Mortal vs. Venial Sin

Learning Goals

- There are different types of sin.
- All sins hurt our relationship with God.
- Serious sin – that is, completely turning away from God – is called mortal sin.
- Less serious sin is called venial sin.

Connection to the Catechism of the Catholic Church

- CCC 1854
- CCC 1855
- CCC 1857
- CCC 1858
- CCC 1859
- CCC 1862
- CCC 1863

Vocabulary

- Charity
- Mortal Sin
- Venial Sin

BIBLICAL TOUCHSTONES

If anyone sees his brother sinning, if the sin is not deadly, he should pray to God and he will give him life. This is only for those whose sin is not deadly. There is such a thing as deadly sin, about which I do not say that you should pray. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not deadly.

1 JOHN 5:16-17

Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure or greedy person, that is, an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

EPHESIANS 5:5
**Lesson Plan**

### Materials
- Failure-to-Love Slips
- Understanding Mortal Sin

### DAY ONE

#### Warm-Up
A. Ask students to recall the Good vs. Evil activity they completed earlier in the unit, and to recall some good and evil characters from their lists. Keep a list on the board.

B. Based on the list, ask students again to identify the basic differences between good and evil. If necessary, lead students to the conclusion that good seeks what is best for others while evil seeks its own interests and destroys the happiness of others. Good is loving. Evil is unloving and selfish. When we fail to love, we sin.

#### Activity
A. Ask students what are some ways we can fail to love. Listen to student responses, asking follow-up questions.

B. As the conversation winds down, distribute three slips from Teacher Resource: Failure-to-Love Slips (page 161 of this guide) to each student and ask them to write three examples of sinful actions. They should hold on to these for the remainder of class.

C. Then pose the question: Are all sins equal? If students need clarification, suggest:
   - Is telling your mother that you cleaned your room when you didn’t really clean it as bad as stealing a very large sum of money from your mother’s wallet?
   - Is gossiping about a neighbor as bad as killing him?
   - And so forth

D. Intuitively, students will know that not all sins are equally bad. Confirm to students that the Church knows this to be true.

E. Write on the board the following except from Paragraph 1854 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Write the sentence with widely spaced words so you have space to write some scaffolding information as you discuss it.

   “Sins are rightly evaluated according to their gravity.”

F. Students may not understand every word when you first write it, but that is okay. If needed, go over the statement word by word, writing out definitions or synonyms where helpful. For example, near the word “rightly” you might write “correctly” or “it is good that we evaluate sins.” You might draw a line from the word “evaluated” to another part of the board, where you write “judged” or “put in categories”; you might write “seriousness” next to gravity,” and so forth.
LESSON PLAN

G. Conclude with a mini-lecture going over the following information:

All sin is evil, but not all sins have the same degree of evil. Mortal sin is a grave (very serious) sin in which we choose to sever our relationship with God. In order for a sin to be mortal it must meet three criteria: (1) it must involve grave matter, (2) one has to have full knowledge that it is wrong, and (3) one has to give complete consent and do it anyway. Venial sin is less serious and, while it hurts our relationship with God, it does not sever it. While venial sin does not sever our relationship with God, it is important to work against it because if we don't, venial sin will lead to mortal sin.

Formative Assessment

Put three shoe boxes in the front of the room. Label the boxes “Mortal Sin,” “Venial Sin,” and “More Information Needed.” As a way to check for understanding of these two types of sin, have students drop each of their slips into one of the boxes before you transition to the next activity.

DAY TWO

Warm-Up

Ask a student to recall the three criteria for a sin to be mortal. Write them on the board. Clarify any questions about the meaning of key terms, including grave, consent, sever, and any others.

Activity

A. Go over a few examples from the sins that students wrote on their slips. Correct students as needed.

B. Have students complete the first page of Understanding Mortal Sin (page 88).

Formative Assessment

Have students share the questions they wrote. Discuss answers as a class, and/or discuss what you can do to find out the answers, including having students ask the questions of their parents.
DAY THREE

Warm-Up
Continue discussing student questions from the last class.

Activity/Assessment
Have students complete the second part of Understanding Mortal Sin. Use the Answer Key to provide students with feedback, and clarify as needed.
Understanding Mortal Sin

Directions: Read the information and answer the questions that follow.

God is love, and He created us in love. We all have this love from God in our hearts. That love for God and our neighbor is called charity. We also have sin in our hearts. All sin is evil, and all sin hurts charity. But not all sins are equally evil.

Mortal sin is a grave (very serious) sin in which we freely choose to break our relationship with God.

In order for a sin to be mortal, three things must all be true.

1. It must involve grave (very serious) matter.
2. One has to have full knowledge that it is wrong and do it anyway.
3. One has to give complete consent.

Venial sin is less serious. It hurts charity and our relationship with God, but it does not sever (completely break) it. We should try hard to avoid venial sin. If we don't, venial sin will lead to mortal sin.

Mortal sin destroys charity in our hearts. When that happens, we need to receive God's mercy in the Sacrament of Confession.

After reading this information, what questions do you have?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
Answer Key

Grave (very serious) Matter

- Stealing something very valuable
- Worshipping someone other than the Blessed Trinity
- Committing murder

Full Knowledge

- A college student who was raised Catholic and attended Catholic schools eats meat on a Friday during Lent.
- A mother has been struggling to pay her bills, so she cheats on her income taxes enough she feels guilty about doing so.

Full Consent

- A boy is playing his favorite computer game on Sunday morning when his mother tells him to come join the family for Mass. He doesn’t want to go, so, after thinking about it for a minute, he lies and tells her he isn’t feeling well. He stays home and plays his game while the family is at church.
- A boy finds a wallet with a large sum of money inside. Since the wallet also contains a driver’s license, the boy could contact the owner if he wanted to. A few days go by, and after thinking about it, the boy decides to keep the money.

Grave (very serious) Matter

All of the actions below are sins. Circle the ones that involve grave matters.

- Complaining too much
- Stealing something very valuable
- Failing to pray every day
- Talking badly behind someone’s back
- Worshipping someone other than the Blessed Trinity
- Feeling angry because your friend did better than you on a test
- Bragging and boasting
- Committing murder

Full Knowledge

Circle the sentences below that describe someone with full knowledge that an action is wrong.

- A lady buys a designer watch at a yard sale and later finds out the watch had been stolen.
- A college student who was raised Catholic and attended Catholic schools eats meat on a Friday during Lent.
- A man offers to give his friend a ride to the store. Later he learns the man had been going to the store in order to rob it.
- A mother has been struggling to pay her bills, so she cheats on her income taxes enough she feels guilty about doing so.

Full Consent

Circle the sentences that describe someone who has used his or her free will to choose a sinful action.

- A girl borrows her sister’s very expensive diamond earrings and forgets to return them for a month.
- A boy is playing his favorite computer game on Sunday morning when his mother tells him to come join the family for Mass. He doesn’t want to go, so, after thinking about it for a minute, he lies and tells her he isn’t feeling well. He stays home and plays his game while the family is at church.
- A man robs a bank after kidnappers tell him they will kill his daughter if he doesn’t.
- A boy finds a wallet with a large sum of money inside. Since the wallet also contains a driver’s license, the boy could contact the owner if he wanted to. A few days go by, and after thinking about it, the boy decides to keep the money.
Failure-to-Love Slips

Note: Before class, print and cut out enough slips to distribute three slips to each student.

It is sinful to...

Your initials:

It is sinful to...

Your initials:

It is sinful to...

Your initials:

It is sinful to...

Your initials: