

#### 4. The Family as Environment of Sex Education

JACEK GOLEŃ

Sex education is a part of the whole educational process aimed at the person's perfection in human and Christian maturity (cf. GE 2). Education is built on a certain concept of the human person<sup>211</sup> and, therefore, requires first of all knowledge and acceptance of man's truth. Now, this is the foundation of sex education. In the *Letter to Families*, John Paul II stated that our civilization's rejection of the truth of man—as male and female—means, that despite the many positive achievements, this is a sick civilization and a source of deep human problems. The pope pointed out that these problems are caused, among other things, by modern rationalism, which does not accept the truth about man revealed in Jesus Christ (see LtF 19-20). The purely material conception the human body deprives sexuality of the personal dimension and leads to its instrumentalization as a place for satisfying one's desires and drives (EV 23). Man, then, ceases to be perceived as a person and subject, and human sexuality, trivialized and impoverished (see AL 280), becomes an area for manipulation and exploitation (LtF 19).

Pope John Paul II also perceived in contemporary sex education programs the danger of treating the human person as an object of use (LtF 13, EGHL 7). This view is further developed in the exhortation of *Amoris Laetitia*, which cautions against sex education that merely provides information and, without being attentive to the developmental stage of children and youth, that can cripple sexuality by focusing on the genital organs, and so pervert the ability to love and lead to sexual violence. He also cautions against education that encourages the use of protection that allows "safe sex" because it instills a negative attitude towards procreation and propagates narcissistic aggression. The document stresses that encouraging teenagers to play with their bodies and desires and using other people as an object for experimentation is "irresponsible." This leads to the illusion of union while, in fact, prolonging emotional immaturity (see AL 281-284).

Sex education requires the adoption of a holistic vision of man and the acceptance of human sexuality as a gift and value that are inseparable from a person (see EGHL 34-35). The appropriate environment for sex education is, therefore, the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman. It has a unique combination of educational factors that make integral sex education possible.

---

<sup>211</sup> EGHL 21; cf. K. Wojtyła, "Problem 'uświadczenia' z punktu widzenia teologii," AK 1:1962, no. 318, 1-5.

### *The Aim of Sex Education*

A person's sexuality is deeply connected with biological and genetic factors (see AL 286). Sexuality is, in fact, an essential aspect of the human person and marks the physical, psychological, and spiritual identity of a man and a woman differently (FC 37; EGHL 4-5, 16). It manifests itself in different ways in a person's life, appearance, communication with others, emotions, forms of expression, and experience of human love.<sup>212</sup> A person should acknowledge and accept his or her sexual identity and live it out coherently (see CCC 2333). At the same time, accepting one's body as it was created and acting in accordance with one's sexual identity requires educative support that takes into account the psychosocial factors (see AL 285-286).<sup>213</sup> Therefore, the educational process should fully respect and appreciate the male-female sexual difference associated with biological factors that affect the whole human personality structure.<sup>214</sup> The differences between the sexes should not ignore, minimize or obliterate, for they are a gift that allows individuals to fully become self-aware and find mutual enrichment in the encounter with a person of the opposite sex (see AL 285).<sup>215</sup>

Moreover, human sexuality includes the possibility of spiritual and moral development and, therefore, constitutes a task (TMHS 12).<sup>216</sup> It determines the person's development towards maturity and integration in the community (EGHL 4; PH 1). In the light of the teaching of the Holy See, human sexuality is naturally oriented towards interpersonal dialogue, man's full matu-

---

<sup>212</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Wednesday audience on 9.01.1980: "Objawienie i odkrycie oblubieńczego sensu ciała," in: W. Zega (ed.), *Katechezy Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II. Teologia małżeństwa*, Krakow, 1999, 52-4.

<sup>213</sup> T. Kukołowicz, *Rodzina wychowuje. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Stalowa Wola, 1998, 123, 132.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. W. Póltawska, "Rola rodziców w wychowaniu seksualnym młodzieży," in: I. Kraińska-Rogała (ed.), *Rodzina wspólnotą miłości*, Krakow, 1999, 93.

<sup>215</sup> The Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* clearly exposes and warns against "gender" ideology, which refutes the difference and natural complementarity of man and woman. In AL 56, we read this: "[it] envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time [...] Let us not fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator. We are creatures, and not omnipotent. Creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created."

