

The Heroic Life of St. Joan of Arc

PRO TIP
Download other
grades for alternate
activities!

CONNECTIONS TO THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC 1617

MATERIALS

- ▶ [The Heroic Life of St. Joan of Arc](#)

SUGGESTED TIME

40 minutes

CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY STANDARDS

8.11.1 TOB Describe the idea of a vocation and how it is the way one makes a total gift-of-self. (TOB 78, 86; CCC 915-916, 929, 932, 1579, 1603, 1605, 1618-1620)

Teacher Background

It is the vocation, or calling, of every Christian to dwell eternally in the blessed happiness of Heaven with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all the angels and saints. While every vocation is special in some way, they all will include one thing in common: making a life-long gift of yourself in service to God and others.



HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

Gender ideology asserts that our identity is self-created, and that, if we so choose, our feelings in a way can actually define us. But the truth is that our feelings do not define us. God gives each person a vocation (or a call) to serve Him and others in a special way. While every vocation is special in some way, they all will include one thing in common: making a life-long gift of yourself in service to God and others. This gift may be made in marriage, or as a priest, religious, or consecrated virgin.

Gender ideology also asserts that our sex or so-called gender identity is self-determined. But our sex is in fact determined at conception, observed in utero or at birth, and never changes. Nothing we can do to our body or clothing we put on it can ever change that.

Activity

- A. Begin by asking students to name their favorite saints (and/or their Confirmation saints) and discuss briefly the different walks of life represented in that group. Then ask them to think of ways their chosen saint lived out extraordinary courage in the face of difficulty, was especially devoted to the pursuit of justice, or lived out any other virtue. Finally, ask what each saint's vocation was (i.e. whether it was to marriage, to the priesthood, or as a religious or consecrated virgin).
- B. Explain that it is the vocation, or calling, of every Christian to dwell eternally in the blessed happiness of heaven with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all the angels and saints. While every vocation is special in some way, they all will include one thing in common: making a life-long gift of yourself in service to God and others. This aspect of your vocation will mean a permanent commitment. The *Catechism* explains that "the entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church" (CCC 1617). In other words, we are called to give ourselves fully and permanently to another: to our spouse, or to the Church.

C. Continue to explain that the saints give us many different examples of just how rich and varied the call to holiness looks among the members of the Church. The saints lived lives of heroic virtue. This means they exemplified virtue in extraordinary ways, over a long period of time. One such saint was Joan of Arc, an illiterate farmer's daughter whom God called to lead the French army to victory against the British.

D. Distribute [The Heroic Life of St. Joan of Arc](#) and read over the information. Then read aloud (or ask students to read aloud) the story of St. Joan of Arc.

E. Before you begin, or after you complete the reading, you may wish to spend a few moments looking at the paintings and discussing what we can know about St. Joan from looking at them.

F. Next, have students get into small groups and discuss the conversation questions. Circulate around the room keeping students focused. Then after some time has passed, call on groups to share their responses.

The Heroic Life of St. Joan of Arc

Directions: Read the information and the story of St. Joan of Arc. Then discuss the questions.

A person's vocation is the unique call from God to love and serve Him in business, in family, or in any other way. It is like an adventure that God has planned just for you, and the adventure ends with becoming a saint. While every vocation is special in some way, they all will include one thing in common: making a gift of yourself in service to God and others. This respect of your vocation will mean a life-long commitment: it may be in marriage, where you love your spouse and help them get

to heaven as long as you both live, or as a priest, religious, or consecrated virgin, where your whole life is given to the Church.

This story gives us many examples of how rich and varied the call to be a saint (our vocation to beatitude) looks among the members of the Church: from the young Dominic to intellectual giant Thomas Aquinas, from the "Little Flower" Therese of Lisieux who struggled to find her voice when she was young to the courageous Joan of Arc. Each lived out their individual call from God with the unique gifts God had given them, great or small. As St. Therese wrote, "The splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not add the little violet of its suet nor the glory of its simple chalice."

St. Joan of Arc
Joan was born in a tiny French village. A farmer's daughter, she had never learned to read. Joan had responded to God's calling—her vocation—and had taken it on as a consecrated virgin before the Lord.

