

**ACTS**

# **Mission And Policy**

**2024-2026**



# TUCKER DEVACK

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November 27, 2024

Dear ACTS Family,

As the founder and president of the Association of Catholic Teens, it is my honor to welcome you all into this vibrant community where we come together to grow in our faith, deepen our relationships with one another, and become the men and women God has called us to be. At ACTS, we strive to create an environment that fosters respect, integrity, and spiritual growth, and to do so, we must all commit to upholding the values and policies that support our shared mission.

Our policies on confidentiality, masculinity and femininity, substance use, and the sanctity of our gatherings are designed to ensure that each of us is respected, protected, and empowered to live out our faith with confidence.

We believe that true masculinity and femininity are gifts from God—designed to complement and honor each other. It is our responsibility to cultivate these virtues with humility, strength, and love, reflecting the image of Christ in all that we do. We reject any notion that masculinity or femininity can be "toxic" or harmful when expressed in accordance with God's plan. Instead, we embrace our roles with purpose and dignity.

At ACTS, we also prioritize the safety and well-being of every participant.

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We maintain a strict policy against the use of substances such as alcohol or drugs during our events. Our goal is to provide a space where you can grow spiritually and personally, free from distractions and harm. We ask that all members respect these boundaries, creating a safe and supportive environment where everyone is free to learn, share, and deepen their relationship with God.

Confidentiality is another key principle we hold dear. What is shared within our community stays within our community. It is essential that we maintain trust and respect, so everyone feels comfortable being open and vulnerable in their faith journey.

Finally, I want to thank each of you for your commitment to these values. As you participate in ACTS events and activities, know that you are part of something greater—something that is rooted in love, respect, and the pursuit of holiness. Together, we will continue to build a community where all are welcomed, cherished, and empowered to live as true men and women of God.

Thank you for being a part of ACTS, and may God bless each of you abundantly on your journey.

With gratitude and blessings,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of fluid, connected strokes that form a unique, cursive-like shape.

Tucker DeVack  
Founder and President.

## Introduction

The moral teachings of the Catholic Church are rooted in Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the natural law, providing a comprehensive framework for how believers are called to live in accordance with God's will. These teachings address a wide range of human experiences and challenges, offering guidance on how to live a life that reflects the dignity of the human person and the love of Christ. Central to Catholic moral beliefs is the idea that every aspect of life—whether it pertains to sexuality, relationships, family life, or social justice—should align with the teachings of the Church and the natural law. This outline highlights key areas of Catholic moral teachings, including the Church's views on sexuality, marriage, homosexuality, the sanctity of life, and social responsibility. Each of these areas reflects the Church's belief in the inherent dignity of every person, the sanctity of life, and the importance of living in harmony with God's plan.

## Mission Statement of ACTS (Association of Catholic Teens)

The ACTS (Association of Catholic Teens) is dedicated to fostering a vibrant community of faith, service, and fellowship for young Catholics. Our mission is to empower teens to live out their Catholic faith through meaningful activities, prayer, and outreach, while promoting the values of respect, integrity, and compassion.

We commit to:

1. **Living Our Faith:** We strive to deepen our relationship with Christ through regular prayer, participation in the sacraments, and study of the Word of God.
2. **Building a Supportive Community:** We create a welcoming environment where all teens are encouraged to grow spiritually, emotionally, and socially in alignment with the teachings of the Church.
3. **Serving Others:** We are called to serve those in need by engaging in charitable works and service projects that reflect Christ's love for all people.
4. **Upholding Catholic Values:** We live according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, demonstrating love, respect, honesty, and kindness in all our interactions and activities.
5. **Fostering Respectful Conduct:** We honor one another by practicing kindness, respect, and inclusivity in all our interactions, and we follow the guidelines of the organization to maintain a positive and supportive environment.

Through these principles, ACTS seeks to be a place where teens can grow in faith, make lifelong friendships, and contribute positively to the Church and society.

## ACTS Association of Catholic Teens – Code of Conduct & Consequences for Violations

At ACTS, we believe in fostering a respectful and supportive environment where every member can grow spiritually, emotionally, and socially. To maintain this atmosphere, we have established a Code of Conduct that all members are expected to follow. This Code is rooted in the teachings of the Catholic faith and our commitment to creating a positive, safe, and welcoming community.

## **Code of Conduct:**

1. **Respect for Others:** All members are expected to treat one another with kindness, courtesy, and respect. This includes being considerate in speech, action, and behavior.
2. **Upholding Catholic Values:** Members should actively seek to live according to the Catholic faith, reflecting Christian virtues such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and humility.
3. **Participation in Activities:** Members are encouraged to attend and actively engage in events, meetings, and service projects organized by ACTS.
4. **Safe and Positive Environment:** Bullying, harassment, or any form of disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. We are committed to creating a space where every teen feels safe and valued.
5. **Respect for Authority:** All members should follow the guidance and instructions of ACTS leaders, mentors, and adult volunteers. This ensures that activities run smoothly and that everyone is treated fairly and equitably.

## **Procedures for Addressing Violations:**

While we trust our members to uphold these standards, we understand that sometimes mistakes may happen. In the event of a violation, ACTS follows a clear and fair procedure to address the issue in a manner that is consistent with our values and focused on growth, learning, and reconciliation.

### **1. Step 1: Verbal Warning**

- If a member's behavior does not align with the Code of Conduct, the first step will be a private conversation between the member and a leader or mentor. The issue will be explained to the teen, and they will be given an opportunity to reflect on their behavior and how it can be improved.
- This conversation will also focus on providing guidance and support to help the teen better understand the expectations of the community.

