HOLY OR HYPOCRITE

A LIFE NIGHT ON HYPOCRICY, JUDGMENT, AND TOLERANCE

GOAL

The goal of *Holy or Hypocrite* is to acknowledge hypocrisy and judgment within the Church and to challenge teens to recognize the Church as the path to holiness for all people.

KEY CONCEPTS

• The Church is full of imperfect people who make mistakes, but the Church still remains sinless.

• The purpose of the Church is to sanctify and lead all her members to holiness.

• True friendship challenges a person to grow and pursue the call to holiness, which is intended for everyone.

KEY TERMS:	SCRIPTURE:	CATECHISM:
Holiness	Matthew 7:3-5	823-824
Hypocrisy	Matthew 23	1422
Rash Judgment	Mark 2:17	2477-2478
Virtue	John 8:3-11	

ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

This Life Night begins with small groups discussing the driving question: "How can the Church be holy if it is made up of so many hypocritical and intolerant people?" The Proclaim roots out instances of hypocrisy and judgment within the Church and guides teens into a better understanding of how to live a life of virtue. During the Break, each small group acts out areas of hypocrisy or judgment and the corresponding way that the Church responds to them. The Life Night ends by praying the Confiteor.

ENVIRONMENT

Throughout this series, have a giant question box at the front of the main meeting space. At each Life Night, pull a staged question out of the box and discuss it in small groups for the Gather. For *Holy or Hypocrite*, have the question "How can the Church be holy if it is made up of so many hypocritical and intolerant people?" written on a scroll and in the box. Next to the box, have a large tree branch or beam and a toothpick on display.

Create a black and white two-tone room by covering the walls of one side of the room with black poster paper or fabric and the opposing side with white poster paper or fabric. Place white question marks on the black poster paper and black question marks on the white poster paper. Search "theatre masks" on Google, print out and cut out masks, and place the images around the room on both sides.

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Life Teen: "Love > Tolerance" (Life Support: *May 2018*)

"My Victory," Passion Crowder (*Salvation's Tide Is Rising*, SixSteps Records, 2016)

Ascension Presents: "Are All Catholics Hypocrites?" (youtube.com)

Life Teen: “Choices” (Life Support: *January 2018*)

Pero Like: “When Grandma Throws Shade” (youtube.com)

SOCIAL MEDIA HASHTAGS: #LT_HolyOrHypocrite #PerfectlyImperfect

AS YOU GET STARTED...

For a more dramatic Gather, have a Core Member wear a Phantom of the Opera style costume and mask. Play dramatic theatre music as he or she opens up the big question box and reveals the scroll and dramatically reads the question for the Life Night: “How can the Church be holy if it is made up of so many hypocritical and intolerant people?”

For a Break with a larger group, consider having selected groups act out their skit instead of every small group.

HISPANIC INCULTURATION
By Stephanie Espinoza
Contributors: Juan Aznaran, Jessica Maciel Hernandez, Angie Marino

Cultural Insights:
Hispanic teens are all too familiar with the Church’s *chismosas,* or gossips. Their parents probably tell them to steer clear of these people and not to overshare within their earshot, unless they want their “dirty laundry” aired in public. This is a pervasive sentiment among Hispanic families — parents communicate, either explicitly or implicitly, that mistakes are shameful, and they are not to be shared because they reveal a weakness that is not anyone’s business. This attitude fosters greater feelings of judgment instead of encouraging people to journey through the messiness of acknowledging sins. For this reason, many Hispanic teens are extra sensitive to judgment because they’ve never had healthy experiences of sharing their struggles without shame accompanying it.

Be extra mindful of these teens as this might be the first time they’ve been invited to speak about the ways they’ve experienced hypocrisy or judgment at the hand of a church-goer, especially outside of their family. During the Gather, consider allowing teens to write their responses and hand them in anonymously rather than speak them aloud to the whole group. Still, remind the teens that what is shared in small group is done so in confidence, and it should not be shared with others outside of the discussion.

