

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 8, 1998

From: Deacon Roger T. Ostrom, Office for Family Life
Rev. Paul F. deLadurantaye, Office of Catechetics
Sr. Patricia Helene Earl, IHM, Office of Catholic Schools

To: Pastors
Principals
Directors of Religious Education

Subject: Guidelines for Catechesis in Human Sexuality Working Draft

Over the past year, the Office for Family Life, the Office of Catechetics, and the Office of Catholic Schools, together with a committee of parents, teachers of religion, and priests, have collaborated in an updating of the existing diocesan guidelines for catechesis in human sexuality. The enclosed pages represent the fruits of that updating, presented as a draft document. We are interested in and welcome your insights, comments and suggestions regarding this working document. Please send your comments in writing to any of us at the diocesan offices listed above. All responses will be considered and appropriate adjustments can be made to the enclosed working draft. The final copy of the revised guidelines will be available for distribution and implementation upon the approval of the diocesan bishop.

The task of providing a sound and responsible formation in human love and the use of one's sexuality is a necessary and delicate one. It is our hope that these revised guidelines will strengthen parents, the primary educators of their children, in their teaching of and witness to the truth and meaning of human sexuality. It is also our hope that teachers in Catholic schools and religious education programs will be enabled to assist parents in fulfilling this most important responsibility. To this end, our three diocesan offices desire to place the resources of the Church at the service of parents and teachers so that family life may be strengthened, and our young people may, in an appropriate manner, come to appreciate and live the beauty of God's gift of human sexuality.

A VOCATION TO LOVE
GUIDELINES FOR CATECHESIS IN HUMAN SEXUALITY
IN PARISHES AND SCHOOLS OF THE DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

INTRODUCTION

"The whole Church is obliged to a deep reflection and commitment, so that the new culture now emerging may be evangelized in depth, true values acknowledged, the rights of men and women defended and justice promoted in the very structures of society. It becomes necessary, therefore, on the part of all to recover an awareness of the primacy of moral values, which are the values of the human person as such. The great task that has to be faced today for the renewal of society is that of recapturing the ultimate meaning of life and its fundamental values. The education of the moral conscience, which makes every human being capable of judging and of discerning the proper ways to achieve self-realization according to his or her original truth, thus becomes a pressing requirement that cannot be renounced" (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 1981, par. #8).

These words of Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation on the family, are a call to renewal and to recapturing life's ultimate meaning and value. Education, in the light of Gospel values and the nature, demands, and responsibilities of human sexuality, continues to challenge parents who have the right and duty to teach their children in accord with their age and personal development. "Among the many difficulties parents encounter today, despite different social contexts, one certainly stands out: giving children an adequate preparation for adult life, particularly with regard to education in the true meaning of sexuality. This new context is made worse by what we observe: an eclipse of the truth about man, which, among other things, exerts pressure to reduce sex to something commonplace. 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, an ambience lacking basic values of life, human love and the family. In such a situation, many Catholic parents turn to the Church to take up the task of providing guidance and suggestions for educating their children, especially in the phase of childhood and adolescence" (The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 1995, par. #1).

"The Pontifical Council for the Family has received repeated and pressing requests to provide guidelines in support of parents in this delicate area of education. Aware of this family dimension of education for love and for living one's own sexuality properly, and conscious of the unique 'experience of humanity' of the community of believers, our Council wishes to put forward pastoral guidelines, drawing on the wisdom which comes from the Word of the Lord and the values which illuminate the teaching of the Church" (*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, par. #1-2).

Responding to earlier requests for guidelines for catechesis in religious education in the

Diocese of Arlington, Bishop Welsh authorized the publication of guidelines developed by the Diocesan Religious Education Office in 1981 to govern the content and to suggest strategies for elementary and secondary religious education. Integral to those guidelines are learning objectives that support the teaching of the Church in the areas of morality, reverence for life, and human sexuality. In 1988, the Office of Catechetics and the Office of Catholic Schools developed *A Vocation to Love*, with guidelines to govern catechesis in human sexuality, and in 1990, added an orderly, consistent process of implementation to assure appropriate opportunity for participation, with particular emphasis on respecting the inalienable parental right and duty to teach their children in the area of human sexuality.

Following in this tradition, and respecting the pastoral guidelines contained in *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* issued by the Pontifical Council for the Family, the Diocesan Office for Family Life, the Office of Catechetics and the Office of Catholic Schools, assisted by a committee of people working in the field, have together developed a revised version of *A Vocation to Love*. This revision includes a synopsis of *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, presents the underlying theological principles concerning the meaning and nature of human sexuality, and provides the basic diocesan guidelines for catechesis in human sexuality.