At the age of 13, the unique adventure God had planned for her took a dramatic turn: she heard the voices of St. Michael the Archangel, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret, telling her to lead the French army to victory against England. At first Joan was frightened, but she trusted God.

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G. You may wish to explain that while St. Joan is known for wearing men's clothing, it is false and misleading to imply that she did so as a political statement or because she identified as a man. Joan wore men's clothing so it would be harder for men to try to take advantage of her. As she endured unwelcome advances, she was keenly aware she remained a female even though she was dressed as a man! Gender ideology asserts that our sex or so-called gender identity is self-determined. But our sex is in fact determined at conception, observed in utero or at birth, and never changes. Nothing we can do to our body, no clothing we put on it, and not even the way we feel about it can ever change our sex.

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Directions: Read the information and the story of St. Joan of Arc. Then discuss the questions.

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STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

She understood that God had chosen a young and defenseless girl to win victory for France because He chooses the weak to humble the proud.

Joan went to the French court to meet the king. To test her, the king disguised himself and hid in the crowd. Immediately, Joan identified him even though she had never seen him before. She told him that God wanted her to lead his army. "I am not afraid," Joan told him, "for this I was born." The king realized that Joan had been sent by God and did as she wished. Joan's fearlessness convinced him. Charles had her clad in white armor. He gave her a sword, a charger, and a banner bearing the names of Jesus and Mary. And though it seemed impossible, Charles gave Joan charge of his army.

With God, however, nothing is impossible. Joan led the French army and pushed the English out of France. Even though victory would soon be France's, there were still small battles to fight. In one of these battles, Joan was captured and put on trial by Church officials who worked for the English, not the pope. On a technicality, they found Joan guilty of heresy — for wearing men's clothing — and condemned her to death by burning.

Joan of Arc is held up by some today as a symbol of gender ideology because she dressed in men's clothing. But Joan dressed as a man not because she identified as a male, but to protect her femininity. Within the all-male French military and during her imprisonment, Joan



endured unwelcome advances. She put on men's clothes (a hose and tunic connected by several straps) so she would be harder to attack. During her trial, Joan explained, "the clothes are a small matter, the least of all things." She knew that a woman dressed in men's clothes is still a woman.

At her execution, Joan kissed the crucifix, and her eyes never left it as she called out the name of Jesus. The pyre was set on fire, and Joan knew that soon she would be with God and the saints in heaven. She was 19 years old.

Thirty years later, a Church court declared that her trial had been unfair, and she was declared innocent of all crimes.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

Discussion Questions

- 1 What do you think St. Thérèse meant by saying “The splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not rob the little violet of its scent nor the daisy of its simple charm”?
- 2 Think of your favorite saint(s). What special gifts did God give them to live out their call to holiness? What gifts did He give Joan of Arc?
- 3 The Cardinal Virtues are prudence (knowing the right thing to do and then doing it); temperance (avoiding extremes and moderating our desires); justice (giving God and neighbor their due); and fortitude (courage to pursue the good despite difficulties). For each of these virtues, give an example of how St. Joan lived it out.
- 4 The Cardinal Virtues are virtues that everyone, men and women alike, can and should strive for. What are some ways you can live out these virtues in the service of God and others?
- 5 Joan’s example also reminds us that women do not lose their femininity because they are strong and fearless. In fact, their fortitude inspires those around them to be better. For example, in *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, Toph teaches Aang combat skills so he becomes willing to face danger head-on. From *Toy Story*’s Jesse, to Zelda from *The Legend of Zelda* game series, you can probably think of other female figures whose femininity brings out manly virtues in men (i.e. inspires them to “man up.”) What other examples can you think of?

1. Each of us is beautiful in our own way, and the fact that some may have gifts that are grander or more obvious does not in any way take away from others who have simpler but still beautiful gifts.
2. Discussions of individual saints will vary. God gifted St. Joan of Arc with bravery, fortitude, cunning, determination, obedience. Accept additional reasoned answers.
3. Answers will vary.
4. Possible answers could be that she showed prudence in her command of the French army to victory, and in her decision to wear men’s clothing as a means of protecting herself. She showed temperance in her meek response to being falsely accused and unjustly executed. She lived out justice in her faithful service to the king and in her obedience to God’s call. She showed fortitude throughout the story, continuing in pursuit of the good despite great obstacles.
5. Discussions will vary. In addition to the examples given in the question, other possible answers may include Princess Leia who inspires Han Solo to be a better man in the original Star Wars trilogy; Hermione in the Harry Potter series who inspires Harry and Ron to be braver. Accept additional reasoned answers.

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Our Bodies Have Meaning

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CONNECTIONS TO THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC 221
CCC 355–358
CCC 369–372
CCC 1766

MATERIALS

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Song available at [SophiaOnline.org/LiketheDawn](https://www.sophiaonline.org/likethedawn)
- ▶ Lyrics available at [SophiaOnline.org/DawnLyrics](https://www.sophiaonline.org/dawnlyrics)
- ▶ [Like the Dawn](https://www.sophiaonline.org/like-the-dawn)
- ▶ [The Imago Dei](https://www.sophiaonline.org/the-Imago-Dei)

SUGGESTED TIME

30 Minutes

CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY STANDARDS

8.5.1 TOB Compare how the loving communion of man and woman is like that of the Trinity, a communion of persons who are love and who in giving and receiving are fruitful. (TOB 9:1–3, 10:4, 14:6, 15:1; CCC 355–357)

8.8.1 TOB Explain that living out the spousal meaning of the body can be through marriage or virginity for the sake of the Kingdom. (TOB 15:5, 81:6; CCC 915, 916, 922, 923, 926, 1640, 1646)

8.11.1 TOB Describe the idea of a vocation and how it is the way one makes a total gift-of-self. (TOB 78, 86; CCC 915–916, 929, 932, 1579, 1603, 1605, 1618–1620)

Teacher Background

God is a Trinity of Persons in an eternal exchange of love: the Father loves the Son, the Son receives and reciprocates that love, and the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son personified. Human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. Ultimately, we are made for communion with God and each other. God is love, so we are made by love, in love, for love, and to love. We are given an invitation to enter into the community of the Trinity and the Love of God, and to form a loving communion with each other.



HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

While gender ideology asserts that our sex is simply “assigned” at birth, the truth is that our sex is determined at conception, observed in utero or at birth, and never changes. God created us male and female in His image. Being made male or female comes with a certain complementarity to in giving and receiving of love. This complementarity of the sexes is written in our very bodies. Being made in the image of God, or the imago Dei, means that we are literally made in the image of Love Himself. image, and this dignity is ours by nature. It can never be taken away.

Activity

- A. Begin by brainstorming as a class all the famous love poems you can think of. Write down some of the famous lines or lyrics (songs are poems set to music!) on the board.
- B. Spend a few moments talking about what the love poems had in common.
- C. Ask a student to recall the creation of Adam and Eve. If students are not familiar with the Scriptural account, read aloud Genesis 2.
- D. Then distribute the [Like the Dawn](#) worksheet and play the song “Like the Dawn” by the Oh Hello’s found at [SophiaOnline.org/LiketheDawn](#). While listening to the song, students should answer the reflection questions on their worksheet. Lyrics to the song can be found at [SophiaOnline.org/DawnLyrics](#).
- E. Give the students a few minutes after the song is over for them to finish their answers, and invite any volunteers to share their responses.

Like the Dawn

Directions: As you listen to the song and follow along with the lyrics, answer the following questions.

1. What is your first reaction to this song? What do you like about it? Why?

2. What is happening in this scene?

3. Who are “I,” “you,” and “her” in the song?

4. How do you think the author of the song feels about what is happening?

5. What event do the last two lines refer to?

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F. Explain to your students that in one of the most important documents from the Second Vatican Council, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, the council fathers proclaim that “[Man] cannot fully find himself, except through a sincere gift of himself” (GS 24). We are created to give ourselves to another— to give love and to receive love.

G. Explain that God has ordained that when we make a selfless gift of ourselves (when we are thinking only of how to help others), we feel more “fully alive” than ever before. Pope St. John Paul II called this the “spousal meaning of the body.” This is the capacity within a human being to give him or herself to another.

H. Continue to explain that this love is like the life of the Blessed Trinity: the Father gives Himself to the Son, and the Son offers Himself to the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the both. We have within ourselves this capacity to give ourselves to one another. For someone who is married that gift is to their spouse. For a priest or religious, their spouse is the Church.

I. Explain that when Adam was alone, in “original solitude,” he was not able to give of himself in this way. He looked for a suitable partner among the animals, but none were good enough. It wasn’t until Eve was created out of Adam’s rib, that he exclaimed, “At last, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!” This was the first love poem and one of the most romantic scenes in all of salvation history, so much better than the cheesy pick-up lines that we hear in movies, or the love poems we brainstormed earlier as a class. Those are all just shadows of the first love between Adam and Eve, the first husband and wife.

J. Have students skim over the **Imago Dei** worksheet, and discuss the questions with their parents.

The Imago Dei

A sunset over the ocean is one of the most beautiful sights in the world. It is a sight that is both awe-inspiring and majestic, but can they wonder about philosophical questions? Your dog might be the most loyal dog on the planet, but can he reflect on his life? No. Humans are different from everything else because we have a soul created by God in His image and likeness.

What does it mean to be made in someone's image and likeness? Perhaps you have been told that you look like your mother or father, or maybe you've been told that you're a spitting image of another relative. When someone is in someone else's likeness it means that they have some of their characteristics.

So when we say that humans are made in the image of God, we mean that we share some of His characteristics: being made in the image of God, or the Imago Dei, means that we are literally made in the image of love Himself. God is love, so we are made by love, in love for love, and made to love. But note that this love is not merely affection or a feeling of contentment. The love of God is that, sacrificial love: the free choice to give of ourselves for the good of another. “His love is to will the good of another” (CCC 1766). Jesus Christ reveals the true meaning of this self-gift to us.

The human body also shares in the dignity of being made in God's image because it is animated (brought to life) by a spiritual soul. Pope St. John Paul II wrote, “the body, in fact, and only the body is



capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine. It has been created to transmute the visible reality of the world: the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it.” Together, soul, body and soul make up who we are as a unique human person. In fact, this soul created made or formed by God at the moment of conception, is immortal. There is a beautiful unity between body and soul, which cannot be separated until death itself. This means the soul does not die even when our earthly bodies do. Our souls will be reunited with our bodies at the final resurrection.

God invites us to enter into the community of the Trinity and enter into the love of God. This love is life-giving. The Father loves the Son, the Son receives and reciprocates that love, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the both, the personification of the eternal exchange of love.

Similar to parents who adopt a son or daughter into their family, God adopts us into His family and calls us His son!

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Like the Dawn

Directions: As you listen to the song and follow along with the lyrics, answer the following questions.

1 What is your first reaction to this song? What do you like about it? Why?.

2 What is happening in this scene?

3 Who are "I," "you," and "He" in the song?

4 How do you think the author of the song feels about what is happening?

5 What event do the last two lines refer to?

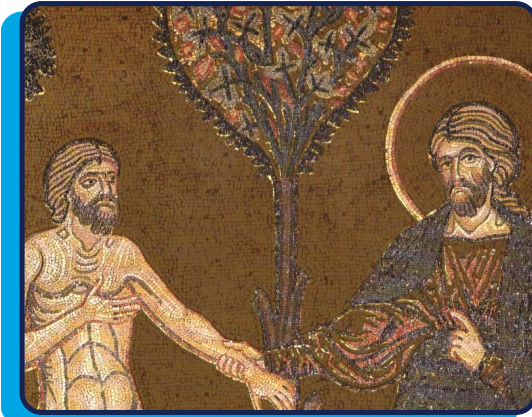
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A sunset over the ocean is awe-inspiring, but can it think? God's strongest and fastest animals are strong and majestic, but can they wonder about philosophical questions? Your dog might be the smartest dog on the planet, but can he reflect on his life? No. Humans are different from everything else because we have a soul created by God in His image and likeness.

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STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

daughter at our Baptism. When a son or daughter is adopted into a family, they start to take on characteristics of that family, and become heirs of their parents, while still retaining their own identity. Each

day, they are loved by the family and taught how to love in return. As Christians, this is our true identity that no one can change or take away from us: we are each a son or daughter of God.

Discussion Questions

- 1 Our sex is determined at conception, observed in utero or at birth, and never changes. When did your parents learn that you were a boy or a girl? What special preparations did they make? When and how did they choose your name?

