**The Imitation of Christ**

**Curriculum**

**Introduction**

I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Jn 8:12

**The Imitation of Christ**

Christ calls us to follow him. He admonishes us to listen and follow the message He is proclaiming to the whole world to follow Him as the Son of God. Throughout his earthly life, especially at the public initiation of his ministry in Baptism (Jn 3:5); Christ lays a foundation for all of us to follow as a fulfillment of the Old Testament (Is 51).

**Christ asks the faithful to mediate and imitate him (Jn 8:12).**

**The Doctrine of Christ**

1. **The Doctrine of Christ –** what the doctrine of Christ refers to is the way to live our lives in Christ (Rev 2:17). The entire proposition offered by Christ was to renounce the false propositions of the world and embrace the true proposition found in Christ.
2. **The Importance of the Gospel –** this is why the reading and reflecting on the Gospel during the Mass pivotal in our personal relationship with Him.

**Understanding Christ**

1. In order to understand Christ we must be willing to conform ourselves to Him. He left us the beatitudes, the sacraments, His crucifixion as direct reminders of what we are called to do.
2. Words do not make a virtuous life. A virtuous life itself makes a virtuous life.

**Knowledge alone does not offer a complete assent to Christ. We are called to be open and exercise the grace given to us in the sacraments and display a genuine love for others.**

**Highest Form of Wisdom vs. Vanity**

The highest form of wisdom is show contempt for the world and love for God. Vanity acts on the opposite.

**What does vanity profess?**

1. Seeks after perishing riches and trusts them.
2. Hunts after honors
3. Desires the flesh
4. Wish to live long and careless to live well
5. Only thinks about the present situation
6. Seeks immediate love and does not love in return or everlasting.

**Chapter 2**

**Our actions must be driven by Charity.**

1. The greatest thing we can do for ourselves, the most profitable is the true knowledge and contempt for ourselves.
2. Great wisdom guides us to not esteem ourselves but think highly of others.
3. We realize how frail we are and the assistance we need through Christ’s love.

**Chapter 3**

**The Doctrine of Truth**

1. The Doctrine of truth subsists in the Catholic Church.
2. The more a man is at one within himself, and becomes single in heart, so much the more and higher things does he without labor understand; for we receive the light of understanding from above.
3. A good devout man disposes within himself beforehand his works which he is to do before the world. Neither do they draw him according to the desires of a sinful inclination, but he himself orders them according to the decision of right reason.
4. We are called to conquer ourselves and those vices that may lead us away.

**A humble knowledge of you is a surer way to God than a deep search after learning;**

1. Knowledge is very good and is ordained by God, but a good conscience and a virtuous life are always to be preferred before it.

**Chapter IV**

* Everything should be done in reference to God. When we speak of others it should be done with reference to God.
* There is great wisdom not to be rash in your actions nor to stand obstinately in your own conceits
* Don’t believe everything you hear nor pass on information you are not sure of until you confirm it with someone else.
* The more humble a man is in himself, and the more resigned unto God; so much the more prudent shall he be in all things and the more at peace.

**Ch. VI**

**Inordinate Affections**

The Poor and humble in spirit dwell in the abundance of peace.

Psalm 37:11

* 1. **The Proud and Covetousness are never at rest.**

A. Man is called to be dead to himself in order to avoid temptation.

* + 1. Little things overcome us.
    2. We can become quick tempered.
    3. Carnal man will have difficulty withdrawing himself from earthly desires.

B. Results of this behavior:

1. Sadness
2. Easily falls into indignation
3. If the man concedes to earthly pleasures the result is remorse and burden of conscience.

C. Truth is found by resisting our passions.

**Ch. IX**

**Obedience and Subjection**

“It is great to stand in obedience.”

We are called to subject ourselves to God.

It is safer to be in subjection than in authority.

**Ch. XI**

**Obtaining Peace and Zealous Desire of Progress in Grace**

I. In order to obtain grace do not allow others to distract you.

* + - 1. Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace.
    1. The saints studied to mortify themselves wholly to all earthly desires, and therefore they could from their very heart’s desires; and therefore they could from their very heart’s core fix themselves upon God, and be free to retire within themselves.
    2. If we esteem our progress in religious life to consist only in some outward observances, our devotion will quickly have an end.
    3. We should root out one vice per year.

