



Christ is the Teacher of life. He came that we might "have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

This program aims at assisting all to lead richer and happier lives by following Christ's guidance in walking in the ways of love. He is the best teacher about such basic realities. We learn from Him about the kind of love that can endure in this world, about the home and family, about the preciousness of life and of chaste and human love.

The principal goal of *The Catholic Vision of Love* is:

To present Christ's vision of love and sexuality, and to encourage all to live according to the Good News of His teaching on love, marriage, the family, sexuality, and the freedom of self-possession.

All the other goals and objectives follow from this principal goal. These more specific goals are:

- To show that God is the Creator of *all* our being: that our sexuality is God's rich gift, which affects all that we are and serves precious human goods, when it is understood in the light of Christ's gracious teaching.
- To stress the sublime importance of every person and the essential equality of all persons; and to show that each one is called to greatness of heart and to friendship with the Lord.
- To teach the profound Christian motives for reverence for every person, and for a healthy self-esteem; to make clear how precious every person is to God, and how by God's grace each is capable of living the excellent ways Christ makes known.
- To guide all toward a fuller understanding of what Christ teaches in His Church about sexual morality and self possession, and to assist them in seeing how good Christ's teaching is, and how important it is to shape our consciences to live in His ways.
- To lead all toward understanding and acceptance of all the dimensions of our human lives: spiritual, moral, psychological, physical, emotional, sexual, intellectual, and social.
- To seek to guard all from exploitation by providing a clear understanding of everything one needs to know about sexuality to be secure and fortified to live in this contemporary world.
- To support all persons in their efforts to acquire the skills, insights, and virtues they need to have confidence and peace in leading chaste lives.
- To motivate and assist all to follow Christ's vision of love, guarding all the good things God intended sexuality to serve, in lives enriched by heeding the commandments and beatitudes, and by doing the works of mercy.



CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

History

In *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II spoke of the Catholic Church's mandate to reveal "the biblical foundations, the ethical grounds, and the personalistic appropriateness of the good news about human sexuality which God has commanded the Church to proclaim" (N. 31). The Church offers to the world a great body of teachers on the positive value of human love and sexuality. Understanding and appreciating this teaching is absolutely critical for the development of attitudes and values that will guide good Christian behavior.

In 1986, the Pennsylvania Catholic Bishops re-issued their statement on *Guidelines for Sex Education in Schools* emphasizing the role of parents as primary educators of their children. This document urges parents to exercise their right and to fulfill their responsibility to provide adequately for their children's education in the area of human sexuality.

To assist parents in fulfilling this important responsibility, the Diocese of Pittsburgh convened an Advisory Committee on Human Sexuality Education on October 19, 1987. This committee was comprised of more than forty members with diverse professional and experiential backgrounds: parents, clergy, educators, pastoral and legal counselors, religious, diocesan administrative personnel, medical professionals. The members of this committee were charged with a two-fold task:

1. To prepare an educational curriculum for Catholics, particularly for parents seeking to instruct their children in the area of human sexuality from a Catholic perspective.
2. To make recommendations concerning the scope, content and implementation of an educational curriculum, in human sexuality for the young people of the Church of Pittsburgh.

A draft of *Guidelines for Human Sexuality Education* was completed by the Advisory Committee and submitted to the diocese in December 1988. This draft was given to the Theological Commission of the diocese for review. On September 7, 1989, the chairman, Father Robert McCreary, O.F.M. returned the guidelines with some recommendations for its improvement. A revision of the draft was completed in September 1989.

On July 24, 1990, a meeting was called by Father Douglas Nowicki to discuss the current status of these guidelines. Those in attendance were, Fr. Nowicki, Dr. Kenneth Garver, Chairman of the Advisory Committee, Fr. Ronald Lawler and Fr. Kris Stubna.

Bishop Donald Wuerl, in a letter dated August 20, 1990, gave general approval to the *Guidelines for Human Sexuality Education*. In his letter, Bishop Wuerl wrote, "It has been suggested that some further editorial work is still to be done and some supplemental material to be added before the project is completed. A small working group will complete this task. The final draft, I understand, will then be presented to the full committee for review prior to its recommendation and presentation to me for final approval."

