

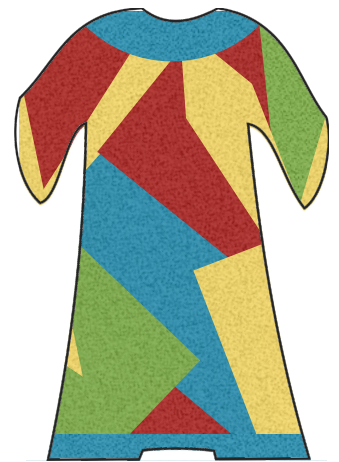
Joseph's Tunic

An Intergenerational Family Gathering on the Consistent Ethic of Life

This intergenerational, interactive gathering is intended for parish or school communities who would like to start a shared conversation on the consistent ethic of life with parents, grandparents, children, siblings, etc. The wording is aimed at families with children up to grade 5, but simple adaptation of some of the language will make it easily usable for groups including middle school and high school youth.

This gathering can be done as a parent/family religious education class, a family night at school or with families whose members are part of a small faith sharing group. The goals of the gathering are two-fold:

- 1. To present some of the fundamentals of a consistent ethic of life in a manner which challenges family units to consider the many ways this ethic is woven through our faith, and*
- 2. To provide families with continuing opportunities to reflect on what living a consistent ethic of life entails, and discern ways they can put this consistent ethic of life into practice in their daily activities.*



Using the image of Joseph's "long ornamented tunic" (frequently referred to as the coat of many colors) this lesson strives to combine the seamless garment imagery familiar to many adults with an image that will be easily understood by children as well.

The Catholic approach to a consistent ethic of life must be seamless in that it acknowledges the inherent God-given dignity present in life at all stages, while honoring the complexity of the various issues which fall into this spectrum. By referring to the ornamented tunic, we acknowledge the importance of the whole (the tunic) while simultaneously identifying the unique characteristics (the ornamentations).



Time Frame: The gathered session is scheduled to take approximately 90 minutes, but may be adapted as needed. Ongoing family opportunities range from brief 5 minute conversations, to all day options. These family opportunities are chosen by the family unit based on what works with their family commitments.

1. Welcome	5 minutes
2. Opening Prayer and Discussion	20 minutes
3. Defining Key Terms Activity	28 minutes
4. Joseph's Tunic	30 minutes
5. Closing Prayer	5 minutes
6. Dismissal and Instructions for families to continue at home	2 minutes

Set Up: Room set up should be focused on facilitating family discussion, as well as providing an opportunity for families to share with others. Consider setting up your space in a way that allows 2 - 3 families to sit at each table thus facilitating both individual family discussion and multi-family sharing.

Supplies Needed/Preparation:

1. A Welcoming Team - these individuals will welcome families, provide name tags and instruct families to make sure they are sitting at a table with at least one other family - two if possible.
2. Copies of Handout #1 (Reading from Genesis) for all readers/participants

This prayer experience is an interactive/discussion opportunity. There are various ways that this prayer can be done based on the preparation time you have:

- i. A few weeks prior to the family night, identify a few children who can assist in acting out the reading. This does not need to be a "full on play," but can be mimed.
 - ii. A few days prior to the family night, identify participants (a combination of adults and children) who can assist in the reading and have them each take sections. You could also have various participants read different parts such as those of Joseph, Israel, the brothers, Reuben, etc.
 - iii. Prepare the reading for one reader (yourself, an adult participant or a peer/older child). Make sure that the individual reading the scripture is able to do so in an engaging way that is more storytelling, lest script.
3. A half size piece of poster board for each family. These can be set out on the table ahead of time.
4. A copy of Handout #2 for the team member leading this activity.
5. A selection of writing instruments, markers and crayons for the Defining Key Terms and Parts of the Tunic Activity. Place at each table ahead of time.
6. Scissors and glue sticks for the Parts of the Tunic Activity.
7. Copy of Handout #3 for each family. Each family will need a copy of both pages - not back to back as they will need to cut page two apart.

