

PARENT CONNECTION

RCL Benziger

7

Family Life



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Welcome to RCL Benziger Family Life!

You are a family! Your child is a gift from God—and a great responsibility. During these important growing-up years, you are the most important influence in your child's life.

Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *On the Family*, challenged families to become what they are—“a community of life and love.” He invited you to wrap your child in the love of Christ, so that your son or daughter will become a follower of the Lord.

You only have to think back as far as your last family argument to know that it isn't always easy to be a community of love. You can use all the help you can get these days to be a Christian family. The Church supports you, and your parish or school chose RCL Benziger Family Life to be a part of that support.

In the weeks ahead your child will be learning more about the skills and virtues of Christian family living. This booklet will help your child to make the connection between what was learned in the classroom and living it at home. Your role is to do what you already know how to do best—be a good parent. You will be asked to share your own faith and values with your child in informal and enjoyable ways.

The first five sections in the Parent Connection correspond to the five themes in your child's book. Read through these materials. Throughout this booklet you'll find ideas to help you to better understand and communicate with your child. You will also find simple explanations of the Church's teaching with regards to living a healthy and holy family life. You will also learn new ways to create family experiences that your child will remember for a lifetime!



“Family, become what you are . . . a community of life and love.”

Pope John Paul II,
On the Family 17



In *God's Gift of Family*, your child is learning the following concepts.

1

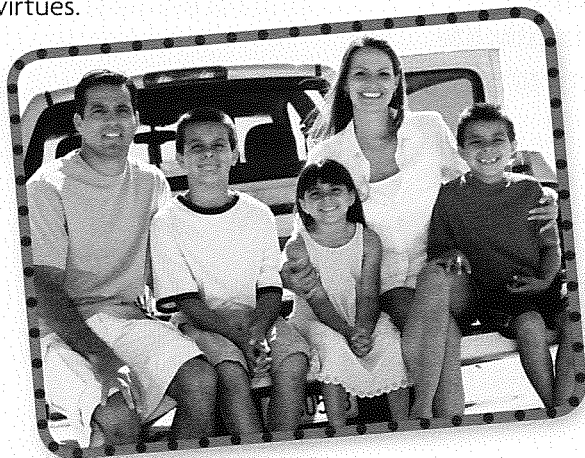
Family Relationships

- ▶ Your birth order or being an only child affects your relationship with others.
- ▶ Both the good habit, or virtue, of compassion and the skill of listening help a person communicate effectively.
- ▶ Conflict is sometimes a part of family life. Learning the skills for resolving conflict peacefully is helpful for better communication.

2

Values and Virtues

- ▶ Many of your values are formed in your family, and influence your actions.
- ▶ Responsible use of positive peer pressure is a sign of maturity and demonstrates respect for others.
- ▶ Putting good values into action results in virtuous living. Your Catholic faith helps you practice Christian virtues.



Connecting with Your Child

Adolescence brings changes both to the child and to the child's family. Building trust and strong lines of communication between you and your child will help to make this change more manageable and enjoyable for all.

Remember that during puberty your child will:

- ▶ Look to you for advice, guidance and support
- ▶ Disagree, argue and display more emotion than before. Be patient, open and flexible—especially when your child isn't. This can help you to work through the day-to-day challenges you will face.
- ▶ Be receptive if you look for opportunities in casual conversation to express your thoughts and ideas. This will seem more like an adult-to-adult conversation and less like a one-sided lecture.

Being a parent who listens, consults and offers advice will help keep you from treating your adolescent like a young child (over-parenting) or treating them like an adult (under-parenting).

Open Communication

As your child searches for independence there are bound to be conflicts. Do not be afraid of the distancing that may develop between you and your child: it is a normal stage of development. This is a way of developing one's identity and establishing oneself as an individual. By keeping the lines of communication open in your family, conflict can be decreased, and it will help your child to feel comfortable in seeking your help.

Need for Monitoring

Today's adolescents have an unprecedented amount of interaction that is not monitored or overseen by adults. Many watch television, use their computers or phones, view Internet sites, play games, chat with people around the world: all *without adult monitoring*. Parents have the opportunity to creatively embrace this seismic cultural shift. Be clear with your child that you will be monitoring their electronic communications. Set clear rules together about what is permitted and appropriate and what is not. Perhaps some private conversations might remain unmonitored, but anything texted, emailed or posted online may be monitored. Discuss the benefits and dangers of sharing information freely, as well as the necessity for parental monitoring. Give your child the freedom to make decisions, yet within the limits of your watchful care.

Wisdom from the Church

Parents must find time to be with their children and take time to talk with them. As a gift and a commitment, children are their most important task. . . . [P]arents should learn how to listen carefully to their children, how to make an effort to understand them.

The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality 51

Family life is a blessing. This is not to deny the difficulties of family life. Rather this statement affirms the positive value of life in the family—even with its stresses and strains. Sharpening one's skills for communication and resolving conflicts is essential for a healthy family life.

Communication

Family members may have different schedules and numerous responsibilities making communication difficult. In addition as family members grow and take steps toward maturity, miscommunication and lack of understanding among family members may occur. The Christian call to live as a family requires each person to work on effective communication and respectful actions. This involves time, patience and skill. Christians are called to relationships and God gives each person the grace to forgive and to help a person live in healthy relationships. Catholic values can also help in the struggle to live as a Christian family.



Catechism of the Catholic Church

Read paragraphs 1804–1829 to learn more about what the Catholic Church teaches about virtues.

Catholic Values

Catholic values find expression in what the Church calls the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. They are charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity (Galatians 5:22). When people turn values into actions, generalizations come into sharper focus. Every Catholic value is founded in love. If a value does not flow from love and lead to love, it is not Christian.

