

## Media Mindfulness Parent Resource:

### Overview:

Media Mindfulness seeks to educate and empower teens to understand and appreciate the fascinating world of media from the perspective of their faith. Media mindfulness is media literacy. As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to love the world today, and to live in freedom and responsibility. To do so means we are to choose, critique, and analyze sources of our stories, whether news or entertainment and to reflect on what they mean.

### Five Key Questions of Media Literacy:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than I?
4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

### Five Core Concepts:

1. All media messages are 'constructed'.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media messages differently.
4. Media have embedded values and point of view.
5. Most media messages are constructed to gain profit and/or power.

### Things to Remember When Talking with Teens About the Media:

1. Anticipate that your children know more than you do about entertainment and information media and you will learn from them.
2. Honor your children's opinions, learning, and experiences.
3. Listen actively to them; make eye contact to show your interest.
4. Be fair towards media. If your children feel you are picking on a certain media they will resist and ultimately tune you out.
5. Do not make generalizations about media.
6. Encourage inquiry and conversation about the media.

## Media Mindfulness:

### Week 1:

#### Topics covered:

- All About Media Mindfulness (definition & explanation)
- Pop Culture & Media Mindfulness
- Advertising & Media Mindfulness

#### Questions to ask:

1. How do sound and visuals function together to create a meaning?
2. How is media mindfulness important to them?
3. How is media different for them than it was for you? Your parents?
4. What is pop culture? It is bad? Good? Both at once?
5. How can you live in the world but be of the world? (that's what we as Catholics are called to do – be in the world but not of it)
6. What is advertising?
7. How are political ads different from other ads? How are they similar?

#### Activities to do:

1. Find out the number of awards for Catholic media of different types.
2. Find out the top five best-selling novels.
3. Find out the top five box office movies.
4. Mall Crawl: Take a circuit around the mall in quiet. Observe the storefronts without going in. Notice the people, stores, the products, the advertising. After a circuit – share your observations. How is 'want' turn into a 'need' through advertising?
5. Find several ways advertising is used by churches of all faiths.
- 6.

#### Saints & Greats to learn about: (they may have gone over some of these in class)

1. Saint Thomas Aquinas, OP (1225-1274) A philosopher, theologian and teacher. His Summa Theologica explained all the main teachings of the Catholic Church at that time.
2. Venerable Pierre Tousaint (1766-1853) was a married man from Haiti, once a slave, who became a famous hairdresser in NYC.
3. Saint John Bosco (1815-1888) was an Italian priest who founded the Salesian order. He used juggling and magic tricks to attract street youth so he could tell them Bible stories.

#### Movies to watch:

1. Clueless (1995, 97 minutes, rated PG-13) In this pop-culture modernization of Jane Austen's Emma, Cher meddles in others' lives, and shopping becomes an emotional cure-all
2. Robots (2004, 100 minutes, rated PG-13) This animated film portrays the story of robots with aging parts combating a corporation effort to replace all old parts with upgrades.
3. What Women Want (2000, 127 minutes, PG-13) In this comedy, an ad exec discovered he can read women's minds, learning their true thoughts about products on the market.

## Media Mindfulness:

### Week 2:

#### Topics covered:

- Movies & Media Mindfulness
- Television & Media Mindfulness

#### Questions to ask or think about:

8. How old were you when your faith made a difference in the movies you chose to see?
9. Once chosen, how did you analyze and think about what they meant?
10. How can you teach your child these skills?
11. How can you teach your child to behave, react, if there are with friends and a movie or TV show the group wishes to watch is inappropriate or has a higher rating than you allow them to watch?

#### Activities to do:

7. Find out how many different official church statements (encyclicals, constitutions, apostolic letters) have been issued since the 1930's on cinema and other means of communications. Read through one and discuss it with your child.
8. Visit the USCCB movie review webpage together.

#### Saints & Greats to learn about:

4. Saint Clare of Assisi (1194-1253) founded the Franciscan Order of the Poor Clares. One Christmas Eve she was too ill to attend mass and, while praying, had a vision of the Mass being celebrated. Because she 'saw from a distance' she was later named the patron saint of television.
5. Saint Gabriel the Archangel was God's messenger many times in the Scriptures, especially when he announced to Mary that she would be the mother of God. As such, Gabriel has been named a patron of telecommunications, especially television.

