Unit Two SECTION D: MORAL DECISION-MAKING

PART ONE: **THINKING ABOUT MORALITY**

Syllabus Objectives	*Knowledge* • be familiar with the variety of meanings of the term 'morality' • understand that morality is a human phenomenon which has been the basis of much thought and reflection since ancient times • be aware of the importance of personal and communal values and their expression in secular and religious law codes. *Understanding* • understand that a person can be a moral person independent of religious belief or affiliation. *Skills* • identify morality as a human phenomenon. *Attitudes* • the ability to dialogue constructively with legal and religious traditions.

Topic: **1.1 The meanings of morality**

Procedure

Description of content: *- morality as a natural human phenomenon*
                                 - the thinking of ancient civilisations about morality
                                     o   *the Hebrews*
                                     o   *the Greeks*
                                     o   *the Romans*

Review course content covered in relation to what it means to be moral and the thinking of the Greeks i.e.
• Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Section A Part 1.2
• Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Section F Part 1

Write the term MORALITY on the chalkboard and brainstorm the students understanding of it.
Or   Make a Vox pop of answers to the question: What is Morality?
        / Listen to The Moral Life Network cassette tape on notions of morality (Side 1 unit 2)
Buzz: What are the different answers given to the question - What is Morality?
Note on the chalkboard feedback and conclude that morality can be defined in many different ways, some of which are more simple than others e.g. morality is concerned with what is right and wrong, or good and evil etc.

Buzz: Do any of these answers give rise to other questions?
Take feedback and note on the chalkboard the questions the students suggest that could arise from the answers given e.g.   How do we know what is right and wrong?
                         Is something right if it causes pleasure?
                         How do we know that something is good?
                         Does evil exist?
                         Why do we choose to do wrong when we know it is wrong?
                         Is morality about actions or character?
                         How do we become good people?
                         Do we need religion to be moral?
                         What is the relationship between what is good for me and for others?

How do I approach difficult moral decisions?

Etc.

Video Assignment: View an episode of a popular soap story or film depicting a concrete situation in which a person acts in a way that is agreed to be morally good.

Discuss: What is good about the person (the moral agent in the story) and his / her actions?

What might motivate the person to act in this way (e.g. concern for those in need etc.)?

Why was the person willing to make personal sacrifices (i.e. comfort, safety) to help others?

Why did the person act morally?

Etc.

Take feedback and conclude by making reference if necessary to the following points:
- human beings have free will - they can therefore make moral choices
- human beings tend to seek or aspire to what is good;
- human beings are social, and therefore act in a way that reflects awareness of others;
- human beings have the capacity of reason, which enables them to reflect upon what is good and to act in accordance with this reflection, rather than acting on instinct.

Group work: Divide the students into three groups and give each time to research the chief moral concerns in one of the following Hebrew, Greek and Roman civilisations.

Take feedback from each group

Discuss: What similarities are there between the moral concerns of the Hebrew, Greek and Roman civilisations and those of people today?

What differences are there between the moral concerns of the Hebrew, Greek and Roman civilisations and those of people today?

Outcomes:
- give three examples from modern culture which show that morality is a natural human phenomenon
- identify one of the chief moral concerns of each of the following ancient civilisations: Hebrew
- Greek and Roman.

Topic: 1.2 Why be moral?

Procedure

Description of content: • *personal and community values*

Brainstorm: Why be moral?

Take feedback and note on the chalkboard the reasons given in students' answers to this question.

Taking each reason noted on the chalkboard discuss the following questions:
- Does this reason show an awareness of a consequence for the person?
  (If so note P beside the answer on the chalkboard)
- Does this reason show an awareness of a consequence for the community?
  (If so note C beside the answer on the chalkboard)
- Does this reason show an awareness of a consequence for the both the person and the community? (If so note P & C beside the answer on the chalkboard)

or Written Assignment / Role play: Review the episode of the soap story or film seen earlier asking the students to imagine what would happen in the story if the person acted in a way that is immoral.

Take feedback from the students on how they imagine the story would have unfolded or give students time to prepare a role-play of the situation with the person behaving immorally.

Discuss: How did the situation change because the person behaved immorally?

What were the consequences of the person's immoral behaviour for themselves?

What were the consequences of the person's immoral behaviour for others in the story?
Present students with the following definition:

> *A value is*
> *a desired quality or characteristic of thought and behaviour*
> *which is considered good, important and worthwhile.*

Buzz: What are your values?
                What quality or characteristic of thought / behaviour do you desire?
                What do you consider good, important and worthwhile for yourself and others?

Take feedback from students and note their answers on the chalkboard.

Or   *Personal Assignment:*   Finish the following sentences:

    What's most important to me is _____

    In 10 years time I hope to _____

    Everyone should _____

    I'm against _____

    I'm all for _____

    I'm convinced that _____

    With a gift of €1000 I would _____

    If I could have three wishes I'd like _____

Take feedback from students.
Present students with the following statements:

PERSONAL VALUES *are those that influence the morality of the individual* e.g. loyalty to friends; the pursuit of excellence; compassion etc.	COMMUNITY VALUES *are those that influence the moral attitudes and conduct of communities such as religious groups, families, societies* e.g. the promotion of education; the protection of a clean and safe environment; care for the marginalised, equality etc.

Review what students have written in the assignments above.
Discuss: Which of these are personal values?
                Which of these are community values?
                Are any of my personal values different to those of the communities to which I belong?
                e.g. if one of my personal values is securing a healthy and happy life for myself and
                some of my friends value going out on a Saturday night and getting drunk, there may
                be conflict between personal values and peer group/community values.

