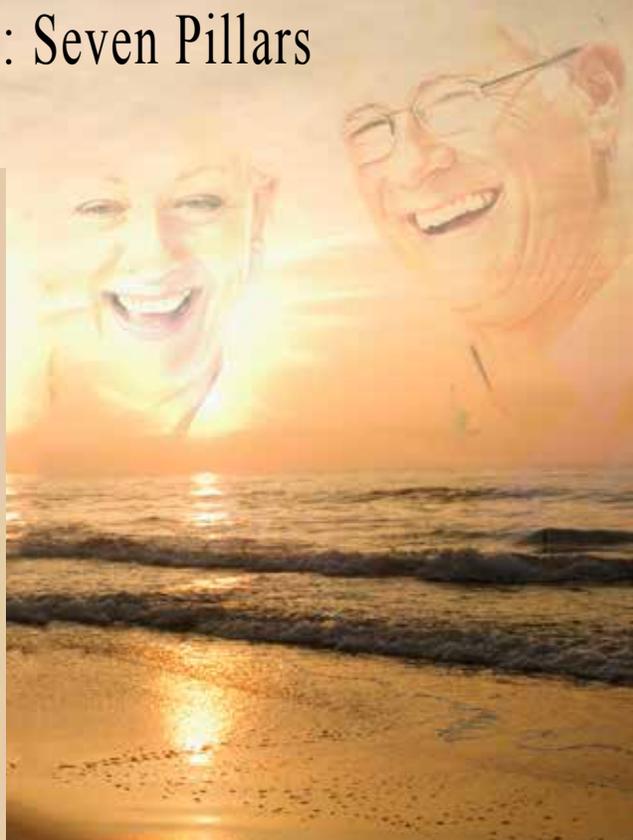
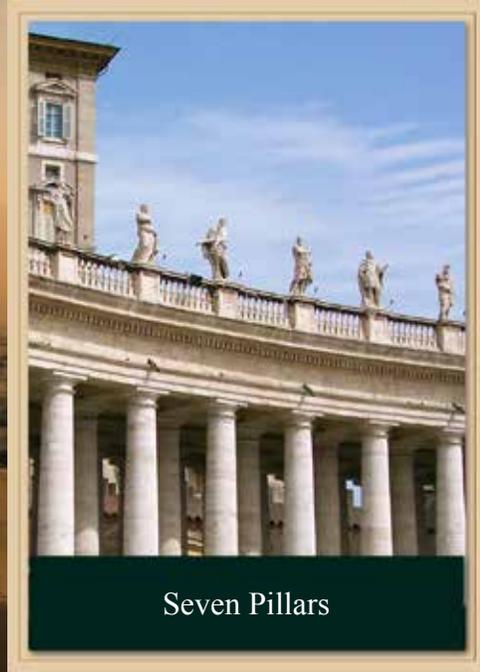


A Way of Life: Seven Pillars



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 Three

Building a House: Seven Pillars for Family Chastity Formation

Wisdom has built her house, she has set up her seven columns ¹¹²

148 To grow as a holy family built upon the rock foundation of Catholic truth, parents must form the personality of their children and build up their home with strength and integrity using some essential pillars of truth found in Scripture and in the teaching of the Catholic Church. In the Old Testament, particularly in Wisdom, Proverbs, and Sirach, fathers and mothers are given instruction for raising chaste and virtuous children, while foolish parents are admonished for tolerating vice and immorality which ends up tearing down their own home and family. In the New Testament and Church teachings, our Lord reiterates the three ways for a man to go which will either build up or destroy his soul, marriage, and family: the way of blessedness or wickedness, the way of wisdom or foolishness, the way of life or death.¹¹³

149 Seven integral elements or pillars for family chastity formation, derived from Scripture and Church teaching, provide a framework for building up the family home according to God's plan. A chastity program

for families should integrate these seven pillars in order to ensure strong character, stability, and virtuous personality development in their children while providing them with a defending wall of protection against evil. The seven principles or pillars include: obedient faith, formation in conscience, sacrificial love, apprenticeship of self-mastery, acquiring virtues, the vocation to holiness, and the goal of eternal life.

The First Pillar: Obedient Faith

150 In the beginning, obedient love in relationships reigned within the family of God the Father. The Father's voice, in an ongoing communication of love, was heard and obeyed in the pure hearts and consciences of his children, Adam and Eve. Envious of this love, the devil set out to seduce Eve into disobedience to destroy the Father's design for pure love in marriage and family life.

