

# A Way of Life: Formation Outside the Home



Formation Outside the Home

Theology of the **BO**dy for families & single people  
plus Family Chastity Formation in Virtue & Purity of Heart

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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 Eight

### Parental Vigilance: Chastity Formation Outside the Home

Other educators can assist in this task, but they can only take the place of parents for serious reasons of physical or moral incapacity. On this point, the Magisterium of the Church has expressed itself clearly, in relation to the whole educative process of children: “The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to find an adequate substitute.”<sup>285</sup>

#### The Current Situation

**355** The primary goal of *Theology of the Body for Families and Single People plus Family Chastity Formation in Virtue and Purity of Heart* is to educate parents in regard to their God-given rights, duties, and responsibilities in the mission of educating their own children in love according to Catholic teaching. A secondary goal is to assist parents in the discernment and use of outside assistance to supplement their own educational efforts, so they can determine if it is in accord with or violates Vatican guidelines, especially in the delicate area of human sexuality.

**356** While parents have a God-given duty to carry out their mission of education in sexuality according to Church teaching, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, Guidelines for Education Within the Family* acknowledges

that “the decline of traditional models has left children deprived of consistent and positive guidance, while parents find themselves unprepared to provide adequate answers.”<sup>286</sup> Making the parents’ mission even more difficult is that children are being systematically exposed to classroom programs that provide inappropriate information about sexuality by educators who want to usurp the parents’ role because they are either (a) ignorant of Church teaching concerning the rights of parents and children, especially in matters pertaining to human sexuality, (b) misinformed about how to apply Church teaching in the classroom, (c) rejecting of Church teaching altogether, or (d) supportive of agendas that intentionally misrepresent or oppose Catholic morality. The parents’ mission is further undermined by powerful worldwide movements and philosophies that actively support efforts to destroy traditional religious values in regard to chastity, marriage, and family life and are

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<sup>285</sup> TMHS 23. Chapter entitled Education for Chastity.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

promoted by wealthy individuals, institutions, foundations, governments, and schools.

**357** Respect for the privacy, intimacy, and sacredness of sexuality means chastity formation should be approached delicately by parents on an individual basis within the sanctuary of the family home. Violating the sacredness and integrity of God’s design for sexuality, as classroom sexual education and inappropriately designed and delivered chastity formation programs do, has set off a chain reaction—similar to splitting the nucleus of an atom—within the personality of our children and within the sanctuary of the family home. Parents are the primary educators of their children and have the inalienable right and duty to educate them in conformity with their moral and religious convictions. However, in some cases, parents may legitimately desire or need outside assistance, and the Church provides definite guidelines for parents to follow in their relationship with educators outside the home.

## The Parent-Educator Relationship: Rules for Right Order

In fulfilling a ministry of love to their own children, parents should enjoy the support and cooperation of the other members of the Church. The *rights* of parents must be recognized, protected, and maintained, not only to ensure solid formation of children and young people, but also to guarantee the right order of cooperation and collaboration

between parents and those who can help them in their task. Likewise, in parishes and apostolates, clergy and religious should support and encourage parents in striving to form their own children. In 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.<sup>287</sup>

**358** The role of the Church and State is first and foremost to assist parents directly by providing them with an authentic education in God’s plan for sexuality and by giving them support and confidence in their ability to fulfill their vocation as the primary educators of their children.<sup>288</sup> In reality, just the opposite often occurs, institutions often assume parents are not capable and attempt to replace the parents’ role by directly providing sexual information to children. Nevertheless, parents must remember that they have the primary right to oversee the education their children receive when they allow other people or institutions to assist them, especially in the area of human sexuality.

**359** The Church has established guidelines for right order in the relationship between parents and educators who provide supplementary assistance to parents in the education of their children. The following list establishes what could be viewed as a “Ten Commandments” for right order that parents can use as a guide and checklist to not only fulfill their obligations but also insure that their own rights and the rights and innocence of their children are protected:

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. TMHS, 47.

