



SEMINARIANS FOR LIFE

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Dear Brothers in Christ,

This edition of the *Seminarians for Life* Newsletter celebrates the 15th anniversary of the publication of “The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality,” promulgated by the Pontifical Council for the Family in 1995.

Due to its importance, we are dedicating our next two issues of the *Seminarians for Life* Newsletter to the subject of this document. In this first of two parts, we offer the expertise of Monsignor Ignacio Barreiro, S.T.D., director of the Rome office of Human Life International, who offers an outstanding explanation of the vital truths contained in “The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality.”

We strongly encourage follow up via our recommended resources for the additional knowledge that is so important in today’s world.

God bless all of you!

John W. Fusto
Human Life International
International Network Manager



John Fusto, Director SFLI

The Significance of the Document *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* in the Life of the Church

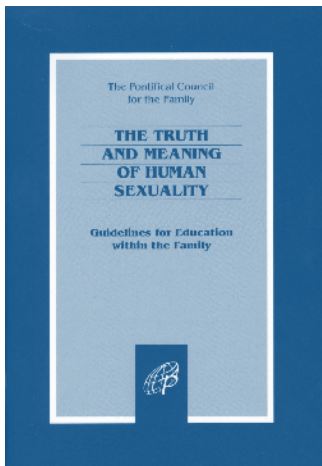
By Msgr. Ignacio Barreiro Carámbula, S.T.D.

Fifteen years after the promulgation of the document *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* by the Pontifical Council for the Family,¹ it is important to revisit and consider how in this document we see the Church exercising the right and duty given to her by Christ of providing clear and precise guidance in moral matters to foster the growth in virtue of its members. There is an evident link between life in the Church and the moral experience,² so we have to see the importance of this very timely document in the life of the Church. We can show that it has a permanent validity for many reasons. First, because the concerns that are addressed here are a constant reality in a human nature that is not subject to change; a human nature that has been wounded by original sin. (It is not even necessary to know that both Saint Augustine³ and Saint Thomas Aquinas⁴ tell us that the most wounded part of the human person is found in his sexual inclinations, because this is an obvious data of human experience.). And second, because we live in a society that exploits human sexuality, and this degradation has reached new lows of debasement in the last few decades.



Monsignor Ignacio Barreiro, S.T.D.,
Director of HLI Rome office.

Pastoral Need of this Document



This document was published to address a real pastoral need, motivated by the proliferation of all sorts of “sexual education” programs that were only concerned with avoidance of both adolescent pregnancy and the contagion of sexually transmitted diseases, as well as the teaching of birth control methods. Interestingly enough, most of these programs have failed to achieve those three objectives. But worse, some of these programs were designed to break down all modesty, reserve and moral basis and to create a social setting where unfettered sexual depravity was accepted.⁵

There is a connection between such programs and the “sexual revolution” that started in the 1960s. These programs are grounded on the materialistic and hedonistic views of man that are promoted by different governments and public and private international organizations. These groups promote all sorts of false rights, like “sexual and reproductive rights,” which really are the promotion of the so-called “right” of a woman to have an abortion whenever she chooses to do so. We can also mention promotion of so-called “safe sex,” which is really contraceptive sexual relations or the false right to obtain information on “family planning” (which is another way of

1 This document should be seen in conjunction with the document, *Educational Guidance in Human Love – Outlines for sex education*, of the Congregation of Catholic Education, November 1st, 1983.

2 M. Pasinato, *Morale e Christus Totus, Etica cristologia ed ecclesiologia in Emile Mersch*, Edizioni Messaggero Padova, Padova, 2008.

3 Saint Agustin, *De civitatis Dei*, XIV, 20.

4 S.T. I-II, q. 83, a. 4.

5 Christine de Marcellus de Vollmer, *Sex Education 1994-2004, Problems and Progress*, Familia et Vita, Anno IX, 1-2 2004, p. 178.

promoting contraception.) All such sexual education programs aim at the destruction of man's natural values, which are the essential foundation for the growth of supernatural virtues.

The document also confronts problems within the Church. We often find that serious theological errors have provided a flawed doctrinal basis for some programs. Additionally, some programs that apparently have sound doctrinal basis have shown poor discernment in the choice of the materials that are presented. This poor discernment is usually due to a naturalistic attitude that separates human nature from the Law of God. Cardinal López Trujillo in his presentation of this document noted, "How can we deny that there are positions of moralists that make relative the authorized teachings of the Church on some topics and questions of sexual morality?"⁶ Regrettably, both problems continue, giving permanent validity to this document.