¹¹² Proverbs 9:1; [1-6,13-18] Wisdom and folly are represented as matrons, each inviting people to her banquet. Wisdom offers the food and drink of divine doctrine and virtue which give life (Proverbs 9:1-6). Unstable and senseless folly furnishes the stolen bread and water of deceit and vice which bring death to her guests.

¹¹³ Cf. CCC, 1696, GS 16.

Obedience is the Precondition to Chaste Living

151 Obedience comes from the Latin root word meaning “to hear or listen to.” The devil successfully tempted Eve into disobedience because she chose to listen to his voice instead of her Father’s. When God punished Adam, He said the reason was, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat...”¹¹⁴ Having sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, Eve persuaded Adam to obey her rather than obey the voice of his Father, and Adam freely chose to disobey God. The bad fruits of disobedience brought disorder and division into all family relationships, between the Father and His children, husband and wife, parents and children.

152 To restore the integrity of the family, husband and wife must choose to obey the voice of the Father rather than the voice of one another, or any other suggestive voice tempting them to sin against His plan for chaste love in marriage. The first step to obeying the Father’s voice is to acknowledge that His paternal plan is made manifest in natural law and in the authoritative teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality, chastity, marriage, family life, and the rights of parents and children.

The Holy Family Model of Obedience

153 The Blessed Virgin Mary is the “most perfect embodiment”¹¹⁵ of obedient faith to God’s plan for life. When she said “yes” to the Father to conceive and bear His Son Jesus,¹¹⁶ she reversed Eve’s disobedience, and in following Jesus to the cross, she helped to restore life where there had been only death and disorder.

154 In the Holy Family, Joseph was obedient to the Father’s Will, Mary was obedient to her husband Joseph, and Jesus, who was truly superior to both, humbly submitted himself to the authority of his parents. Thus, Jesus “fulfills the fourth commandment perfectly” by modeling on earth his divine love and obedience to his Father in heaven, a love and obedience which is later reaffirmed in the Garden of Gethsemane when he said, “Not my will” but yours be done.¹¹⁷

155 In the story of the flight into Egypt,¹¹⁸ the Holy Family provides the perfect model of obedience to God’s paternal plan for right order in marriage and family. The Father revealed His Will only to Joseph in light of his authority as head of the family. In humility, Joseph obeyed the Father and so protected the lives of Jesus and Mary. Mary may have objected to the thought of immediately setting out with a newborn infant for a foreign country across the

¹¹⁴ Gen 3:17.

¹¹⁵ CCC, 144.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Lk 1:38.

¹¹⁷ Cf. CCC, 532; Lk 22:42.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Mt 2:13-14.

desert in the dark of a cold night, but in obedient faith and trust in God, and because Joseph was worthy of trust, she chose to accept his decision as the will of God.

Chastity Heals and Restores Marriages and Families

156 Family chastity formation is founded upon obedience to the Father's plan for marriage and family life. In His plan, a husband and father has a temporal and spiritual duty to guide his wife and family by offering his entire life as a sacrifice of unselfish love in order to lead them to holiness and eternal life with God in heaven. A wife and mother has the duty, as her husband's helpmate, to respect and support him in fulfilling his duties, and to bring love and life into the family through her femininity and motherhood. Children have a duty to honor and obey their parents just as Jesus honored and obeyed Joseph and Mary.

157 The healing, restoration, and strengthening of marriages and families are dependent upon each person respecting and obeying God the Father's design for life and love in relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and each family member with God the Father and the Catholic Church. While all are called to listen to the voice of the Father in their conscience, in marriage and family life, God has chosen to speak through husbands and fathers, so that, in obedience to their voice, wives and children will truly hear the voice of the Father because of the agreement

with right order, reason, conscience, and all things, except sin.

158 Obedience to the Father's paternal plan for right order in marriage and family life is therefore the first pillar for living truly chaste and holy lives. Living this obedience enables each of the remaining pillars to fully develop according to right order, reason, and grace.

The Second Pillar: The Formation of Conscience

The Inner Sanctuary

159 Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and within that temple is an inner sanctuary, a holy place where God dwells and where we can hear His voice:

Deep within his conscience, man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment...For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God...His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths.¹¹⁹

The conscience is the place of decision to follow, or not, God's plan of life which He communicates to us directly in our hearts, in His natural laws, and in the voice of Christ and His Church.

