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TEACHER LESSON PLAN

Bearing True Witness

Faith and Truth in a World of Deception · Grades 5–8 · Religion · 30 minutes

Students connect the Eighth Commandment to modern challenges with deepfakes and misinformation, exploring how bearing true witness requires both verification and moral courage.

THE 30 MINUTES

2 min
PRAYER

5 min
HOOK

8 min
SCRIPTURE

8 min
DEEPPAKES

5 min
PLEDGE

2 min
CLOSE

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will understand how the Eighth Commandment applies to modern challenges including deepfakes and misinformation, recognize that bearing true witness requires both careful verification *and* moral courage, and create a personal commitment to truth-telling.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

- **CCC 2464:** The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others.
- **CCC 2477:** Respect for the reputation of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury.
- **CCC 2488–2489:** The right to communication of truth is not unconditional.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bible (Exodus 20:16, John 8:32, John 14:6)
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (paragraphs 2464–2513, selections)
- Spirit photography examples (1860s–1900s)
- Modern misinformation example (age-appropriate)
- Chart paper for class pledge

OPENING PRAYER · 2 MINUTES

Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life.’

JOHN 14:6

“Lord, help us to be seekers and speakers of truth. Give us the wisdom to recognize falsehood, the courage to speak honestly, and the charity to do so with love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

HOOK · 5 MINUTES

The Spirit Photography Deception

Display spirit photography examples from the 1860s–1900s.

“During the Civil War, a photographer named William Mumler claimed he could photograph spirits of the dead. He charged grieving families large sums for these fake images — double exposures. He bore false witness through images. Today we’ll explore what the Eighth Commandment teaches about truth in a world of deepfakes and viral misinformation.”

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

EXODUS 20:16

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

JOHN 8:32

Unpack: Originally about courtroom testimony, but the Church teaches it extends to all truth-telling. Read CCC 2464: “The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others.”

Discussion: What are ways we can “bear false witness” without being in a courtroom? (Gossip, rumors, sharing unverified info, manipulating images.) Did the spirit photographer bear false witness even though he used images, not words? (Yes.)

MODERN APPLICATION · 8 MINUTES

Deepfakes and Our Responsibility

“Spirit photography was the deepfake of the 1860s. Today, AI can create videos of people saying things they never said.”

Discuss: Why is this a moral issue and not just a technology issue? What responsibilities do we have as Christians when we encounter information online?

Two dimensions of bearing true witness today:

- **1. Verification:** Seek truth before we speak or share. Check sources, be skeptical of sensational claims.
- **2. Moral courage:** Speaking up when difficult — correcting misinformation, admitting when wrong, refusing gossip.

ACTIVITY · 5 MINUTES

Our Commitment to Truth

As a class, create a “Commitment to Truth” pledge on chart paper. Guide students toward including:

- I will verify before I share
- I will not spread gossip or rumors
- I will have courage to speak truth, even when difficult
- I will admit when I am wrong or uncertain
- I will treat others’ reputations as sacred

CLOSING PRAYER AND REFLECTION · 2 MINUTES

“Lord, you are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Help us to be witnesses to your truth in our words, our actions, and what we share with others. Give us wisdom to recognize deception and courage to speak honestly. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.”

MINI MUSEUM CONNECTION

Option 1 — Visit: Spirit photography in the exhibition shows how visual deception exploited grief. William Mumler exploited people’s vulnerability for profit — bearing false witness through images rather than words.

Option 2 — Virtual: Explore the exhibition online.

minimuseumproject.org/exhibitions/seeing-is-deceiving

ASSESSMENT

- **Formative:** Listen for students connecting the commandment to modern applications.
- **Written reflection:** “Describe one situation where you might need moral courage to bear true witness.”
- **Exit question:** “How does the Eighth Commandment apply to what we share online?”

DIFFERENTIATED STUDENT HANDOUTS

GREEN LEVEL
MORE SUPPORT

Key concepts, simple scenarios, personal pledge

YELLOW LEVEL
GRADE LEVEL

Apply commandment to multiple scenarios, write commitment

RED LEVEL
GO DEEPER

Research Catholic figure, theological analysis, extended reflection