### **2. Step 2: Written Warning**

- If the behavior continues or is more serious, a written warning will be issued. This will outline the specific violation, reiterate the expectations of the ACTS community, and provide an opportunity for the teen to respond and go over it with an adult and or parent/guardian for further review.
- At this stage, the member may also be required to meet with their parents or guardians to ensure that there is open communication and support.

### **3. Step 3: Temporary Suspension**

- If the behavior persists after the written warning/meeting with parents//guardian or if a more severe violation occurs (e.g., bullying, disrespect towards leaders, or violations of safety), the member may be temporarily suspended from ACTS activities and programs. This suspension allows the individual time to reflect on their actions and for the leaders to assess the next steps.

- During this suspension, the member will be encouraged to reflect on their behavior and discuss it with their parents, mentors, or spiritual advisors.

#### 4. **Step 4: Permanent Removal from ACTS**

- In rare cases, if the behavior continues after a suspension or if the violation is deemed serious (e.g., serious harm to others, actions that go against core Catholic teachings directly and purposely. We understand that sin is a part of all of our lives and we will work to get through that you will not be removed if you are actively working to fix the vice), the member may be permanently removed from the ACTS community.
- This decision will be made with careful consideration and consultation with leaders, parents, and, if necessary, a pastor or diocesan authority. The goal of this action is not to punish, but to maintain the integrity and mission of ACTS, ensuring that it remains a safe and nurturing environment for all members.
- If the very rare occasion that you are suspended from participation with the Catholic Church (Excommunicated from the church) You can reach out for help but we cannot let you participate within group activities as they relate to the Catholic Church

#### **Guiding Principles for All Procedures:**

- **Restorative Approach:** ACTS believes in fostering growth and reconciliation. We aim to guide members back onto the right path, offering support for personal reflection and spiritual growth.
- **Fairness and Transparency:** All steps will be carried out with transparency, ensuring that both the member and their parents or guardians are informed throughout the process.
- **Confidentiality:** Any disciplinary action taken will respect the privacy of the individual and their family, ensuring that sensitive matters are handled discreetly.
- **Openness to Dialogue:** We encourage open communication between members, their families, and ACTS leaders. We are committed to helping members understand their behavior, make amends where necessary, and restore their relationship with the community.

#### **Conclusion:**

The goal of our conduct procedures is not only to maintain order within the organization but to nurture the growth of our members into strong, faith-filled young adults. We hope that these procedures will help guide our members toward making choices that reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church, while also fostering an environment of love, respect, and community.

We believe that through prayer, support, and accountability, every teen can grow and mature in their faith and character.

#### **ACTS Association of Catholic Teens – Procedures for Board Members**

As a member of the ACTS Board, you hold a position of leadership and responsibility within the organization. The decisions you make and the way you conduct yourself set an example for the entire community. It is essential that board members uphold the highest standards of behavior, transparency, and accountability to maintain the integrity and mission of ACTS.

## **Code of Conduct for Board Members:**

Board members of ACTS are expected to adhere to the following principles:

1. **Commitment to the Mission:** As a board member, you must actively support and promote the mission of ACTS as well as and more so the Mission of the Catholic Church . Your actions, decisions, and participation should reflect the values of faith, service, and community.
2. **Leadership by Example:** Board members are role models for other teens and leaders. This means upholding the values of respect, integrity, and compassion in all interactions, both within the board and with the broader ACTS community.
3. **Confidentiality and Integrity:** Board members must maintain confidentiality regarding sensitive matters, including personal information, financial details, and internal discussions. Integrity should guide all actions and decisions.
4. **Collaboration and Teamwork:** As a member of the board, you are expected to work collaboratively with fellow board members, leaders, and volunteers. Respectful communication and decision-making should always be prioritized.
5. **Active Participation:** Regular attendance and active engagement in board meetings and organizational activities are essential. Board members are expected to contribute their skills, ideas, and time to support the ongoing success of ACTS.
6. **Respect for Authority:** Board members should be respectful of the decisions and actions taken by other leaders and volunteers within ACTS. They should provide constructive feedback and collaborate effectively to achieve common goals.

## **Procedures for Addressing Violations of Board Conduct:**

If a board member does not adhere to the expectations outlined in the Code of Conduct, the following procedures will be followed to address the violation. The focus is on restoring unity, accountability, and ensuring that all board members continue to fulfill their roles effectively.

1. **Step 1: Informal Discussion**
  - If a concern arises about a board member's conduct, an informal discussion will be initiated by the Board President or another senior leader. This conversation will address the issue directly and offer the board member an opportunity to explain their actions.
  - The goal is to clarify expectations and address any misunderstandings or issues early in the process. This is also a chance to provide guidance and support.
2. **Step 2: Formal Written Warning**
  - If the issue is not resolved through informal discussion or if the violation is more significant, a formal written warning will be issued. This document will outline the specific behavior or actions in question, explain how it conflicts with ACTS' mission and values, and specify the expectations for correction.

- The board member will be given a clear timeline to correct the behavior and may be asked to meet again with the Board President and other senior members for further discussion.

### 3. **Step 3: Temporary Suspension from the Board**

- If the behavior continues despite a written warning, or if the violation is severe (e.g., breach of confidentiality, disruptive behavior, or failure to meet the commitments required of a board member), a temporary suspension from board duties may be imposed.
- During the suspension, the board member will not be involved in decision-making, meetings, or other board activities. This period allows time for reflection and further discussion between the board member and ACTS leadership. The suspension will also provide the opportunity to assess whether the board member can resume their responsibilities or if further action is necessary.