¹¹⁹ CCC, 1776.

160 This secret inner sanctuary is like the room within the house where our Lord tells us to go in order to speak as a child to our heavenly Father, heart to heart, to listen to His voice and wisdom. In this sacred place, within the conscience, the Father desires to maintain an intimate and ongoing personal conversation about love with each of His children to help them grow in love of Him and others.

161 The family home is also designed to be a holy place where father and mother, in the image of God, carry on a continuous personal conversation about love with each of their children, helping them to form a good conscience, to gain wisdom, to listen to the voice of the Lord, and to love. Family chastity formation is at heart an ongoing personal dialogue of love between parents, children, and God aimed at helping the mind, heart, body, and soul act in pure love.

An Informed Conscience

162 Our Father knows, and the experience of every father and mother reveals, that this ongoing dialogue and formation of conscience is a battle and a lifelong task. Along with a conscience, every child is born with an attitude that says, “You can’t tell me what to do!” Original sin makes it hard for us to follow the rules. Our Father also knows this, and Scripture reveals His continuing and progressive plan to

assist us in knowing and living the rules of love which are already inscribed in our hearts.

163 God the Father’s plan for human sexuality is founded upon the formation of an informed conscience through prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Bible, the Sacraments, and Christ’s teachings found in the Gospels and in the Catholic Church. The Lord gave Moses the goal and the method for the formation of an informed conscience:

¹²⁰Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest.¹²¹ Bind them at your wrist as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.¹²²

The Voice of Evil

164 The devil also has a goal and an aggressive method to try and make his voice heard in the sanctuary of the conscience. As with Eve, he also tempts all of the Father’s children in order to make his voice heard and followed: “Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to

¹²⁰ [4-5] This passage contains the basic principle of the whole Mosaic Law, the keynote of the Book of Deuteronomy: since the Lord alone is God, we must love him with an undivided heart. Christ cited these words as “the greatest and the first commandment,” embracing in itself the whole law of God (Matthew 22:37, 38 and parallels).

¹²¹ [8] Bind them . . . as a sign: these injunctions were probably meant merely in a figurative sense; Cf. Exodus 13:9, 16. However, the later Jews understood them literally, and tied on their wrists and foreheads “phylacteries,” boxes containing strips of parchment on which these words were inscribed; Cf. Matthew 23:5.

¹²² Dt 6:4-9.

God, which makes them fall into death.”¹²³ The method and goal of his formation program is to separate mankind from the Father, the husband from wife, and the parents from their children in order to destroy the family of God.

165 The diabolical program is aimed first and foremost at the deformation of conscience,¹²⁴ particularly in the area of sexuality because this can corrupt and destroy an integrated personality at its deepest level. His method and goals can be detected in programs aimed at children and youth, who, when separated from their parents and family home, are encouraged by adults, often strangers, to engage in discussions of sexuality and even perversions under the guise of education, health, or safety. This deceptive voice of evil also reaches into the consciences of young people through music, television, entertainment, the internet, chat rooms, and on the streets. God the Father and the devil both understand the power of an informed conscience; however, parents are primarily responsible for vigilance, day and night, as to the *kind* of information that is entering into the hearts and minds of their children.

The Voice of Good

166 Our Father’s plan for marriage and family life means parents must educate and

form the consciences of their children by means of an ongoing conversation of love and daily instruction, so each child can overcome any weaknesses and the influence of evil. The Father has entrusted parents with the duty and every grace necessary to form the consciences of the children He has committed to their care. Vigilance in this area is such a high priority that, “If in fact parents do not give adequate formation in chastity, they are failing in their precise duty. Likewise, they would also be guilty were they to tolerate immoral or inadequate formation being given to their children outside the home.”¹²⁵

167 God infused into every heart a moral conscience, but a child must learn how to use it and obey the Father’s voice by listening to and obeying his father and mother. Parents are responsible and accountable to God for making sure His law of love is engraved in the hearts of their children through education, training, and personal example. The more parents manifest the authoritative and loving voice of God, the easier it will be for a child to develop an upright moral conscience, so he can truly hear and follow the Father’s voice.

168 A pure conscience enables a child to choose to do good and avoid evil at the appropriate moment and is “supported by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and helped by the advice

¹²³ CCC, 391; Cf. Gen 3:1-5; Wis 2:24.

