



FORMATION FOR  
LOVE AND  
CHASTITY

ARCHBISHOP ALEX J. BRUNETT  
ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION  
MARCH 25, 2000





March 25, 2000  
Feast of the Annunciation

OFFICIAL 2000-3  
Formation for Love and Chastity  
Policies and Procedures

Greetings!

The Great Jubilee year reminds us that we are all created in God's image, and are called to love and to know God's love. God's love for us is constant, unconditional, and manifested through the Incarnation. Even though God's love is unchanging, the times in which we live demand an affirmation of faithful love and a reclamation of the virtue of chastity for our children. Parents are looking for ways to form their children in a healthy, holistic, and Christian understanding of sexuality and the Archdiocese seeks to support this desire. These families have asked us to offer them stronger support in order to carry out this important role in the lives of their children. Providing standards and programmatic assistance will ensure that parents, teachers, and catechists are grounded in authentic Church teaching.

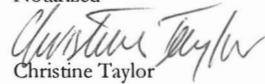
To this end, in 1998 I began the process that resulted in the development of archdiocesan policies and guidelines regarding human sexuality formation for elementary aged children. "Formation for Love and Chastity" is the document that outlines the necessary and basic resources for parents and teachers of young children regarding the appropriate principles of human sexuality.

Effective this date, these policies and guidelines are promulgated as particular law for the Archdiocese of Seattle. It is our hope that this document will provide positive and faith-filled assistance to those responsible for this aspect of the Church's catechetical goals.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
+ Alex J. Brunett  
Most Rêv. Alex J. Brunett  
Archbishop of Seattle

Notarized

  
Christine Taylor  
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# FORMATION FOR LOVE AND CHASTITY

## CONTEXT

Catholic parents face a heroic challenge as they raise their children in a culture that does not always support the values of their faith. One critical area is the education of children in the true meaning of sexuality. Families confront societal realities that fly in the face of committed conjugal love and chastity. Additionally, the institutions of marriage and the family have been weakened in important respects over the last few decades, making the effective teaching and witness of Catholic family life even more valuable and at the same time more counter-cultural. Parents look to the Church for guidance and the Church has responded by giving a renewed focus to its teaching.

The Church knows it must engage in dialogue with the culture of people if Jesus' message of love and hope is to bear fruit. As it does this, the very cultural diversity of the United States is both a blessing and a challenge. Even family structures come in many forms and configurations: nuclear, extended, single generation or multiple generations, two-parent, single-parent, single-earner, dual-earner, dual-career, etc. For numerous reasons, personal and social, many persons are reluctant or unwilling to marry compared to previous generations. America boasts almost limitless access to the media, and the ease of this access poses challenges for parents and for all those dedicated to the formation of young people. Youngsters may see, read, or hear informa-

tion about sexuality that is neither true nor developmentally appropriate. This information often does not reflect the Church's view of the human person created in God's image and called to a life of loving and generous discipleship. North America, though often characterized as consumerist and permissive, includes many parents who desire to raise their children in a manner that is faithful to the Gospel and to the Church's teaching. As the Congregation for Catholic Education has stated: *Faced with a culture which largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something commonplace, . . . the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that is truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person— body, emotions, and soul— and manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love* (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, #37; *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, 1983, #16).

In the early 1980's, pastors, parents, educators and chancery staff of the Archdiocese of Seattle cooperated to publish a document entitled *The Word is Made Flesh—Guidelines for Education in Human Sexuality*. Since the publication of these guidelines, the Holy Father, the United States Catholic Conference, and the Pontifical Council for the Family have issued statements on the teaching of sexuality and on the family. The publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1992 has enriched the uni-

versal Church, and as it is “a sure norm for teaching the faith (*Fidei Depositum*, 1992, #3),” this document also contains relevant sections on sexuality. Clearly, these new documents invited a review of the earlier publication.