<sup>216</sup> Cf. J. Troska, *Moralność życia płciowego, małżeńskiego i rodzinnego*, Poznan, 1998, 7.

rity and openness to the gift of self in love, to fertility and the transmission of life (EGHL 32).

Sex education is needed by all to fully support them in their development as men or women, so that they may harmoniously live with their sexual identity. Sex education is an integral part of a man's and a woman's education to love, and it helps in the discovery and realization the personal vocation to love.<sup>217</sup> It helps people to acknowledge and accept their gender identity (see CCC 2333), while teaching them about the essence and value of sexuality, and leading them to integral development, psychological maturity, and the creation of the moral values necessary for full spiritual maturity (see EGHL 34).<sup>218</sup> To this end, sex education should support the development a mature attitude towards oneself, the acceptance of one's sexuality, and the capacity to establish deep interpersonal relationships based on altruistic love (see EGHL 36). The exhortation of *Amoris Laetitia* emphasizes the importance of learning respect, mutual affection, and meaningful communication. "All this prepares for a full and generous gift of self, which will be expressed after marriage as a gift of the bodies" (AL 283).

Sex education aims to integrate the person's biological, psycho-emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions.<sup>219</sup> This integration happens on two levels: in the emotional-affective sphere impulses and the sexual-emotional sphere subordinated to the spiritual faculties of reason and will that condition emotional maturity. Maturity, in this sense, includes a fully developed emotional life and manifests itself in the complete penetration (integration) of the emotional life by a competent intellect and a benevolent free will.<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>217</sup> Cf. FC 37; EGHL 26, 30; R. Buttiglione, *La crisi della morale*, transl. by K. Borowczyk et al., Lublin, 1994, 79.

<sup>218</sup> At present, we observe the totalitarian attack of a legally supported emancipatory sexual pedagogy on the sexual identity of young people. From earliest childhood, children are subjected to sexualization that wants to destroy the male and female sexual identity and promotes sexual "diversity." This process seeks total corruption by blocking the voice of the conscience, depriving the young of their sense of shame, activating sexual desire, and rejecting moral norms. This sexualization, introduced in schools in the form of mandatory classes based on pseudo-scientific rationale, uses corrupting educational materials to form, favour, and promote homosexual relationships and sexual practices, and is leading to an increase in sexual abuse. Cf. G. Kuby, "Dzieci jako eksperyment seksualny," in: L. Sosnowski (ed.), *Dyktatura gender*, Krakow, 2014, 29-43.

<sup>219</sup> Sexual integration becomes the "language" of love in interpersonal relationships and the place of the responsible transmission of life and spiritual parenthood. J. Augustyn, *Wychowanie do integracji seksualnej*, Krakow, 1994, 131, 139.

<sup>220</sup> A. Terruwe - C.W. Baars, *Integracja psychiczna. O nerwicach i ich leczeniu*, transl. by W. Unolt, Poznan, 1989, 268, also note that, in a mature integrated person the mind respectfully listens to

Sexual integration is, in part, the fruit of the education given by parents and educators, but at the same time, it is a task that requires the individual's effort, commitment, use of reason, and will.<sup>221</sup> Sex education not only concerned providing information (see AL 281), but it is a formation aimed at shaping the will, emotions, feelings, and a personal culture of sexual life. It should help to reach emotional maturity and support integral personal, spiritual, and moral development.<sup>222</sup> Information about sexuality should be given at the appropriate time and in a way adapted to the young people's stage of development (AL 281). It should, moreover, be combined the presentation of values and strive to raise their awareness of personal responsibility, thus, helping them to learn self-control and how to direct their lives.<sup>223</sup>

Sex education is connected with the individual's whole upbringing, and especially with social, moral, and religious education.<sup>224</sup> It should lead the young to adopt moral principles in the field of sexuality and, above all, help them to learn self-control (see AL 280), to shape an attitude of purity that allows them to discover the spousal sense of the body and serves to integrate sexuality with personal development and love.<sup>225</sup> Sex education should also teach them to look at sexuality in the spirit of faith, which reveals the deepest meaning of the human body in the vocation to the resurrection (see EGHL 43).