### 4. **Step 4: Removal from the Board**

- In extreme cases where the violation is serious and ongoing (e.g., conflict of interest, failure to uphold Catholic values, or harmful behavior that disrupts the board's functioning), the board member may be permanently removed from the board.
- The decision to remove a member will be made collectively by the Board President and a majority of the board, in consultation with the appropriate diocesan authorities if needed. Before removal, the board member will be given an opportunity to meet with the board to discuss the situation and offer their perspective.
- The removal will be handled with dignity and respect, recognizing the contributions the member may have made to the organization. However, the decision is made with the overall health and mission of ACTS in mind.

### **Additional Guidelines for Board Members:**

- **Accountability:** Board members are responsible for holding one another accountable to the organization's standards. If a fellow board member is not meeting expectations, it is important to address it promptly and appropriately.
- **Transparency:** Board members must operate with transparency, especially regarding financial matters, decisions affecting the community, and the implementation of policies. Transparency builds trust within the organization.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Conflicts and disagreements are inevitable in any team setting. Board members are expected to handle disagreements with maturity and humility, seeking reconciliation through respectful dialogue and prayer when necessary. All conflict falls under the magisterial law and the CCC and sacred scriptures.
- **Ongoing Development:** Board members are encouraged to continue growing in their faith and leadership skills. Attending leadership training, retreats, and other personal development opportunities are recommended.



## **Conclusion:**

The role of an ACTS Board member is an important one that requires dedication, humility, and a deep commitment to the mission of ACTS. If a violation of the board's expectations occurs, these procedures are designed to address the issue in a fair, transparent, and restorative manner, with the ultimate goal of preserving the unity and integrity of ACTS. By holding ourselves to these standards, we can continue to create a positive environment that encourages spiritual growth, leadership, and service for all the teens involved in the ACTS community.

## **Outline of Catholic Moral Beliefs**

The Catholic Church's moral teachings are rooted in Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the natural law, which together guide its followers in living a life that is aligned with God's will. These teachings offer guidance on how to approach issues such as sexuality, family life, relationships, and personal conduct. Below is an outline of key areas of Catholic moral beliefs, particularly on topics such as the Bible, sexuality, and homosexuality, as well as other moral issues that reflect the Church's teachings.

### **1. The Bible and Sacred Tradition**

The Catholic Church holds the Bible as the inspired Word of God, containing both the Old and New Testaments. Catholics believe that the Bible is not just a collection of historical texts but a living document that communicates God's plan for salvation, guiding humanity toward truth, love, and holiness.

- **Sacred Scripture:** The Bible is considered the primary source of moral guidance. The Church teaches that the Scriptures should be interpreted in light of Sacred Tradition (the oral teachings passed down from the apostles) and the teaching authority of the Church (the Magisterium).
- **Sacred Tradition:** In addition to the Bible, Catholics also look to the teachings of the Church Fathers, papal encyclicals, councils, and the CCC as sources of moral guidance. These resources help to interpret the Bible in its full context, considering the times and culture in which it was written. We are called to live as Catholics not with the times.

### **2. Sexuality and the Human Person**

Catholic teachings on human sexuality are based on the belief that sexuality is a gift from God, meant to be expressed within the context of marriage between one man and one woman. The Church emphasizes the dignity of the human person, the importance of chastity, and the sanctity of marriage.

- **The Purpose of Sexuality:** The Church teaches that sexual activity is a gift meant to be shared between a husband and wife for two main purposes:
  - **Unitive Purpose:** To deepen the bond of love and mutual self-giving between spouses.
  - **Procreative Purpose:** To be open to the possibility of life, as each act of marital love is seen as being open to the creation of children.
- **Chastity:** Chastity is understood as the virtue that helps individuals to live their sexuality in a way that is respectful of themselves and others, according to their state in life (whether single, married, or consecrated).

- **Fornication (Pre-Marital Sex):** The Church teaches that sexual activity outside of marriage is sinful because it goes against the purpose of sexuality as ordered to both love and procreation within a committed, lifelong marital relationship.

### 3. Homosexuality

The Catholic Church differentiates between homosexual orientation (which refers to one's emotional and sexual attraction to persons of the same sex) and homosexual acts (which refer to sexual behaviors between individuals of the same sex). While the Church recognizes the dignity of all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation, it teaches that sexual relations should only occur within the confines of heterosexual marriage. The Church's teachings are that if you find yourself attracted to the same sex that is your cross to bear, and you are called to a life without marriage or sex. It only becomes a sin when you act on the attraction.

- **Homosexual Orientation:** The Church teaches that having a homosexual orientation is not a sin. However, it emphasizes that being attracted to the same sex is not an invitation to act on those desires. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states that "homosexual persons are called to chastity" (CCC 2359).
- **Homosexual Acts:** The Church teaches that homosexual acts are sinful because they do not conform to the natural law and the purposes of sexuality (unitive and procreative). These acts are considered morally disordered and contrary to God's design for human sexuality. The Church encourages individuals with same-sex attraction to live chaste lives, avoiding sinful behavior.
- **Pastoral Care:** While the Church upholds its teachings on homosexuality, it also calls for compassion, respect, and sensitivity toward individuals with same-sex attraction. Church leaders emphasize the importance of supporting such individuals in their efforts to live a life of holiness, offering pastoral care, prayer, and counseling.