Spend Time with Your Child

Here are some tips on how your family can grow in holiness and health:

- ▶ Set aside a special time to review the Family Time pages your child will bring home and do these activities with your child.
- ▶ Assure your child that they will always be valued and appreciated. Make sure your child understands that no matter how much trouble they may get into, forgiveness can be given.
- ▶ Forgiveness and compassion are necessary components of good communication. Help practice these skills with your child.
- ▶ Explore the Internet with your child. Query information on adolescence. Use the time to discuss rules for Internet use.



Catholic Parenting 101

This section includes more practical advice for parents, health and nutrition tips, parenting skills, and new research in areas of interest to growing families.

Your Child Is Learning

In *God's Gift of Self*, your child is learning the following concepts.

3

Identity

- ▶ During adolescence you are maturing physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.
- ▶ Spiritual maturity is a lifelong growth process that focuses on living as Christ did.
- ▶ God created you—all of you. Much searching for self-identity occurs during adolescence.

4

Gender

- ▶ God created the human race with two genders. Gender is a person's sexual identity as a male or female.
- ▶ The difference between men and women are not signs of their inequality. The way these differences work together is called complementarity.
- ▶ God desires for you to accept and appreciate the gender he created you to be.

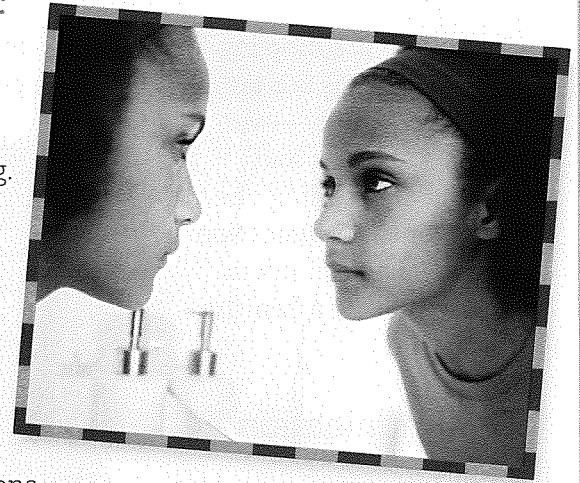
God's Gift of Self

Connecting with Your Child

Your child is going through many changes during this time. You will notice physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual changes. These changes may happen at different times according to each child.

Remember that your child:

- ▶ Has memory skills that are improving, making it easier to move from concrete thinking to abstract thinking.
- ▶ May be experiencing spurts of strong emotions. They are better able to deal with feelings if they can identify and talk about them.
- ▶ Is maturing in their relationship with God. Be ready to answer any questions that they may have concerning God and the Church.



Whatever stage of maturity your child has reached, it is important for you to encourage and support your child intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Gender Identity

How you help your child understand their gender identity will aid in developing their self-image. Children are bombarded with gender stereotypes through various media. However, children are most influenced regarding their role as a man or a woman by the family, particularly the parents. Here are things that you can do to help your child:

- ▶ Model equality and respect for both women and men.
- ▶ Allow your child to explore athletics, the arts and educational endeavors according to their individual gifts.
- ▶ Encourage relationships with trusted adults of the same gender who can serve as mentors or good role models.

Explore with your child the mystery of what it means to be created male or female and how both genders help us to see the goodness of God. Teach your child that God made men and women to complement each other. Men and women both have gifts to share with each other.

Wisdom from the Church

Above all it is important to underline the equal dignity and responsibility of women with men. This equality is realized in a unique manner in that reciprocal self-giving by each one to the other and by both to the children which is proper to marriage and the family.

On the Family 22

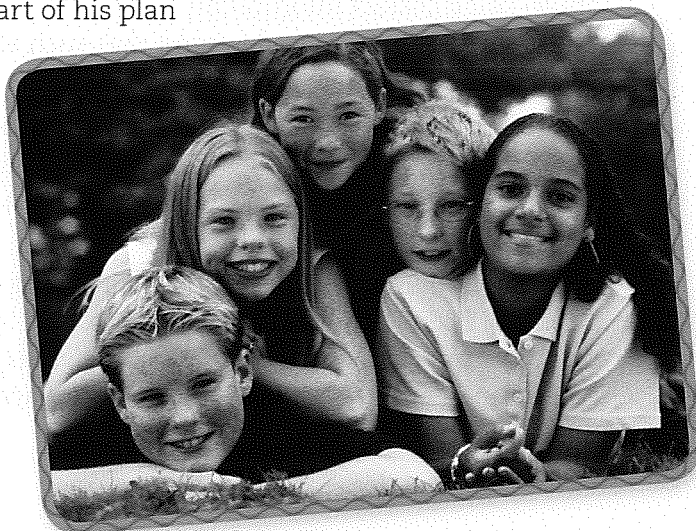
Who am I? Who am I becoming? These questions are closely related to an absorbing question everyone faces: "Do I belong?" No matter a person's stage in life, these questions are pertinent to life and living in community. These questions help a person to understand their way to full maturity—physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

Between the Sexes

Experience and simple observation teach that although men and women have much in common, they are also very different. These differences have been the basis for stereotyping both gender identity and gender roles in society. There are negative implications of gender stereotyping. Sexual stereotypes foster unhealthy ideas and attitudes setting the stage for un-Christian actions toward individuals. In truth there is a complementarity between the sexes. There is a natural sharing of unique gifts, inclinations and qualities between the genders revealing a complete understanding of humanity, according to God's plan.