Welcome (5 min): Plan to have a few volunteers to assist with arrival, welcoming each family, providing name tags and instructions for seating. As this night will refer frequently to the dignity of the human person this is an opportunity to acknowledge the dignity of each individual as they arrive. We will refer back to this welcoming experience later in the lesson and ensuring that each participant can identify how it felt to be warmly welcomed will be important.

After all participants have arrived, ask them to take a few minutes to introduce themselves to others at the table from other families. This is an important opportunity to ensure that each family is at a table with at least one other family, and have them move if necessary (hopefully this will not involve too much movement as your greeters will have provided instruction to sit with other families).



Welcoming each family is an opportunity to acknowledge the dignity of each individual as they arrive. Over the course of the night we will celebrate the dignity of the human person and the sacredness of all life!

Gathering (in these or your own words): Thank you for joining us today/tonight, and for sharing your time and presence as we reflect on what it means to be a people of faith, a people of peace and a people of life. We gather together to reflect on the Church's call to embrace life in all its forms - from conception to natural death - and to talk about it in a way that helps us discern how we as families can be people of faith, peace and life. The Church's teaching is one that is beautiful, multi-faceted and too frequently not fully expressed. We gather together to consider all the ways our Church calls us to embrace life, and to find opportunities as families and as community to continue living and sharing Jesus's call to love our neighbors. Let us start today/tonight in prayer to remind ourselves that we are, as always, in the presence of a God who loves us and desires to grow in deeper relationship with us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (transition to the Reading from Genesis)

Opening Prayer (20 min): A reflection on the Story of Joseph, son of Israel from the Book of Genesis. The reading is provided as "Handout #1" and is from the USCCB translation.

1. Reading (4 min)
2. Discussion (15 min)
 - a. After the reading is complete, let families know that the next few minutes will be for discussion:
 - i. (3 min) First, ask each family to take a few minutes to talk about what they heard. Does each family member have a good idea of what happened in the story?
 - ii. (7 min) After families have had a few moments to discuss the reading, ask them to turn to the other families at their table and discuss the following questions:
 1. What is the most memorable part of this story?
 2. What caused the brothers to have such dislike for Joseph?
 3. Was there a character in the story who tried to do the right thing?
 4. How do you think Joseph felt when his brothers took his prized tunic and sold him into slavery in Egypt?

5. What do you think the father, Israel, felt when he heard his beloved youngest son was “dead”?

iii. (5 min) Once families have had a chance to talk as groups, ask them to share their answers with the large group. If they need help go back and re-ask the above questions as prompts.

Among the answers you should get will be jealousy as the cause of the brother’s dislike, fear as Joseph’s response, and a recognition of the Father’s sadness.

3. (5 min) Highlight these answers, and reflect on how they are like our own human feelings as well as being like God’s love for us. Use these answers to transition to the theme of the night in these or similar words:

In Joseph’s story we hear of a father named Israel who had many sons who he trusted, provided for, and loved. He had one son, Joseph, who he loved dearly. Why did he love Joseph so much? Not because he loved his other sons any less, but because Joseph was born when Israel was older and thought he would not have more children. Joseph was the unexpected child he did not think he would have. Israel loved his older sons and had already put them in charge of the family’s flocks – which means the father had put them in charge of the family’s greatest and most valuable treasure. Unfortunately, the older sons could not see that their father’s trust in them was a sign of love. Instead they were angry that Israel loved Joseph so much, and were jealous of Joseph’s coat which they thought was an extra sign of their father’s love. So, out of anger and jealousy they decided to kill him. Only Reuben, the one brother who tried to help, knew that this was wrong. But even he was too scared to stand up to his other brothers.

In our own lives, and in our own world, we see the same kinds of jealousy, fear and anger. In reading this story we are reminded how easy it is to focus on what someone does or says that makes us mad, and how easy it is to make hurtful decisions because of that. The brothers stopped seeing Joseph as their family, and even stopped seeing him as another person who had feelings. They only thought of Joseph in terms of how he made them feel –

and they acted in a way that was selfish because it only focused on what made them happy.