### 4. Marriage and Family Life

Catholic teaching holds marriage to be a sacred sacrament and an essential part of God's plan for humanity. It is not merely a contract between two individuals, but a covenant before God, designed to be permanent and fruitful.

- **The Nature of Marriage:** Marriage is understood to be a union between one man and one woman. The Catholic Church teaches that marriage is ordered for both the good of the spouses (unitive) and the procreation and education of children.
- **Divorce and Remarriage:** The Church holds that marriage is indissoluble, meaning it cannot be broken or dissolved. While civil divorce may occur, the Church does not recognize the validity of remarriage if the first marriage was valid in the eyes of the Church. The Church offers annulments as a process by which a marriage can be declared invalid based on certain criteria. If a person is to divorce a spouse, they are called to the single life from then on.
- **Contraception:** The Catholic Church teaches that the use of artificial contraception is morally wrong because it intentionally separates the unitive and procreative purposes of marital love. Natural family planning (NFP), which respects the natural rhythms of fertility, is considered an acceptable way for couples to space children.

## 5. Life Issues

The Catholic Church is strongly pro-life and advocates for the protection of human life from conception to natural death.

- **Abortion:** The Church teaches that abortion is a grave moral wrong because it directly ends the life of an innocent human being. It upholds the sanctity of life from the moment of conception.
- **Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide:** The Church opposes euthanasia and assisted suicide, believing that life is a gift from God and should be respected until natural death. Deliberate actions to end life, even in cases of terminal illness or suffering, are morally unacceptable.
- **In Vitro Fertilization (IVF):** The Church has reservations about IVF because it often involves the creation of embryos outside the natural context of marital love and the potential for the destruction of unused embryos. The Church upholds the dignity of life from conception and emphasizes natural procreation within the marital relationship.

## 6. Social Justice and Charity

Catholic moral teachings also extend to how individuals and societies treat others, especially the most vulnerable. The Church advocates for social justice, care for the poor, and the protection of human dignity in all aspects of society.

- **Care for the Poor:** The Church teaches that caring for the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable is a fundamental Christian responsibility. Catholics are called to engage in works of mercy, whether spiritual or corporal.
- **Social Responsibility:** Catholics are encouraged to be active in promoting justice, peace, and the common good in society. This includes advocating for policies that protect life, promote human dignity, and ensure equitable treatment for all people, regardless of their background or status.

## Conclusion

Catholic moral teachings are centered on the belief that all people are created in the image of God and are called to live lives of holiness and virtue. These teachings are meant to guide individuals in making choices that align with God's plan for their lives, respecting human dignity, and building a just and compassionate society. While the Church upholds these teachings as truth, it also stresses the importance of mercy, compassion, and pastoral care for those who struggle with these moral issues.

## ACTS Association of Catholic Teens – Independence and Autonomy

The ACTS (Association of Catholic Teens) is an independent organization, not officially affiliated with any specific parish, school, or larger diocesan or religious organization. While we are grounded in the teachings of the Catholic Church and aim to promote the faith, ACTS operates as a separate entity, distinct from any particular parish or institutional structure.

This independence allows ACTS the flexibility to focus on the unique needs and interests of Catholic teens, creating a space where they can grow spiritually, socially, and emotionally, while respecting the diverse backgrounds and affiliations of its members.

ACTS remains fully committed to the Catholic faith and upholds the core teachings of the Church, but our operations, activities, and decisions are made independently of the governance or policies of any single parish or school. This autonomy ensures that ACTS can remain a welcoming, inclusive community for all Catholic teens, regardless of their parish or school affiliations, and provides the opportunity to foster broader connections and collaboration within the Church's larger community.

Although independent, ACTS is always open to collaboration with parishes, schools, and other Catholic organizations to strengthen the faith of teens and provide service to the community. However, the organization's activities, leadership, and direction remain separate, preserving our mission of supporting the spiritual and personal growth of young Catholics through a unique, independent community experience.

### **Modesty and Language Guidelines for ACTS Events**

At ACTS (Association of Catholic Teens), we strive to create a welcoming and respectful environment that fosters spiritual growth, community, and fellowship. As such, we ask all participants—whether teens, leaders, or volunteers—to adhere to guidelines of modesty and respectful language when attending any ACTS event. These guidelines reflect our commitment to upholding the values of the Catholic faith, maintaining the dignity of each individual, and creating a positive atmosphere for everyone involved.

#### **Modesty**

Modesty is a virtue that reflects both inner and outer respect for oneself and others. At ACTS events, we ask that all attendees dress in a way that promotes a sense of dignity, respect, and reverence for the sacred nature of our gatherings. This includes the following considerations:

1. **Appropriate Clothing:** Attendees should wear clothing that is modest and respectful, avoiding anything that may distract or cause discomfort for others. This means clothing should be of appropriate length, cover the body adequately, and avoid excessively tight or revealing garments.
2. **Respectful of the Setting:** The dress code should also reflect the setting of the event. For example, when attending Mass or a prayer service, attire should be respectful of the sacred space and act of worship. For other ACTS events, such as retreats or social gatherings, modesty should still be observed to maintain an atmosphere of respect and focus on the activities.
3. **Avoiding Distractions:** Clothing and appearance should not draw unnecessary attention to oneself but should instead reflect a spirit of humility and unity with the group. The goal is to focus on the communal experience and spiritual purpose of the event.

#### **Language and Speech**

The words we choose to use can greatly impact the atmosphere of any gathering. At ACTS, we ask that participants use language that is respectful, kind, and uplifting. This includes:

1. **Respectful Communication:** Language should be used to build one another up, not to tear down or disrespect others. This means avoiding hurtful, negative, or judgmental comments and instead speaking with empathy, encouragement, and support for one another.