Sex education must prepare men and women to assume the Christian vocation responsibly. Most believers are called to marriage and, consequently, to parenthood (see LtF 18). Living in a marriage—understood as the total and temporally unlimited mutual gift of a man and a woman and the transmission of life—gives a person the possibility of fully realizing his or her sexuality, not only physically but also spiritually.<sup>226</sup> However, sex education cannot be equated with education to marriage and family life because, for various reasons, a large number of men and women do not get married and do not start a family. These people also need sex education to prepare for life in celibacy.<sup>227</sup>

---

the feelings, and the will, supported by the knowledge obtained from the mind, receives stimuli and emotional impulses. Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> Cf. C. Baars, *Psychologia miłości i seksualności*, transl. by J. Czapczyk, Poznan, 2003, 41, 69.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. EGHL 34-35; K. Wojtyła, art. cit., 1-5.

<sup>223</sup> EGHL 37; cf. M. Ryś, "Wychowanie seksualne," SMR 484-6.

<sup>224</sup> The Church opposes teaching about sexual life independently from moral principles, because, even already in childhood, it can lead to the lose of joy and provoke moral corruption. FC 37; EGHL 16.

<sup>225</sup> FC 37; EGHL 18-19; TMHS 43; cf. R. Buttiglione, *op. cit.*, 80-1.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. CCC 2337; TMHS 16.

<sup>227</sup> See FC 37; TMHS 34; W. Bołoz, *Promocja osoby w rodzinie*, Warsaw, 1998, 179-81.

The aim of sex education is composed of tasks that parents can fully accomplish. These tasks include helping to identify with a gender role by providing the right patterns, sexual awareness in a moral context, instilling respect for fertility and human life, and shaping virtues that foster sexual integration.<sup>228</sup> In addition, because of today's educational threats, there is an even greater need to form a positive attitude towards human sexuality, sensitizing and encouraging young people to oppose widespread eroticism and teaching them to protect their intimacy and defend themselves against sexual abuse.<sup>229</sup> For these reasons, the role of parents and the family in education appears indispensable and very difficult to replace (see GE 3).

### *Factors of Sex Education in the Family*

The family is the primary and most important environment of human development, and its contribution to children's global initiation is incomparable.<sup>230</sup> Pope John Paul II said that "man has no other way to humanity than through the family."<sup>231</sup> The family has been called to be the first place for the humanization of the person and society (ChL 40, see AL 276). The family's agency in education derives from its life-giving role. Vatican II stresses that "parents, because they gave life to children, are in the highest degree obliged to bring up children and therefore they must be recognized as the first and main educators" (GE 3). Moreover, the sacrament of marriage gives spouses the mission to raise children and fortifies them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that they may help their children in their growth (see FC 38). The Church wishes to educate primarily through a family that has the grace of the state and the charism of the family community (LtF 16).

The goals of sex education presented above, and the tasks they involve can be most fully accomplished by parents, while educational entities play an auxiliary role.<sup>232</sup> Vatican II states that sex education should take place in the family and, at the same time, that it should be positive, prudent, adapt-

<sup>228</sup> Cf. J. Goleń, *Wychowanie seksualne w rodzinie. Studium pastoralne*, Rzeszow, 1996, 96–7.

<sup>229</sup> G. Węglarczyk, "Wychowanie seksualne przygotowaniem do życia w małżeństwie i rodzinie," in: J. Augustyn (ed.), *Dojrzewanie do życia w miłości. Materiały pomocnicze do wychowania prorodzinnego*, Krakow, 2000, 130–8.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. FC 40; LtF 16; TMHS 25, 40, 43, 64.

<sup>231</sup> John Paul II, Homily during Holy Mass for the Family. "The family is the only path leading to humanity (12 Oct. 1980)," in: id., *Nauczanie społeczne 1980*, vol. 3, P. Nitecki, J. Skwara and E. Strózczyk (eds.), Warsaw, 1984, 154.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. FC 40; LtF 16; TMHS 25, 40, 43, 64.

ed to the age of the young, and gradual.<sup>233</sup> The family is the most suitable environment for sex education<sup>234</sup> because, as the first school of human values, where good use of freedom can be taught (see AL 274). If the parents are absent or incapable of accomplishing the tasks of sex education, other people must carry out their educational tasks. The Pontifical Council for the Family indicates the conditions for helping parents and the situations in which it is necessary to act in their place.<sup>235</sup> Parents also have the right to object to any attempts to compel their children to participate in school activities that are not in agreement with their religious and moral convictions (CRF 5c).

