

## Presentation by Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia

One of the most delicate tasks that parents have to face in the education of their children is their emotional formation, so they can respond to the most decisive vocation for every human being: the vocation to love.

This vocation to love is the fundamental task of parents in the family. In accomplishing their work, they can count on the help of different moral and educational communities: schools and men and women teachers, as well as on the cooperation of the other members of the church community: the parish priests, the catechists and other Christian faithful.

Today, the educational work of parents, of parishes and schools is influenced, and often hampered by certain media, including virtual communities and social networks that have become increasingly important in our time. Adolescents and young people are exposed to a variety of information concerning affectivity in general and the exercise of sexuality in particular. In many cases, these same young people have no criteria for discerning the truth of good human sexuality from the emotivism introduced in many of today's channels of information and formation.

In this sense, cultural, legislative and educational projects directly or indirectly challenge the Christian vision of the body, of the difference and the complementarity between man and woman, the exercise of sexuality, marriage and the family. They want to acknowledge and legitimize the different ways in which sexuality is lived in society, by proposing visions that constitute a real anthropological change that impedes the affirmation of sexual identity, virtues, values and attitudes that integrate the body and the affections in the vocation to love that is the basis of the whole project of human life and of the good life according to the Gospel.

These problems are especially noticeable when young people are called to opt for faithful and indissoluble marriage, or in daily life as they have to face the fullness of emotional and sexual life, whether within a conjugal project or as part of a project of virginal life. The recent Synod of the Family expresses it this way: "Many cultural tendencies exist in today's world whose goal is to impose a sexuality without any limits and where all affective aspects are explored, even the more complex ones. The idea of emotional weakness is very timely; a narcissistic, unstable and changing affectivity does not help a person to achieve greater maturity. The following cultural tendencies need to be firmly denounced: the prevalence of pornography and the commercialization of the body which is promoted by a distorted use of the internet, forced prostitution and exploitation. In this regard, couples are sometimes uncertain, hesitant and struggling to find ways to grow, many of whom tend to remain in the primary stages of their emotional and sexual life. A crisis of the couple destabilizes the family and can reach the point, through separation and divorce, to have serious consequences on adults, children and society, thereby weakening individual and social ties." (*Final Relation*, no. 32).

Consequently, adequate affective education needs to be increasingly shared by those who have the task of supporting parents in their educational work. The challenge of affective education was recently recalled by the Synod of Bishops, in many of the numbers of the final report to the Pope, and especially in nos. 30 and 31, where we read: "To take care of one's self, to know one's self interiorly, to live better in line with one's emotions and feelings and to seek quality in emotional relationships requires opening oneself to the gift of loving others and the desire to build a creative, empowering and sound reciprocity as that in families. The Church's challenge is to assist couples in the maturation of the emotional aspect of their relationship and in their affective development through fostering dialogue, the life of virtue and trust in the merciful love of God. The commitment to full dedication required in Christian marriage is a strong antidote to the temptation of a person's living an existence exclusively turned in upon itself" (no. 30). "The dynamic of family relations has a primary impact on the formation of younger generations. The speed of changes occurring in present-day society makes the work of accompanying a person's affective formation in sound growth and development more difficult (...) This formation is also to highlight the admirable character of the virtue of chastity, since the virtue of chastity is understood to mean the integration of affections which fosters self-giving" (no. 31).

The Pontifical Council for the Family, as a special observatory of the Holy See in this field, responding to what many Bishops have expressed in their respective *Ad Limina* visits in recent years and to suggestions of family movements and associations working in the field of pastoral ministry of the family, is publishing materials that can be used to accompany adolescents and youth in this area,

so important for happiness in life. I would like to highlight the uniqueness of the project, which combines attention to teachers and to the young person or adolescent. The educational element in these two groups is fully realized and, hence, the service itself is truly useful. Interactivity and dialogue make this project more than merely a cold manual, but rather introduce content that allows the different subjects to interact, by suggesting, emphasizing or developing processes that the project presents. The Pontifical Council for the Family wants to diffuse through its website all the good “practices” and “experiences” in this regard. From this digital platform, we would like to respond to the call of our partners and especially to families who are facing the challenge highlighted by the recent Synod of the Family.

Moreover, we are aware that serious preparation for marriage is based on the Christian initiation and the formation of young people to the emotional life. The progress of adequate anthropology today is not optional; it is in fact the foundation for the proper preparation to the sacrament of marriage. On numerous occasions in the past three years, pope Francis has drawn attention to this critical stage of the young, who in a few years will incarnate in their lives the mystery of marriage and building a family.

Finally, I would like to thank especially the Subcommittee for family and the defense of life of the Spanish Bishops’ Conference, which has been a major actor in the development of these materials, as well as the various institutions whose advice and suggestions have made it possible for these materials to be made available on the official digital platform of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

It is our hope that the development and the evaluation of the units, already partially offered and reflected on during the recent World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia and now presented officially, may continue at the next World Meeting of Families in Dublin in 2018.

To St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church and guardian of the Holy Family, we entrust the fruits of this service.

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