The Catholic Church teaches that human sexuality is a wonderful gift. Humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. He created us both male and female and this is very good. Being male and female is part of his plan of creation.

Complementary genders can reveal the wisdom and beauty of God as Creator.



Catechism of the Catholic Church

Read paragraphs 2331–2336, to learn more about the Church's teaching on the complementary relationship between women and men.

Spend Time with Your Child

Here are some tips on how your family can grow in holiness and health:

- ▶ Speak with your child about healthy relationships between men and women. Discuss the importance of maturing into a Christian man or a Christian woman.
- ▶ Look for examples of gender stereotyping and talk about the harm it can cause to both genders.
- ▶ Discuss the roles that men and women play in film or shows. List good qualities unique to each gender and similar to both.
- ▶ Pay close attention to the ways advertisers target young teens based on gender. Talk with your child about such methods and identify how teens are being seduced by certain advertisements. Discuss what your child can do to deal with the temptations that typically result from these types of ads.



Catholic Parenting 101

This section includes more practical advice for parents, health and nutrition tips, parenting skills, and new research in areas of interest to growing families.

In *God's Gift of Life*,
your child is learning
the following concepts.

5

Wellness

- ▶ God is the source of beauty, and your body reflects divine beauty.
- ▶ Good hygiene includes physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health habits for wellness.
- ▶ The Fifth Commandment requires that you take good care of your health.

6

Choose Life

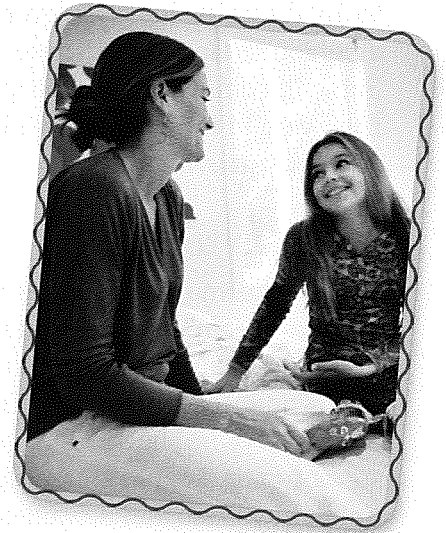
- ▶ Maturity involves making good moral choices for health and life.
- ▶ Substance abuse has dangerous and destructive effects on the mind, body and spirit.
- ▶ Through prayer, you can receive the grace necessary to resist temptations to damage your health and life.

Connecting with Your Child

During this time in your child's life, some very dramatic changes will take place. Growth rate will increase and other physical changes will take place as well. Your child may equate their bodily appearance to who they are as a person. Unfortunately for many adolescents, their self-image suffers as their body changes. A negative body image can lead to anxiety about self and about life in general.

You can help your adolescent by being aware that:

- ▶ Many young people want to deal with weight issues by severe dieting. Developing healthy eating and exercise habits is a proper approach. Make regular exercise and healthy eating a part of your family's daily routine.
- ▶ Adolescents are always snacking. Keep your household stocked with nutritious snacks, such as fruit, whole grain crackers and yogurt.



Healthy Choices

Your child will encounter many opportunities to make healthy or unhealthy decisions about their body. Almost every child will face the challenges associated with the use of drugs and alcohol. In most cases the decision to take drugs or to drink alcohol has to do with wanting to feel mature, being independent, or fit in.

- ▶ Prepare your child to deal with peer pressure. Talk to them about making decisions and resisting negative peer pressure.
- ▶ Be informed so that you can talk to your child about substance abuse using correct information. Adolescents who want to express their maturity need to understand that such abuse is far from being mature.
- ▶ Maintain good communication with your child. Be involved in your child's life. Attend school events, sports activities, and know who your child's friends are. Work to develop a closer relationship with your child.
- ▶ Encourage your child to maintain friends who share common interests. Then help them to remain involved to improve competence. Adolescents engaged in activities that require mastery and competence are much less likely to engage in harmful behavior than those not engaged in such activities.

Wisdom from the Church

Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good.

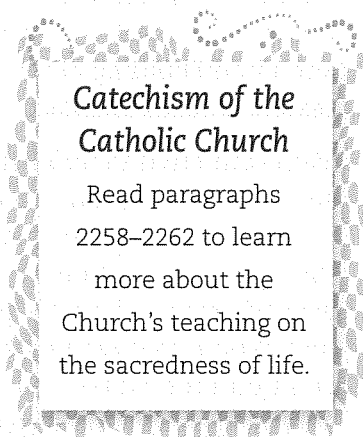
Catechism of the Catholic Church 2288

In Western culture, health has often been viewed exclusively as a person's physical wellness. Yet the Catholic Church teaches that the mind and the spirit must also be included in the description of a healthy person. Good health is not simply an absence of physical sickness or pain. It is a state of wellness involving body, mind and spirit.

Substance Abuse

Christians are called to respect life and their health. Substance abuse inflicts grave damage on human life, and therefore "is a grave offense" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2291). By being informed about the dangers of substance abuse, you will be in a good position to help your family make good and healthy decisions.

Talk honestly with your child about substance abuse. Explain that drugs, alcohol and tobacco are tempting because they can create a brief feeling of pleasure, relief from pain, or escape from life's issues. Also explain that these substances can have a destructive side that is never worth the cost.



Spiritual Health

The spirit needs nourishment just as much as the body. Many people have extremely busy lives and neglect their spiritual needs. This can be especially true for adolescents. The challenge for Christians is to recognize the need for spiritual health as well as physical health. Every person could use a few moments to quietly collect their thoughts and spend time in prayer. Prayer can be one way to act on improving one's complete health.