In December, 1998, I convened a Task Force on Human Sexuality to review the recent, relevant Church documents and to develop policies and guidelines to direct instruction in human sexuality for children of elementary age in the Archdiocese of Seattle. The Task Force was composed of pastors, parents, educators, health-care professionals, and Chancery staff. After theological input and study of Church documents, the Task Force developed poli-

cies and guidelines which reflect Church teaching and respond to certain parental concerns in this area. As the Task Force embraced their work, it was apparent that there was more than one phase to this charge. These policies and guidelines, entitled *Formation for Love and Chastity*, represent Phase I of the task; an additional phase will be necessary to address appropriate content, methodology, and resources. This statement was reviewed by the Presbyteral Council and recommended to me for implementation in the elementary schools and parish religious education programs of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

## BACKGROUND

In 1991, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference published the document, *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*, originally intended as a revision of an earlier document (*Education in Human Sexuality for Christians: Guidelines for Discussion and Planning* [1981]). In light of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education’s *Educational Guidance in Human Love* (1983), the American

Bishops’ document became much more than a revision. The Pontifical Council for the Family published yet another document, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family* (1995). These documents, together with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), provide a framework for the development of guiding principles. These principles are the foundation for *Formation for Love and Chastity*.

## FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES: THE CHURCH'S TEACHING

**W**ith God's help, each person can experience, enjoy, and make wise and loving use of the gift of human sexuality (*Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*, 1991, p. 14).

Human sexuality is a gift that shares in God's own creative love and life. The human person is created in God's own image, and inscribed in each human heart is the same message: that the one, core, universal vocation is to love and to be loved. As the Preface for Marriage (III) states, "Love is our origin, our constant calling on earth and our fulfillment in heaven." The need to relate sexual feeling with the Christian call to love and to be loved is a lifelong task for each of us. Therefore, education and formation in sexuality is a continual process, an invitation for each of us to grow and develop as morally mature sexual beings, whatever our age or calling in life.

### **Each person is created unique in the image of God.**

*Being [created] in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, #357; Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #8).*

*God created man in his image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27).*

### **Each person, created in God's likeness, is called to love and to be loved, just as Jesus –loved by the Father– loves us.**

*Created in God's likeness, we are called to a life of loving and being loved. Love is the basic vocation we all share. We begin with love, continue in love, and*

*reach our fulfillment of love through, with, and in God when we die (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, p. 90).*

### **Despite original sin, all human life in its physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions is fundamentally good.**

*God is infinitely good and all his works are good (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, #385).*

*The reality of original sin remains the inevitable counterpoint to all our efforts to promote a healthy, holistic, and Christian approach to life, including human sexuality (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, p.11).*

*It is a fundamental belief of the Christian tradition that, left to our own efforts and without grace, we are unable to overcome sinful temptations and to attain our personal and eternal destiny (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, p. 11).*

### **The Holy Trinity, as the model of loving relationship, should characterize the family.**

*The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, #2205).*

**Each person is a sexual being from conception to death. Sexuality is integral to our personal identity and maturity.**

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Human sexuality is a divine gift to be approached with appreciation, wonder, and respect. It is through this gift that we, as male or female, experience our relatedness to self, others, the world, and God. Our sexuality, as distinct from sexual activity, is an innate force that can draw us out of ourselves into loving relationships.

*Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity 'in the image of God.' In their 'being-man' and 'being-woman,' they reflect the Creator's wisdom and goodness (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, #369; Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, pp. 91-93).*

**The sacrament of marriage entails a lifelong unitive and procreative covenant of love bound by an unbreakable pledge of fidelity deeper than any civil contract.**

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Christians believe that marriage is a commitment, a covenant promise to be available to one's beloved in times of joy and in times of grief. Marriage among baptized Christians constitutes a special sacrament, a Spirit-filled experience. *Lived faithfully and well, marriage is an incarnation of the never-ending love of God for humanity and the unconditional love of Christ for the Church (Familiaris Consortio, 1982, #12-13; Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, p. 42).*

Children observe and participate in this selfless love of spouses for each other and of a parent for a child as they witness the mutual decision-making, the tenderness, and respect evident in familial relationships. It is in the family first and foremost that children learn the meaning of sexuality and of committed love.