Auction Game: Divide the class into groups
Brief: Imagine each group is setting up a new community (e.g. class; club; neighbourhood; etc.) Each group can decide what values there will be in their community so that is will be a good place for them. The difficulty is that only 12 different values are available and no two groups can have the same values. The problem of dividing up the values is to be solved by holding a values auction, with each of the 12 values being sold to the highest bidder. Each group has €1000 to be used in purchasing the values. During the auction each group can buy as many values as it can afford until its funds are gone, at which point the group must withdraw from the auction.

Display the following value cards for all groups to see and give students time to plan a strategy for the auction. Value Cards:

HONESTY	POWER
WEALTH	FREEDOM
HAPPINESS	RESPECT
PEACE	LOVE
HEALTH	JUSTICE
BEAUTY	WISDOM

To start the auction choose one of the above value cards and ask:
Who will give me €10 for this value? Who will give me €20? Keep the price going up until the bidding stops. Then close the auction saying sold and give the highest bidder the value card. Keep the auction going until all the values are sold or the groups have run out of funds.
Debriefing - Ask each group to report on the following questions:
- o What values did you end up with?
- o Are these the values you wanted to have in your community?
- o How did you decide on the values you wanted in your community?
- o What type of community do you think you will have with the values you have bought?
- o Would you like to be in such a community? Why? Why not?

Description of content: • *the expression of personal and communal values in the UN Declaration of Human Rights and similar charters*

Review course content covered in relation to Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Section F and Section H

Present overhead of a charter that expresses values e.g.
- The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:1-21)
- The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (www.un.org)
- Declaration Toward A Global Ethic (www.uni-tuebingen.de)
- Etc.

Written Assignment: Values
Name of Charter:

PERSONAL VALUES	COMMUNITY VALUES

Give students time to complete the assignment by noting where personal and community values are expressed in the charter.
Take feedback from the written assignment asking students to explain how personal and community values are in the parts of the charter they identified.
Discuss: Do we need to consider the values of the community when stating our personal values?
          Do we need to consider personal values when stating the values of the community?
          How does this charter show the connection between personal and community values?

Outcomes:
- Give an example of a personal value
- Give an example of a community value
- Outline the difference between personal values and community values
- Name two charters that express personal and community values
- In the case of each one, give three examples of how personal and community values are held in balance.

Resources which teachers have suggested include:
Teach Me Your Ways – The Light of the World Series 3 – S. Kirwan & L. Garland Chapter 3.

Topic: **1.3 The common good and individual rights*** (Higher Level only)
Procedure

Brainstorm students on their understanding of the common good
Take feedback and if necessary present students with the following definition:

> *"the common good" may be defined as that which is best for the whole community / society*

or Research Assignment: Give students time to look up definitions of "the common good" from documents such as Gaudium et Spes and Pacem in Terris (available on www.vatican.va) etc.

Take feedback from the students and explain that what is termed "good" is not just about an individual seeking what is good for him / herself alone. It also involves taking into consideration what is good for others and how the good of society as a whole can be served.

Case study: Profile an example of Irish civil law
      e.g. Laws relating to driving - speed limits, limits on drinking and driving etc.
             Laws relating to the sale of alcohol
             Law banning smoking in places of work etc.
Discuss: How do these laws balance the rights of individuals with the rights of others?
Or Media study: Pick an example of Irish civil law e.g. the banning of smoking in pubs etc.
Following the debate in the media over a period of time e.g. a newspaper's letter section etc.
Review all the material gathered from the debate in the media identifying:
      a. Points which refer to the rights of individuals
      b. Points which refer to the common good
Take feedback when student s have completed the review of the debate in the media.
Discuss: How do this law balance the rights of individuals with the rights of others?

Finish the story - Assignment: Read the following situations and in each case finish the story outlining the decision the people involved should make that would best serve the common good.

Situation A	Situation B	Situation C
A police car is chasing a stolen vehicle through the streets of a large town in the afternoon. In their efforts to escape, the occupants of the car engage in very dangerous behaviour, moving from lane to lane at great speed. The police realise that there is a grave threat to public safety if these people escape, as they are known to have engaged in violent behaviour previously. They also realise that children will be coming out of a school further down the road in a few minutes time.	An individual feels that the taxes in this country are too high. He is already wealthy, but knows that the savings he would make by evading some of his taxes would help him pay off a loan he took out in order to expand his business. His business provides jobs for previously unemployed people. He figures that he has saved the state (and taxpayers) money by providing employment. He also knows that the country is facing recession, and that cutbacks are being made in the provision of healthcare and education.	A hurricane is heading towards a large city which needs to be evacuated in order to save lives. However, there is a danger that the large number of vehicles on the roads out of the city will cause traffic chaos, seriously slowing down the speed of the evacuation process. The government orders that, where public transport vehicles are serving a particular area for the purposes of evacuation, residents must use them, and leave their personal vehicles behind. Some people object to this, as they know their vehicle may be destroyed by the hurricane, and they would prefer the privacy of their own vehicle to a crowded bus/train.

Take feedback from students on how they would finish each story in each situation.
Discuss: How do you feel the common good would be best served in each situation?
          Give reasons for your answer.
          What are the advantages for the people involved in this way of finishing the story?
          What are the disadvantages for the people involved in this way of finishing the story?

Outcomes:
- Give two definitions of "the common good"
- Give two examples of how "the common good" is expressed in Irish civil law
- Give two examples of how Irish civil law attempts to balance individual rights with "the common good"