expansion of regulation. However, unless citizens, like you and me, choose to live virtuously, to be honest citizens, no rule, regulation or law will ever be enough to uphold the rule of law.

² Philippians 4:8

³ YOUCAT 299

⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1803

The consequence of the lack of honest citizens, of virtuous people, is a lack of trust. Trust is truly in short supply in our society. Many of the scandals which have recently hit the headlines – whether in Malta or abroad, in the political/economic world as well as in the Church – can be described as a betrayal of trust.

We often underestimate the importance of trusting that someone is good/virtuous in our daily lives.

- When using a debit card to pay, one trusts that the right amount will be debited from the card;
- When boarding a plane, one trusts that the pilot will safely take the passengers to their intended destination.

If we had to start doubting these daily transactions and operations which are largely based on trust, our lives would become unlivable.

Trust is a fragile thing – easy to lose and hard to regain. The Justice & Peace Commission strongly believes that, apart from an ethically and rule-of-law founded reform of many of our social, and economic institutions, in order to rebuild trust, the virtue of honesty is crucial.

As opposed to the hypocrites mentioned by Jesus in the Gospel, a righteous person doesn't perform righteous deeds to attract praise and doesn't refrain from breaking the law only when there is a high risk of getting caught. We therefore need honest citizens, and more than that, we need to be virtuous people to counteract the narrative of sleaze, opportunism and dishonesty which is poisoning our social fabric.

This video can come in handy while preparing:

<https://aquinas101.thomisticinstitute.org/where-does-virtue-come-from>

ACT

Debrief activity: One-Minute Paper (4 mins)

Give participants exactly one minute to answer each of the following questions. (It is suggested that you present one question at a time, with a timer so that young people can know how much time passed.)

- Who did you identify with (from the first discussion): 'the good person,' 'the bad person,' or 'the in-between person.'? Why?
- What is one thing you can change in order to be a more virtuous person?

Encourage young people to think of that "one thing" which they can do in light of Lent: Can they make this small change for the first week of Lent? Or maybe for longer?

Prayer (5 mins)

During closing prayer, read a short excerpt from Ash Wednesday's Gospel.

Matt 6:1, 16-18

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to

you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

For the following session

Ask a few young people to research and learn about the story of St Augustine, looking particularly at the difference between his life before and after his conversion. Invite them to prepare a presentation for the following session. (The theme of the next session is temperance).