Conjugal sexuality is an expression of the faithful, life-enriching love of husband and wife, and is ordained toward the loving procreation of new life. Genital sexual activity has true meaning and integrity only within the context of marriage. *To this*

*married love, and to this love alone, belongs sexual giving... (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #14).*

*Sexuality, in which man's belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, #2337).*

*Outside of marriage, genital sexual intimacy, however well-intended, is not an expression of total self-giving and thus is objectively morally wrong (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, pp. 93).* The proper value of sexual abstinence before and even within marriage consists in its expression of loving self-control for the sake of one's own personal growth, that of one's spouse, and that of the larger human family.

*The spouses' union achieves the twofold end of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life. These two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, #2363).*

**All persons are called to be chaste by doing what is sexually responsible for one's state in life.**

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Physical, emotional, and spiritual self-care reflect the goodness of the human body and enable us to reveal God's own goodness, love, and vitality. Mature Christian sexuality, in whatever state of life, demands a life-enriching commitment to other persons and to the community. This desire to love and be loved is the basic vocation shared by all. It involves personal decisions of commitment and self-sacrifice. Mature persons, whether married, celibate, single, or vowed religious, seek for themselves a balance of healthy independence and genuine intimacy within the human community.

Chastity *"consists in self-control, in the capacity of guiding the sexual instinct to the service of love and of integrating it in the development of the person (Edu-*

*cational Guidance in Human Love*, 1983, #18).” The virtue of chastity, not be confused with the celibacy of ordained priests and vowed religious, frees us from the tendency to act in a manipulative or exploitive manner in our relationships and enables us to show true love and kindness to all. As individuals work and sometimes struggle to achieve right relationships and to grow in their understanding and practice of the virtue of chastity, they deserve respect, pastoral sensitivity and support along with education in all of the Church’s teaching.

*People should cultivate [chastity] in the way that is suited to their state of life. Some profess virginity or consecrated celibacy, which enables them to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner. Others live in the way prescribed for all by the moral law, whether they are married or single (Persona Humana, 1975, #11).*

*Married people are called to live conjugal chastity; others practice chastity in continenc(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, #2349).*

**Discerning a proper course of action requires careful and continuing formation of a correct conscience, a process best served by the accurate articulation and study of Church teaching.**

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From a theological perspective, there are objectively right and wrong answers to moral questions even as their resolution requires great sensitivity and

compassion from a pastoral perspective. *Discernment of moral choices involves the formation of a correct conscience by a process of using one’s reasoning ability, the sources of divine revelation (Scripture and tradition), the Church’s teaching and guidance, the wise counsel of others, and one’s own individual and communal experience of prayer and grace (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, p. 92).*

*Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, #1786).*

*The faithful therefore have a right to be instructed in the divine saving precepts that purify judgements and, with grace, heal wounded human reason (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, #2037).*

**Although the human person is frail and capable of sin, God’s abiding presence and forgiveness are always available.**

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*As members of the Church, we draw strength, comfort, and renewed challenge from the Word of God, the Eucharist, and the healing and strengthening power of the sacrament of reconciliation (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, p. 91).*

## POLICIES

**F**ormation for Love and Chastity supports the traditional Catholic teaching that parents are by right the primary educators of their children in teaching about love and sexuality. At the same time, the Church can provide positive and faith-filled assistance for parents and children. While local needs may differ, all catechesis in human sexuality should proceed from the basic context of the Church's belief in and respect for the dignity of all creation. The broader spectrum of the Church's moral wisdom provides a backdrop for the following policies.

1. Parents are recognized as the primary educators of their children. Church educators will work collaboratively with parents to help them carry out this responsibility.
2. Human sexuality programs for children and youth will be rooted in the teachings of the Church.
3. Human sexuality information will be presented in a manner sensitive to the children's development, to cultural issues, and to pastoral concerns.
4. It is the right of children to be adequately informed about their sexuality in an appropriate setting.
5. Parents have legitimate authority to ensure the right of children to withdraw from any form of sexual instruction imparted outside the home. At the same time, parents are called to remember that the family is not the only or exclusive formative community. In our faith tradition, the parish is the basic structure within which most Catholics express and experience faith and catechesis. In the area of human sexuality formation, the parish will be a strong partner with the home.

# GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION IN HUMAN SEXUALITY

The importance of parents and teachers serving as authentic Christian role models in this area cannot be overemphasized. Following the example of Jesus, parents and teachers alike must give evidence of a truly compassionate openness to their children, students, and one another. Without creating undue fears or fostering overly judgmental attitudes, the Church's teaching on the beauty and purpose of human sexuality can be presented and can serve to free people of their fears and prejudices. In a very special way, the authentic teaching of the Church should be known and understood. The following guidelines implement the policy statements and should be applied to resources and materials used by parents and educators in their work with children.

- 1. All programs shall include assistance to parents so that they can fulfill their role in helping their children know and live authentic Catholic doctrine and morals in the area of sexuality.**

Modern American life and culture often work against Christian values and stable family life. Parents, children, the Church, and indeed, society as a whole would benefit by programs which strengthen the family and promote chastity.

*Parents and the family comprise the first and most important context for sharing faith, forming attitudes, fostering values, and sharing information. Children have a right to life, education, bodily integrity, and the means for holistic human development (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, p. 92).*

*The fruitfulness of conjugal love extends to the fruits of the moral, spiritual, and supernatural life that*

*parents hand on to their children by education. Parents are the principal and first educators of their children (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, #1653).*

*It is recommended that parents be aware of their own educational role and defend and carry out this primary right and duty. It follows that any educative activity, related to education for love and carried out by persons outside the family, must be subject to the parents' acceptance of it and must be seen not as a substitute but as a support for their work (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #113).*

*In their turn, parents should remember that the family is not the only or exclusive formative community. Thus they should cultivate a cordial and active relationship with other persons who can help them, while never forgetting their own inalienable rights (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #148).*

*Only a strict collaboration between the school and the family will be able to guarantee an advantageous exchange of experience between parents and teachers for the good of the pupils (Educational Guidance in Human Love, 1983, #72).*

## *Kindergarten through Fourth Grade*

Since parents know their children best and can find many "teachable moments" to convey the lived Gospel, early sexuality education (grades K-4) will be offered in the family rather than in a classroom setting. However, recognizing its role to support the family, the Church, through the Archdiocese, parishes, schools, and religious education programs, will offer parent education programs. Parents will collaborate with trained Church personnel to plan, implement, and evaluate these experiences. These programs will assist parents in an authentic understanding of Catholic morality related to marriage, family, and sexuality as well as in providing practical

guidance and resources to assist parents in responding to their children's questions and concerns.

#### *Fifth Grade through Eighth Grade*

Additional parental education will be provided on issues related to growth and development and parenting skills as children progress into the preadolescent-adolescent years (grades 5-8). In particular, education in genital sexuality will be done by parents or in special out-of-classroom sessions which involve parents. Trained Church personnel will work with pastors, parents, and educators. This approach is a change from previous practice, and there will be instructional options available to families (e.g., sessions for parents only, with resources provided so that they may work with their own child or sessions in parent-child settings where both receive the same instruction and time and resources are provided for families to discuss together), as well as a gradual implementation schedule. Parents will be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of these programs. Where appropriate, parents may also serve as instructional leaders.

Parents and teachers at these grade levels must work together for the welfare of the child. Classroom teachers will continue to teach and to model religious values and virtues, to expose students to Sacred Scripture, to encourage participation in Liturgy, the Sacraments and prayer experiences, to provide moral guidance, and to impart the full and authentic teaching of the Church.

Schools and parishes will work together to offer quality programs for parents so that mothers and fathers feel confident in discussions with their children about sexuality. These sessions should include the following:

- instruction on authentic Church teaching on human sexuality;
- opportunity for parents to share with one another so that parents feel the support of others in their important role; and
- materials which parents could use as they discuss this area with their children.