Students will discuss this question with their parents.

- 2 When were you baptized? What are some things your family did to celebrate? In what ways is your Baptism day important, even more important than your birthday?

Students will discuss this question with their parents.

- 3 Men and women are equal in dignity, but we are different in terms of how we are made to give and receive love. The Church calls this relationship "complementarity." Each sex completes the other in marriage. Being made in the image of God, or the *imago Dei*, means that we are literally made in the image of Love Himself. What are some ways your parents, or grandparents, aunts and uncles, and/or other married couples in your life make a gift of themselves to their spouses? (Can you remember what Pope St. John Paul II called the ability to make this gift?)

Pope St. John Paul II called it the "spousal meaning of the body."

Students will discuss this question with their parents.

Our Bodies Have Meaning

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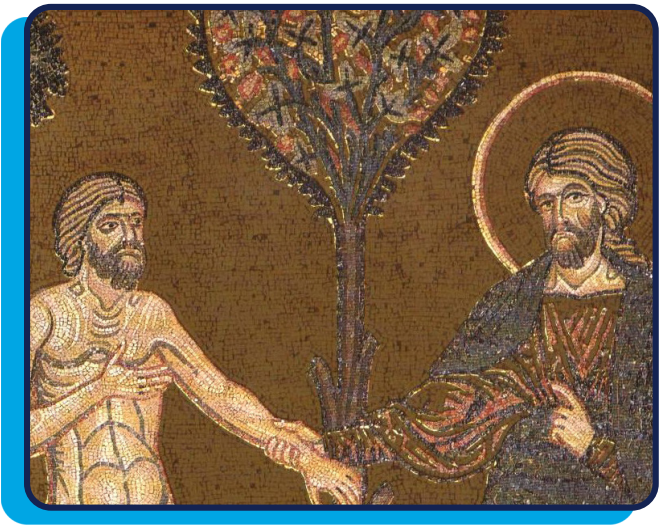
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So when we say that humans are made in the image of God, we mean that we share some of His characteristics. Being made in the image of God, or the *imago Dei*, means that we are literally made in the image of Love Himself. God is love, so we are made by love, in love, for love, and made to love! But note that this love is not merely affection or a feeling of contentment. The love of God is true, sacrificial love: the free choice to give of ourselves for the good of another. "To love is to will the good of another" (CCC 1766). Jesus Christ reveals the true meaning of this self-gift to us.

The human body also shares in the dignity of being made in God's image because it is animated (brought to life) by a spiritual soul. Pope St. John Paul II wrote, "the body, in fact, and only the body is



capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it." Together, our body and soul make up who we are as a unique human person. In fact, this soul, created male or female by God at the moment of conception, is immortal. There is a beautiful unity between body and soul, which cannot be separated until death itself. This means the soul does not die even when our earthly bodies do. Our souls will be reunited with our bodies at the final Resurrection.

God invites us to enter into the community of the Trinity and enter into the Love of God. This love is life-giving. The Father loves the Son, the Son receives and reciprocates that love, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the both, the personification of the eternal exchange of love.

Similar to parents who adopt a son or daughter into their family, God adopts us into His family and calls us His son/

daughter at our Baptism. When a son or daughter is adopted into a family, they start to take on characteristics of that family, and become heirs of their parents, while still retaining their own identity. Each

day, they are loved by the family and taught how to love in return. As Christians, this is our true identity that no one can change or take away from us: we are each a son or daughter of God.

Discussion Questions

- 1 Our sex is determined at conception, observed in utero or at birth, and never changes. When did your parents learn that you were a boy or a girl? What special preparations did they make? When and how did they choose your name?
- 2 When were you baptized? What are some things your family did to celebrate? In what ways is your Baptism day important, even more important than your birthday?
- 3 Men and women are equal in dignity, but we are different in terms of how we are made to give and receive love. The Church calls this relationship "complementarity." Each sex completes the other in marriage. Being made in the image of God, or the *imago Dei*, means that we are literally made in the image of Love Himself. What are some ways your parents, or grandparents, aunts and uncles, and/or other married couples in your life make a gift of themselves to their spouses? (Can you remember what Pope St. John Paul II called the ability to make this gift?)