The Objective of the Document

The objective of the document is not to set the rules for a "Catholic sexual education;" such would be at total misunderstanding of both the permanent teachings of the Church on this matter and the scope of this document. Instead, the aim of this document is to promote education for chastity as a positive virtue within the family. At the same time when we speak of the family we should not take the reductive contemporary view of the family that only focuses on the nuclear family. Grandparents can also be of great help here.⁷ Chastity is an "*attitude of self-mastery*" which is a sign "of inner freedom, of responsibility towards oneself and others. At the same time, these signs bear witness to a faithful conscience. Such self-mastery involves both avoiding occasions which might provoke or encourage sin as well as knowing how to overcome one's own natural instinctive impulses."⁸ This document emphasizes the three objectives to be obtained in education for chastity in the family: "(a) to maintain in the family *a positive atmosphere of love, virtue and respect for the gifts of God*, in particular the gift of life; (b) to help children to understand the value of sexuality and chastity in stages, sustaining their growth through enlightening word, example and prayer; (c) to help them understand and discover *their own vocation to marriage or to consecrated virginity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven* in harmony with and respecting their attitudes and inclinations and the gifts of the Spirit."⁹

6 Alfonso Cardenal López Trujillo, *Presentación del documento Sexualidad Human: Verdad y Significado. Orientaciones educativas en familia*, Familia et Vita, edición en Español, año I, n. 1, 1996, p. 7. Bonifacio Honings, OCF, *Los puntos morales más difíciles en el diálogo hoy. El Proyecto del hombre en lugar del proyecto de Dios*, Familia et Vita, edición en Español, año I, n. 1, 1996, p. 68.

7 Norbert and Renate Martin, *Sex education and Its Challenges for Young Families*, in *Tavole Rotonda Educazione sessuale e sfide alle giovani famiglie*, Familia et Vita, Anno IX, n.3/2004 -1/2005, p. 109.

8 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 18.

9 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 22.

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Rights and Duties of Parents

Against the totalitarian tendencies of contemporary states and even of some members of the Church, influenced by the liberal and socialist mindset of our times, the Church needed to underline her constant teaching that, “since they have conferred life on their children, parents have the original, primary and inalienable right to educate them.”¹⁰ This is done within the family that is defined by the Magisterium as domestic Church. Beyond their duty to take material and educational care of their children, parents have, “above all to pass on to them the lived truth of the faith and to educate them in love of God and neighbour.”¹¹ The family is the fundamental and privileged place to transmit the faith.¹² As part of the teaching of the faith the family has the primary responsibility of providing education on chastity and the dignity of married love, its role and its exercise.¹³ This formation should always be integrated with the teachings of the faith.¹⁴ As Msgr. Elliot points out, one of the principles of this document is that the home is the normal place where education for chastity should be imparted.¹⁵ The document in its conclusions underlines that, “the role which others can carry out in helping parents is always (a) *subsidiary*, because the formative role of the family is always preferable, and (b) *subordinate*, that is, subject to the parents’ attentive guidance

10 *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, 5, quoted by *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* 42, see also *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 5

11 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 5

12 Antonio Cardenal Cañizares Llovera, *La transmisión de la fe. Aspectos pastorales*, Familia et Vita, Anno XI, n.3/2006 -1/2007, p. 64.

13 Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1632.

14 The document underlines that “it must be stressed that education for chastity is inseparable from efforts to cultivate *all the other virtues* and, in a particular way, *Christian love*, characterized by respect, altruism and service, which after all is called *charity*.” *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* 55. Also education for chastity should be presented taking the overall perspective that, “Human sexuality is a sacred mystery and must be presented according to the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church, always bearing in mind the effects of original sin.” *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 122

15 Peter J. Elliot, *Una introducción a “Sexualidad Humana: Verdad y Significado”*, Familia et Vita, edición en Español, año I, n. 1, 1996, p. 88.

and control.”¹⁶ It has been argued that parents do not have in most cases the technical capability to be the best teachers of their children. Against this it should be pointed out: 1. If parents are committed Catholics they will always try to obtain the necessary formation. At the same time, it is not necessary to have a sophisticated intellectual formation to educate in accordance with nature; it is sufficient to have Catholic common sense and good will. In a concomitant way the Church has the right and duty to assist parents in the education of their children at two levels: 1. through catechetical formation of the adults and through specific programs of formation in the virtue of chastity;¹⁷ 2. parents can always draw valuable lessons from their own experience as a married couple. We have to be certain that parents will receive superabundant graces of state to fulfill their functions as educators of their children.