The family's role in sex education is priceless, alongside the grace of the sacrament of marriage, because of its educational assets, which include its lasting mutual bonds that create a climate of love, the presence of parents as role models of sexual and social roles, their authority and example, the possibility of dialogue between parents and children over many years, the climate of faith and prayer that is a support for sexual integration.

### Growing up in an Atmosphere of Love

The climate of love prevailing in the family is the most important educative factor for shaping the personality and affectivity of the young.<sup>236</sup> It supposes the presence of both parents – mother and father – and depends primarily on the marital relationship, which constitutes the family and significantly affects its functioning.<sup>237</sup> The first of the essential components of this climate is the mutual love and bond of the spouses. It should be noted that the quality of the marital relationship and the functioning of the marriage are connected with the degree of personal maturity of the spouses.<sup>238</sup>

The climate of love in the family, from the prenatal period and infancy through the subsequent years of the child's life, builds trust between parents and children. This trust largely determines the success of raising a boy and a girl. In a family full of love, it is easier to accept one's own sexuality as a gift of God and a call to love (see TMHS 52). The emotional climate permeated by

<sup>233</sup> Cf. GE 1; GS 52; EGHL 14-15; TMHS 75.

<sup>234</sup> EGHL 48; cf. TMHS 43, 64.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. TMHS 38-41, 113, 128-132, 148.

<sup>236</sup> TMHS 50; cf. G.P. Nicola di – A. Danese, *Mężczyzna i kobieta z perspektywy personalizmu*, transl. by A. Radziszewska, Lublin, 2010, 238-9.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. M. Braun-Gałkowska, *Psychologiczna analiza systemów rodzinnych osób zadowolonych i niezadowolonych z małżeństwa*, Lublin, 1992, 144-51.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. S. Steuden, "Osobowościowe uwarunkowania niepowodzenia w małżeństwie," in: J. Misiurek – W. Słomka (eds.), *Małżeństwo-przymierze miłości*, Lublin, 1995, 205.

the positive presence of spouses prevails, equilibrium, mutual acceptance and understanding as well as mature, non-conflictual relationships, and the beauty of the parents' mutual bond that "will safeguard their affective serenity" (TMHS 50). Children are, thus helped to achieve sexual integration, especially at the first basic level. The parent's deep bond of love plays an integrating role because it links the child's sexuality with the feelings of love for a person of the opposite sex.<sup>239</sup> The supportive influence of each parent's acknowledgment and respect of his or her own sexual identity and that of the spouse, as well as their satisfaction with the marriage, are not without importance.<sup>240</sup>

The second, essential component of the climate of love is the parents' love for their children, manifested in tenderness, stability, goodness, helpfulness, selflessness, and sacrifice (FC 36). This love guides all the educational activities. Children who experience this climate are better prepared to live according to moral truths practiced by their parents. The children's awareness that they are loved, raises their confidence in their parents and most strongly stimulates them to love.<sup>241</sup> In this way, the climate of love is conducive not only to the integration of sexuality with emotionality but also, on the second level, to the growth of love. This happens thanks to the love of parents or their deputies, and through the infinite love of God, the source of all true love, which free us from the inclination to selfishness (TMHS 9, see CL 34). Thus, the climate of love in the family helps to shape the awareness God's love and gifts and, consequently, supports sexual integration at the personal level—orienting the children towards love as self-giving to God and their neighbor. According to Pope John Paul II, it can, therefore, be concluded that through the mutual love of the spouses and their love for their children, parents communicate their humanity and gradually introduce the children born into the spiritual dimension (cf. LfF 16). The climate of love for sex education in the family is essential for this process.

### The Positive Presence of Both Parents and the Child's Acceptance

The presence of both parents in the upbringing of both girls and boys plays an important role in their gender identification.<sup>242</sup> The mother and the father with whom the children share a deep bond are at the same time the

<sup>239</sup> J. Augustyn, *Wychowanie do integracji seksualnej*, 45–6.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. A. Gałkowska, *Percepcja powodzenia małżeństwa rodziców a społeczny obraz siebie ich dorosłych dzieci*, Lublin, 1999, 72–3.