Notes:

LIFE NIGHT: **HOLY OR HYPOCRITE**

GATHER

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)
Gather teens in the main meeting space. Welcome them to the Life Night, introduce any teens or Core Members who are attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

How Is the Church Holy? (10 min)
Have a Core Member dramatically open up the big question box, reveal the scroll, and read the driving question for the Life Night: "How can the Church be holy if it is made up of so many hypocritical and intolerant people?"Once the question is read, split the teens into small groups of six to eight, and have a Core Member guide the conversation. Allow teens to share but avoid rants and gossip. Remind Core Members that they are not trying to prove anything to the teens. They are there to facilitate a discussion that allows teens to express their thoughts, doubts, and questions. The Proclaim answers the driving question for the Life Night. Use the *Tips for Navigating Conversations* handout found on the *May 2018 Life Teen USB* and online at lifeteen.com under Life Support: *May 2018.*

PROCLAIM

"Holy or Hypocrite" Teaching (10 min)
The *Proclaim Outline* and *Proclaim Details* can be found on pages 47 to 55.

BREAK

Theatre Mask Activity (30 min)
Have the teens divide into their small groups again. Pass out the *Theatre Mask* handout and pens. Handouts are found on the *May 2018 Life Teen USB* and online at lifeteen.com under Life Support: *May 2018*. Begin the small group with a prayer, and then explain the following activity.

Have each teen take time to reflect on the hypocrisy and judgment they have seen in the Church or heard as an accusation against the Church. Next to the frowning theatre mask, have the teens write these things down. After a few minutes, have teens share their list with the group. Next, have the teens write how they can respond or react to these situations next to the smiling theatre mask. Conclude the discussion by brainstorming alternate ways to respond to the most popular observations or objections.

From their lists, have the group choose one hypocritical or judgmental action and its corresponding reaction to perform in a one to two minute skit in front of the large group.

Large Group Skits (10 min)
Gather all of the small groups into the main meeting space. Have each group act out their skit in front of the large group. Encourage each group to take note of particular ways in which one can respond to different situations. Emphasize that the most important step to responding is to examine our own hearts for the same hypocrisy and judgment, and then work to root it out.

SEND

Through My Fault Reflection (10 min)
Allow the teens to stay in their small groups and transition to a time of prayer using the following:

Some of you may know of someone who has left the Catholic Church because they felt there was hypocrisy and judgment. Maybe you have personally thought about it yourself. But as was explained, one of the first acts at Mass is to acknowledge our sinfulness and need for Jesus during the Penitential Act. You may notice that we sometimes pray different forms of this prayer, depending

on the priest or parish we attend. We are going to end this Life Night by praying Form A called the Confiteor. First, we'll spend some time in a guided prayer.

Project the Confiteor or pass out the *Confiteor Holy Card* handout found on the *May 2018 Life Teen USB* and online at lifeteen.com under Life Support: *May 2018.* Have your music minister or a Core Member play reflective music in the background. Invite the teens to close their eyes and open their hands in front of them as you read the following:

At this time, bring to mind someone who has left the Church. (Pause for a moment.) Jesus, we offer this person to you. We pray that, in your mercy, they recognize their need for your grace and return to the sacramental life.

Now, bring to mind someone who isn't Catholic because of a misperception of the Church's teachings. (Pause for a moment.) Jesus, we offer this person to you. We pray that they will be open to the fullness of the truth found in the Church.

Now, bring to mind someone you struggle with because of their hypocrisy and/or judgmental character. (Pause for a moment.) Jesus, we pray for a loving and patient heart to understand and respect him or her.

Finally, bring to mind your own personal struggle with hypocrisy and judgment. (Pause for a moment.) Jesus, we pray that we can be mindful of our faults and have the courage to live virtuously as we pray together: I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord, our God.

HOLY OR HYPOCRITE

KEY TERMS

Holiness: The possession of sanctifying grace, which is present in a person from the moment of baptism and represents the person's likeness to God; it is accompanied by the practice of virtue.

Hypocrisy: A form of lying in which a person acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.