¹²⁴ TMHS, 1. The media and schools often use good people with good intentions to “...provide depersonalized, recreational and often pessimistic information. Moreover, this information does not take into account the different stages of formation and development of children and young people, and it is influenced by a distorted individualistic concept of freedom, in an ambience lacking the basic values of life, human love and the family. Then the school, making itself available to carry out programmes of sex education, has often done this by taking the place of the family and, most of the time, with the aim of only providing information. Sometimes this really leads to the deformation of consciences.”

¹²⁵ Ibid., 44.

of wise people.”¹²⁶ Receiving the Sacraments often, especially the Sacrament of Penance, is essential in the formation of a correct moral conscience, to purify and strengthen it and to fight against and overcome evil tendencies.

A Lifelong Task

169 In the eyes of the Father, all of us are in need of a continual and ongoing formation of conscience because, due to original sin, we are influenced by negativity, tempted to prefer our own judgment and will, and prone to reject authoritative teaching.¹²⁷

170 Formation of sexuality in children and youth must be approached with reverence, as it touches upon the most private and sacred areas of the human heart. Because it enters into this most sensitive personal area, formation of conscience in sexuality will always involve an intensity of the deepest emotions and passions and therefore requires a parent’s affection and individual attention to a young person over a long period of time:

The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults.¹²⁸

171 Formation of conscience in regard to chastity serves to provide a positive integration of sexuality in the personality of the child, so he or she can have the strength of character and freedom to fulfill the vocation to true love while avoiding distorted concepts of love, which seek to justify sins against chastity.

The Third Pillar: Sacrificial Love

172 God created man and woman in His own image and this image, is reflected perfectly in Christ’s total self-giving, sacrificial love for the Church. In each person’s conscience, the Father’s voice urges us to love sacrificially

¹²⁶ CCCC, Cf. 372; 374. “Christians have a great help for the formation of conscience *in the Church and her Magisterium*. As the Council affirms: ‘In forming their consciences the Christian faithful must give careful attention to the sacred and certain teaching of the Church. For the Catholic Church is by the will of Christ the teacher of truth. Her charge is to announce and teach authentically that truth which is Christ, and at the same time with her authority to declare and confirm the principles of the moral order which derive from human nature itself’ (Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 14.). It follows that the authority of the Church, when she pronounces on moral questions, in no way undermines the freedom of conscience of Christians. This is so not only because freedom of conscience is never freedom ‘from’ the truth but always and only freedom ‘in’ the truth, but also because the Magisterium does not bring to the Christian conscience truths which are extraneous to it; rather it brings to light the truths which it ought already to possess, developing them from the starting point of the primordial act of faith. The Church puts herself always and only at the *service of conscience*, helping it to avoid being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine proposed by human deceit (cf. *Eph* 4:14), and helping it not to swerve from the truth about the good of man, but rather, especially in more difficult questions, to attain the truth with certainty and to abide in it.” *Veritatis Splendor*, 64.

¹²⁷ Cf. CCC, 1783.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1784.

after the example of Christ, who, through His scourging at the pillar and along the way of the cross, showed us that inordinate self-love must die if we are to truly live our Father's plan for love in purity.

Inordinate Self-Love: Overcoming Selfishness

173 St. Thomas Aquinas took up St. Augustine's analysis of pride as the root of all sin and concluded that inordinate self-love can also be considered the "beginning of every evil."¹²⁹ The definition of inordinate is excessive, unrestrained feelings or behavior; disorderly. Inordinate self-love involves a disordered choice, rooted in pride, to prefer one's own will over God's will.¹³⁰ In short, it is selfishness.

174 To see first-hand the effects of inordinate self-love, simply watch a two-year-old boy react to another child who picks up one of his toys. Usually there is a ruckus, pulling, shoving, crying, and the final exclamation, "It's mine!!!" Then mom or dad intervenes to restore order by teaching the young children about "sharing." The formation process of either

teaching, disciplining, or punishing the child eventually helps him to choose sacrificial love over inordinate self-love.

175 The ability to love chastely depends upon self-mastery and dying to selfish love in all areas of life, beginning in the earliest years, since "Chastity cannot exist as a virtue without the capacity to renounce self, to make sacrifices and to wait."¹³¹ When parents immediately cater to an undisciplined child's selfish demands, they spoil and cripple his ability to love others. Sadly, such a child becomes an irresponsible adult accountable for nothing, yet feels "entitled" to use everyone and everything to fulfill his own selfish needs. Inordinate self-love truly is the beginning of every evil, but sacrificial love is the beginning of everything good.