2. **All programs shall include *assistance to educators* so that they can fulfill their role in helping parents and children know and live authentic Catholic doctrine and morals.**

As children grow and develop, their world expands. They encounter new teachers, catechists, coaches, pastors, principals, etc.; each of these persons has an impact on them. The teacher or catechist does not replace the parent but often assumes an important role in the young person's life. The child is best served when the parent and teacher are working together for that child's welfare. Classroom teachers and parish religious educators have a role that is both formative and educative. Youngsters look to their teachers for the wisdom of the Church and for lives that reflect Jesus' call to discipleship. In many ways, the teachers are providing the moral grounding for the child and for the work of the parents. Every day, teachers and catechists are instructing children about their faith, thus participating in the critical work of formation of conscience. This moral formation will assist the child as he or she matures and encounters increasingly complex moral dilemmas.

*But corresponding to their right [to educate their children], parents have a serious duty to commit themselves to a cordial and active relationship with the teachers and school authorities (Familiaris Consortio, 1982, #40).*

*Professional educators assist parents in fulfilling their educational responsibilities. They represent the wider Church and society. The profession of educating in human sexuality is a call to model and articulate what it means to be a mature sexual person (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, p. 92).*

*Educators...need to be able to convey the Church's teachings with authority, candor, sound reasoning, fidelity, and sensitivity to the age and maturity level of their audience...Each person has an obligation to form a correct conscience. It is the responsibility of Catholic educators to assist them in the process by articulating church teaching in its entirety and in its integrity (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, pp. 91,92).*

*Parents who are not always prepared to face up to the problematic side of education for love can take part in meetings with their children, guided by expert persons who are worthy of trust, for example, doctors, priests, educators (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #131).*

*Openness and collaboration of parents with other educators who are co-responsible for formation, will positively influence the maturation of young people (Educational Guidance in Human Love, 1983, #51).*

Teachers and catechists will participate in training so that they are able to assist the parents and children in human sexuality instruction. These educators should be mature individuals, well-prepared for the task. All *Formation for Love and Chastity* presenters should possess an accurate and full appreciation of both the meaning and the value of human sexuality as understood by the Catholic Church. It is expected that teachers and catechists would be living models of the Church's teaching in this area. Those involved in the *Formation for Love and Chastity* program shall be:

- informed of and faithful to the Catholic Church's teachings;
- supportive of the role and responsibility of parents;
- able to relate to the age and developmental needs of the learner;
- able to recognize the need for discretion in answering questions; and
- willing to complete requisite in-service workshops.

**3. All human sexuality programs and resources must meet the following standards:**

*Programs must reflect authentic and comprehensive Church catechesis.*

The curriculum and resource material must be faithful to the magisterium in a confident manner, or if the material is religiously neutral, state nothing contradictory to it. The material must reflect authentic Church catechesis, not theological speculation, nor an analytical probing of legalistic limits. It

should conform in presentation and spirit to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Teaching will include the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical dimensions of sexuality.

*It is important to give suitable and timely instruction to young people, above all in the heart of their own families, about the dignity of married love, its role and its exercise; in this way they will be able to engage in honourable courtship and enter upon marriage of their own (Gaudium et Spes, 1965, # 49).*

*...the spiritual and moral dimensions must always be predominant so as to have two special purposes: presenting God's commandments as a way of life and the formation of a right conscience (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #94).*

*...in catechesis and the formation given both within and outside the family, the Church's teaching on the sublime value of virginity and celibacy must never be lacking, but also the vocational meaning of marriage, which a Christian can never regard as only a human venture (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #101).*

*In this regard, an in-depth and reflective knowledge of the documents of the Church dealing with these problems (e.g., indissolubility of marriage, the relationship between love and procreation, the situation of homosexual persons, the immorality of premarital relations, abortion, contraception, and masturbation) will be of valuable assistance to parents (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #102).*

***Programs must be pastorally sensitive to issues of our culture.***

The Catholic Church in the Northwest boasts strong and varied multi-cultural communities (e.g., Native American, Asian-Pacific, Hispanic, African-American, etc.). All teaching in human sexuality must be sensitive to the various ethnic cultural issues present when parents address the topic of sexuality with their children. Many parents are struggling to raise their children honoring cultural traditions and yet desiring that their children understand the Church's teaching on human sexuality to ground moral choices.