Rash Judgment: A fault against the eighth commandment committed by one who assumes the moral fault of the neighbor to be true without sufficient foundation.

Virtue: A habitual and firm disposition to do good. The moral virtues are acquired through human effort aided by God's grace.

TEACHING POINTS

WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE?

- A common accusation against the Catholic Church is that it is full of hypocrites who are intolerant of different lifestyles.
- Many feel the Catholic Church has fallen into the same pharisaical behavior that Jesus warned against in the Gospels. Jesus firmly denounces religious leaders who demand one thing but live another.
- *Project and read Matthew 23:13-16, 23, 25, 29-30.*

HYPOCRISY AND JUDGMENT

- The word *hypocrite* has its origin in the Greek word *hypokrite*, meaning "actor." The modern definition of hypocrite has changed to describe a person's moral character: "a form of lying in which a person acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings."
- Usually, the error of hypocrisy goes hand-in-hand with judgment. While it is often necessary to make a judgment regarding a person's actions, it is never in our authority to judge a person's soul.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

- Unfortunately, people within the Church are hypocritical and judgmental, which negatively characterizes the Church as being duplicitous, elitist, and unfair.
- The Church remains perfect even though we, as her children, all fall short of perfection. We don't go to church to prove our holiness but because we recognize our sinfulness and desire to be made holy.
- The Church exists to make us holy. We are not hypocrites if we are striving for holiness and fall into sin. Hypocrisy is holding others to a standard we don't hold for ourselves.

STRENGTH IN THE SACRAMENTS

- As often as we sin, we can go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation in which we are forgiven by God and restore our relationship with the Church.
- In partaking of the Eucharist, we consume and are consumed by Jesus, who both forgives sinners and corrects the self-righteous. Receiving Him strengthens us with patience and mercy toward ourselves and others.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

- It takes vulnerability and courage to share our struggles with another person. When a friend or family member entrusts us with a sinful struggle, how do we respond?
- *Read John 8:3-11.*
- Jesus, knowing that all sin leads to death, prompted us to examine our own consciences. Although we can and should condemn sin, we never condemn the person because God's mercy is inexhaustible.

PLANKS AND SPLINTERS

- *Read Matthew 7:3-5. Hold up the wooden beam and the small toothpick.*
- Jesus doesn't excuse us from "removing the splinter" from our brother's eye just because we have our own personal sins and struggles. Our faults and sins do not disqualify us from sharing God with others.
- The recognition of our own brokenness allows us to have a more charitable, tender, and understanding approach to the brokenness of others.

BE THE EXAMPLE

- We fight hypocrisy by being honest with our own struggles and our need for grace. We fight judgment by seeking the good in others, being welcoming, and praying for self-awareness.
- It is imperative that we become the Christians we want to encounter. We are all works in progress, striving for holiness.
- Consider playing the video "Love > Tolerance" found in the Media Suggestions.

Notes:

HOLY OR HYPOCRITE

TEACHING

WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE?

"Why are you a Christian? Most Christians are hypocrites and so judgmental!"

In some way, we all encounter this objection — from society, close friends, family, or within ourselves. If everyone is a sinner, why do "church-y" people tell others to follow commandments they struggle to keep? If the Church is supposed to love like Jesus, why are Catholics intolerant of different lifestyles? Who are we to point out flaws in others? Isn't the Bible rich in verses that speak out against hypocrisy and judgment?

Many people feel the Catholic Church has fallen into the same pharisaical behavior that Jesus warned against in the Gospels. Jesus firmly denounces religious leaders — also known as Pharisees and Scribes — with a series of "woe to you hypocrites..." statements.

Project and read Matthew 23:13-16, 23, 25, 29-30.

They demand strict observance of Jewish law but act as if they are not accountable to the law themselves. Jesus even instructs those listening to not follow their example of hypocrisy but to live out the truth of His teachings with humility and persistence.