<sup>241</sup> TMHS 52; FC 18, 63–4.

<sup>242</sup> J. Augustyn, *op. cit.*, 66.

gender and social role models. Some emphasize the special significance of the father's presence in the identification process.<sup>243</sup> In spite of the fact that the father is the main object of identification for the son and the mother for the daughter,<sup>244</sup> sexual identification happens through affective relationships with both parents simultaneously. The parents who are not of the same sex as the child makes "complementary identification" possible.<sup>245</sup>

Similarly, being accepted by the parents creates a place and space for the child and supports his or her sexual identification. Even the planning of a child's conception shapes the parents' reference to him – they are already accepting it.<sup>246</sup> However, if the conception of a child was not planned, parents should try to accept their child and its sex as soon as possible. The acceptance of a child and its sex in the immediate environment is important for the acceptance of one's gender identity, and some consider it the most original form of sex education.<sup>247</sup> The first period after the birth of the child – when the foundations of the person's sense of identity and personal distinctness are formed – is crucial in this respect. A small child gets to know itself through how others perceive it.<sup>248</sup> Moreover, choosing a child's name and speaking to it helps to shape his or her gender identity.<sup>249</sup>

The mother's presence and care are of great importance, especially for younger children. In their development and growth in love, they first have a greater need for her unconditional love and care; later, the father's love, authority, and leadership become more important.<sup>250</sup> The emotional relationship between mother and child influences the formation of the child's affective attitude towards the milieu. During the first years of life, the emotional bond of the mother with the child is fundamental for the formation of its emotional structure, which later affects his or her sexual contacts.<sup>251</sup> Good emotional

<sup>243</sup> Cf. J. Witczak, *Ojcostwo bez tajemnic*, Warsaw, 1987, 16.

<sup>244</sup> I. Obuchowska, "Adolescencja," in: B. Harwas-Napierała – J. Trempała (eds.), *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*, vol. 2: *Charakterystyka okresów życia człowieka*, Warsaw, 2000, 186.

<sup>245</sup> J. Augustyn, *op. cit.*, 45.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. M. Ziemska, "Postawy rodzicielskie i ich wpływ na osobowość dziecka," in: M. Ziemska (ed.), *Rodzina i dziecko*, Warsaw, 1979, 184.

<sup>247</sup> Cf. J. Augustyn, *op. cit.*, 67.

<sup>248</sup> I. Obuchowska, *art. cit.*, 163–201.

<sup>249</sup> When choosing their child's name, parents are often motivated by the desire to see him or her develop the character traits of people with that name. The name is intended to strengthen the sense of identity through the relationship with a personal role model and it can contain the wish for God's care. Cf. C. Niezgoda, "Duszpasterska wartość imienia," *HD* 52:1983, no. 1, 57–61.

<sup>250</sup> E. Fromm, *O sztuce miłości [The art of loving]*, transl. by A. Bogdański, Warsaw, 1992, 43–6.

<sup>251</sup> According to Kępiński, those who have experienced a deep emotional bond with their mothers in the childhood are able to establish warm, emotional relationships with their milieu

contact with the mother during childhood and adolescence is the foundation of emotional sensitivity and sensitivity in interpersonal relationships for boys and girls alike. Thanks to this, boys do not need to prove their masculinity in sexual contact, and girls do not need to prove their own femininity by paying attention to themselves.<sup>252</sup>

Children surrounded by their mother's love, who experience a sense of security in this relationship, can more easily break away from her and go to their father – and this is an important stage of gender identification, especially for boys.<sup>253</sup> Both the mother and the father should make it easier for their children to establish a positive relationship with their father. In this regard, much also depends on the mother's attitude; whether she is open or possessive.<sup>254</sup> Above all, however, the father himself should help the children to establish an intimate relationship with him. Good emotional contact with the father during childhood and adolescence is the foundation of emotional stability, a sense of security, and greater moral stability both in girls and in boys. A good relationship with the father has positive effects on their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual development.<sup>255</sup> Vatican II states that the father's active and positive presence contributes to the children's moral education (GS 52). The presence of a loving father gives a sense of security to the mother and the children and introduces the latter to a world of values and norms.<sup>256</sup> Conversely, the father's absence or his overwhelming presence in the family and misuse of his masculine powers leads to mental and moral imbalance (FC 25). Both the father's absence in children's lives and as his cold or aggressive attitude can make it difficult for them to become emotionally closer to him, and this, in turn, hinders their sexual development. A father's absence or dreaded presence upsets the sexual identification of both boys and girls.<sup>257</sup>