Spend Time with Your Child

Here are some tips on how your family can grow in holiness and health:

- ▶ Discuss healthy eating, exercise, and grooming tips with your child. Invite your child to help you with these tips as well.
- ▶ Talk about the strong pressure your child may feel to take drugs, smoke tobacco or drink alcohol. Practice with your child what they should do or say if they are offered these substances.
- ▶ Psychologists suggest that boredom is one of the contributors to adolescent recreational drug use. Keep your child busy by developing personal talents and doing service projects for others.
- ▶ Have a family health day. Ask everybody in the family to suggest ways to reorder family priorities. Think of ways to spend time together exercising outdoors. Share a simple and healthy meal together that includes the basic food groups.



Catholic Parenting 101

This section includes more practical advice for parents, health and nutrition tips, parenting skills, and new research in areas of interest to growing families.

In *God's Gift of Love*, your child is learning the following concepts.

7

Love Is

- ▶ There are different aspects of love according to our relationships. Love is expressed either as friends, neighbors, spouses or as charity.
- ▶ St. Paul provides us a description of the qualities of love from which we can examine our own experiences of love.

8

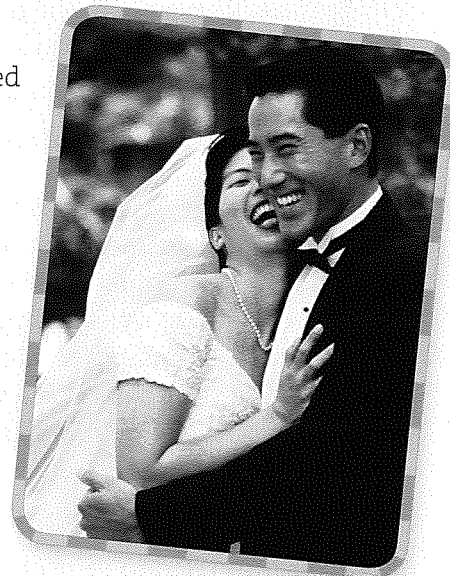
Chastity

- ▶ Sexual attraction is a natural feeling and a gift in God's plan for a man and a woman to become husband and wife.
- ▶ Chastity integrates God's gift of sexuality within us, respecting each other as persons.
- ▶ Through chaste living we can respond to the pressures of becoming sexually active through healthy and holy choices.

Connecting with Your Child

Seventh-graders are not as enlightened about their sexuality as they might think or lead you to believe. While they may have learned a great deal from what they have seen in movies, television, the Internet, and from friends, most lack a solid foundation and understanding of what sexuality really is about.

Help your child to understand that sexuality is about our basic longing to love and to be loved, and that there are many different ways to give and receive love. Help your child understand that waiting for sexual intimacy until marriage is an important choice. Talk about the emotional and moral impact, and the medical and physical risks that come with having sexual intercourse in today's promiscuous society.



While some discussion of the distorted views of sexuality are necessary, focus primarily on God's plan for how your child can give and receive love in family and friendship, helping others, supporting those needing encouragement, and participating in fun group outings instead of individual dates.

Tell your child that the full expression of sexuality is a wonderful and awesome gift from God that is to be reserved for marriage because it is so precious. The Church has always considered sexual intercourse between spouses to be a supremely sacred act of love because it binds the married couple in ways that are deeper and more powerful than we can understand. It opens the possibility of creating a new human being. This new person will need love, food, shelter, education and guidance to mature into a healthy and happy adult. This is why the conjugal act of love is considered holy.

Effective Communication

Keeping the lines of communication open between you and your child is the best way to help them overcome negative peer pressures. Remember that good communication involves careful and respectful listening. If possible, let your child bring up an issue, but always be prepared to raise one yourself, if need be. Try to avoid communicating your own anxiousness about their emerging sexual awareness. Don't be afraid to tell stories about what adolescence was like for you. Respect your adolescent's privacy, but let them know that you are available should they want or need your help.

Wisdom from the Church

[V]irginal and married love are the two forms in which the person's call to love is fulfilled. In order for both to develop, they require the commitment to live chastity, in conformity with each person's own state of life. . . . growth in love is helped by that discipline of the feelings, passions and emotions which leads us to self-mastery. . . . Chastity is the spiritual power which frees love from selfishness and aggression.

Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality 16

One's natural attraction for a person of the complementary, or other, sex is a blessing and a gift from God. This attraction is what can eventually lead a couple to marry and start a family. However, this attraction also presents Christians with a challenge to live chastely.

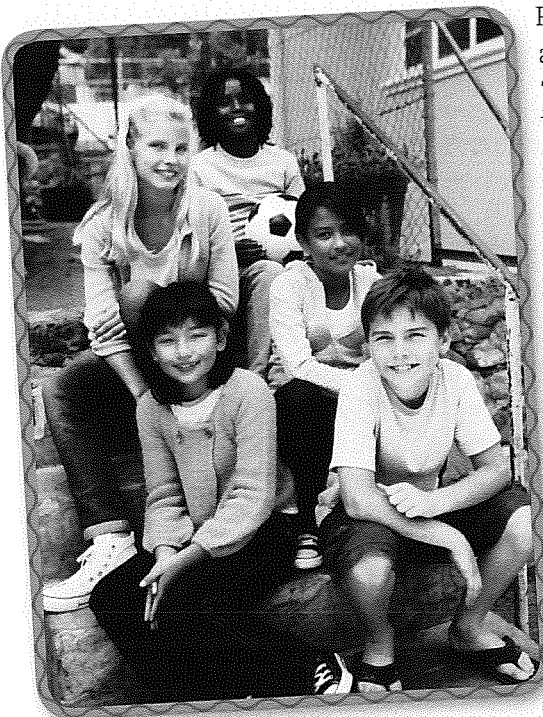
The Gift of Sexuality

Sexuality is a beautiful gift, worthy of respect and a lifelong commitment. The Church teaches abstinence and chastity as a way of safeguarding and respecting the gift of intimacy in marriage. The Church places great value on a person's sexuality and challenges Christians to express their sexuality in a chaste manner, even in marriage.