Imitation of Jesus: The Model for Sacrificial Love

176 Jesus Christ's total self-giving, sacrificial love for the Church is the model of sacrificial love that a husband and wife are called to imitate. And in Jesus' obedience to Joseph and Mary, children find a model of sacrificial love for their parents.¹³² In family formation in love,

¹²⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "...the beginning of every sin would seem to be that which causes all sins. Now this is inordinate self-love, which, according to Augustine, 'builds up the city of Babylon.' Therefore self-love and not pride is the beginning of sin." He then clarifies by saying, "In desiring to excel, man loves himself, for to love oneself is the same as to desire some good for oneself. Consequently, it amounts to the same whether we reckon pride or self-love as the beginning of every evil." *Summa Theologica*, Question 84, Article 2, Obj.3.

¹³⁰ Cf. CCC, 398.

¹³¹ TMHS, 5.

¹³² "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them." LK 2:51.

sacrificial love is the essential component, if one is to learn to live chastely. Jesus, the Master of sacrificial love, invites parents and children to choose His way: ¹³³ “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself,¹³⁴ take up his cross, and follow me.”¹³⁵

The Fourth Pillar: Apprenticeship in Self- Mastery

177 Family chastity formation involves extensive training or, what the Church calls, an *apprenticeship in self-mastery*. This “vocational training” is truly a lifelong task but requires a more intense effort during childhood and adolescence when the personality is being formed.¹³⁶

178 In a traditional apprenticeship, a youthful learner is entrusted to an adult master so the young person can receive formal instruction in a trade with the goal of becoming an independent master. As with any trade, instruction is passed on over a period of many years by words but even more so by the silent observation and imitation of the example of the master.

179 Family chastity formation is an apprenticeship in the correct use of one’s sexuality, and God the Father has called parents to be the master teachers of their children within the “workshop” or school of the home. The Church insists that there is no substitute for parents training their own children on how to integrate sexuality within their personality, so that they can master love in marriage or virginity.¹³⁷

Leading and Teaching by Example

180 By learning about Catholic moral teachings on marriage, sexuality, and family life, and in practicing conjugal chastity, parents are better able and qualified to train their children in chastity and love. Nazareth is the model home school and workshop, where Jesus, as an apprentice to Joseph and Mary, acquired mastery in pure love with the help of his parents’ example, teaching, prayer, and daily work. Since the home is “well suited for education in the virtues,” parents must first create an environment within the home “where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity and disinterested service are the rule” and teach their children to subordinate their human inclinations to the spiritual dimensions of life.¹³⁸

¹³³ [24-28] A readiness to follow Jesus, even to giving up one’s life for him, is the condition for true discipleship; this will be repaid by him at the final judgment.

¹³⁴ [24] Deny himself: to deny someone is to disown him (see Matthew 10:33; 26:34-35) and to deny oneself is to disown oneself as the center of one’s existence.

¹³⁵ Mt 16:24.

¹³⁶ Cf. CCC, 2342.

¹³⁷ Cf. TMHS, 41-43.

¹³⁸ Cf. CCC, 2223.

One Cannot Give What One Does Not Possess

181 Parents must teach their children to master their passions, desires, and selfishness which is crucial to learning how to live chaste and holy lives. The Church explains why an apprenticeship in self-discipline and self-mastery is so essential to love:

Insofar as it entails sincere self-giving, it is obvious that growth in love is helped by that discipline of the feelings, passions and emotions which leads us to self-mastery. One cannot give what one does not possess. If the person is not master of self—through the virtues and, in a concrete way, through chastity—he or she lacks that self-possession which makes self-giving possible. *Chastity is the spiritual power which frees love from selfishness and aggression.* To the degree that a person weakens chastity, his or her love becomes more and more selfish, that is, satisfying a desire for pleasure and no longer self-giving.¹³⁹

The Fifth Pillar: Acquiring Virtues

182 The virtues essential for living a holy and chaste life are acquired over time through

education, effort, sacrifice, prayer, and frequent reception of the sacraments. On the supernatural level, the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity are gifts infused by the Father into the souls of His children so they can act as His sons and daughters. On the natural level, the four cardinal or human virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance are acquired through effort. They are “habitual and stable perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith.”¹⁴⁰ In daily acts of virtue, the heart is widened in its capacity to receive divine love and produces the fruits of peace, joy, and love in our relationships with others.