---

and easily enter into sexual contact, but their emotional relationships with a partner are more one-directional. A. Kępiński, *Z psychopatologii życia seksualnego*, Warsaw, 1982, 25–6.

<sup>252</sup> J. Augustyn, *op. cit.*, 43–5.

<sup>253</sup> At the beginning, every child identifies himself with his mother and is attached to her. When the child symbolically passes from the mother to the father, it opens up to other people with love. In this way, it lives its first passage (by going beyond itself) and accepts other people. The father, as the representative of the external reality, opens the child's way to the external world. E. Badinter, *L'Amour en plus. Histoire de l'amour maternel*, transl. by K. Choiński, Warsaw, 1998, 234.

<sup>254</sup> J. Augustyn, *op. cit.*, 68–70.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 42–3.

<sup>256</sup> The positive presence of the father in the family results in the lower rates of teenage pregnancies and crime. Cf. C.H. Joyeux, "Nowa ewangelizacja a wychowanie seksualne," in: J. Augustyn (ed.), *Ku dojrzałej ludzkiej miłości*, Krakow, 1996, 52.

<sup>257</sup> J. Augustyn, *Wychowanie do integracji seksualnej*, 68.

The condition of sex education, which can only be fulfilled in a family, is the presence of sexual and social role models.<sup>258</sup> They not only make sexual identification possible but also the child's adoption of a social role through imitation and modeling, conditioned by cognitive and social mechanisms.<sup>259</sup> Attitudes and behaviors are formed both through observation of the model's behavior and strengthening certain desirable behaviors by the environment.<sup>260</sup> Parental attitudes and behavior typical of a given sex are perceived and adopted by the child as normative. Modeling occurs when children see their parents interacting with each other and establishing relationships determined by their with the milieu.<sup>261</sup> This has nothing to do with rigid categories, stereotypical patterns of understanding roles, or the exaggerated manifestation of what is masculine and feminine, but it means that parents, in a spirit of mutual cooperation, should let their children visualize the positive realization of their femininity and masculinity (cf. AL 286). For the good of the children's adoption of sexual and social roles in the future – including maternity or paternity –, it is beneficial to provide them with positive models of male and female parenting and mature parental attitudes.<sup>262</sup>

It is also important that the positive attitudes of parents at home be approved by the family setting and, thus, strengthened. A multigenerational family, where there is usually more than one sexual model, may be particularly influential. Family bonds are the basis for some similarity between models (e.g., mother and grandmother, father, and grandfather) and promote mutual respect. If other people, such as relatives, are present in the family together with the parents, it is possible to observe how role models function.<sup>263</sup> Moreover, children also have the opportunity to observe other people, for example relatives, educators, friends, acquaintances, and admired persons (cf. AL 286)

---

<sup>258</sup> I. Obuchowska – A. Jaczewski, *Rozwój erotyczny*, Warsaw, 1992, 69.

<sup>259</sup> Pope Francis speaks of the influence of educational factors in sexual education but treats them integrally together with biological factors. Therefore, he states that “biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated” (AI. 56).

<sup>260</sup> See R. Vasta – M. Haith – S.A. Miller, *Child psychology: the modern science*, transl. by M. Babiuch et al., Warsaw, 1995, 550, 553.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 559.

<sup>262</sup> EGHL 48; TMHS 64; K. Meissner, *Płciowość człowieka w kontekście wychowania osoby ludzkiej*, Poznań, 8–9; R. Buttiglione, *op. cit.*, 43, 85, thinks that the absence of the parents, a child's lack of knowledge about them, and the parents' infidelity provoke its hostility towards them. Such a situation harms the ability of the child to accept his own sexual condition and the ability to become a father or a mother.