Recent magisterial documents guide the development and selection of a curriculum for catechesis in human sexuality. The present diocesan guidelines are to be read in the broad context of authentic Church teaching articulated in the list of "Church Documents on Catechesis and/or Human Sexuality" which is included within these guidelines. Before taking any steps to implement a program of catechesis in human sexuality, those responsible for planning and implementing such a program should study these documents carefully and attentively, especially the most recent on *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*.

A VOCATION TO LOVE
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SYNOPSIS: *THE TRUTH AND MEANING OF HUMAN SEXUALITY*

Thesis: Parents have the right and duty to teach, in the light of Gospel truth, the nature, the demands and the responsibilities of human sexuality to their children, in accord with the age and personal development of their children.

The Situation and the Problem (*TMHS 1-7*)

Of all the tasks that parents face in their role as educators, one that stands out is the obligation to teach their children the true meaning of human sexuality. Parents have need of guidance from the Church since it is their obligation and right to teach in this delicate area of chastity which is the "spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it toward its full realization." Parents must have confidence that they are not only the cooperators of God's creative power in bringing their children to life, but also the best equipped to share in His care of their children in their growth, especially in the faith.

Called to True Love (*TMHS 4-15*)

As the image of God, man is created for love (#8). Love, the ability to give of self, is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being, as persons and as made and redeemed by God, Whose love was made known in Christ (#8-9). Love is incarnated in the body, and expressed by one's sexuality. Sexuality, which characterizes man and woman physically, psychologically, and spiritually, and as it is a way of relating and being open to others, has love as its intrinsic end (#10-13). This love is a gift from God, for the married and for those called to consecrated life. Such love in marriage includes and surpasses friendship, especially in the spouses' openness to life, every new life being "a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother" (#14-15).

True Love and Chastity (*TMHS 16-25*)

Chastity, required for the proper development of the vocation to love, frees the person from selfishness, enables him to master himself, and thus be capable of the self-giving necessary in true love (#16-17). It matures the person, gives inner peace, and helps develop true self-respect, while making one capable of respecting others. Sometimes, heroic acts of virtue are necessary, for the married and the celibate (#18-19).

The most valid premise for educating children in chastity is the living of conjugal chastity by the parents, who must base their chastity on their love for God. "Any attack on the virtue and chastity of their children [is] an offense against the life of faith itself that threatens and impoverishes [the parents'] own communion of life and grace" (#20-21).

Three goals: (a) to maintain in the family a positive atmosphere of love, virtue and

respect for the gifts of God; (b) to help children understand the value of sexuality and chastity in stages; (c) to help them understand and discover their own vocation to marriage or to consecrated virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (#22). The *Principle of Subsidiarity* must govern the education of children. Parents are primary and must never be replaced as the first teachers of their children. Other bodies may only assist parents, and never take their place, especially in the area of education in sexuality (#23).

In the Light of Vocation (TMHS 26-36)

All are called to holiness, through a vocation to marriage or to virginity or celibacy (#26). The vocation to marriage is a call to love; in marriage, this love is fully human, total, faithful and fruitful (#28-29). Parents will educate their children in the truth about sexuality by themselves living and teaching the unity of the procreative and unitive aspects of the marital act. Love cannot be separated from life and true self-giving (#32). Where chastity is fostered, as the proper living out of one's sexuality, vocations to consecrated virginity or celibacy will grow and mature (#34-36).

Father and Mother as Educators (TMHS 37-47)

"The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, original and primary, irreplaceable and inalienable." This right to teach their children is especially true of education in matters of sexuality (#41-42). "No one is capable of giving moral education in this delicate area better than duly prepared parents" (#43). Parents would fail in their duty if they did nothing or if they tolerated immoral or inadequate formation being given to their children (#44). Their task is difficult in the contemporary climate, yet the Church encourages parents to have confidence in their capabilities (#46-47).

Paths of Formation Within the Family (TMHS 48-63)

"The family environment is thus the normal and usual place for forming children and young people to consolidate and exercise the virtues of charity, temperance, fortitude and chastity." Parents should demand support from the state (#48). They are to see to their children's growth in virtue. Basic virtues are learned at home: decency and modesty, legitimate privacy, and self-control (#52-58). Parents are to be models for their children, and are to foster their family as a sanctuary of life and faith (#59-63).

Learning Stages (TMHS 64-111)

Four principles regarding information about sexuality: (1) Each child is a unique and unrepeatable person and must receive individual formation (#65). (2) The moral dimension must always be part of their explanations (#68). (3) Formation in chastity and timely information regarding sexuality must be provided in the broadest context of education for love (#70). (4) Parents should provide this information with great delicacy, but clearly and at the appropriate time (#75). In teaching their children, parents must take into consideration the stages of development: *the years of innocence; puberty; adolescence in one's plan of life; and toward adulthood* (#77-111).