2. **Avoiding Profanity and Disrespectful Terms:** The use of profanity, vulgarity, or offensive language is strictly discouraged. Such language does not reflect the values of ACTS and does not contribute to the wholesome, respectful environment we aim to maintain. We encourage participants to choose words that are kind, considerate, and reflective of the respect we are called to show one another as members of the Body of Christ.
3. **Constructive Conversations:** While disagreements or differences of opinion may arise, we ask that all language be constructive and expressed with respect for others' perspectives. Engaging in positive dialogue and avoiding gossip, slander, or any form of harmful speech helps foster an environment of peace, unity, and understanding.

### **Protection of Children Against Sexual Abuse and Protocols for ACTS**

At ACTS (Association of Catholic Teens), the safety and well-being of every young person is our top priority. As an organization committed to fostering a safe and nurturing environment for spiritual growth and community, we hold ourselves to the highest standards when it comes to protecting children and vulnerable individuals from any form of harm, including sexual abuse. We are committed to upholding the moral and ethical principles of the Catholic faith, which calls for the protection and care of all individuals, particularly the most vulnerable.

#### **Commitment to Protecting Children**

ACTS adheres to strict guidelines and protocols to prevent sexual abuse and ensure a safe environment for all teens and participants in our programs. We recognize that all children and young people deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, and care, and we take every necessary step to ensure that our events, retreats, meetings, and activities provide a safe and secure space for spiritual, social, and emotional development.

- **Safe Environment Training:** All ACTS leaders, volunteers, and board members are required to complete mandatory safe environment training, which includes education on recognizing the signs of abuse, understanding boundaries, and learning how to respond appropriately to concerns.
- **Background Checks:** All adult volunteers and staff members who work with children and teens undergo thorough background checks to ensure they have no history of inappropriate behavior or criminal activity.
- **Supervision and Accountability:** Activities and events are properly supervised, with adequate adult presence in all settings. There is always at least one adult present during youth activities, and appropriate measures are taken to ensure accountability and transparency at all times.
- **Clear Boundaries:** ACTS enforces clear and firm guidelines regarding physical boundaries, communication, and interactions between adults and minors. Any form of inappropriate touch, private communication, or behavior that crosses personal boundaries is strictly prohibited.

#### **What to Do If Abuse is Suspected or Reported**

In the unfortunate event that a concern regarding sexual abuse arises, ACTS has a clear and detailed procedure in place to respond swiftly, appropriately, and with the utmost seriousness. We are committed

to protecting the rights of the victim, ensuring that they are supported and that their well-being is prioritized throughout the process.

1. **Immediate Reporting:** If an allegation of sexual abuse is made, whether by a victim, a witness, or a third party, it is critical that the matter be reported immediately. Any member of the ACTS organization—whether a teen, volunteer, or leader—who witnesses or suspects abuse should report it to an ACTS leader or designated safe environment coordinator.
  - **Reports can be made confidentially and should never be ignored. There are clear lines of communication for reporting, which include contacting local authorities if necessary.**
2. **Investigation Protocol:** Once an allegation is made, ACTS will initiate an immediate investigation. This investigation will be carried out by designated leaders, with a focus on understanding the details of the situation and providing support to the alleged victim. Any suspected cases of abuse will also be reported to the appropriate civil authorities (e.g., law enforcement or child protective services), in accordance with local laws.
3. **Removal of Suspected Offenders:** Any adult accused of sexual abuse or inappropriate behavior will be immediately removed from any role involving direct contact with minors until the investigation is completed. This precautionary measure ensures the safety of all children and teens involved in ACTS activities while the situation is being handled.
  - If the investigation reveals that the accused individual has violated ACTS policies or committed any form of abuse, they will be permanently removed from the organization and reported to the appropriate legal authorities. Additionally, they will be prohibited from participating in any future activities or events organized by ACTS.
4. **Support for Victims:** The emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being of the victim is a primary concern. ACTS will provide appropriate counseling, pastoral care, and resources to support the victim and their family. We will ensure that the victim has access to professional help if needed and that they feel safe and supported throughout the entire process.
  - **In addition, ACTS will work with the family of the victim to ensure they understand the steps being taken and are involved in the resolution process.**
5. **Confidentiality:** The privacy and dignity of the individuals involved in any abuse investigation are of utmost importance. ACTS will handle all reports and investigations with the highest level of confidentiality, only sharing information on a need-to-know basis and in compliance with legal requirements.
6. **Ongoing Review and Prevention:** After any allegation or incident, ACTS will review its policies, procedures, and training to ensure that our prevention strategies are effective. We are committed to continuously improving our protocols to maintain a safe environment for all teens.

## Conclusion

The protection of children and teens is central to the mission of ACTS. We are deeply committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for all participants. By establishing strict guidelines,

implementing safety protocols, and fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, and respect, we ensure that the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of every young person involved in ACTS is prioritized. Should any situation of sexual abuse arise, ACTS will respond swiftly and effectively, with a focus on supporting the victim and holding individuals accountable for their actions. Our goal is to provide a safe, nurturing community where young people can grow in their faith without fear or harm.

### **Trained Adults and Peer Training at ACTS Events (Virtus Trained)**

At ACTS (Association of Catholic Teens), the safety, spiritual growth, and well-being of every participant are our top priorities. To ensure that all events are conducted in a secure and nurturing environment, we uphold the practice of having a trained adult present at every ACTS gathering, retreat, or activity. Additionally, we believe in empowering all of our teen members by providing them with the necessary training and guidance to be worthy of the call to lead and serve in their peers' lives.