Respecting God's Gift

Many centuries ago Saint Paul wrote to the people of Corinth about respecting the gift of sexuality: "For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Paul reminds us that we are a part of Christ's body. Therefore, misusing one's body is wrong. The value of chastity helps Christians to integrate "one's thoughts, feelings, and actions in a way that values, esteems, and respects the dignity of oneself and others" (*Human Sexuality*, page 19). By treating one another with respect, Christians recognize the sacredness of the human body, which comes from God.



Catechism of the Catholic Church

Read paragraphs 2337–2359 to learn more about the Church's teaching on the virtue of chastity.

Spend Time with Your Child

Here are some tips on how your family can grow in holiness and health:

- ▶ Talk with your child about the importance of showing respect for others, particularly those of the other sex.
- ▶ Share with your child your values about the gift of sexuality and discuss the Christian view about sexuality.
- ▶ Watch a television program with your child and then discuss the values about sexuality portrayed there. You can also do this for Internet videos. How are these values similar to or different from your family values?
- ▶ Show respect for your maturing child by including them in adult conversation as appropriate. Perhaps they can help prepare a dish to share at dinner parties and the like.



Catholic Parenting 101

This section includes more practical advice for parents, health and nutrition tips, parenting skills, and new research in areas of interest to growing families.

In *God's Gift of Community*, your child is learning the following concepts.

9

Consequences

- ▶ Personal sins have social consequences.
- ▶ The social evils of cyber-bullying, pornography, prostitution, rape and molestation are gravely contrary to God's law.
- ▶ With an informed conscience, a person can better discern the messages in the media as being healthy and holy or not.

10

Civility

- ▶ God created us to live in community. Community living depends on each person treating others with respect.
- ▶ Friendships are nourished by trust, generosity, forgiveness, honesty and loyalty.
- ▶ Through solidarity among friends, we can meet the needs of friendship and build true community.

Connecting with Your Child

Although the family is the primary source of socialization for your child, peer relationships are beginning to have more of an influence on their life. Their friendships will become more important as your child gets older. Also your child will desire and ask to socialize more with friends than with the family.



You can help your young adolescent by:

- ▶ Talking about the qualities of a good friend to help them develop healthy friendships.
- ▶ Reminding them that friendship is about giving and receiving. Friends do not take advantage of or misuse each other. To have good friends, one must be a good friend.
- ▶ Encouraging them to see beyond outward appearances when cultivating friendships. Encourage your child to make friends who share common values, faith and interests.

Learning to deal with interpersonal relationships is very important for the personal development and happiness of your child. Help your child by serving as a guide through the ups and downs of their friendships.

Appreciating Others

Part of growing in our relationships is reaching out to others in the community. This requires acceptance, something your child may already have experienced due to the diversity that already exists in your parish, neighborhood and school. Having respect for the gifts and talents of others is also required to live in harmony with them. Teach your child to be a witness to God's love by reaching out to help others in need. Help your child be a model of service and respect. Evaluate your own willingness to reach out to help others, especially those who are different from you. Help dispel harmful myths and stereotypes that your child may have learned. Encourage with your family an awareness and appreciation of diverse cultures.

Wisdom from the Church

The family is the original cell of social life. . . . Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values.

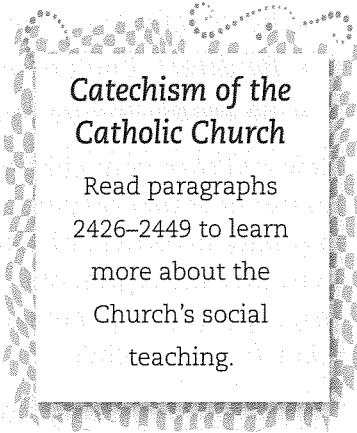
Catechism of the Catholic Church 2207

The family is the very first community to which we belong. It is within the family that a person can learn that community life is good, enriching and necessary. As a person matures, one takes small steps beyond the family home and into other communities.

Community

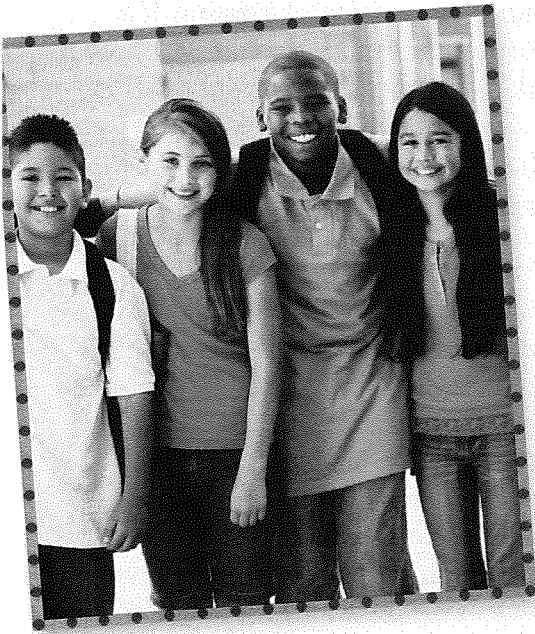
Those who cut themselves off from community life often end up judgmental and intolerant of others. Human beings need experiences in community to help bring out the best in one another. By participating in community, a person benefits from the gifts and talents of others, and offers their own gifts and talents in return. Living in community teaches us how to open our lives to the love of God and to one another.