Matthew 23:3

HYPOCRISY AND JUDGMENT

The word *hypocrite* has its origin in the Greek word *hypokrite,* meaning "actor." Stage actors and actresses wore masks to distinguish themselves from characters they played. Although they were real people with real lives, as soon as they put on a mask, they would transform into a new character. They were one way but acting like another. The modern definition of hypocrite has changed to describe a person's moral character: "a form of lying in which a person acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings."

Usually, the error of hypocrisy goes hand-in-hand with judgment. We make healthy judgments every day. We judge our clothing choices and breakfast options. We even make judgments to discern safety in social situations. However, when judgments are hastily made toward people, we consequently insult their inherent dignity. Often, this form of judgment includes criticizing, trivializing, and ostracizing people from a community. While it is never in our authority to judge a person's soul, it is necessary for us to make judgments regarding actions.

In refusing to distinguish between judging an action and a person, many accuse a moral stance, or judgment of actions, of being intolerant. Someone should never feel unwelcome or unloved because of their choices. However, we have to stay firm in teaching that certain acts are wrong. Following Christ requires a certain way of life — a way that leads to our ultimate joy and peace.

In regard to difficult teachings that challenge cultural lifestyles, the Church demands compassion and charity, while offering opportunities to receive forgiveness and healing. Showing love and respect does not mean accepting or encouraging the behavior of others.

Consider providing relevant examples of actions that are loving but not accepting of a person's behavior.

The Church doesn't want to tolerate us; she wants to deeply love us and bring us into a relationship with God. This requires remaining steadfast in truth in an ever-changing world.

CCC 34-35

Consider playing the video "Love > Tolerance" found in the Media Suggestions.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

Unfortunately, people within the Church can be hypocritical and judgmental. Some may encourage pro-life support for the unborn, but not for death row inmates or immigrants and refugees. Some people are quick to speak out against homosexual actions, but not on issues of cohabitation or infidelity. Other times, Church leaders tell their congregation one thing while living out an adverse reality.

These approaches and actions hurt the Catholic Church as a whole and negatively characterize her as being duplicitous, elitist, and unfair. There is no denying that people within the Church are hypocritical and judgmental, but that is precisely why the Church exists. The Catholic Church is the unblemished Bride of Jesus, and He has loved her into perfection. The Church remains perfect even though we, as her children, all have moments of hypocrisy and judgment and fall short of perfection. Instead of throwing us aside, we are invited to receive divine grace which aids us in the process of holiness. We don't go to church to prove our holiness, but because we recognize our sinfulness and our desire to be made holy.

Romans 3:23

Project the Confiteor (Form A) used in the Send.

Every Sunday, we pray the Penitential Act aloud. We publicly confess to God and to one another that we have sinned, and we humbly ask each other for prayers. This is less of an act of a hypocrite and more of a response from a penitent. When we confess our shortcomings to one another, it allows us to grow in the virtue of humility. It allows our brothers and sisters the opportunity to support us by their prayers and merciful actions.

It's important to note that you are not a hypocrite if you are striving for holiness and fall into sin — we all do. Hypocrisy is holding others to a standard we don't hold for ourselves.

STRENGTH IN THE SACRAMENTS

As often as we sin, we can go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When we confess, we are forgiven by God and restore our relationship with the Church, who is wounded by our sin. Since God forgives us, we should never withhold forgiveness from ourselves or others; and since the Church, by charity, example, and prayer works hard for our return to holiness, we should do the same for our brothers and sisters in Christ. There is no judgment of the past, only hope for the future.

CCC 1422

Wanting to strengthen us with spiritual nourishment, Jesus chooses to make Himself available to us through the appearance of bread and wine. In partaking of the Eucharist, we consume and are consumed by Jesus, who both forgives sinners and corrects the self-righteous. In the Gospel of Mark, we read that Jesus ate with sinners and, when questioned about it by a judgmental audience, responded, "...I did not come to call the righteous but sinners." Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist strengthens us with patience and mercy toward ourselves and others.