### **Trained Adults at Every Event (Virtus Trained)**

Every ACTS event is supervised by at least one trained adult who has completed comprehensive training in areas such as safe environment practices, conflict resolution, and leadership within the context of youth ministry. These trained adults are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that the event runs smoothly and that the safety of all participants is maintained. Their role is crucial in overseeing activities, monitoring group dynamics, and being available to address any concerns that may arise during the event.

### **Responsibilities of Trained Adults Include: (Virtus Trained)**

1. **Ensuring Safety and Compliance:** Trained adults are responsible for maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all attendees, ensuring that safety protocols, including those related to preventing abuse and maintaining appropriate boundaries, are strictly followed.
2. **Being Accessible for Support:** These adults act as points of contact for any emotional, spiritual, or logistical concerns during the event. They are available to support participants, provide guidance, and address any issues that arise.
3. **Leadership and Supervision:** Trained adults help lead activities, ensuring that everyone is included and engaged in a positive and productive manner, while maintaining order and upholding ACTS' values.
4. **Modeling Catholic Values:** Adults are expected to model Catholic virtues such as kindness, humility, respect, and charity. They are called to be role models for the teens, demonstrating what it means to live a life of faith, responsibility, and integrity.

### **Peer Leadership and Training (Worthy of the Call Trained)**

In addition to having trained adults present, ACTS recognizes the importance of involving teens in leadership roles. Teen members who are called to serve in leadership positions are required to undergo specific training that equips them to lead their peers effectively and in accordance with the values of the Catholic faith. These leaders are entrusted with responsibilities such as leading small group discussions, facilitating activities, and serving as role models for others.

### **Peer Leadership Training Includes: (Worthy of the Call Training)**

1. **Spiritual and Moral Formation:** Peer leaders are given training in how to live out their Catholic faith through action and words. This includes understanding key Church teachings, prayer, and Catholic values, and how to model these in their interactions with others.
2. **Safe Environment and Boundaries:** Just as adult leaders are trained, peer leaders are also taught about appropriate boundaries, recognizing harmful behaviors, and how to help create a safe, respectful environment for their peers. This training ensures that peer leaders are aware of the responsibilities they carry when interacting with younger or more vulnerable teens.
3. **Conflict Resolution and Communication Skills:** Peer leaders receive training in how to manage conflicts in a positive, constructive manner. They learn how to communicate effectively, listen to others, and resolve issues in a way that is respectful and in line with Christian principles.
4. **Servant Leadership:** Peer leaders are encouraged to adopt a "servant leader" mindset, which means placing the needs of others above their own. They are trained to serve as humble guides, offering support, encouragement, and mentorship to their peers, fostering a spirit of community and cooperation.

## Conclusion

By ensuring that every ACTS event is staffed with trained adults and that our teen leaders are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, we create an environment that promotes spiritual growth, safety, and mutual respect. Our goal is to empower both adult leaders and peer leaders to act with responsibility, compassion, and integrity as they guide their peers in their faith journey. Through this approach, ACTS helps foster a culture of leadership, support, and safety—where all participants, regardless of age or background, can grow closer to God and to one another in a secure and nurturing environment.

## Catholic Teachings on Pornography, Masturbation, and Fornication

The Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality are grounded in its belief in the dignity of the human person, the sanctity of marriage, and the call for individuals to live according to God's plan for human flourishing. The Church upholds that sexual acts are sacred, meant to be expressed within the context of a committed marriage between a man and a woman. This understanding shapes its stance on issues such as pornography, masturbation, and fornication, guiding Catholics toward a life of purity and moral integrity.

### Pornography

The Catholic Church condemns pornography as a violation of human dignity and a distortion of sexuality. Pornography, according to Church teachings, treats the human person as an object for selfish pleasure, undermining the sacredness of the body and the truth of human sexuality. It reduces the individual to a mere instrument of lust, rather than a person worthy of love and respect.

The Church teaches that pornography harms both the viewer and those who are involved in its production, often leading to exploitation, addiction, and the breakdown of authentic relationships. It also leads individuals away from healthy, loving relationships and distorts their understanding of intimacy. Catholics are called to reject pornography and strive for purity in their thoughts, words, and actions, focusing instead on fostering loving, respectful relationships based on mutual trust and self-giving love.



## **Masturbation**

The Church's position on masturbation is rooted in its understanding of sexuality as a gift intended for the expression of love within marriage. Masturbation is seen as an act that isolates the sexual act from its natural purpose of procreation and communion between spouses. It is viewed as self-centered, in contrast to the self-giving nature of authentic love.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2352) teaches that masturbation is intrinsically disordered because it uses the sexual faculty outside the context of a marital relationship, and it does not lead to the full flourishing of the human person as God intends. However, the Church also recognizes that individuals may struggle with the temptation to masturbate, and in these cases, it calls for compassion, recognizing the complexity of human behavior. The Church encourages individuals to seek healing through prayer, the sacraments, and spiritual direction, helping them to live in accordance with God's plan for human sexuality.

## **Fornication**

Fornication refers to sexual relations between individuals who are not married to each other. The Catholic Church teaches that sexual activity is a sacred act that is reserved for marriage, which is a sacrament that reflects the union between Christ and the Church. Sexual intimacy is intended to be an expression of love, openness to life, and a mutual gift of self between husband and wife.