This document underlines that “it is extremely important for parents to be aware of their *rights and duties*, particularly in the face of a State or a school that tends to take the initiative in the area of sex education.”¹⁸ Regrettably we have to express our concern not only with government sponsored programs but also with programs used in some Catholic schools.¹⁹ This document underlines in very strong terms the duty that parents have to protect their children against any attack against their virtue and chastity.²⁰ As a consequence, it also teaches that parents “would also be guilty were they to tolerate immoral or inadequate formation being given to their children outside the home.”²¹ As part of their duty to protect their children, parents should remove their children from classes that do “*not correspond to their own principles*”²² or “which are not in harmony with their religious and moral convictions.”²³ It is recommended that parents form associations to help them better fulfil their roles as the educators of their children and

16 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* 145.

17 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 134.

18 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 41.

19 Christine de Marcellus de Vollmer, *Sex Education 1994-2004, Problems and Progress*, cit., p. 178.

20 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 21.

21 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 44.

22 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 117.

23 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 64.



“to fight against damaging forms of sex education and to ensure that their children will be educated according to Christian principles and in a way that is consonant with their personal development.”²⁴

Gradual Presentation of Information

The document gives wise and clear guidelines for the gradual presentation of information that is necessary and which take into account the various phases of the development of the children. We have to be aware that excess of information creates confusion.²⁵ More than that, it can cause moral problems and psychological traumas if children or pre-teens are confronted with information that they are not yet mature enough to receive. Especially in the case of young city dwelling pre-adolescents who have classmates exposed to the deleterious influence of the media, parents should be vigilant that their children do not receive immoral and distorted sexual information from their peers. Catholic parents should be attentive regarding the exposure of their children to the media, but it is more difficult to oversee all the social contacts their children have with others in their age group, particularly in an urban context. We have to keep in mind the typical urban circumstances of Europe and in some Latin American countries where most families live in apartment buildings. To protect children from all sorts of negative social environments we will see that it is important for children and adolescents to join different Catholic groups.

The Principle of Subsidiarity

In the education of the children, as in all social areas, we have to apply the principle of subsidiarity. This is a principle of Catholic social teaching which declares that all social bodies exist for the sake of the individual, such that whatever individuals are capable of doing, the larger society should not take over and do; and whatever a small (and more local) society can do, larger societies or entities should not take over and do.

This principle of subsidiarity remains a primary defense of society’s smaller units - - and especially the individual and the family. We, therefore, must be aware that society’s violation of this principle ordinarily seriously damages the organic nature of any community. And where the family is impacted, society damages the most basic social unit willed by God for the generation and education of children. And where the right of the family to educate its children is disregarded and usurped, then society as a whole is injured. The family’s rights, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, are highlighted in this document: “Other educators can assist in

²⁴ *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 114.

²⁵ Tony Anatrella, “Los modelos sexuales contemporáneos y las orientaciones actuales de la educación sexual,” *Familia et Vita*, edición en Español, año I, n. 1, 1996, p. 36.

The aim of this document is to promote the education for Chastity as a positive virtue within the family.

this task, but they can only take the place of parents for serious reasons of physical or moral incapacity.”²⁶ This document also indicates that the school’s task is not to substitute for the family, but to assist and complete the work of parents,²⁷ doing what parents cannot do by themselves, but always with their consent.²⁸ As a corollary of this right, parents should use of all legal and moral means to oppose educational programs that attack the virtue and chastity of their children. This document suggests that parents should form associations that bring together educational programs to form their children in accordance with the permanent teaching of the Church.²⁹

Bearing in mind the fundamental rights of parents, educators must respect “*the right of the child or young person to withdraw from any form of sexual instruction imparted outside the home.*”³⁰ This norm deserves a special mention because it not only applies to instruction based on wrong principles, but also to courses that, even if not apparently using wrong principles, use materials that include dangerously graphic content. The following principle must be followed: “No material of an erotic nature should be presented to children or young people of any age, individually or in a group.”³¹ The prudential judgment on such materials belongs to the parents; schools must comply with parental oversight.