Christians are uniquely called to live in and contribute to community. We are called to express mutual respect, responsibility, and most importantly, love.



Loving One Another

Love invites us to act. Loving action can be seen in the sacrifices that parents make to provide for their children. Or when a young person sacrifices time or money for a good cause. When love is shared with others, people are treated with dignity and respect—and the whole community benefits.



Spend Time with Your Child

Here are some tips on how your family can grow in holiness and health:

- ▶ Discuss the virtue of charity with your child. Talk about what it means to be generous and why it is important to share what you have with others.
- ▶ Teach your child the value of the Works of Mercy. Visit someone who is sick in the hospital, feed the hungry at a soup kitchen, or work in a used clothing store.
- ▶ Check with your parish or school for places where you and your child can volunteer to help others. Discuss this with your child before hand, do the service together, and talk about the experience afterward. If you enjoyed this project, have your child invite their friends to join you on a later occasion.



Catholic Parenting 101

This section includes more practical advice for parents, health and nutrition tips, parenting skills, and new research in areas of interest to growing families.

Between Parent and Child

You are continually challenged to find the words that will answer their questions simply yet wisely.

To paraphrase an old TV show, “Kids ask the darnedest things!” Today, as never before, children bring home questions about themselves, their friends, and about events they have observed in the world around them and in the media. You are continually challenged to find the words that will answer their questions simply yet wisely. The best advice for answering them is this:

- ▶ **Be simple.** Don't answer more than they are asking.
- ▶ **Be direct.** Don't hesitate. Be as forthright as possible.
- ▶ **Be ready.** Be sure your information is accurate and up-to-date.

Now and then your child will ask a question that surprises you, no matter how well-prepared you try to be. In areas such as human sexuality, it's often difficult to know what to say. The following questions are typical of those asked by seventh-graders. Maybe the responses provided here will be a help to you when similar questions come from your child.

“What does ‘getting hooked’ mean?”

Whether one likes it or not, drugs and alcohol are part of the early adolescent culture. Taking drugs and using alcohol is seen by many young people as something exciting to do. It can also be the source of negative peer pressure. Your child is more vulnerable to substance abuse if they have a low self-image, combined with a great need to fit in. One of the best protections against using drugs or alcohol is having good friends, developing areas of competence, mastering a skill, and developing a meaningful spirituality.

Explain to your child that substance abuse is habit forming. If a person drinks alcohol on a regular basis because they like the way it makes them feel, they might continue to consume excessive amounts. Because of its addictive qualities, a person might need alcohol just to feel normal. The same applies to drug use, although some drugs are more addictive than others. Be sure to mention to your child that addiction itself can lead to death. A person who is an addict can become very thin and sick as drugs take the place of nutritious meals. Alcohol or drug poisoning, when one consumes more alcohol or drugs than the body can handle, can cause one to go into a coma or even stop breathing. Getting hooked is simply a path of addiction and harm.



“How will I know when it’s the right time?”

As your seventh-grader grows in awareness of their own sexuality, they will likely experience a strong attraction for members of the other sex. Today this can be accelerated by what they are exposed to by peers and society. This may lead to a natural curiosity about human sexuality. It is important to address questions about sexuality seriously and to answer them as honestly as possible.

Begin by affirming your child’s curiosity and let them know that such curiosity is normal as they mature. Your child needs to know that part of God’s plan is for men and women to feel attracted to each other, and that there is nothing wrong with having these feelings. This attraction is what may eventually lead a couple to marry and have children.

Let your seventh-grader know that sexual desire is a wonderful and awesome gift from God. And because of being a gift, it is to be shared between spouses in marriage. Sexual intercourse is the fullest expression of spousal love a husband and wife can share. The act itself communicates a loving, lifetime commitment of faithfulness and loyalty. It is the right time for sexual intimacy when one is in a committed marital relationship that is open to creating new life.

“What is so bad about playing violent games or looking at porn, only for the fun of it?”

Your seventh-grader may witness many acts of violence both fictional and real. They may be disturbed and confused by street violence, terrorism and by the violent images seen in the media every day. Your child may come across pornography accidentally while searching the Internet or may play video games involving acts of crime and violence. It is important that your child does not become indifferent to these violent acts or think of pornography—which usually involves acts of violence against people too—as normal. The more violence children experience, the less it is seen as harmful.

Psychologists talk about the law of exposure (i.e., what we are exposed to we think about, even if it was by accident or only for “fun”) and the law of cognition (i.e., what we think about we are more likely to do). So it is not surprising that children who are exposed to more violence become more violent, and children who see more sexually explicit images are sexually active and promiscuous sooner. As the saying goes: “What we see creates thoughts. Thoughts become actions. Actions become habits. Habits become character. Character becomes destiny.” So we need to be careful about what we see!

Discuss appropriately with your child the reality of violence. Help your child realize that violence in real life causes permanent injury and death; there are no reset buttons or “do overs” in life. Let your child know that violence is harmful and is never a good way to resolve conflict.



Thoughts become
actions. Actions
become habits.
Habits become
character.

There is a section at the front of your child's book entitled, "The Catholic Home." It includes prayers, moral principles and actions that flow from Christian living. Your child's teacher will offer some classroom exercises that reinforce these moral principles and actions. Some of these prayers will also be used in the classroom. However, these prayers and principles cannot become a part of your child's life without your support. Here are some ideas for using these pages at home.