The Church views fornication as sinful because it separates the unitive and procreative aspects of sexuality, disregards the commitment of marriage, and fails to respect the dignity of the human person. Premarital sex undermines the ideal of chastity and the dignity of both individuals involved, often leading to confusion, emotional harm, and a lack of true commitment. The Church calls on individuals to practice chastity before marriage, fostering relationships based on trust, respect, and a genuine love that is open to God's plan for sexuality.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, Catholic teachings on pornography, masturbation, and fornication are grounded in the belief that human sexuality is a sacred gift from God, meant to be expressed within the context of marriage. The Church teaches that pornography and masturbation distort the natural purposes of sexuality, while fornication undermines the sacredness of the marital bond. Catholics are called to live according to the virtues of chastity and purity, seeking to honor their bodies and the bodies of others in ways that align with God's plan for human flourishing. Through prayer, the sacraments, and spiritual guidance, individuals are encouraged to grow in their understanding of sexuality, cultivating relationships that are loving, respectful, and life-giving.

## **ACTS Association of Catholic Teens – Confidentiality Outline**

Confidentiality is a core principle that ensures the trust and safety of every individual involved in the ACTS community. It is essential that all participants, leaders, and volunteers respect and uphold confidentiality to protect personal information, sensitive matters, and the overall well-being of everyone involved. Below is an outline that explains the guidelines and procedures regarding confidentiality within ACTS.

## **I. Purpose of Confidentiality**

### **1. Trust and Safety**

- Establishes a safe environment for sharing personal experiences, struggles, and spiritual journeys.
- Encourages open communication without fear of judgment or gossip.

### **2. Respect for Individuals**

- Ensures that each person's privacy and dignity are protected.
- Helps maintain the integrity of ACTS as a community built on mutual respect.

### **3. Protecting Sensitive Information**

- Safeguards personal, emotional, or spiritual information shared within the group.
- Prevents the spread of rumors, gossip, or any unapproved sharing of private matters.

## **II. Who is Bound by Confidentiality**

### **1. Leaders and Volunteers**

- All adult leaders, volunteers, and any staff involved in ACTS activities must adhere to confidentiality guidelines, both within and outside of ACTS events.
- Includes those in positions of authority who may be entrusted with personal disclosures (e.g., counselors, retreat facilitators).

### **2. Teens and Participants**

- Teen participants are expected to respect the confidentiality of others by refraining from sharing personal information revealed in a group setting, unless permission is granted.
- Promotes a culture of trust and respect, where all individuals feel safe to express themselves.

## **III. What Should Be Kept Confidential**

### **1. Personal Information**

- Any personal details shared by individuals, including but not limited to family issues, struggles, or sensitive topics, should remain private unless explicit permission is given to share.

### **2. Spiritual or Emotional Struggles**

- Confessions, prayers, or personal revelations made in the context of a faith-based conversation should be kept confidential to respect the vulnerability of individuals.

### **3. Group Discussions and Reflections**

- Any reflections, small group discussions, or experiences shared during ACTS events, retreats, or meetings should remain private unless the individual has agreed to share it with others.

## **IV. Exceptions to Confidentiality**

### **1. Safety Concerns**

- If a participant or leader shares information that indicates they are at risk of harm (e.g., suicidal thoughts, abuse), confidentiality may be breached in order to ensure their safety.
- The leader or volunteer should take immediate steps to report the concern to appropriate authorities, such as parents, school officials, or child protective services.

### **2. Legal Requirements**

- If there is a legal obligation to disclose information (e.g., in the case of abuse, criminal activity, or other legal matters), confidentiality must be broken in accordance with the law.

### **3. Permission to Share**

- If an individual gives explicit consent for their information to be shared, it is permissible to do so. However, this should be made clear, and the individual should fully understand the scope of the sharing.

## **V. Consequences of Breaching Confidentiality**

### **1. Loss of Trust**

- Breaching confidentiality undermines the trust that is essential for the community's safety and integrity, and may lead to strained relationships between members and leaders.

### **2. Disciplinary Action**

- Violations of confidentiality may result in disciplinary measures, including warnings, removal from specific activities, or, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion from the organization.
- Actions will be taken based on the severity of the breach and in alignment with ACTS' values and commitment to a safe environment.

### **3. Ethical and Moral Responsibility**

- Breaching confidentiality also compromises the ethical standards of ACTS as a faith-based organization, diminishing the community's commitment to respect, privacy, and mutual care.

## **VI. Best Practices for Maintaining Confidentiality**

### **1. Clear Communication**

- Ensure all participants understand the importance of confidentiality before engaging in activities or discussions where personal information might be shared.
- Leaders should clearly communicate the limits and boundaries of confidentiality at the start of each event or retreat.

### **2. Modeling Confidentiality**

- Leaders and volunteers should model respectful and ethical behavior by maintaining confidentiality themselves, demonstrating the value of trust and respect in their interactions with participants.

### **3. Ongoing Training**

- Regular training and reminders about the importance of confidentiality should be provided to all members, ensuring that both adults and teens understand the ethical obligations they carry in maintaining privacy.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Confidentiality is essential to the mission of ACTS, as it fosters trust, safety, and respect within the community. By adhering to these guidelines, ACTS ensures that all participants can grow in their faith and personal development in a secure and supportive environment. It is the responsibility of every member, leader, and volunteer to uphold these principles, creating a space where individuals are respected, valued, and protected.

### **Catholic Teachings on Masculinity and Femininity**

In the Catholic tradition, masculinity and femininity are understood as complementary and beautiful expressions of the divine plan for humanity. Both are rooted in the image of God, each with unique strengths and qualities that contribute to the flourishing of society and the family. The Church teaches that masculinity and femininity are not arbitrary social constructs, but are inherent to human nature and are intended to reflect the characteristics of God's love.