Role of the Family as a Domestic Church

The document highlights the importance of the family fulfilling its role as a domestic Church when it shows that the family is able to offer the optimal education of the whole person, particularly when its children reach adolescence. The document states: “Parents should always strive to give *example and witness* with their own

lives to fidelity to God and one another in the marriage covenant. Their example is especially decisive in adolescence when young people are looking for *lived and attractive behaviour models*. Since sexual problems become more evident at this time, parents should also help them to love the beauty and strength of chastity through prudent advice, highlighting the inestimable value of prayer and frequent fruitful recourse to the sacraments for a chaste life, especially personal confession. Furthermore, parents should be capable of giving their children, when necessary, a positive and serene explanation of the solid points of Christian morality such as the indissolubility of marriage, the relationship between love and procreation, as well as the immorality of premarital relations, abortion, contraception and masturbation. With regard to these immoral situations that contradict the meaning of self-giving in marriage, it is also good to recall that “*the two dimensions of conjugal union, the unitive and the procreative, cannot be artificially separated* without damaging the deepest truth of the conjugal act itself.” In this regard, an in-depth knowledge of the documents of the Church dealing with these problems will be of valuable assistance to parents.”³² In their instructions to parents this document makes a very good connection between the immoral use of sexuality outside marriage and disdain for human life. The document points out with utter realism that conception can come to be regarded “as an evil that threatens personal pleasure.”³³ Here we can see an indictment of so many “sex education programs” whose strongest immoral message usually is: enjoy sexual pleasure but be sure that no child is conceived to get in your way as a consequence of your sexual actions.

Integration into Catholic Associations

To counteract the hedonistic tendencies of contemporary societies the document highlights the importance of “Church associations, movements and voluntary

26 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 23.

27 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 64.

28 John Paul II, Letter to the Families, 16.

29 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 24 and 113.

30 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 120.

31 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 126.3.

32 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 102

33 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 105

Catholic and missionary activities”³⁴ for the integration of young people. As we have seen earlier, formation for chastity is part and parcel of the general education in the Faith, and this formation must take into account the social nature of the human person and the solidarity and support to be found in wholesome social groups. It is natural that young people be able to associate with others in the same age group and thus counteract the social isolation of Catholics that is commonplace. In many areas, Catholics suffer the alienating experience of being a minority, and at worst a despised minority, because they are countercultural in a society dominated by materialistic anti-values.

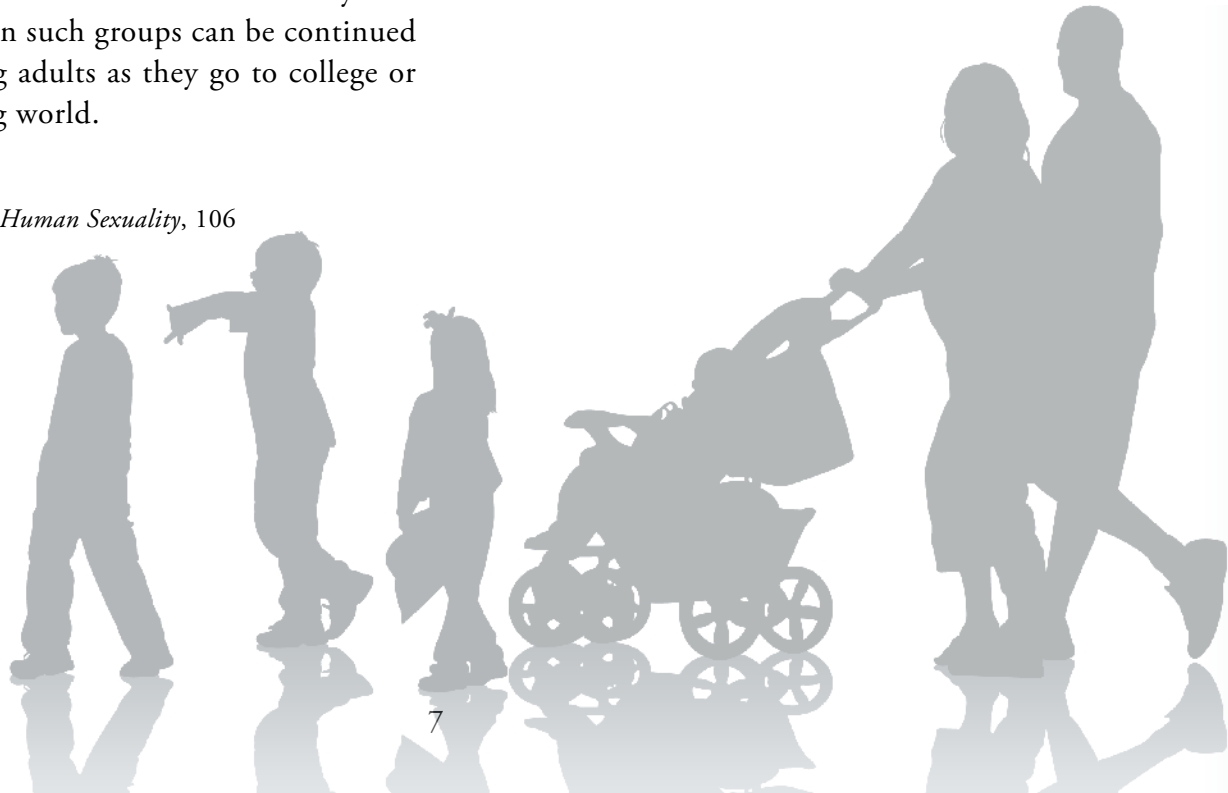
The first social group where young persons should be incorporated is the parish, but Catholic associations can also play a significant role. In today’s world, one of the activities of such groups should be the pro-life apostolate. It is easy to see the great formative value to young persons when they stand in front of an abortion clinic praying the rosary and then see that through their prayers and witness some of the women who had planned to commit a horrible crime can be dissuaded and even converted. Also it should not be lost on these young people that many of the women who are ready to kill their unborn babies are doing so because they have engaged in immoral sexual relations. It becomes easy to see in such cases that sins of impurity often lead to the far worse sin of murder. Such social groups can also serve to unite families in an area because some Catholic movements for adults will also have youth groups. Membership in such groups can be continued so as to protect young adults as they go to college or enter into the working world.