Practical Guidelines (*TMHS 112-150*)

Parents, aware of their right and duty in this area, should associate with other parents; be informed on the content and methodology of supplementary education; be allowed to attend classes; be free to remove their children from improper instruction (#114-117). Educators must not interfere with these principles (#118). The sacred mystery of human sexuality must be presented according to the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church (#122). Only information proportionate to a child's phase of development should be presented (#124). No material of an erotic nature should be presented to children of any age (#126). No one should ever be pressured into acting against modesty (#127).

The best method is the personal dialogue between parents and their children (#129). Others may assist in the moral education of children, but always with the awareness and consent of the parents (#130-133). Secularist, anti-natalist methods must be avoided (#136). Methods that introduce graphic material to the young must be rejected (#139).

Above all, parents are to be made aware both of their right, their duty, and their competence to teach their children the truth about human sexuality, in a spirit of faith, and with reliance on the grace of God and the support of the Church (#145-150).

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**TEN UNDERLYING THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES
OF THE
DIOCESAN GUIDELINES ON CATECHESIS IN HUMAN SEXUALITY**

1. Created in God's image out of love, each human person is a unity of body and soul. The human person is endowed with a unique dignity and is called to share in the supernatural life of God.
2. The fullness of what it means to be human is found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man.
3. Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church to continue His redemptive mission. Relying on the truths of Divine Revelation and furnished with the authority to teach in the name of Christ, the Church is compelled to proclaim the truth about the meaning, dignity and purposes of human sexuality.
4. In accomplishing this task, the Church affirms that parents are the primary educators of their children. This right is essential, original and primary, and it is irreplaceable and inalienable. The Church seeks to prepare and support parents in the fulfillment of their God-given role as their children's primary teachers of Christian values and virtues.
5. God's gift of sexuality is the sum total of those physical, emotional and spiritual qualities that make us male or female. Sexuality concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and generally the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others.
6. All Christ's faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life. Chastity is the virtue which ensures that one's thoughts, words and actions correspond to God's plan for the gift of sexuality.
7. The strength to live a mature, loving and chaste life comes from one's relationship with Christ. Prayer and frequent participation in the sacraments of the Church, especially Penance and the Eucharist, are sources of God's grace helping each person to live in the manner God wills.
8. Sexual intercourse is reserved for the union of husband and wife in marriage and for the procreation and education of children.

9. Physical, moral and spiritual difference and complementarity between men and women are oriented towards the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. Thus, heterosexuality is normative. While homosexual inclinations, though disordered, are not in themselves sinful, homosexual activity and behavior is morally wrong.
10. Abstinence outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage are the only two morally acceptable ways of preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

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GUIDELINES FOR CATECHESIS IN HUMAN SEXUALITY

1. Parishes have the responsibility of providing parent education and resources in order to help parents fulfill their responsibility as primary educators of their children and in teaching them about human sexuality.
2. The Arlington Diocese does not mandate separate human sexuality programs for either its schools or its religious education programs. However, catechesis for development in virtue, the value of chastity, and moral formation will, by its nature, touch on the area of human sexuality. Therefore, to some extent, this topic will be part of general catechesis and faith formation.
3. Where parishes choose to implement separate programs in human sexuality, they are to be clearly designated as "opt-in" programs. The initiation or continuation of any separate program of catechesis in human sexuality should follow the "Steps for Implementation" which are included in this document.
4. Pastors are to be involved in both the selection and training of responsible personnel for catechesis in human sexuality and in the determination of content to be presented.
5. Catechists, who should be faithful to the Magisterium, should only carry out their responsibilities with the consent of parents who have been informed of the content to be presented and who have agreed to their children's participation.
6. The selection and/or development of catechetical materials or programs in human sexuality for either schools or parochial religious education must be in compliance with recent magisterial guidelines, especially: (a) *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*; (b) *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World [Familiaris Consortio]*; and (c) *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*.
7. The psycho-sexual development of children and recognition of the latency period of young children must guide the choice of material to be presented.
8. A copy of these guidelines should be on file and easily accessible to parents in all parishes and schools.