### **Masculinity and Femininity According to Catholic Thought**

#### **1. Masculinity as Strength, Leadership, and Sacrifice**

Authentic masculinity, as described in Catholic teaching, is not about dominance or aggression,

but about strength used in service, leadership, and protection. True masculinity is exemplified in Christ, who modeled strength through self-sacrifice and humility. Jason Evert, in his talk on "True Manhood" at SEEK, articulates that masculinity, when understood in its pure form, is not toxic. If masculinity were toxic, it would contradict its true nature—strength used for the good of others, protecting and providing for those in need, leading with integrity, and fostering love and respect in relationships. In this way, true masculinity is an expression of self-giving love, mirroring Christ's sacrificial love for His Church.

## **2. Femininity as Nurturing, Wisdom, and Grace**

Femininity, in Catholic thought, is rooted in the gifts of nurture, wisdom, and the ability to receive and give life—both literally and metaphorically. Women are called to reflect the tenderness and receptivity that God shows to all people, embodying grace, mercy, and a particular strength in their nurturing roles. This strength is not weak, but a dynamic, life-giving power that complements masculinity in marriage, family, and society. The Church honors the feminine vocation of motherhood, as well as the unique way women contribute to the world through their gifts of empathy, intuition, and collaboration.

## **3. Complementarity and the Beauty of Difference**

The Church celebrates the complementarity of masculinity and femininity, understanding that each brings a necessary gift to human relationships, especially in the context of marriage. Rather than seeing gender differences as divisive or inferior, the Church teaches that men and women were created to work together in harmony, reflecting the unity and diversity present in the Holy Trinity.

## **The Truth About Toxic Masculinity**

The term "toxic masculinity" is often used to describe a set of cultural norms and behaviors that encourage men to suppress emotions, avoid vulnerability, and engage in harmful or violent behaviors to assert power and control. However, in the Catholic view, this is a distortion of true masculinity. If masculinity were truly toxic, it would mean that the authentic strength, courage, and love found in men are inherently harmful—which is not true.

The reality is that true masculinity, as the Church teaches, is not toxic but is deeply good when it is used for selflessness, service, and love. This form of masculinity leads to healthy relationships, personal integrity, and a dedication to the welfare of others. It is the perversion of masculinity—when it is detached from virtue and used for selfish or destructive purposes—that is harmful. Authentic manhood, rooted in the teachings of Christ, is marked by responsibility, humility, and sacrifice for the good of others.

## **The Use of Substances or Alcohol at ACTS Events**

ACTS (Association of Catholic Teens) upholds a strict policy when it comes to the use of substances such as alcohol, drugs, or any other substances that could alter the mind or judgment during any of its events or activities. As a faith-based organization, our commitment is to provide a safe, respectful, and spiritually enriching environment for all participants. The use of substances at ACTS events goes against our core values of respect, responsibility, and the pursuit of holiness.

## **Substance Use Policy**

### **1. Prohibition of Alcohol and Drugs**

- The consumption or possession of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any other harmful substances is strictly prohibited at all ACTS events. This policy applies to all participants, leaders, volunteers, and guests.
- The Catholic Church teaches the importance of temperance and self-control. Substance use, particularly alcohol and drugs, can impair judgment, lead to reckless behavior, and damage relationships. As such, ACTS takes a strong stance against any form of substance abuse within the context of its events.

### **2. The Role of Teens in Leading by Example**

- ACTS teens are called to live out their faith with integrity, and their actions should reflect the teachings of Christ. Participation in ACTS activities should be an opportunity for spiritual growth, personal development, and community building. The use of substances undermines these goals and hinders the ability to fully engage in the faith and fellowship of the group.

### **3. Consequences for Substance Use at ACTS Events**

- Any individual found to be using substances, including alcohol or illegal drugs, during an ACTS event will face immediate and serious consequences. Depending on the severity of the situation, this may include:
  - Immediate Removal from the event or activity.
  - Notification of Parents or Guardians: If the participant is a minor, parents or guardians will be contacted immediately.
  - Disciplinary Action: The individual may be prohibited from attending future ACTS events and may face further disciplinary measures in line with the severity of the violation.
  - Restorative Actions: In some cases, individuals may be required to seek counseling or take part in an education program about the dangers of substance abuse and its impact on their health, relationships, and spiritual life.

### **4. Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment**

- The ACTS community is dedicated to supporting each individual in their journey of faith, and maintaining a substance-free environment is essential to ensuring that all participants can grow spiritually and emotionally. We encourage all members to be mindful of their actions and to choose behaviors that build up the community and honor the dignity of each person involved.

Conclusion on Substance Use ACTS strives to create a space where teens can flourish in their faith and form healthy relationships. The use of alcohol, drugs, or any other substances has the potential to undermine this mission. By adhering to the no-substance policy, we ensure that ACTS events remain a

place of respect, integrity, and spiritual growth—where individuals are free to experience the fullness of God’s love and guidance without the distractions or dangers posed by substance use.

## **Conclusion**

By adhering to these guidelines for modesty and language, we ensure that ACTS events remain a place where everyone feels respected, valued, and safe to grow in their faith. Our goal is to create an environment that reflects the teachings of Christ—one that promotes dignity, kindness, and a spirit of unity. We believe that by living out these values in our actions and words, we can strengthen our community, deepen our spiritual connections, and help each other grow closer to God.