**Ch. XII** **Dealing with Adversity**

1. **Adversity is good for the Soul**
2. We are called to carry our cross-because it brings us back to Christ’s own heart.
3. It is good that people speak ill-will of us because it leads to humility.
4. We should commit ourselves fully to God that we do not seek consolation from men.

**Ch. XIII: Resisting Temptation**

So long as we live in the world we cannot be without tribulation and temptation.

The life of man upon earth is temptation.

Job 7:1

1. Temptations can be profitable to man because it can lead them to humility, purification and instruction.
2. The Saints passed through many tribulations and temptations, and profited.
3. No one is immune from temptation.
4. Through patience and a little suffering through God’s help we can more easily overcome these temptations.

The beginning of all evil temptation is inconstancy of mind, and small confidence in God. Fro a ship without a helm is tossed to and fro with the waves, so the man who is careless, and apt to leave his purpose, is many ways tempted.

Be watchful at the beginning of any temptations in order to easily overcome the enemy.

**The anatomy of Temptation**

* First: comes the bare thought of evil
* Second: a strong imagination develops from this thought of evil/
* Third: Delight in the though via the imagination.
* Fourth: An evil motion of the temptation or how you can continue to indulge the temptation
* Fifth: Consent to the temptation

**End Result of the Temptation**

* Little by little the enemy gains complete entrance because he is not resisted from the very beginning.
* The longer man is slow to resist, the weaker he becomes on a daily basis.
* Thus, the enemy becomes stronger in him.

**What to do with these temptations**

* Do not despair when you are tempted.
* Implore God more during these times of temptation.
* Ask for God’s divine assistance.
* Read 1 Cor 5:13
* Humble your souls before the hand of God.

**Chapter XIV**

**Of Avoiding Rash Judgments**

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

1 Cor 13:3

**Introduction/Preparation**

Judgment should be based upon how we perceive something should be. Our emotions tend to blind us from seeing the reality of something thus causing us to harshly judge without merit.

**Proclamation**

If God were always the true merit of our desire, we would not be easily troubled by what we see thus not judge others so easily.

**Explanation**

Rash judgment is based on expecting things to go the way you expect them or intend them to be. If they do not, then the spew of judgment takes over. This leads to a dissension from Christ and the love he calls us to share and live.

**Application**

The rush to judgment reflects a reliance on yourself rather than God. Rash judgment reflects a desire to be illumined apart from Christ.

Chapter XIX

The Exercises of a Good Religious Person

You therefore be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.

Mt 5:48

**Proclamation**

The life of a good religious person is mighty in virtue.

**Explanation**

The internal disposition of the person is what drives him to act according to the will of God. On other words, are you in tune with the soul God gave you to exercise sound and right judgment and reason?

We are called to walk with Christ and seek daily renewal in our relationship with him; this requires a genuine openness to prayer. One of the many gifts God has given us is the ability to call for his help.

The virtue of diligence is necessary if we are to act in accordance with God’s plan for our lives. “The purpose of just men depending not upon their own wisdom, but upon God’s grace; on whom too they always rely for whatsoever they take in hand. Man proposes but God disposes.

* All of our actions should be centered in Christ.
* Establish a daily examination of conscience.
* Be wary of the temptations of the Devil. Job 38:3
* Never be idle but on the contrary constantly read, write, meditate, prayer and perform corporal works of mercy.

**Chapter XXI**

**Of Contrite Heart**

**The fear of the Lord leads to life; and he who has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.**

**Proverbs 19:23**

**Proclamation**

I cannot begin to truly understand God until I acknowledge my fear of Him.

**Explanation**

1. A contrite hearts rests in seeking fulfillment in Christ and not of the world.
2. A contrite heart leads towards authentic devotion.
3. A contrite heart avoids the distractions of the world.

“Happy is he who can cast off all distracting hindrances; and gather himself to the one single purpose of holy contrition. Happy is he, who can put away from him all that may defile his conscience or burden it.”

**Strive Manfully**: vanquish all bad habits

1. We must busy ourselves first and not in the circumstances of others.
2. Refute yourself before you refute others.
3. Do not seek the favor of men.
4. It is better and oftentimes safer that a man should not have many consolations in this life especially those according to the flesh.
5. We must have divine consolation first.

“When a man is perfectly contrite, then is the whole world grievous and bitter unto him.”

* The joy of having a contrite heart prepares man not for leaving but for death and his pending entrance into the Kingdom of God.
* A contrite heart would also make us very aware of the penalties of hell or in purgatory.
* We would easily undergo labor and sorrow if we knew these penalties.

It is often our want of spirit which makes our miserable body so easily complain.

“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits and in His word I hope; “

Psalm 130: 5

**Imitation of Christ**

**The Second Book**

**Chapter One-The Inward Life**

The Kingdom of God is within your midst’s.

Lk 17:21

We are called to turn ourselves over to God and shun the empty temptations of the world.

1. We are called to seek a life in Christ culminating in an intimate relationship with him.
2. The inward presence of Christ in our lives rests in the Ten Commandments, the beatitudes and the sacraments.
3. We are called to place Christ at the very center of our lives.

Christ never fails.

Jn 12:34

1. We are called to place all of our trust in God – Heb 13:14
2. He does what’s best for us.
3. Our meditation and daily reflections should be on God the most high.

* If you cannot contemplate about God and Heaven then rest yourself in the passion of Christ.
* Dwell on his wounds.

1. Christ was in the world and was despised by men. He was forsaken by his acquaintances.
2. Christ willed to suffer and die – Mt 24:16; 21; John 15:20

* You cannot obtain your crown without suffering.
* Be strong with Christ, and for Christ, if thou desire to reign with Christ.
* Be strong with Christ, and for Christ, if you desire to reign with Christ.
* To love Jesus is to despise yourself.

A lover of Jesus and of the Truth, and a true inward Christian, and one free from unruly affections can freely turn himself unto God, and lift himself above himself in spirit and with profit remain at rest. (Imitation of Christ, 68)

**Chapter II**

**On Humble Submission**

If God is for us, who can be against us?

Rom 8:31

The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. (Psalm 28:7)

1. Humble submission to the will of God does not mean a loss of personal freedom. On the contrary, the person who places God above everything else chooses to freely live a life devoid of worldly distractions.
2. If we know how to be silent and suffer, then we shall see the help of the Lord.

Humble submission refers to man’s desire to resign himself to God.

1. When a man humbles himself for his faults he:

* He easily pacifies others
* Satisfies those that are offended with him.

God:

* Protects the humble
* Delivers the humble
* Loves and comforts the humble
* Inclines Himself to the humble
* Reveals his secrets to the humble
* Gives grace to the humble

Do not think that you have made any progress unless you esteem yourself inferior to all.

Chapter VI

Of the Joy of a Good Conscience

The Joy of a good man, is the testimony of a good conscience.

1 Cor 1:31

1. A good conscience brings out genuine joy.

* A good conscience is able to bear much and is joyful in adversities.
* An evil conscience is always fearful and unquiet.

1. The active sinner never feels joy, nor an inward peace because there is no peace for the wicked (Deut 6:5)
2. A pure conscience is neither satisfied with praise nor looks for the faults of men.
3. The difference between man and God with respect to conscience is as follows:

* Man looks to countenance vs. God looks at the heart. (1 Sam 16:7)
* Man considers deeds, but God weighs the intentions.

To walk inwardly with God, and not to be kept abroad by any affection, is the state of an inwardly Christian man.

**Chapter VII**

**Of the Love of Jesus above All Things**

Blessed is he who understands.

Jn 21:28

1. We are called to love Christ first above all things.
2. The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant.
3. The love of Jesus is faithful and persevering.

We are called to be a christocentric people. Our aim is Christ in everything that we do. To look for anything else beyond Christ is to deceive yourself.

**Chapter VIII**

**Conversing with Jesus**

Never desire to be singularly commended or beloved, for this only pertains to God who has no one but Himself.

Never desire that the heart of any should be set on yourself or the love of anyone else. Instead let Jesus be in you.

Allow the grace of Christ to come into you. Draw from His grace in order to empty yourself from everything. When God’s grace comes into man, then man is able in all things.

**Chapter X**

**Of Gratitude for the Grace of God**

We are born to labor.

Job 5:7

1. We are called to dispose ourselves to patience rather than to comfort, and to the bearing of the Cross, rather than to gladness. (Lk 15:27)
2. We are called to be the least before God.

**The Third Book**

**Chapter XXIII**

**A Prayer Against evil thoughts**

O Lord my God, do not be far from me; my God, have regard to help me: for there have risen up against me sundry thoughts, and great fears afflicting my soul. How shall I pass through unhurt? How shall I break them into pieces?

I say He will go before thee, and will humble the great ones of the earth; I will open the doors of the prison, and reveal unto thee hidden secrets.

Do, O Lord, as you say, and let all evil thoughts fly before your face. This is my hope, my one only consolation, to flee unto you from my inmost heart, and to wait patiently for your consolation.

**A Prayer for Mental Illumination**

O good Jesus, enlighten me with the clear shining of an inward light, and remove away all darkness from the habitation of my heart. Repress my many wandering thoughts, and break in pieces those temptations which violently assault me. Fight strongly for me, and vanquish the evil beats, I mean the alluring desire of the flesh so that there may be peace in your power, and that your abundant praise may resound in your holy court, that is, in a pure conscience. Command the winds and tempests; say unto the sea, be still; say to the north wind, blow not; and there shall be a great calm.

Send out your light and your truth that they may shine upon the earth; for I am earth without form and void until thou enlighten me. Pour forth they grace from above, shower upon my heart the dew of Heaven, supply fresh streams of devotion to water the face of the earth, that it may bring forth fruit good an excellent. Lift up my mind which is pressed down by a load of sins, and draw up my whole desire to things heavenly; that having tasted the sweetness of supernal happiness, it may be irksome to me to think of earthly things.

Pluck me away and deliver me from all un-enduring comfort of creatures; for no created things can give me full rest and comfort to my desires. Join me to myself with inseparable band of love; for even being alone satisfies him that loves thee; and without you all things are vain and frivolous.

**Chapter XXXII**

Perfect liberty cannot be obtained unless we wholly renounce ourselves.

Let go of all and shall find all.

Leave desire and you shall find rest.

**Chapter LIX**

**That All Our Hope and Trust I to Be Fixed in God Alone**

* Our Hope rests in the Lord.
* We place all of our trust in the Lord.
* All of our tribulation and anguish is placed in the Lord.
* We recognize our weakness outside of God.
* God is the perfection of all that is good.

Prayer

Bless and sanctify my soul with your heavenly blessing that it may become your holy habitation and the seat of your eternal glory; and let nothing be found in this temple of your dignity, which will offend the eyes of my majesty. According to the greatness of your goodness and multitude of your mercy look upon me and hear the prayer of your poor servant, who is far exiled from you in the land of the shadow of death. Protect and keep my soul, your meanest servant amidst so many dangers of this corruptible life, and by your grace accompanying me direct it along the way of peace to its native-land of everlasting brightness. Amen.

Fourth Book

A Devout Exhortation to Holy Communion

CHAPTER XIII

That the devout soul ought with the whole heart to yearn after  
union with Christ in the Sacrament

The Voice of the Disciple

Who shall grant unto me, O Lord, that I may find Thee alone, and open all my heart unto Thee, and enjoy Thee as much as my soul desireth; and that no man may henceforth look upon me, nor any creature move me or have respect unto me, but Thou alone speak unto me and I unto Thee, even as beloved is wont to speak unto beloved, and friend to feast with friend? For this do I pray,  
this do I long for, that I may be wholly united unto Thee, and may withdraw my heart from all created things, and by means of Holy Communion and frequent celebration may learn more and more to relish heavenly and eternal things. Ah, Lord God, when shall I be entirely united and lost in Thee, and altogether forgetful of myself? Thou in me, and I in Thee;(1) even so grant that we  
may in like manner continue together in one.

For what other nation is there so renowned as the Christian people? Or what creature is so beloved under heaven as the devout soul to which God entereth in, that he may feed it with  
His glorious flesh? O unspeakable grace! O wonderful condescension! O immeasurable love specially bestowed upon men! But what reward shall I give unto the Lord for this grace, for  
charity so mighty? There is nothing which I am able to present more acceptable than to give my heart altogether unto God, and to join it inwardly to Him. Then all my inward parts shall rejoice,  
when my soul shall be perfectly united unto God. Then shall He say unto me, “If thou wilt be with Me, I will be with thee.” And I will answer Him, “Vouchsafe, O Lord, to abide with me, I will gladly be with Thee; this is my whole desire, even that my heart be united unto Thee.”

CHAPTER XVI

That we ought to lay open our necessities to Christ and to  
require His Grace

The Voice of the Disciple

O most sweet and loving Lord, whom now I devoutly desire to receive, Thou knowest my infirmity and the necessity which I suffer, in what evils and vices I lie; how often I am weighed  
down, tempted, disturbed, and defiled. I come unto Thee for remedy, I beseech of Thee consolation and support. I speak unto Thee who knowest all things, to whom all my secrets are open, and who alone art able perfectly to comfort and help me. Thou knowest what good thing I most stand in need of, and how poor I am in virtues.

2. Behold, I stand poor and naked before Thee, requiring grace, and imploring mercy. Refresh the hungry suppliant, kindle my coldness with the fire of Thy love, illuminate my blindness with  
the brightness of Thy presence. Turn thou all earthly things into bitterness for me, all grievous and contrary things into patience, all things worthless and created into contempt and oblivion. Lift up my heart unto Thee in Heaven, and suffer me not to wander over the earth. Be Thou alone sweet unto me from this day forward for ever, because Thou alone art my meat and  
drink, my love and joy, my sweetness and my whole good.

3. Oh that Thou wouldest altogether by Thy presence, kindle, consume, and transform me into Thyself; that I may be made one spirit with Thee, by the grace of inward union, and the melting  
of earnest love! Suffer me not to go away from Thee hungry and dry; but deal mercifully with me, as oftentimes Thou hast dealt wondrously with Thy saints. What marvel if I should be wholly kindled from Thee, and in myself should utterly fail, since Thou art fire always burning and never failing, love purifying the heart and enlightening the understanding.

CHAPTER XVIII

That a man should not be a curious searcher of the Sacrament, but a humble imitator of Christ, submitting his sense to holy faith

The Voice of the Beloved

Thou must take heed of curious and useless searching into this most profound Sacrament, if thou wilt not be plunged into the abyss of doubt. He that is a searcher of Majesty shall be oppressed by the glory thereof.(1) God is able to do more than man can understand. A pious and humble search after truth is to be allowed, when it is always ready to be taught, and striving to walk after the wholesome opinions of the fathers.

2. Blessed is the simplicity which leaveth alone the difficult paths of questionings, and followeth the plain and firm steps of God’s commandments. Many have lost devotion whilst they sought  
to search into deeper things. Faith is required of thee, and a sincere life, not loftiness of intellect, nor deepness in the mysteries of God. If thou understandest not nor comprehendest the things which are beneath thee, how shalt thou comprehend those which are above thee? Submit thyself unto God, and humble thy sense to faith, and the light of knowledge shall be given thee, as shall be profitable and necessary unto thee.

3. There are some who are grievously tempted concerning faith and the Sacrament; but this is not to be imputed to themselves but rather to the enemy. Care not then for this, dispute not with  
thine own thoughts, nor make answer to the doubts which are cast into thee by the devil; but believe the words of God, believe His Saints and Prophets, and the wicked enemy shall flee from thee. Often it profiteth much, that the servant of God endureth such things. For the enemy tempteth not unbelievers and sinners, because he already hath secure possession of them; but he  
tempteth and harasseth the faithful and devout by various means.

4. Go forward therefore with simple and undoubting faith, and draw nigh unto the Sacrament with supplicating reverence. And whatsoever thou art not enabled to understand, that commit  
without anxiety to Almighty God. God deceiveth thee not; he is deceived who believeth too much in himself. God walketh with the simple, revealeth Himself to the humble, giveth understanding to babes, openeth the sense to pure minds, and hideth grace from the curious and proud. Human reason is weak and may be deceived; but true faith cannot be deceived.

5. All reason and natural investigation ought to follow faith, not to precede, nor to break it. For faith and love do here especially take the highest place, and work in hidden ways in this most holy and exceeding excellent Sacrament. God who is eternal and incomprehensible, and of infinite power, doth great and inscrutable things in heaven and in earth, and His wonderful  
works are past finding out. If the works of God were of such sort that they might easily be comprehended by human reason, they should no longer be called wonderful or unspeakable.

(1) Proverbs xxv. 27 (Vulg.).