CHURCH DOCUMENTS ON CATECHESIS AND/OR HUMAN SEXUALITY

<i>To Teach As Jesus Did</i> (TTJD) United States Catholic Conference	1972
<i>Sharing The Light Of Faith: National Catechetical Directory</i> (NCD) United States Catholic Conference	1978
<i>Education In Human Sexuality For Christians</i> (EHSC) United States Catholic Conference	1981
<i>Apostolic Exhortation On The Family – Familiaris Consortio</i> (FC) Pope John Paul II	1981
<i>Educational Guidance In Human Love</i> (EGHL) Congregation for Catholic Education	1983
<i>Code Of Canon Law</i> Pope John Paul II	1983
<i>The Truth And Meaning Of Human Sexuality</i> (TMHS) The Pontifical Council for the Family	1995
<i>General Directory For Catechesis</i> (GDC) Congregation for the Clergy	1997

**HUMAN SEXUALITY PROGRAM
STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION BY PARISHES AND/OR SCHOOLS
DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON**

I. SELECTION OF LEADERSHIP TEAM

1. Pastor
2. Principal
3. DRE
4. Teacher(s)/Catechist(s)
5. Parent(s)

II. FORMATION OF LEADERSHIP TEAM

1. Familiarize members with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and United States Bishops teachings on catechesis in human sexuality. (cf. List of Church Documents on Catechesis and Human Sexuality)
2. Review A VOCATION TO LOVE: Guidelines for Catechesis in Human in Human Sexuality in Parishes and Schools of the Diocese of Arlington. (Revised 1998 edition)
3. Study need for human sexuality education program in parish and/or school religious education programs.
4. Inform parents and teachers of formation of such a team.

III. MEETINGS WITH PARENTS AND TEACHERS

1. Announce dates for meetings through parish and school communications so that parents and teachers can meet the leadership team.
2. At meeting (s):
 - Introduce leadership team and its purpose
 - Familiarize parents and teachers with Church teachings and Diocesan guidelines on catechesis in human sexuality.
 - Explain rationale of team for implementing program on catechesis in human sexuality.
 - Provide opportunity for parental and teacher response to team's rationale.
 - Provide ways for parents to express in writing their hopes and concerns for a program.

3. After meeting(s), the team
 - Assesses parental and teacher response regarding a program.
 - Selects resources and catechists for a program.
 - Provides opportunities for parents to preview materials to be used so that parents can make informed decisions about their children's participation.
 - Provides appropriate teacher training.

IV. INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN

1. Team develops a parent component for the program.
2. Team determines and announces the specifics of when and how the program will be offered.
3. Team implements program.

V. PROCEDURES RESPECTING PARENTAL CHOICE TO OPT INTO THE PROGRAM FOR THEIR CHILDREN

1. For school programs, staff prepares alternate activities for children not participating in human sexuality catechesis.
2. Team publishes alternate option.
3. Team publicizes availability of resources for parents to use in instructing their own children.
4. Team distributes a form for parents to indicate whether their children will or will not participate in the human sexuality catechesis.
5. Parents return the form to the parish or school.

VI. EVALUATION OF PROGRAM

1. Team distributes to parents, teachers, and students (7th grade or older), a written questionnaire for evaluating the program implemented.
2. Team reviews evaluations and prepares recommendations for future catechesis.
3. Team forwards program evaluations to either the Office of Catechetics or the Office of Catholic Schools, along with a copy of the completed checklist.

CHECKLIST

1. Members of Leadership Team Selected:

Pastor: _____

Principal: _____

DRE: _____

Parent(s): _____

Teacher(s)/Catechist(s): _____

2. Members received copies of documents cited in A VOCATION TO LOVE on this date:

3. Team met to discuss these documents and parish needs on this (these) date(s):

4. Decision to respond to parish needs: (circle as applicable)

- a. Provide and publicize availability of materials for parents
- b. Provide educational sessions for parents
- c. Provide catechetical sessions for children

A parish might select 1,2, or all 3 options.

If leadership team selects Option c, then the following steps are also necessary:

5. Meeting for parents and teachers to meet leadership team was publicized on these dates in these vehicles (e.g. parish bulletin, school newsletter etc.).

Date: _____ Vehicle: _____

Date: _____ Vehicle: _____

Date: _____ Vehicle: _____

6. Meeting(s) with parents and teachers were held on this (these) date(s):

(It is recommended that a record of attendance be kept with this checklist along with all written expressions of parental hopes and concerns (cf. Steps for Implementation III.2.).

7. Briefly describe what/how opportunities were provided for parents to preview the materials selected by the team and how parents were notified of such opportunities: _____

8. For school programs, briefly describe what provisions were made for children whose parents did not choose to opt into the sexuality catechesis:

9. Save all evaluations from parents, teachers, and students.

10. Copies of all evaluations with leadership summaries and recommendations sent to the Office of Catechetics/Office of Catholic Schools on this date.