In September 1990 work began to develop an outline for a total program on human sexuality education in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Given the immensity of a program of this nature, a decision was made to pilot a program geared specifically for students in grades five through eight. While working on the larger overall total program, immediate attention was given to developing this pilot program. Various personnel were contacted to discuss plans for curricula development and other important elements upon which the success of this program hinges.

In 1990-91, eight parishes were chosen as pilot sites. Evaluations of the work done the first year were favorable, and important suggestions for improving the program were made by parents, priests, principals, directors of religious education, teachers and students. These suggestions were then incorporated into the program, as the program entered another expanded year of pilot programs in 1992-93. Further development of the program, with one entire deanery entering the pilot program, went on in 1993-94 and in another deanery in 1995.

From 1990 to 1996, under the leadership of Fr. Kris D. Stubna, Secretary for Education, the program carefully took shape. The Secretariat coordinated the efforts of many at developing curriculum materials for students in grades five through eight, creating a parent handbook and facilitating parent meetings, identifying and inservicing catechists, and providing means for ongoing evaluation and development.

The Catholic Vision of Love Guidelines and program for implementation were finalized, presented to the consultative boards of the diocese, and approved and promulgated by Bishop Wuerl on August 15, 1994. The program was integrated into the curriculum guidelines for parish religious education programs and in the revised curriculum guidelines for Catholic Schools.

As of 1998, the *Catholic Vision of Love* program has been implemented in every parish and elementary school in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. In addition to these efforts aimed at students in grades five through eight, work is being done in our secondary education curriculum, pre-marriage programs and natural family planning initiatives to address the larger context of human sexuality education.

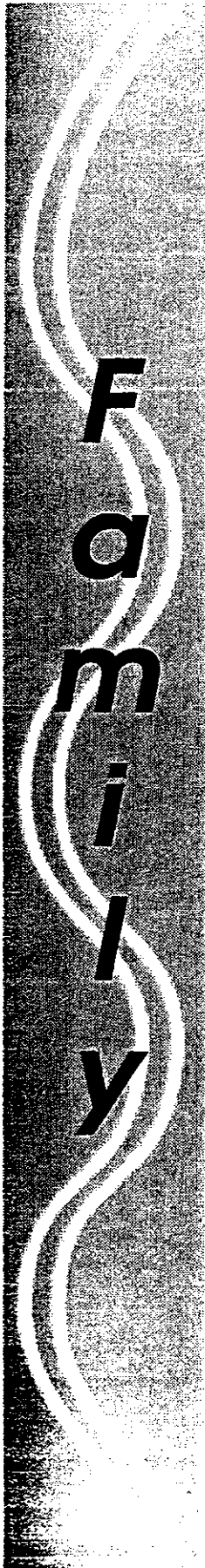
CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE

IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS

The Catholic Church recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children. While others in the Church may assist them in providing a suitable sexual education for their children, the rights and duties of parents remain primary. The general principles to be heeded in this matter are spelled out in the *Guidelines* for education in human sexuality for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The instructions offered in the *Catholic Vision of Love* by our school and CCD catechetical programs are by no means intended to replace the work of parents. They are intended to assist the efforts of parents, and to support them, providing a certain social support to the words of parents.

Parental acceptance and cooperation is indispensable. What parents say to their children has a special force. Nothing can replace parents for many reasons. They have a privileged knowledge of each of their children; their words and their support can in no way be substituted for. Hence parents are to be fully aware of all that goes on in our classes. Much of our effort is aimed at helping parents grasp ways of sharing their own faith and their own responsible love with their children. In many matters, especially the more intimate and sensitive ones, parents should be the ones to speak to their children.



These *Guidelines* wholeheartedly support the traditional Catholic teaching that parents are by right the primary educators of their children, in teaching about love and sexuality as well as in other areas. The Christian community owes parents assistance in their task of providing a good education to their children.