Conclusions

In this brief presentation of a fundamental document of the Church we can reach the following conclusions:

1. Education for chastity must always be conducted in accordance with the constant teachings of the Church and as a part of the general education in the faith.
2. Parents have the original, primary and inalienable right to educate their children in the virtue of chastity. As a consequence, the home is the normal place where education for chastity should be imparted. The Church is always ready to assist parents in this fundamental role.
3. Schools and other teaching institutions have roles that are only *subsidiary*; the formative role of the family is always the norm, and is *subordinate* and subject to the parents’ attentive guidance and control.
4. Last, but not least, it should be emphasized that as a consequence of the above mentioned principles, parents always have the right to educate their children in the virtue of chastity exclusively at home if they so choose.

34 *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 106



Recommended Resources

Written materials

Casti Connubii (1930). Papal encyclical by Pius XI:
www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/P11CASTI.HTM

Humanae Vitae (1968). Papal encyclical by Paul VI:
www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/P6HUMANA.HTM

Evangelium Vitae (1995). Papal encyclical by John Paul II: www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/JP2EVANG.HTM

John Paul II's "Theology of the Body" conferences. Includes original unity of man and woman and reflections on *Humanae Vitae*. Available through HLI's bookstore: www.hli.org.

Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality (1995), www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_08121995_human-sexuality_en.html

Educational Guidance in Human Love by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1983) www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19831101_sexual-education_en.html

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994)

Links

www.humanaevitapriests.org Great information about *Humanae Vitae* as well as many good articles and resources.

www.hli.org Human Life International's website. Of particular note are the pages:

www.hli.org/contraception_resources.html
Good articles about contraception.

www.hli.org/condom_expose.html
Exposes many of the myths about condoms. Shows the condom's high failure rate for preventing sexually transmitted diseases.

Bishops Pastoral Letters and Articles

Human Sexuality from God's Perspective: Humanae Vitae 25 Years Later, by The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB): www.usccb.org/prolife/humanae25.shtm.

Marriage: A communion of Life and Love, Bishop Victor Galeone (Bishop St. Augustine Florida USA). The pastoral letter can be found at the following sites: www.ewtn.com/library/prolife/zbodtrut.htm and at www.staugcatholic.org/archives/july-aug2003.pdf.

Electronic Resources:

Human Life International Pro-Life CD Library The world's first pro-life library on CD. A comprehensive and unparalleled resource for pro-lifers. Produced and distributed by Human Life International (HLI) and available at www.hli.org.

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