1. Outside assistance must be subject to parents' acceptance.
2. Outside assistance must support the parents' education of their children and must not be seen as, or in fact, be a substitute for their work.
3. Supplementary sexual education must be carried out under "the attentive guidance" of parents in "educational centres chosen and controlled by them."<sup>289</sup>
4. Parents must be fully informed of the precise "*content and methodology with which such supplementary education is imparted.*"
5. "No one can bind children or young people to secrecy about the content and/or method of instruction provided outside the family."<sup>290</sup>
6. Parents who permit their children to participate in educational assistance outside the home have a right "to be present during classes."<sup>291</sup>
7. Parents have the right to remove their children from "*any form of sexual instruction imparted outside the home,*"<sup>292</sup> that does "*not correspond with their own principles.*"
8. Parents who choose not to permit their children to attend classes that impart *any form of sexual instruction outside the home* "have the duty to give them an adequate formation, appropriate to each child's or young person's stage of development."<sup>293</sup>
9. "*No educator—not even parents—can interfere*" with the rights of a child or young person to live "his or her own sexuality in conformity with Christian principles" and hence the virtue of chastity.<sup>294</sup>
10. Children and young people have a right to receive chastity formation according to each child's (a) "stage of development," (b) "capacity to integrate moral truth with sexual information," and (c) stage of "innocence and tranquility."<sup>295</sup>

## Subsidiarity and Subordination: Two Essential Catholic Principles

**360** Catholic guidelines for chastity formation and sexual education outside the home insist that everyone must respect parents' inalienable rights:

There are various ways of helping and supporting parents in fulfilling their fundamental right and duty to educate their children for love. Such assistance never means taking from parents or diminishing their formative right and duty, because they remain 'original and primary,' 'irreplaceable and inalienable.' Therefore, the role which

<sup>289</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

others can carry out in helping parents is always (a) *subsidiary*, because the formative role of the family is always preferable, and (b) *subordinate*, that is, subject to the parents' attentive guidance and control. Everyone must observe the right order of cooperation and collaboration between parents and those who can help them in their task. It is clear that the assistance of others must be given first and foremost to parents rather than to their children.<sup>296</sup>

**361** Subsidiarity is a “most weighty principle, which cannot be set aside or changed, remains fixed and unshaken in social philosophy: Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.”<sup>297</sup>

**362** What this means is the supportive structures of Church and State “cannot and must not take away from families the functions that they can just as well perform on their own or in free associations; instead it must positively favor and encourage as far as possible responsible initiative by families....”<sup>298</sup>

**363** Parents have full authority and responsibility to guide every aspect of the education of their children, and all others who share in the parents' mission are subordinate to their authority and control. If parents choose to have others assist them in chastity formation,

they have a right to expect that educators clearly present the full Catholic truth about the meaning of human sexuality, marriage, and family life and promote the practice of all the moral virtues, according to God's laws, as revealed in the natural law, the Ten Commandments, and Christ's teaching in the Gospel and in the Church. The Church has always been firmly opposed to any information or presentations on sexuality that are dissociated from Catholic moral principles<sup>299</sup> and that violate the principles of subsidiarity and subordination by usurping the parents' role.

## Required Qualifications for Anyone Assisting Parents

**364** God's plan for both the procreation and education of children is that it be carried out by parents for the purpose of growth in love and holiness. In some cases, parents may feel they are unqualified or unprepared to educate and form their own children in chastity. Situations like this occur primarily because parents do not know their rights, duties, and responsibilities as primary educators; underestimate their gifts, or do not develop their God-given abilities. In exceptional cases, parents may actually be morally or physically incapable of carrying out their duties.

**365** In the area of chastity formation, the Church clearly teaches that there is no substitute for parents as educators within the family. However, there may be times when outside

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>297</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (May 15, 1931), 79.

<sup>298</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, Nov. 22, 1981, n. 45.

<sup>299</sup> Cf. TMHS, 64.

assistance is needed in specific cases. When parents do choose to allow others to assist them in the education of their children, the Church says it is the parents' obligation to be sure that those who assist possess the following qualifications:

1. Be prepared and disposed to teach the full Catholic truth;
2. Be mature, moral, and faithful to their vocation;
3. Know and respect the rights of parents as primary educators;
4. Know and practice the moral teachings of the Church on sexuality and chastity;
5. Assist the children in the spirit of the father and mother.<sup>300</sup>

## Exceptional Cases Where Parents May Need Assistance

**366** Having first met the Vatican's qualifications just mentioned, trustworthy people may be allowed to speak directly to children on an *individualized* basis in the area of sexual education and chastity formation in these exceptional cases:

1. Persons who assume a permanent parental role in cases involving *orphans and abandoned children* may undertake the education of children in chastity.<sup>301</sup>
2. Other educators can act as substitutes for the parents in serious cases of *moral or physical incapacity* on the part of parents.<sup>302</sup>
3. *Single parents* with children of the opposite sex may enlist the help of another person of the same sex as the child to communicate the most intimate details of human sexuality in chastity formation.<sup>303</sup>
4. Parents and children can meet with an expert such as a doctor, nurse, priest, or educator to help *explain bodily changes during puberty*.<sup>304</sup>
5. Specific and actual instances of *sexual perversions* "should not be dealt with except through individual counseling, as the parent's response to genuine problems."<sup>305</sup>
6. Parents may seek help from "expert qualified persons" for children exhibiting *homosexual tendencies* or behaviors during childhood or adolescence.<sup>306</sup>

<sup>300</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 125, 72.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

## Other Types of Assistance for Parents

**367** Additional support available to parents includes:

1. Spiritual guidance during the *Sacrament of Reconciliation* by a regular confessor can “aid in progressively enlightening the stages of growth and as moral support.”<sup>307</sup>
2. Parents can assist their children in *discerning a vocation* with the “support of a priest or other properly formed persons (in parishes, associations or in the new fruitful ecclesial movements, etc.).”<sup>308</sup>
3. Parents can meet with other qualified and trustworthy parents and others to draw on their experience and competence.<sup>309</sup>
4. Parents can attend meetings together with their children guided by expert, trustworthy educators.<sup>310</sup>
5. Parents can entrust a child to a trustworthy person for particular issues.<sup>311</sup>
6. Parents can supplement their home formation program with limited moral catechesis on sexual ethics, during puberty and adolescence, taught by qualified and trustworthy persons.<sup>312</sup>
7. Parents can receive *Church assistance, formation, and catechesis* to help support and encourage them in forming their

own children,<sup>313</sup> but it must conform to “the principles set out in this guide (*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*), concerning doctrine, timing and the content and method of such education.”<sup>314</sup>

8. Any other assistance from either the Church or State “must always be carried out in accordance with a proper application of the *principle of subsidiarity*.”<sup>315</sup>

## Methods and Ideologies to Avoid

**368** Parents must be vigilant and aware of the dangerous ideologies that motivate, as well as the harmful methods that are used by public and private educators which violate the innocence of children, undermine parental rights and duties, and attack the family. Most of these dangerous methods appear harmless, and that is precisely why parents must learn to discern the threats to their children and family, since most will come from good people with good intentions. The following are five of the most common methods of immoral education that must be rejected by parents, and most are designed for a classroom method of delivery:

1. *Secular* sex education that promotes contraception, abortion, and sterilization.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. Ibid., 134, 148.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 23.

2. *Professional* or officially recognized organizations of educators and counselors in sex education that promote unproven theories, diminish chastity, and ignore Church teaching.
3. *Safety* or health education where information on sexuality, particularly on protection from disease or perversions, is presented to children in school.
4. *Values clarification* instruction where children are encouraged to develop a personal moral code without reference to absolute truth or authority outside themselves. Children are “empowered” to make decisions based solely on what they think or feel is right. Value systems are created by the individual and not by God or parents, and since all are considered equal, no one can impose any value system on any other person.
5. *Inclusion* in curriculum where sexual information is presented under the guise of another subject in education, like health, hygiene, personal development, family life, children’s literature, social or cultural studies, and catechesis or religious education.<sup>316</sup>

## Parental Vigilance: Grave Concerns about Sexual Education Outside the Home

**369** Parents should be aware that everyone involved in offering supplementary sexual education to their children outside the home has a responsibility to promote full disclosure

to parents about the content and methodology being used. Yet, parents must not simply be satisfied with the word of another, or that large numbers approve, but they must investigate course materials themselves to see if both content and methodology are acceptable to them and conform to the teachings of the Church. A lack of vigilance and thoroughness in this crucial area may expose children to great harm and injury if they are permitted to participate in programs that violate their innocence, undermine parental authority, attack the family, and oppose Church teaching.

**370** Parents who have done their homework and are aware of inappropriate content or methodologies are obliged to withdraw their children from these programs or classes; however, they are also responsible for providing their children with appropriate education and training at home. In this respect, they also have a duty to inform educators, principals, pastors, and all involved of the harmful effects of the program or class and to shed light on how they violate Church teaching.<sup>317</sup> Likewise, parents should alert family, friends, and those parents who have children at risk of the harmful effects of dangerous sexual education programs.

### What Information is Being Taught?

**371** Parents should not give consent for their children to participate in “*any form of sexual instruction imparted outside the home*”<sup>318</sup> before making a full review and preview of all classroom films, books, other materials and information that will be presented to their

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-142.