Pope John Paul II emphasized the principle that parents are called to be the primary educators of their children:

The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others. In addition to those characteristics, it cannot be forgotten that the most basic element, so basic that it qualifies the educational role of parents, is parental love, which finds fulfillment in the task of education as it completes and perfects its service of life. As well as being a source, the parents' love is also the animating principle and therefore the norm inspiring and guiding all concrete educational activity, enriching it with the values of kindness, constancy, goodness, service, disinterestedness, and self-sacrifice that are the most precious fruit of love (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 36).

The Pontifical Council for the Family has emphasized this point in its document *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*: "This right also implies an educational duty. If in fact parents do not give adequate formation in chastity, they are failing in their precise duty" (n. 44; see as well nos. 37-49).

Parents especially are called to hand on the faith and the Christian pattern of life to the next generation. To do this well, parents must be adequately formed in the faith. The more securely parents themselves possess the Catholic vision of love, the more effectively they can pass it on to their children. The National Catechetical Directory for the United States (*Sharing the Light of Faith*) stresses the importance of the home in all areas of education and catechesis.

The vital influence of parents on the social and religious development of their children must be more widely recognized. Family life needs to be strengthened so that children and youth will derive their values from the home, rather than from potentially undesirable sources outside the home. The Church, especially through the parish, should provide an intensified support system for family life (*Sharing the Light of Faith*, n. 25).

Parents must make every effort to educate children in the essential values of human life. The "positive and prudent sexual education" that the Second Vatican Council called for (*Declaration on Christian Education [Gravissimum Educationis]*, n. 1) requires the loving communication of the concept that sexuality is a gift that affects all the dimensions of our life. Since human sexuality education "is realized in full in the context of faith" and should be provided in the context of human and family relationships and experiences, it must be penetrated with concern for Chris-

tian love, self-esteem, and reverence for self and others (Congregation for Christian Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, n. 43).

Good parents wish their children to have such an education. However, the circumstances of the times, the pervasiveness of the media, the contradictions of the surrounding culture, the awkwardness of communication with young people often dominated by their peers, and the innate sensitivity of the task all serve to make this responsibility of speaking about sexuality with their children very difficult at times. Parents have a right to expect from the Church community assistance in this task; not an assistance that replaces their role, but one that fortifies them and enables them to do this important parental task well.

As “a community of persons bound together by love” (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 18), the family seeks to form both the mind and heart of its young members. This education of the heart, this guidance given to feelings and affections as well as to the mind, is also stressed in these *Guidelines*. Full personal development requires growth in understanding of our own feelings and affections and in learning how to shape and direct our affections in ways that are faithful to those we love and to all that is good and helpful in directing our lives wisely.

It is in the home that this affective education is best provided. Each person is unique, and the attentive (but not dominating) care of those who love the young is needed to help them integrate their deeply felt feelings with intelligent and faithful love for the goods that faith and intelligence grasp. No one can become more helpful than parents in assisting children to realize in concrete circumstances what the Lord expects of them in these matters.

The United States bishops continually stress the centrality of the family in shaping the whole person and in instilling values. The bishops note the value of the good family’s witness as a sign of fidelity and hope:

For the believer the family is the place where God’s image is reproduced in his creation. The family is the community within which the person is realized, the place where all our hopes for the future person are nourished. The family is a learning experience in which fidelity is fostered, hope imparted and life honored; it thus increases the moral resources of our culture and, more importantly, of the person. The family is a sign to all mankind of fidelity to life and of hope in the future which becomes possible when persons are in communion with one another; it is a sign to believers of the depth of this fidelity and this hope when these center on God; it is a sign to Christians of the fidelity and hope which Christ communicates as the elder brother of the family of the Church for which he died (*Human Life In Our Day*, 1257, pp. 356-357, USCC Publications Office [1968]).

“Like every other reality, the family, too, is called upon to develop and grow” (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 65). It is called to shape well the intimate depths of its members, and to urge them to faithfulness in their broad social responsibilities as well. These *Guidelines* acknowledge the importance of the ongoing education of the family, which is challenged to form persons in love and also to practice love in all relationships, so that it does not live closed in on itself, but remains open to the community, moved by a sense of justice and concern for others, as well as by a consciousness of its responsibility toward the whole of society (The Sixth Synod of Bishops, *Message to Christian Families in the Modern World*, October 24, 1980, n. 12).