The Church teaches that sexual activity is moral only in the context of a lifelong committed marriage that is open to procreation. At the same time, the Church is pastorally supportive to people, homosexuals and others, who respect Church teaching and struggle in good faith with understanding and living that teaching in their lives. The Church takes an unequivocal stand against unjust prejudice toward homosexual persons.

*Catechesis is prepared to accommodate all social and cultural differences in harmony with the message of salvation. Within the fundamental unity of faith, the Church recognizes diversity, the essential equality of all, and the need for charity and mutual respect among all groups in a pluralistic Church and society. (Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics in the United States, 1979, #93).*

*In light of American pluralism and regional realities, leaders need to assess the people with whom they work...A person's culture must be respected as well as examined in the light of human values and church teaching. Within a culture, there are various ethnic groups. While there may be a common language and faith, persons may come from different countries with varying dialects, attitudes, values, traditions and histories. Diocesan leaders need to take into consideration the unique heritage of participants (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, p.87).*

*It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the church's pastors wherever it occurs (The Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, 1986, #10).*

***Programs must be family-centered.***

Programs in human sexuality for children and youth must be family-centered, allowing appropriate parent-to-parent, parent-to-youth/child, and youth-to-youth interaction in the learning process. Programs must respect the parental role, which is direct and indispensable in a way beyond that of other areas of instruction. All programs must seek first to empower parents and thus assist them to help their children to know and live authentic Catholic

doctrine and morals in this area of human sexuality. *Formation for Love and Chastity* will assist—and not substitute for—parents in their important role.

*It is recommended that parents be aware of their own educational role and defend and carry out this primary right and duty. It follows that any educative activity, related to education for love and carried out by persons outside the family, must be subject to the parents' acceptance of it and must be seen not as a substitute but as a support for their work (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #113).*

***Programs must be developmentally sensitive.***

All adults working with children in human sexuality instruction must be sensitive to the range of developmental stages present among children. This is as true in the family as it is in the classroom. What is age-appropriate is that which respects the individual development of each person. This respect for each individual manifests itself in the reinforcement of a sense of modesty each step of the way. This respect responds to questions as they arise in each person's journey and does so in a way that evokes wonder and gratitude to God, avoiding any occasion that might bring public embarrassment. The teacher or parent is called upon to listen carefully not only to what the child asks but to "where the child is," and to respond respectfully in a manner that is true to Church teaching and honors the developmental stage of the child.

*A gradual or evolutionary approach to the subject (i.e., human sexuality instruction) is warranted, attentive to the stages of physical and psychological maturity of the individual learners (Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, 1991, p.81).*

*Since parents know, understand and love each of their children in their uniqueness, they are in the best position to decide what the appropriate time is for providing a variety of information according to their children's physical and spiritual growth. No one can take this capacity for discernment away from conscientious parents (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #65).*

## CONCLUSION

Woven through each person's search for genuine love, for personal maturity, and for interpersonal commitments is a call to be chaste and sexually responsible in ways appropriate for one's state in life. This is not always easy in the culture of contemporary American society. As parents and educators strive to present the principles of sexual morality to

children and adolescents, the Church can be a strong partner. Young people have a right to know the Church's teaching on sexuality. Providing catechesis for parents and educators is critical so that this teaching will be comprehensive and authentic. The Church, the parents and the educators must work together to help our young people understand and live the call to Christ-like love.

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Dr. Onard Mejino  
Mrs. Maureen Reid  
Mrs. Theresa Stuhrman  
Mrs. Pam Sturgeon  
Mrs. Karen Taylor  
Mrs. Kathleen Vance  
Mrs. Carolyn Kay Workman

### **Office of Catholic Faith Formation:**

Dr. Mary Cross, Archbishop's Delegate  
Dr. Judith E. Ford,  
Director of Religious Education

### **Catholic Schools Department:**

Dr. Harry Purpur, Superintendent  
Principals of the Catholic Elementary Schools of the Archdiocese