Your example of Christian behavior will always be the best teacher.

Prayers

Formula prayers are an important part of our Catholic tradition. They are guides for personal as well as communal prayer, and contribute to our sense of belonging to the Catholic Church. Help your child to learn these prayers by heart and to pray often.

- ▶ Pray each day for a month at family mealtimes. Let your child refer to a printed copy of the prayer until they know it by heart.
- ▶ Take a copy of one of the prayers and cut it into strips. Let your child practice putting the lines of the prayer back in the proper order. This is especially useful with longer prayers.
- ▶ Invite your child to create a personal prayer book out of standard art materials. Include formula prayers as well as personal prayers written by your child.
- ▶ Help your child to see that not all prayers ask for something. Prayers of praise and thanksgiving are of special value, as well as prayers of sorrow that we express to God for our failure to love as we should.

Family Living

Attend Mass regularly as a family. Help your child to follow along and participate in the prayer responses and the singing. By seventh grade your child can be taking an active role in the Liturgy by serving as an altar server, usher, or perhaps even as a member of the choir. Your child is more likely to take on these roles if you and your spouse actively participate in the Liturgy as well.

- ▶ Pray as a family every day. Encourage your child to say the prayer before meals and to pray for those in need.
- ▶ Encourage your child to read the Bible. Read the Bible with the family and discuss together what you have read.
- ▶ Help your child review their day every night before going to bed. Encourage your child to give thanks to God for all the good things that happened during the day.

Above all, model Christian behavior for your child. Your example will always be the best teacher.

Glossary

This glossary lists and defines the important terms as used in the context of the *Family Life* Grade 7 program.

abstinence: the avoidance of any sexual behavior or act

addiction: a psychological dependence on something harmful; an unhealthy habit that is difficult to break

adolescence: a stage of life between childhood and adulthood; derived from the Latin, *adolescens*, meaning "growing toward"

affection: a feeling of fondness, tender attachment or sign of liking someone, being affected by a person or event

agape: the love of human beings for one another that comes from a love of God

anorexia: an eating disorder of habitually fasting and rigorous exercise based on an obsessive fear of being fat

attraction: the sense of being drawn to or pulled toward something or someone; in relationships feelings of warmth, trust, care and generosity are experienced

birth order: the sequence of offspring and thus particular position within the family according to when the person was born

blended family: a family formed when adults with children from an earlier marriage enter a new marriage

body: the physical, mortal part of the person that together with the soul forms one unique human nature

bulimia: an eating disorder in which the person goes through cycles of bingeing and purging

character strength: a good habit that becomes a personal trait enabling one to live virtuously

charity: the theological virtue of the love a person shows another because of one's love for God, who is the source of such love

chastity: the appropriate and successful integration of the gift of sexuality within the whole person in accord with their vocational state of life

chromosomes: threadlike structures inside each cell's nucleus that contain genes

cirrhosis: a disease of the liver that prevents it from removing harmful substances from the blood

civility: the character strength or practice of respectful, polite acts or expressions

compassion: the character strength of being able to identify with the situation and feelings of another, built on an attitude of equality

complementarity: to live with and for each other as equal in dignity, helping each other according to God's plan for the two genders

complementary sex: man and woman are not opposites, but complement each other because God created them to be one; also complementary gender

conjugal love: the unique expression of sexual love between a husband and a wife who freely give their whole self to each other

conscience: the "inner voice" of a human being from God, within whose heart God's law is inscribed to discern or judge right from wrong, good from evil; a sense of obligation to do what is good and to avoid what is evil

contraception: the mentality and practice of separating the conjugal act from its two purposes of self-giving and life-giving

courtesy: a way of acting that shows respect for another person through words and deeds

cyber-bullying: the misuse of the Internet for the purposes of degrading or demeaning others

diligence: in the context of sexual identity, the steadfast attention and appreciation of one's gender

discernment: prayerfully seeking to know God's will individually and personally so that the person's will can align with God's will

divorce: a legal procedure declaring the end of a civil marriage; different from an annulment in the Catholic Church

emotion: a state of feeling or subjective experience of a person or event that results in physiological changes or inclines one to act or not act in regard to something felt or imagined to be good or evil

endocrine system: a collection of glands that make hormones to regulate body growth, reproductive development and metabolism

fidelity: being totally loyal to a person, also known as faithfulness

forgiveness: the virtue of being able to offer acceptance and mercy by reconciling with the person who has caused harm or injury

fornication: sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and unmarried woman; a violation of the Sixth Commandment

fortitude: the cardinal virtue of courage or strength of mind and will to do what is good in the face of adversity or difficulty

free will: the ability to recognize God as a part of our lives and the power to choose between good and evil

gender: the unique traits associated with being created male or female

generation: a group of related people born around the same time

gifts of the Holy Spirit: God-given powers and strengths that enable us to work toward the establishment of the Kingdom of God

hormones: secretions that tell the body how to grow and how to use food; comes from the Greek word that means "to set in motion"

hygiene: practice of cleanliness that promotes good health

If you convey the truth, beauty and goodness of how God created each of us, your child will feel more confident as they mature.