Our faith asks us to remember that like Joseph we are children who are very much loved. We also have the same kind of love that Israel had for Joseph from people in our lives - parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends - and always from our God who loves us each as his own children.

Lots of the scripture stories teach us that each person, regardless of whether we

*are angry with them,
if we don't so much like them,
if we are jealous of them,
if they have done something bad like the brothers did,
if they are unborn or old,
if they are sick, or ill or have different abilities than we do,
if they are poor or rich,
if their skin is a different color than ours,
if they are women or men,
if they look different, speak differently or come from a different place,
if they have a family or if they don't*

- each person is loved just as much as Israel loved Joseph. And we as children of God are called to love them just as much as God loves us. This call to love and respect each person is called a "consistent ethic of life" and we want to talk about what that really means and how we can help live out what God calls us to.

As a family you are going to take a few minutes to define some key terms to help us figure out what a "consistent ethic of life" means. We will walk through the instructions together and then have about 15 minutes for your family to work together.

Defining Key Terms Activity (28 min):

1. (10 min) Each family will be asked to create their own poster that defines some of our key themes in talking about a culture of life. See Handout #2 for all instructions.
 1. Respect Life
 2. Equality
 3. Peace
 4. Justice
 5. Equity
 6. Community
 7. Dignity of Work
 8. Care for the Poor
2. (8 min) Once the families are done, ask them to share with other families at their table. Encourage them to add to their own definitions based on what they hear from others.
3. (6 min) Allow for large group sharing. Invite children and family members to stand or come forward to share one thing they drew/talked about/added. Make sure to have one example from each of the 8 above.
4. (4 min) After the large group discussion is complete, use these or similar words to tie together each of these terms into the understanding of a consistent ethic of life.

Each of the terms we defined, as a family and as a large group, are key to understanding what the Church means by a consistent ethic of life. A consistent ethic of life means that we view what we do, how we act towards others, the decisions we make, and the things that our community and country does as a whole picture. It means that we understand that our approach to others "links together many different issues by focusing attention on the basic value of life." The value of life means that we choose to respect others as children of God regardless of who they are and what they have done in the past. We say often that we are all made in the image and likeness of God, and the consistent ethic of life means that we admit that does not merely mean we are made in the image and likeness of God, but that everyone else is as well. This means that we choose life when a child is conceived and born as well as that we choose life when: (see next page)

- *we help a woman who is pregnant support her child,*
- *when we make sure those who are homeless have shelter,*
- *we help those who are hungry so they may live,*
- *we work to make sure that everyone has access to medicine,*
- *we make sure all children learn to read and write,*
- *we work to end human trafficking and human slavery that still exists in the 21st century*
- *we work to end the use of the death penalty*
- *we help those fleeing from war and unsafe countries*
- *we speak kindly to others because they are also children of God,*
- *we don't take from others simply because we want something*
- *we love others even when they are different from us.*

These things are really big issues, and sometimes it may seem like there is nothing that we can really do to make changes that matter. But each of us has gifts that we bring, and in our kindness towards others, our willingness to help and our desire to make things better we make a big difference.

You will find many adults who work on these issues through changing laws that cause harm, through building shelters and soup kitchens, and through donating money to help causes that show respect for life at all stages. As families there are also things that we can do together to value life. Together as a family let's see how many different ways you can identify to work towards sharing the value of life.

Parts of the Tunic Activity (30 min):

1. (5 min) Give each family the first page of Handout #3 (the tunic with words). Once every family has a copy ask a child to read to the group what it says. If it is a younger child, ask a parent to help them. Introduce this activity in these or similar words:

When we say we value life, we are saying that we value it at all time in all ways. It is saying that we think life is valuable as a whole.

What is on this page you just received? It may look like a shirt, or a dress, but think back to the reading we started with. Does it look like it may be a tunic?

