

## Chastity Education in Stages: Puberty and Teen Years

"Beginning with the changes which their sons and daughters experience in their bodies, parents are thus bound to give *more detailed explanations about sexuality* (in an on-going relationship of trust and friendship) each time girls confide in their mothers and boys in their fathers. This relationship of trust and friendship should have already started in the first years of life." (*Truth and Meaning*, 89) Detailed sexual information should always be given in the context of its ultimate purpose for marriage, procreation and the family.

Your task of instructing your children on sexuality is necessary, not because they won't receive information about sexuality otherwise (they *will* find out what their friends know), but so that they will learn about it in the right light - in the context of Chastity which protects the truth and meaning of human sexuality.

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### Chastity Education for Boys in Puberty

If your son is not confiding in you about the physical changes in his genitals, your first clue about the onset of puberty will be the changes in his voice. However, the change in voice usually doesn't happen until the third or fourth stage of puberty, which would be quite delayed to first begin receiving sex education. At this point, he most likely will already have received a secular and inadequate sex education from his peers. "It is very important for adolescent boys to be helped to understand the stages of physical and physiological development of the genital organs before they get this information from their companions or from persons who are not well-intentioned. The physiological facts about male puberty should be presented in an atmosphere of serenity, positively and with reserve, in the framework of marriage, family and fatherhood" (*Truth and Meaning*, 91).

"During puberty, *the psychological and emotional development of boys* can make them vulnerable to erotic fantasies and they may be tempted to try sexual experiences. Parents should be close to their sons and correct the tendency to use sexuality in a hedonistic and materialistic way." He should be reminded that his sexuality is a gift from God, received in order to cooperate with him through married love in the procreation of new life. (*Truth and Meaning*, 93).

Boys in puberty also need to receive "detailed and sufficient information about the bodily and psychological characteristics of the opposite sex, about whom their curiosity is growing" (*Truth and Meaning*, 91). Information given to boys about girls should always "aim at pointing out the beauty of motherhood and the wonderful reality of procreation, as well as the deep meaning of virginity" (*Truth and Meaning*, 92). In this way, they will learn respect for a woman's fertility, educating them against the contraceptive mentality prevalent in society.

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### Chastity Education for Girls in Puberty

Daughters will probably be more likely to confide in you about bodily changes, but if not, the beginning of breast development is usually the first noticeable sign for parents. This should precede menstruation by approximately two years.

Parents should pay attention to "the gradual physiological development of their daughters, helping them joyfully to accept the *development of their femininity* in a bodily, psychological and

spiritual sense. Therefore, normally, one should discuss the cycles of fertility and their meaning. But it is still not necessary to give detailed explanations about sexual union, unless this is explicitly requested" (*Truth and Meaning*, 90). When information about sexual union is given, it is important to emphasize the beauty of motherhood, procreation, and the deep meaning of virginity. Girls should also be educated against the contraceptive mentality, with an understanding that contraception does not allow for free, full, faithful and fruitful love. It is okay to inform girls in general about the existence of natural family planning, but is unnecessarily early to teach them the method of natural family planning.

Just as boy's chastity education includes information on a girl's body and psychology, so too girls should receive "detailed and sufficient information about the bodily and psychological characteristics of the opposite sex" (*Truth and Meaning*, 91). It is important when giving this information to teach a man's sexuality as ordered to fatherhood.

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### **Pointing Boys & Girls in Puberty Toward an Understanding of Sex & Marriage**

"In answering children's questions, parents should offer well-reasoned arguments about the great value of chastity and show the intellectual and human weakness of theories that inspire permissive and hedonistic behavior. They will answer clearly, without giving excessive importance to pathological sexual problems. Nor will they give the false impression that sex is something shameful or dirty, because it is a great gift of God who placed the ability to generate life in the human body, thereby sharing his creative power with us. Indeed, both in the Scriptures and in the Christian mystical tradition, conjugal love has always been considered a symbol and image of God's love for us" (*Truth and Meaning*, 96).

"Parents have a duty to help their children resist negative outside influences that may lead them to have little regard for Christian formation in love and chastity. Especially in societies overwhelmed by consumer pressures, parents should sometimes watch out for their children's relations with young people of the opposite sex — without making it too obvious. Even if they are socially acceptable, some habits of speech and conduct are not morally correct and represent a way of trivializing sexuality, reducing it to a consumer object. Parents should therefore teach their children the value of Christian modesty, moderate dress, and, when it comes to trends, the necessary autonomy characteristic of man or woman with a mature personality." (*Truth and Meaning*, 97).

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### **Chastity Education in the Teen Years**

Temptations against chastity will be very strong in the teen years. "Therefore, suitable advice should always be given regarding how to grow in the love of God and one's neighbor, and how to overcome any difficulties: 'These means are: discipline of the senses and the mind, watchfulness and prudence in avoiding occasions of sin, the observance of modesty, moderation in recreation, wholesome pursuits, assiduous prayer and frequent reception to the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Young people especially should foster devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God'" (*Truth and Meaning*, 71).

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#### Resources

\* *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family* published by the Pontifical Council for the Family.

<http://parentsteachchastity.weebly.com>