

A Way of Life: Welcoming New Life



Welcoming New Life

The[♂]ology
of the BO[♀]dy for families
& single people
plus Family Chastity Formation in Virtue & Purity of Heart

Universal Truths about Human Sexuality for People of All Ages

With extensive references to the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church

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Chapter Four

Making a House a Home: Welcoming and Protecting Life

211 Once the foundation, walls, and entire structure of a family house is firmly established on the pillars of Catholic truth and wisdom, it is time to make the house a home. For a house to be a home, it is necessary that it be welcoming, hospitable, open to life, stable, safe, and warm with affection and love. Both father and mother must have the most profound reverence for the sanctity of life and its transmission in the sanctuary of the womb, as they cooperate with God in love and in the creation of human life.

Welcoming a Child as a Gift from God

212 Our Father revealed His plan for the love of husband and wife at the beginning of creation, that it be pure, holy, and fertile in the very image and likeness of God. He was intimately involved in the conception of life as Eve, after relations with Adam, said, “I have produced a man with the help of the LORD.”¹⁸² The moment of conception was raised to an entirely new level when God became a child, a tiny embryo, in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Reflecting on this mystery, the Church affirms

God’s intimate concern for life from the moment of conception and that every child be conceived in pure love, carried to birth, and received as a gift from heaven.

213 The sanctity of each child’s life is so highly regarded that Our Lord lifted up a child and said: “Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”¹⁸³ “And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.”¹⁸⁴ And after speaking of God’s plan for marriage and warning about divorce, Jesus looked with compassion at the children around him and said: “Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these... Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.”¹⁸⁵ Jesus teaches us that children are indeed a blessing from God the Father, and that each child is to be embraced with love and blessed by their father and mother just as He was by Joseph and Mary.

214 Pope John Paul II wrote: “The process from conception and growth in the mother’s womb to birth makes it possible to create a space within which the new creature can be revealed

¹⁸² Gen 4:1.

¹⁸³ [5] Cf. Matthew 10:40.

¹⁸⁴ Mt 18:5.

¹⁸⁵ Mk 10:14, 16.

as a “gift”: indeed this is what it is from the very beginning. Could this frail and helpless being, totally dependent upon its parents and completely entrusted to them, be seen in any other way? The newborn child gives itself to its parents by the very fact of its coming into existence. *Its existence is already a gift, the first gift of the Creator to the creature.*¹⁸⁶

The Rights and Dignity of Children

215 Every child is a gift from heaven, and the first task of a father and mother is to “create a space” to receive this gift worthily. Creating a space to receive a child as a gift of God means not only a concern for chastity within their marriage, but also creating a holy, pure, and healthy home as a sanctuary of life, where the Spirit of Love can dwell. To this end, all that is impure, profane, unhealthy, sinful and evil is cast out.

216 Mothers can look to the Virgin Mary to learn how to prepare a suitable place to receive a child as a gift of God. With God’s grace, Mary preserved her body as a pure, holy vessel and a temple of God, and, within that temple, her womb was the holiest of places, a tabernacle and a sanctuary, where the gift of God was welcome. Fathers can look to St. Joseph who revered and protected his spouse as a holy temple of God and sought to provide a home

and sanctuary worthy of the sacred dignity of both mother and child.

217 The Church teaches that human life is sacred from the moment of conception because each child is created in the image of God and is therefore holy.¹⁸⁷ As a gift of heaven, each child is endowed with fundamental God-given rights which must be respected. Christ admonished everyone to respect the dignity of each child: “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”¹⁸⁸

218 Pope Benedict XVI, before he became pope, wrote that every child has the “right to be conceived, carried in the womb, brought into the world and brought up within marriage,” and “to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents.”¹⁸⁹ In other words, every child has a right to be conceived through the sexual love of a man and woman within a marriage that is valid in the eyes of God and the Catholic Church.

219 Contraception violates a child’s basic right to life as God may desire to bless marital love with the conception of a child, but the parents take action to prevent it. Likewise, conceiving a child outside of marriage, or in a factory or laboratory dish by the technological power of man, as in in-vitro fertilization, is also a grave violation of the right of the child. In

¹⁸⁶ Letter to Families, 11.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction Dignitas Personae, On Certain Biological Questions* (Sept 8, 2008); 7,8.

¹⁸⁸ Mt 18:6.

¹⁸⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and On the Dignity of Procreation* (Feb. 22, 1987); A 2, B 8.

short, a child has a right to have a father and mother who live chastity in marriage.

220 Before he became Pope, Cardinal Ratzinger also pointed out that there can be no legitimate claim that any person has a “right to a child”: *“A true and proper right to a child would be contrary to the child’s dignity and nature. The child is not an object to which one has a right, nor can he be considered as an object of ownership: rather, a child is a gift, ‘the supreme gift’¹⁹⁰ and the most gratuitous gift of marriage, and is a living testimony of the mutual giving of his parents.”¹⁹¹*

221 In vigorously defending and promoting Catholic teaching on family life as the model for all families of the world, Pope Benedict XVI recently said that every child has a right to come to know God the Father through the Catholic faith within a family home modeled after the Holy Family of Nazareth.¹⁹² Since every aspect of daily life in the Holy Family was devoted to growth in holiness, parents must also orient daily family life to promote the spiritual health, safety, and education of their children. A child’s right to grow in holiness and chastity is respected in establishing a home atmosphere where pure love, family prayer, and formation in holiness are the daily rule.