This is a tunic much like the one Joseph's father gave him - at least in its shape. The tunic was a very important piece of clothing to people in the time of Joseph. It kept them warm in the evenings and dry when it rained. Sometime certain decorations or symbols on the tunic would tell others about your job, your family connections and even your wealth. It was important to have a tunic and people spent good money for them. But tunics are only of worth when they are whole. You wouldn't buy a sleeve of a shirt or a leg of a pant would you?

This is much like our understanding of the value of life - we can't just say we value one thing while not another. Does it make sense to say that you value life and will feed a homeless person, but then say you value life and would kill someone? No! Our Church teaches us that we must look at life as a whole - just like this tunic.

But just because we look at it as a whole, does not mean there are not many ways to respect life. One question - can anyone tell me how this tunic differs from the one in the story of Joseph? That's right, Joseph's tunic was ornamented - or very decorative and colorful! That is a great image for how our Church understands the value of life. It is a whole - and yet there are many different and beautiful parts that come together to make that whole. There is the joy of a new baby brother or sister, there is the happiness at a wedding, there is respecting and loving your grandparents, there is helping those in need.

2. (10 min) At this point, have a team member hand out page 2 of Handout #3. Provide the following instructions:

As a family we are going to work together to create your own ornamented tunic and while doing so think of things we can do together to show respect for life.

On each section of the tunic write one thing your family can do to show respect for life. Maybe it is praying for the unborn, maybe it is making food for those who are homeless, maybe it is not fighting so much with our siblings! There are lots of different options so let's see if you can come up with one thing for each section on the tunic.

Once you have an idea in each section, color the tunic as brightly and fun as you can - making sure each section looks a little different - but also making sure you can still read the words you wrote.

3. (15 min) After the families have had about 10 minutes to come up with ideas and color, invite them to once again turn to other families at their table and share their ideas. Remind them that this is a great chance to add something to their own tunic if they still have blank spots.

Now that we have shared, we are going to do something a little bit surprising - using the scissors on your table cut up your tunic following the lines. Don't worry we will put it back together in a few minutes.

Pause while they cut all the pieces out.

Now what do you have? Is this tunic still pretty? That is right, you have a lot of random pieces that don't make much! Each piece might look pretty in that it is colorful, but it really doesn't give you much. Again, it's like buying one arm of a shirt. This is why our church talks about consistent life ethic when we talk about respecting life. Because each of the pieces is important - you can't have a shirt without an arm, but what good is the sleeve without the rest of the shirt?

So, let's put the pieces back together. One the first tunic you had - the one with the words saying we value all life at all times - put your tunic back together and glue it down.

Pause while they reassemble.

The tunic we have just made serves as a reminder of what our Church teaches about respecting life. The foundation (the paper you glued the pieces to) is a whole that does not make sense if it is missing any piece, and each piece is a very important part of the whole!



When we say we value life, we are saying that we value it at all time in all ways. We believe life is valuable as a whole. Just like the tunic we have created it does not make sense if it is missing any of its pieces!

Closing Prayer and Wrap Up (5 min):

(5 min) To prepare for closing prayer ask each family to identify one thing they wrote on their tunic that they can share. It is okay if it is similar to something someone else says.

Have each family select a representative to be their reader and invite them to come join you in the front of the room (of course other family members can join them if they are nervous). Once the representatives have joined you, start your prayer by calling people to focus on what they learned and how God love us all.

Dear God, today/tonight we have gathered to learn more about how to show our love for you through valuing all of the lives that you have made. We know that sometimes the challenge can seem hard - there is so much fighting, anger, fear, jealousy and selfishness in our world that sometimes the beauty gets hidden.

But we know that all you create is beautiful and loved even in those times we struggle to see that. Today open our hearts to seeing the value in all your people. Help us to do things - even those things that are difficult - to make our communities and the world a better place. We know there is a lot of work to do, and so today our families commit to doing our part. As each family shares the thing which we can commit to doing, we all join in prayer saying

"God of life, Be with Us"

One by one invite families to read their statements. After each one invite the rest of the families gathered to respond: *"God of life, Be with Us"*. After the last family has shared, end the prayer with:

God of Life, you have created us each in your own image and likeness. Help us to see you in each person that we meet. We pray for love and guidance as we see you reflected in all we meet. We pray In In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dismissal and Instructions for Continuing at Home (2 min):

Thank you for being with us today/tonight as we learn more about the many ways to show respect for life, and learn more about how important it is to know that all the parts of life are valuable.