The Virtue of Chastity

183 “The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of *temperance*, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason.”¹⁴¹ In the formation of a child to live a chaste life, his character must develop through the practice of temperance by asserting reason over the passions and appetites, by moderating the attraction of pleasures, by using created goods with balance, and by keeping desires within the limits of what is honorable.¹⁴²

184 While chastity is a moral or human virtue acquired through effort, it “is also a gift

¹³⁹ TMHS, 16.

¹⁴⁰ CCCC, 378.

¹⁴¹ CCC, 2341.

¹⁴² Cf. *Ibid.*, 1809.

from God, a *grace*, a fruit of spiritual effort.¹⁴³ The Holy Spirit enables one whom the water of Baptism has regenerated to imitate the purity of Christ.”¹⁴⁴ Chastity and holiness are holistic and lead to a healthy expression of sexuality in one’s mind, body, and spirit, bringing integration and wholeness to the inner unity of body and spirit.¹⁴⁵

Acquiring the Virtue of Chastity Leads to the Ability to Love

185 Family chastity formation is about healthy personality development through acquiring virtues and integrity in one’s behavior and character, so that one can love in truth and freedom. “Charity is the *form* of all the virtues. Under its influence, chastity appears as a school of the gift of the person. Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self. Chastity leads him, who practices it, to become a witness to his neighbor of God’s fidelity and loving kindness.”¹⁴⁶

186 Couples want to be happy in marriage and their children to be blessed with happiness in love. Contrary to popular opinion, this doesn’t just happen through chance or luck. Happiness in love is the result of formation in chastity and acquiring virtues. Everyone has a choice, the wide or the narrow road, and the “alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and

finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.”¹⁴⁷ In order to be faithful in love and resist temptations, constant effort is required by using the means God has provided: “the grace of God, the help of the sacraments, prayer, self-knowledge, the practice of an asceticism adapted to various situations, the exercise of the moral virtues, especially the virtue of temperance which seeks to have the passions guided by reason.”¹⁴⁸

The Sixth Pillar: The Vocation to Holiness

187 Family chastity formation is ordered so that parents and children can fulfill their vocation to love and holiness. “Only a person who knows how to be chaste will know how to love in marriage and virginity.”¹⁴⁹ Obedience and right order in relationships, the formation of conscience, sacrificial love, the apprenticeship in self-mastery, and the acquiring of virtues are all meant to lead to holiness, which is perfect and pure love in action.

A Universal Call

188 God the Father speaks within the heart of each person calling them to holiness. Vatican II said that, since the Church is the body and

¹⁴³ Cf. Gal 5:22.

¹⁴⁴ CCC, 2345; Cf. 1 Jn 3:3.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid., 2337.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 2346.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 2339; Cf. Sir 1:22.

¹⁴⁸ CCCC, 490. Asceticism is the practice of ascesis or penance, mortification, and self-denial to achieve self-mastery and foster perfection by embracing the way of the cross. Cf. CCC, Glossary.

¹⁴⁹ TMHS, 68.

bride of Christ, every member of her must be pure and holy.¹⁵⁰ Married couples, in particular, must reflect this supernatural union of love, along with priests, religious, and single men and women who love in virginal purity.

189 Everyone is called to love as Christ loves, so husbands, wives, parents, children, priests, and religious might live as true sons and daughters of one family of God the Father. Jesus “preached holiness of life to each and everyone of His disciples of every condition...¹⁵¹ Indeed He sent the Holy Spirit upon all men that He might move them inwardly to love God with their whole heart and their whole soul, with all their mind and all their strength¹⁵² and that they might love each other as Christ loves them.”¹⁵³

190 The call to holiness is a call to love, friendship, and communion with God and with all of our brothers and sisters; the call to holiness is universal and is “therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.”¹⁵⁴ We are called to love within the family and as a family of our heavenly Father.

The Family’s Role in Fostering Vocations

191 As a domestic church, the “family carries out *a decisive role* in cultivating and

developing all vocations.”¹⁵⁵ Chastity formation in the family is necessary for both parents and children so that all family members can better “understand and discover *their own vocation to marriage or to consecrated virginity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.*”¹⁵⁶

192 Healthy marriages and families formed in the truth of human sexuality will bear fruit in vocations to the priesthood and religious life:

“When marriage is not esteemed, neither can consecrated virginity or celibacy exist; when human sexuality is not regarded as a great value given by the Creator, the renunciation of it for the sake of the kingdom of heaven loses its meaning.” A lack of vocations follows from the breakdown of the family, yet where parents are generous in welcoming life, children will be more likely to be generous when it comes to the question of offering themselves to God.¹⁵⁷

The Vocation to Marriage

193 Sexuality is not only very good, but holy, and “Christian marriage is a *sacrament* whereby sexuality is integrated into a path to holiness.”¹⁵⁸ Chastity formation “for true love is always the best preparation for the vocation to marriage. In the family, children and young people can learn to live human sexuality within the solid

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG), 39.