Protecting a Child’s Innocence

222 Parents are responsible for protecting the innocence of their children in regard to

what they see, hear, and experience, especially in the media and schools, which are heavily invested in extremely harmful programs aimed at influencing and forming what children think about sexuality beginning in the preschool years. Parents must be on guard against the many voices trying to get their children’s attention in order to form their thinking about sex, especially when they entrust their children’s education to other people or institutions. Discussions about sexuality are often initiated under the guise of nice sounding subjects like education, health, family life, or safety. This vigilance is also important within the home, as many violations of a child’s innocence occur in what children are allowed to see on television, in the movies, and on the internet and in what they hear in music on CDs and on the radio.

223 The reason the Church instructs parents to protect their pre-pubescent children from “planned and determined attempts to impose” sexual information on children is that premature information outside of the context of a parent’s love and guidance in morality “tends to shatter their emotional and educational development and to disturb the natural serenity of this period of life.” It also violates “the spiritual, moral and emotional development of growing persons who have a right to their innocence.”¹⁹³

224 Even when parents follow the guidelines of the Church for controlling and eliminating harmful influences, children are still vulnerable to premature information about sex from “peers who have been led astray or received premature

¹⁹⁰ GS, 50.

¹⁹¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and On the Dignity of Procreation* (Feb. 22, 1987); B 8.

¹⁹² Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address at the World Meeting of Families*, Valencia, Spain (July 8, 2006).

¹⁹³ TMHS, 83.

sex education.” To protect their children and correct immoral and erroneous information they may have heard or learned, “parents will have to begin to give carefully limited sexual information” to their children, according to the gravity of the situation and the state of their individual development.¹⁹⁴

225 Parents are irreplaceable in providing training to protect their children from sexual abuse by first “teaching them a form of modesty and reserve with regards to strangers,” but “without going into details and particulars that might upset or frighten them.”¹⁹⁵ Recent statistics show a higher risk of sexual abuse when the integrity of the natural family is compromised by cohabitation and divorce. Statistics also reveal that abuse can occur within the family circle or with other trusted people and that it is not just perpetrated by strangers.

Stability and Warmth in Marriage and Family Life

226 The mission of parents is not just to procreate but to also educate their children in love and provide a family atmosphere for healthy personality development. Parents are first in line in accountability for fulfilling and defending the right of each of their children to receive a complete education in holiness as a child of God through an “educative process,

protected by love and trust, proper to the family environment.”¹⁹⁶

227 Parents, and anyone interested in the dignity of children and a peaceful future for them, must be concerned, first and foremost, with the stability and sanctity of marriage and family life. Without question, divorce is the most destructive plague in the breakdown of the family. The Catechism teaches: “Divorce is immoral also because it introduces disorder into the family and into society. This disorder brings grave harm to the deserted spouse, to children traumatized by the separation of their parents and often torn between them, and because of its contagious effect which makes it truly a plague on society.”¹⁹⁷

228 Pope John Paul II pointed out that the most serious obstacle to peace and security in the world is when children are deprived of the warmth of a family and neglected by parents who divorce or who are taken up with other interests. When the center of a child’s soul is empty from a lack of affection and the warmth of a family, his or her sexual and personal development often takes a tragic turn. Responsible fathers and mothers and strong families are the only hope for our children in building a peaceful society for themselves and future generations.¹⁹⁸

229 The beginning of responsible fatherhood and motherhood, and the making of a house into

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁹⁶ Educational Guidance in Human Love, Congregation for Catholic Education (Nov. 1, 1983), 107.

¹⁹⁷ CCC, 2385.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Message for the XXVII World Day of Peace (Dec 8, 1993), 4.

a loving home environment, is the affectionate and generous spirit of a husband and wife who are always open to the conception of life as a blessing and a gift from God. In the presence of holy and chaste self-giving love, children are well-formed and cared for in body and spirit, and they absorb and learn the truth about love naturally and in accord with God's plan. Parents are called to serve God in the transmission of life, physical and spiritual, not only in procreation but in the education of their children in love:

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.¹⁹⁹ In this sense the fundamental task of marriage and family is to be at the service of life.²⁰⁰

Summary Points

230 In marital love, husband and wife are deeply united in the mystery of God's love and in the creation of human life. Each child is a gift of God to be received with love.

231 Human life is sacred and therefore every child has a right to be conceived through an act

of marital love within the womb, to be carried to birth, and to be brought up in a stable marriage and family home.

232 Within and outside the family home, parents must be vigilant in protecting the innocence of their children to prevent physical, spiritual, and emotional violations of chastity which can seriously harm a child's personality for life.

233 Parents are irreplaceable in the education and formation of their children in love and have a duty to control information presented to them by the media, schools, and other family members.

234 Everyone concerned about the dignity and health of children must be concerned, first and foremost, with the stability and sanctity of marriage and family life.

235 A peaceful society is the result of children being raised within a responsible, stable, warm, and loving marriage and family, open to life and built upon God's plan for love.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Educational Guidance in Human Love, 3.

²⁰⁰ CCC, 1653; Cf. FC, 28.