Take your tunics home with you, and as a family pick one thing each week that you can do together. Think outside the box if needed. If one thing one your tunic was to feed the hungry and your family can't get to a soup kitchen, what about packing lunches and delivering them or handing them out to those who you encounter who are hungry. Valuing life, especially in times where the news and current events show us that life is not always valued is an important part of our faith, and even the smallest things we do make a difference - to those we encounter and to our own hearts.



*"All life has inestimable value even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God's creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect."
- Pope Francis, 2013*

This intergenerational family gathering was created by Mae Richardson. To see more dignity of life resources created by Mae and others please visit:

<http://catholicsmobilizing.org/tools/>



Joseph's Tunic

An intergenerational family gathering

Handout #1

A Reading from the Book of Genesis

(37: 2 – 4, 13, 18 – 24, 28, 31 – 34)

This is the story of the family of Jacob.

When Joseph was seventeen years old, he was tending the flocks with his brothers; he was an assistant to the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah, and Joseph brought their father bad reports about them. Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him a long ornamented tunic. When his brothers saw that their father loved him best of all his brothers, they hated him so much that they could not say a kind word to him.

When Israel said to Joseph, "Are your brothers not tending our flocks at Shechem? Come and I will send you to them."

"I am ready," Joseph answered. They saw him from a distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. They said to one another: "Here comes that dreamer! Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the cisterns here; we could say that a wild beast devoured him. We will see then what comes of his dreams."

But when Reuben heard this, he tried to save him from their hands, saying: "We must not take his life." Then Reuben said, "Do not shed blood! Throw him into this cistern in the wilderness; but do not lay a hand on him." His purpose was to save him from their hands and restore him to his father.

So when Joseph came up to his brothers, they stripped him of his tunic, the long ornamented tunic he had on; then they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

Later, Midianite traders passed by, and they pulled Joseph up out of the cistern. They sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. They took Joseph's tunic, and after slaughtering a goat, dipped the tunic in its blood.



Then they sent someone to bring the long ornamented tunic to their father, with the message: "We found this. See whether it is your son's tunic or not."

He recognized it and exclaimed: "My son's tunic! A wild beast has devoured him! Joseph has been torn to pieces!" Then Jacob tore his garments, put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned his son many days

The Word of the Lord





Joseph's Tunic

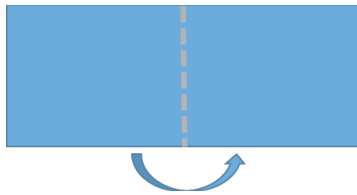
An intergenerational family gathering

Handout #2

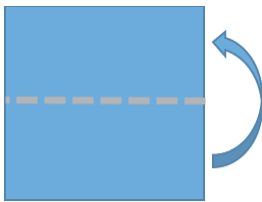
Defining Key Terms Activity

Provide each family with a piece of poster board (1/2 of a full sheet) and instruct them to fold the poster board following the instructions below:

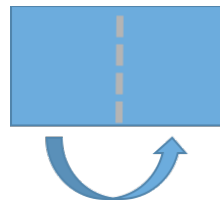
Step 1: Fold poster board in half



Step 2: Fold in half again




Step 3: Fold in half one last time



Step 4: Fully unfold the poster board. You should now have 8 boxes made by the creases.

Respect Life	Equality	Peace	Justice
Equity	Community	Dignity of Work	Care for the Poor

Have parents write each of the key terms at the top of each box. Then as a family define what they think that term means. They can do so by writing out a definition, but drawing a picture, or by coming up with examples.



A Consistent
Ethic of Life

Seeing the Value
in ALL Life at ALL
Times