¹⁵¹ *Mt.* 5:48; (2) Cfr. Origenes, *Comm. Rom.* 7, 7: PG 14, 1122 B. Ps.-Macarius, *De Oracione*, 11: PG 34, 861 AB. S. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* II-II, q. 184, a. 3.

¹⁵² Cf. *Mc.* 12, 30.

¹⁵³ LG, 40; Cf. *Jn.* 13:34; 15:12.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. TMHS, 8.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

context of Christian life. They can gradually discover that a stable Christian marriage cannot be regarded as a matter of convenience or mere sexual attraction. By the fact that it is a vocation, marriage must involve a carefully considered choice, a mutual commitment before God and the constant seeking of his help in prayer.”¹⁵⁹

The Vocation to Virginitly or Celibacy for the Kingdom

194 No greater gift is possible than to give totally and without reserve one’s self, body and soul, to another in pure love, so the Church tells parents they must “devote special attention and care to education in virginitly or celibacy as the supreme form of that self-giving that constitutes the very meaning of human sexuality.”¹⁶⁰

195 Parents should rejoice and be generous in supporting children who show signs of a higher vocation of virginitly or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom and “adapt formation for chaste love to the needs of those children, encouraging them on their own path up to the time of entering the seminary or house of formation, or until this specific call to self-giving with an undivided heart matures. They must respect and appreciate the freedom of each of their children, encouraging their personal vocation and without

trying to impose a pre-determined vocation on them.”¹⁶¹

196 Christian revelation presents the two vocations to love: marriage and virginitly, both of which involve a total and joyful gift of self. Through chastity formation, parents help children realize their life is a gift of God, “a gift which can express itself in matrimony, in consecrated virginitly, in self-dedication to one’s neighbor towards an ideal, or in the choice of priestly ministry.”¹⁶²

Holiness: The Soul’s Spousal Union with Christ

197 The Catechism reminds us that the marriage bond and family ties are important but in the end not absolute.¹⁶³ The one “marriage” that lasts forever is the soul’s union with God. Jesus Christ is the bridegroom of our souls, and this “bond with him takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social.”¹⁶⁴ From the very beginning of the Church there have been men and women who have renounced the great good of marriage to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, to be intent on the things of the Lord, to seek to please him, and to go out to meet the Bridegroom who is coming.”¹⁶⁵ Virgins for the sake of the kingdom are a living “sign of the

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁶⁰ FC, 37.

¹⁶¹ TMHS, 35.

¹⁶² John Paul II, Address to participants in a Family Ministry Convention sponsored by the Italian Episcopal Conference (April 28, 1990), 3 and 4; *L’Osservatore Romano*, English Edition (May 7, 1990), 34.

¹⁶³ Cf. CCC, 2232.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Lk 14:26; Mk 10:28-31.

¹⁶⁵ CCC, 1618; Cf. Rev 14:4; 1 Cor 7:32; Mt 25:6.

supremacy of the bond with Christ and of the ardent expectation of his return, a sign which also recalls that marriage is a reality of this present age which is passing away.”¹⁶⁶

The Seventh Pillar: The Goal of Eternal Life

198 Family chastity formation in this life really has only one goal: to taste the promise of heaven on earth now and to be prepared to enjoy eternal life where, in the beatific vision, we will see God face to face. Chastity increases faith, hope, and charity in this life and “is a promise of immortality” in the next.¹⁶⁷

199 Purity of heart is the precondition of the vision of God, and the pure of heart are those who are holy through being charitable,¹⁶⁸ chaste,¹⁶⁹ and orthodox in the faith.¹⁷⁰ Eternal life depends on maintaining purity in heart, mind, body, and soul.