Mark 2:17

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

It takes vulnerability and courage to share our struggles with another person. When a friend or family member entrusts us with a sinful struggle, how do we respond? Do we correct and chastise them, or do we listen, pray for and with them, and assist them in taking positive steps forward?

Read John 8:3-11.

According to Mosaic law, adultery was punishable by death. The Pharisees and Scribes brought the woman to Jesus and pointed out her sin and its consequence. But Jesus, knowing that all sin leads to death, prompted them to examine their

own consciences. Jesus was the only person who could have stoned her, but His response was one we all hope to hear when confronted with our sin: "Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin anymore." Although we can and should condemn sin, we never condemn the person because God's mercy is inexhaustible. From this encounter, we can learn that hypocrisy and judgment point a finger at a person's heart while compassion and mercy point a person to the heart of God.

John 8:3-11

PLANKS AND SPLINTERS

Project the picture of "The Parable of the Mote and the Beam" by Domenico Fetti.

Although we may feel like it, our faults and sins do not disqualify us from sharing God with others. When we see a friend doing something contrary to their dignity, it is our responsibility to charitably lead him or her to truth. We first lead others by seeking God ourselves. We have to spend time with Him in prayer and allow Him to reveal areas of our own lives that need correction. It is also necessary to build up the cardinal virtue of prudence, which aids us in knowing when and how to approach situations with those in our life. Prudence assists us in making sure that we are not being careless, overzealous, prideful, or judgmental when leading others to Christ.

Read Matthew 7:3-5. Hold up the wooden beam and the small toothpick.

Jesus doesn't excuse us from "removing the splinter" from our brother's eye just because we have our own personal sins and struggles. However, it's important for us to acknowledge the obstacles of sin in our own life. The recognition of our own brokenness allows us to have a more charitable, tender, and understanding approach to the brokenness of others. Jesus never allowed anyone to leave Him the same as when they first approached Him. They were always different. Jesus may not have judged, but He did command people to be better — "go and sin no more."

John 8:11

BE THE EXAMPLE

Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen once wrote, "Criticism of others is thus an oblique form of self-commendation. We think we make the picture hang straight on our wall by telling our neighbors that all his pictures are crooked." Although we strive to grow in holiness, we make mistakes. We fight hypocrisy by being honest with our own struggles and our need for grace. We fight judgment by seeking the good in others, being welcoming, and praying for self-awareness.

Seven Words of Jesus and Mary, Fulton J. Sheen

It is imperative that we become the Christians we want to encounter. Although the Church is perfect, we are all sinners in need of a Savior. We are all works in progress, striving for holiness.

Notes:

CORE TEAM OVERVIEW

HOLY OR HYPOCRITE: Hypocricy, Judgment, and Tolerance

GOAL: The goal of *Holy or Hypocrite* is to acknowledge hypocrisy and judgment within the Church and to challenge teens to recognize the Church as the path to holiness for all people.

GATHER (15 MIN):

Welcome and Opening Prayer: _____

How Is the Church Holy?: _____

_____

PROCLAIM (10 MIN):

"Holy or Hypocrite" Teaching: _____

BREAK (40 MIN):

Theatre Mask Activity: _____

Large Group Skits: _____

SEND (10 MIN):

Through My Fault Reflection: _____

Notes: _____

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LIFE NIGHT OVERVIEW

TRUST OR FEAR

A LIFE NIGHT ON SUFFERING

GOAL

The goal of *Trust or Fear* is to address the cause of suffering in the world and encourage teens to turn to Jesus, who suffers with us and can transform our suffering into something beneficial.

KEY CONCEPTS

- The many forms of suffering we experience and witness are a result of the disorder caused by original sin.

- Although the world tries to eradicate or numb suffering, Christ unites our suffering to His and makes it redemptive.

- In the Eucharist, we encounter the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus and, at the same time, receive strength and a disposition of gratitude and thanksgiving.

KEY TERMS:	SCRIPTURE:	CATECHISM:
Hope	Psalm 27:1	309
Redemptive Suffering	Sirach 2:1-6	385
Trust	John 16:33	