Glossary

Be open to
all questions,
even if you are
uncomfortable
with the topic.

intoxication: the diminishing effects on the physical or mental abilities to function normally; derived from a Latin word meaning “poisoned”

justice: the cardinal virtue of giving to another what is due to them, what is theirs by right, or ensuring that they have what they need

love: to will the good of another

manners: socially acceptable behaviors that help people function harmoniously as a community

marriage: a covenantal relationship between a man and a woman in which their spousal love is to be unitive and procreative; Sacrament in which a baptized man and a baptized woman promise love and faithfulness until death

maturity: the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth of the person through which one realizes their full potential appropriate to the person’s intellectual or emotional level or age

mercy: loving kindness toward one who has caused offense in the context of forgiveness and compassion

modesty: the virtue, or practice, of valuing, holding onto and guarding the sacredness of the human body through proper speech, attire and conduct

molestation: unwanted or inappropriate sexual contact

morality: the goodness or evil of human acts

nicotine: an addictive substance that is inhaled in cigarette smoke

nutrition: the study of foods and how the human body uses them

Original Sin: the first rejection of God’s love, which had effects on all human beings

peer pressure: influence of others upon a person, especially those close to the person, like one’s friends

perseverance: the act of continuing with patient effort despite obstacles

perspiration: the production and excretion of moisture from the sweat glands; increases during stress, cooling the body

pornography: any effort to portray real or simulated sexual acts for use by others that betrays the truth and meaning of human sexuality and demeans persons as objects

prostitution: the performance of sexual acts for money violating the dignity of the human person

prudence: the cardinal virtue of knowing what is right and consistently making good judgments so to choose the correct means to accomplish it

rape: forced violent sexual intercourse violating the dignity of the human person

resilience: the ability to adjust or to change with courage in order to deal with failure; being able to bounce back and move ahead in life

responsibility: the quality of being dependable or accountable for one’s attitude, decisions and actions by putting the care for self, others and the world around us into action

sacrifice: giving up something for the good of self or another

self-acceptance: the ability to discover, appreciate and value yourself as God created you

sexual attraction: attraction to another person based on their gender; part of God’s plan to help a man and a woman become husband and wife

sexual identity: everything about a person related to their gender

sexual intercourse: the physical act of love showing a full commitment proper between spouses as gifts to one another

sexuality: that aspect of human nature concerned with the capacity to love and form relationships based on the person being created either male or female

sin: a deliberate thought, word, deed or omission contrary to God’s law

social evil: the impact of personal sin that influences or includes the sins of others

social involvement: a person’s participation in the life of a community

social sin: the effect of sin, over time, which can affect society and its institutions to create “structures of sin”

solidarity: a sense of unity and belonging with another or within a group of people

somatotropin: the “growth hormone” released by the pituitary gland in the brain

spousal love: the unique expression of love between a husband and a wife who freely give their whole self to each other; marital love

stereotype: erroneous ideas or false preconceived notions about an individual

stewardship: the actions of responsibly caring for what God has given in service to others

temperance: the cardinal virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasure or a person’s actions so that the person does what is right

temptation: an attraction either from outside oneself or from within to act contrary to right reason and the Commandments of God

values: those things believed to be important to living a moral and holy life; derived from the Latin, *valēre*, meaning “to be of worth”

vocation: a call from God to a particular way of life in service to others, which in turn honors God: single, married, ordained or consecrated; the universal call to holiness

wellness: soundness of mind, body and spirit; healthy living

Review This Year

We have learned about family life this year.

God's Gift of Family

- ▶ Both the virtue of compassion and the skills of listening help a person communicate effectively.
- ▶ Many of your values are formed in your family and these values influence your actions.
- ▶ Responsible use of positive peer pressure is a sign of maturity and demonstrates respect for others.

God's Gift of Self

- ▶ Spiritual maturity is a lifelong growth process that focuses on living as Christ did.
- ▶ God created the human race with two complementary genders, male and female.
- ▶ God desires for you to accept and appreciate the gender he created you to be.

God's Gift of Life

- ▶ God is the source of beauty and your body reflects divine beauty.
- ▶ The Fifth Commandment requires that you take good care of your health.
- ▶ Maturity involves making good moral choices for health and life.

God's Gift of Love

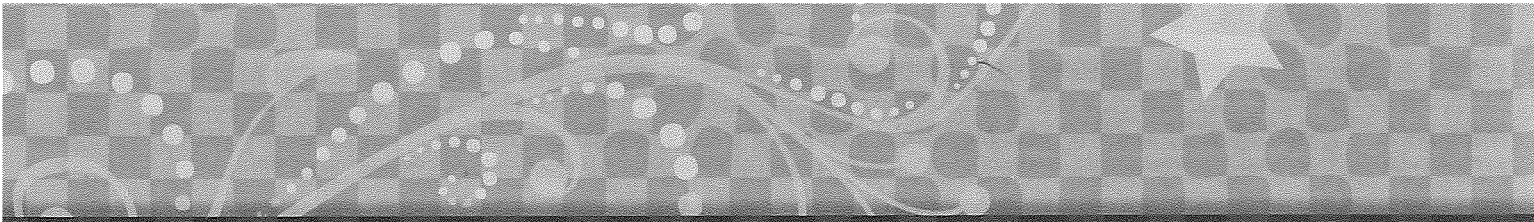
- ▶ Love is expressed either as friends, neighbors, spouses or unconditionally in imitation of God.
- ▶ Sexual attraction is a natural feeling and gift in God's plan for a man and a woman to become husband and wife.
- ▶ Chastity integrates God's gift of sexuality within us, respecting each other as persons.

God's Gift of Community

- ▶ With an informed conscience, a person can better discern the messages in the media as being healthy and holy or not.
- ▶ Friendships are nourished by trust, generosity, forgiveness, honesty and loyalty.
- ▶ Through solidarity among friends, we can meet the needs of friendship and build true community.

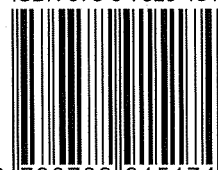
Family values influence a person's actions.





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