200 With the innocence of children, we pray daily for our Father’s heavenly kingdom to come; and in purity as the bride of Christ, we plead with love that Jesus consummate the marriage union of heaven and earth: “The Spirit and the bride¹⁷¹ say, ‘Come.’ Let the hearer say, ‘Come...’¹⁷² Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”¹⁷³

201 St. John’s vision of the wedding feast of the Lamb in Revelation is an encouragement to choose the blessed way of chastity and a warning to reject the wicked way of impurity since this choice has eternal consequences:

Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed¹⁷⁴ are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.” ...¹⁷⁵ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem,¹⁷⁶ coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ...The one who sat on the throne¹⁷⁷ said, “Behold, I make all things new” ...¹⁷⁸ I (am) the Alpha and the Omega,

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 1619; Mt 19:12.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 2347.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. 1 Tim 4:3-9; 2 Tim 2:22.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. 1 Thess 4:7; Col 3:5; Eph 4:19.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. CCC, 2518; Cf. Titus 1:15; 1 Tim 1:3-4; 2 Tim 2:23-26.

¹⁷¹ [17] Bride: the church; see the note on Rev 21:2.

¹⁷² [20] Come, Lord Jesus: a liturgical refrain, similar to the Aramaic expression Marana tha—“Our Lord, come!”—in 1 Cor 16:22; cf. the note there. It was a prayer for the coming of Christ in glory at the parousia; see the note on Rev 1:3.

¹⁷³ Rev. 22:17, 20.

¹⁷⁴ [9] Blessed: see the note on Rev 1:3.

¹⁷⁵ [21:1-22:5] A description of God’s eternal kingdom in heaven under the symbols of a new heaven and a new earth; cf. *Isaiah* 65:17-25; 66:22; Matthew 19:28.

¹⁷⁶ [2] New Jerusalem . . . bride: symbol of the church (Gal 4:26); see the note on Rev 19:7.

¹⁷⁷ [5] The one . . . on the throne: God himself; cf. Rev 4:1-11.

¹⁷⁸ [6] They are accomplished: God’s reign has already begun; see the note on Rev 20:1-6. Alpha . . . Omega: see the note on Rev 1:8. Life-giving water: see the note on Rev 7:17.

the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give a gift from the spring of life-giving water. The victor¹⁷⁹ will inherit these gifts, and I shall be his God, and he will be my son. But as for cowards,¹⁸⁰ the unfaithful, the depraved, murderers, the unchaste, sorcerers, idol-worshippers, and deceivers of every sort, their lot is in the burning pool of fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”¹⁸¹

203 Because of the power of sin and the possibility of eternal separation from God for the unchaste, it is absolutely necessary to provide married couples and children with a solid chastity formation program built on the foundation of God’s plan for human sexuality. The wise will build their homes on the rock foundation of God’s plan for love. The wise will set in place the seven pillars needed not only to provide a defense from the relentless attacks of the world, the flesh, and the devil, but also to provide a safe, interior sanctuary of life within the family where pure life-giving streams can flow from the heart of love and bear fruit in peace, joy, health, and new life.

Summary Points

204 Obedient faith and trust in God the Father’s plan for marriage and family life, as taught by the Catholic Church, is the first of seven pillars of a solid family home.

205 Formation of conscience, in imitation of the Father means parents form the consciences of their children by a daily, heart-to-heart, personal, and individualized dialogue of love, prayer, and instruction.

206 Sacrificial love, in imitation of Christ’s example of self-giving love on the cross, practiced by parents and children alike, helps the family to overcome inordinate self-love.

207 An apprenticeship in self-mastery means parents are the master teachers and children the apprentices, as they learn self-mastery of love in the school of the home.

208 Acquiring virtues means parents help children to act with pure love as true sons and daughters of the Father through education, effort, sacrifice, prayer, and frequent reception of the sacraments.

209 The vocation to holiness is a call for parents to holiness in marital love, to serve as a fertile seedbed in which vocations to marriage and virginity are cultivated and grown.

210 Eternal life is ultimate goal of chastity formation within the family since only the pure of heart will be able to enter the heavenly wedding feast of the Lamb.

¹⁷⁹ [7] The victor: over the forces of evil; see the conclusions of the seven letters (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). He will be my son: the victorious Christian enjoys divine affiliation by adoption (Gal 4:4-7; Romans 8:14-17); see the note on Rev 2:26-28.

¹⁸⁰ [8] Cowards: their conviction is so weak that they deny Christ in time of trial and become traitors. Second death: see the note on Rev 2:11.

¹⁸¹ Rev 19:9; 21:1-2, 5-8.