#### Movies to watch

1. The Truman Show (1998, 103 minutes, rated PG) An insurance salesman discovers his whole life has been broadcast on television.
4. Pleasantville (1998, 124 minutes, rated PG-13) Two teens are sucked into the set of a 1950s family sitcom in back and white.
5. Good Night and Good Luck (2005, 93 minutes, rated PG) True story of Edward R. Murrow who challenged the culture of fear propagated by Sen. Joe McCarthy's hunt for communists in the 1950's.
6. Cinema Paradiso (1989, 155 minutes, rated R) Despite the rating, the opening sequences are suitable for teens and provide a historical glimpse of the Church's relationship with cinema.
7. Singin' in the Rain (1952, 103 minutes, rated G) This classic is a look at Hollywood's musicals and a spoof on the transition from silent films to 'talkies'.

## Media Mindfulness:

### Week 3:

#### Topics covered:

- Music & Media Mindfulness
- Electronic Games & Media Mindfulness

#### Questions to ask or think about:

12. How old were you when you started playing video games? How often do you play video games?
13. What types of video games do you enjoy playing?
14. Do you think the violence in some games affects you or others who play the games?
15. How many hours a day do you listen to the radio or your mp3 player?
16. What genres of songs do you listen to?
17. Would you share your mp3 player with Jesus? Why or why not? Would you be embarrassed by any of the songs on it?

#### Activities to do:

9. Choose 1 hour to listen to Christian radio with your child. In our area the station is 102.5 Life FM. Make notes of what songs you both enjoy and which you don't. If you don't normally listen to this radio station – were you surprised by what you heard?
10. Analyze the lyrics of two favorite songs of yours and two of your child's favorite songs. Do they convey Catholic values?

#### Saints & Greats to learn about:

6. Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) was a Spanish soldier who became a priest and founded the Jesuit order in 1534. His spirituality is characterized by listening to the voices of the heart and spirit in silence and to imagine oneself with Jesus in the gospels.
7. Saint Cecilia (2<sup>nd</sup> century) was a Roman martyr often associated with singing and playing musical instruments. She is said to have been singing while she was martyred.
8. Pope Saint Gregory the Great (540-604) collected ancient melodies and chants that were later referred to as Gregorian chant.

#### Movies to watch

1. Radio (2000, 118 minutes, rated PG). Based on a true story, this film tells of a small town football coach's friendship with a mentally challenged boy who never goes anywhere without his radio.
2. Walk the Line (2005, 136 minutes, rated PG-13). This film follows the life story of American singer-songwriter Johnny Cash until his marriage to June Carter.
3. S1mOne 'Simone' (2002, 117 minutes rated PG-13) A washed-up film director creates a computer-generated actress, devises a simulated life for her, and passes her off as a real celebrity.

## Media Mindfulness:

### Week 4:

#### Topics covered:

- The Internet and Media Mindfulness
- Theology and Spirituality of Communication

#### Questions to ask or think about:

18. How do I use the internet?
19. Do you think you spend too much time using the internet? Texting?
20. Do you think about the appropriateness of what you watch, what you listen to, what websites you visit?
21. How can your spirituality guide you to become a better user of media?
22. What changes do you need to make in your consumption of media?

#### Activities to do:

11. Find out Pope Benedict's email address and send him a greeting or ask him a question.
12. Visit the Vatican's website and explore the site.
13. Find out if any countries forbid, limit, censor, or track the internet use of its citizens, and to what extent and why.
14. Access the parish website ([www.sjtb.org](http://www.sjtb.org)) and explore the faith formation part; did anything you find surprise you?

#### Saints & Greats to learn about:

9. Saint Isidore of Seville (560-636), a Spanish archbishop, wrote a history of the world and compiled an encyclopedia (summa) of universal knowledge, a version of what we would now call a databank.
10. Pope John Paul II the Great (1920-2005) He was a playwright, an actor, youth minister, chaplain, priest, bishop. Two of his plays were made into movies. This pope has also been called the Great Communicator.
11. Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997) She founded the Missionaries of Charity. She always taught that "every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing."

#### Movies to watch

4. You've Got Mail (1998, 199 minutes, rated PG) A man and woman begin an anonymous relationship online without realizing they are rivals in real life.
5. The Perfect Man (2005, 100 minutes, rated PG) A teenage girl, tired of moving from place to place with her single mom, pretends to be a man interested in her mom. When the virtual relationship is successful, things get complicated.
6. Simon Birch (1998, 113 minutes, rated PG) This excellent film is about a young boy, born with severe physical handicaps, who shows

an awareness of God, God's call for him, and what God means to him by giving his life for others.