<sup>317</sup> Cf. CCC, 907; Cf. Code of Canon Law, Can. 212 §3.

<sup>318</sup> TMHS, 120.

children. Laws mandating the inclusion of the homosexual lifestyle within all educational materials beginning in preschool is the most comprehensive effort to date to impose sexual education on children.

## The Dangers of the Classroom Model

**372** Even when parents have been given full disclosure and have conducted their own personal investigation of educational materials, they must be aware of the great dangers of allowing their children to participate in mixed classroom presentations about human sexuality. First of all, mixed classroom discussions of sexual matters directly contradict the Church norm for sexual education, that it be a private and personal dialogue between parent and child.

**373** Second, each child in a mixed classroom setting will have different ideas or knowledge about human sexuality. Some may know anatomically correct definitions for body parts, while others may only know vulgar definitions and still others nothing at all. Having your child participate in classes with other boys and girls means that your child will probably be exposed to information about human sexuality that you do not want them to know yet. Third, after class is over, children will have learned that talking about sex in public is okay, so they may discuss with their friends what they just learned, or perhaps act it out, with unforeseen consequences. The mixed classroom setting is a very dangerous and explosive environment for engaging in these discussions. Again, the Church teaches that chastity formation and the

sharing of other information about sexuality should take place between mothers and daughters or fathers and sons in “*personalized dialogue*” based upon “love and trust,”<sup>319</sup> and that the “moral dimension must always be part of the explanation.”<sup>320</sup>

## The Teacher Risk

**374** While most teachers may be well-intentioned, their individual teaching styles, methods of delivery, and lack of knowledge and/or conformity to Church teaching on sexuality could put your child at risk. Many teachers’ moral codes and actions openly contradict Church teaching, especially concerning sex outside of marriage and the use of contraceptives and abortifacients. Even if a parent has researched all the classroom materials and decided to allow his or her child to participate, the teacher may introduce ideas, concepts, or information that are outside the scope of the materials reviewed, or begin answering students’ “real life” questions in areas that should not be discussed. Is this a risk worth taking? Does any parent really want another man or woman who they may not even know forming their child’s attitude or talking directly to their child about sexual matters?

## Parental Monitoring

**375** The decision to allow or not to allow a child to receive classroom-imparted supplementary education about sex is a parent’s duty and responsibility. By reviewing all the classroom materials, weighing all the risks, and

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 68.

understanding and applying Church teaching, a parent should be in a better position to determine whether the information will violate the faith or chastity of their child. If not, then, with an informed conscience, a parent can permit their child to participate in these classes. However, it would be wise to talk with the child every day to find out in detail what he or she has learned, to correct any information that is contrary to Church teaching, and to monitor for signs of any harm or damage the classes may be causing.

**376** Both the Church and this book provide guidance to help parents be vigilant and to give them confidence in taking the appropriate action necessary to defend their own child's chastity and that of all children against those who would harm them either intentionally or out of ignorance. Parents are encouraged to be fully informed and to trust their "gut feelings" about negative influences which might be, or already are, producing negative effects in the personality of their children or harming relationships in their family. Parents should "consider any attack on the virtue and chastity of their children as an *offence against the life of faith itself that threatens and impoverishes their own communion of life and grace.*"<sup>321</sup>

## Summary Points

**377** Modern culture, media, government, and educational institutions often undermine or attack the teachings of the Catholic Church on chastity; therefore, parents must be vigilant in monitoring information about sexuality presented to their children.

**378** As a general rule, Church and State educators must not take the place of parents and present sexual information directly to children, but can support parents with assistance, only if parents choose and fully control that assistance.

**379** The principles of subsidiarity and subordination in chastity formation mean that God has ordained parents with the mission of forming their children in love, and all those who would assist them must never take over their role and must be subordinate to their control.

**380** The qualifications for anyone who would assist parents in chastity formation are that they know, teach, and live the teachings of the Church on marriage and family life.

**381** Only in specific exceptional cases may a trustworthy person replace a parent and discuss sexuality with a child, and this must only be through private dialogue.

**382** Spiritual guidance and limited moral catechesis on sexuality for adolescents can assist parents when they conform to the principles of subsidiarity and subordination.

**383** Parents must avoid dangerous ideologies and methods of sexual education often hidden under the guise of other subjects and protect their children from them.

**384** Any form of sexual education outside the home involves so many grave violations and hidden dangers to children and parents that it should be avoided as a serious threat to the health and very existence of the family.

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 21.

