



## **Video Games:** *What is your child playing?*

Video games have become quite popular among our youth. Relating to games, St. Thomas would say, “It is a requisite for the relaxation of the mind that we make use, from time to time, of playful deeds and jokes.” As parents, one of the questions we need to ask is, “How does this game offer relaxation and build virtue?” While it is true that not every game is like the notorious *Grand Theft Auto*, we as parents need to possess and teach discernment while guarding their innocence and virtue. Here are some starter tips to assist:

- **Investigate before the purchase:** Through game stores and even Redbox, parents now have the opportunity to rent and review a game before committing to purchase. Do a quick investigation and then sit with your child and play a few rounds to ensure there is nothing objectionable.
- **Review the rating:** Games have a rating system designed by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). The rating may be found on the back of the game sleeves/jewel case. Like movies, prudential judgment is a must when reading the ratings. There is nothing like previewing a game for yourself.
- **Set limits:** Playing video games can easily become an obsession. Establish time limits and where they may be played. Additionally, for younger children, take note of when the game becomes a right rather than a privilege. Video games are not essential to a life of happiness and joy.
- **Remember role-playing:** Role-playing is a technique used by therapists to teach new behavior or augment current behavior. Most teenage video games are RPGs (Role Playing Games). Parents should ask:
  - What role is the player being encouraged to adopt?
  - Does the role have attributes that you as a parent find highly objectionable?
  - Is there likelihood that your child will imitate any of the behaviors represented in the game?
- **Join in:** When purchasing a game, look for those that are multiplayer games. This provides an additional opportunity to spend time with your child and possibly grow in a little humility (How do you play in three dimensions?!?). Plus, the more the merrier!
- **Govern online-multiplayer games:** Gaming is no longer confined to one room in the house. Now, gamers may invite or join games in progress via the internet. Online predators do not come with a warning when a screen name pops up. Teach your children to limit invitations to people they know and have met. Opening their games to the general public opens opportunities for predators.
- **Encourage movement:** There was a time when young people went outside to have fun. Some fresh air and exercise is still the best way to relax and renew our body, mind and spirit.