<sup>263</sup> The effects of modelling indicates the significance of sex education in the family for fatherhood and motherhood. See E. Badinter, *op. cit.*, 243–71.

who present typical behaviors of a particular sex. In this way, children verify the social habits and behaviors learned at home.

### The Parents' Authority and Example

The parents' authority is a significant educational factor.<sup>264</sup> It is based on the trust put in the parents and, approved by the children, it determines the family's organization and deficiencies. The atmosphere of love itself also significantly strengthens the parents' authority. The attitudes of parents who create a climate of love and trust are readily imitated by the children, and their orders are more willingly observed.<sup>265</sup> Authority enables parents to effectively teach their children in the field of sexuality and love and to convey moral values.

The parents' example constitutes a model that determines the formation of attitudes.<sup>266</sup> Their example in life is the best contribution to their children's education (EGHL 50). A mother, who responds with respect of her maternal vocation, helps daughters in the development of their femininity and motherhood, and she is a clear, strong, and noble example of womanhood for her sons. A father who acts with dignity is an attractive model for his son and can inspire his daughter's respect for masculinity, along with admiration and, above all, a sense of security (see TMHS 59). Parents give a good example for sex education when they themselves experience faithful and selfless love, live in conjugal purity, and are generous in accepting life.<sup>267</sup> Parents who understand sexual act in connection with fatherhood and motherhood, and live in conjugal fidelity, create a living environment in which the children experience welcoming, irrevocable acceptance, and rooting in life. This kind of environment shapes the children's ability to act morally and to manage their own lives and their impulses responsibly.<sup>268</sup>

The mutual respect of parents for the other's intimacy and conscience is a good example for their children. If children or teenagers notice that their personal intimacy and conscience are respected, they will know that this attitude is also expected of them with regard to others. In this case, the parents' conduct is beneficial for shaping their sense of responsibility before God, for themselves, and in relation to other people (TMHS 57).

---

<sup>264</sup> The sexualization of children and young people promoted in the mass media and at school undermines the parents' authority. G. Kuby, *art. cit.*, 47.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. J. Augustyn, *op. cit.*, 50; W. Póltawska, "Rola rodziców w wychowaniu seksualnym młodzieży," 109.

<sup>266</sup> I. Obuchowska – A. Jaczewski, *op. cit.*, 231.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. HV 21; FC 20, 33; TMHS 20.

<sup>268</sup> R. Buttiglione, *op. cit.*, 44–6.

## Personal Dialogue over Time

In sex education, personal dialogue between parents and children is necessary. It is considered to be the basic method of raising awareness and teaching in the field of sexuality (see TMHS 65-76). Creating awareness implies the initiation into questions concerning procreation and related sexual issues, especially teaching children about the transmission of human life.<sup>269</sup> This is done gradually, by providing children, adolescents and young adults with in-depth knowledge about sexuality.<sup>270</sup> Awareness lived out in the Christian spirit should help children to understand that children are a proof of their parents' mutual love and of God's love for people and that they themselves are children of love. It is also important to teach them about the sexual act, emphasizing not so much its details, but its particular significance as a free and deliberate act, with a moral significance, as cooperation with God in the transmission of life. They must be taught about the male and female fertility, conception, and a child's prenatal development, and be led to respect human life.<sup>271</sup>

Raising sexual awareness is the task of parents and constitutes a complement of the experience of their mutual love in the family.<sup>272</sup> This dialogue is also complemented by the example of parents' lives and plays an important role in forming the affections. If parents and children speak about sexuality and fertility at the right time, this exchange has a preventive effect.<sup>273</sup> Therefore, parents and educators should listen to children and teenagers attentively and try to understand them, despite different forms of rebellion that sometimes appear.<sup>274</sup> This means that parents must devote time to their children, and truly "be there for" them, descending with love to their level of development. In this way, they can help to channel their anxieties and aspirations, while teaching them to reflect and use their reason. They can show a certain

---

<sup>269</sup> W. Póltawska, art. cit., 95; H. Joyeux, *L'École de la vie et de l'amour. Le livre des parents pour apprendre l'écologie sexuelle de 4 à 20 ans*, Paris, 1998, 11.

<sup>270</sup> K. Wojtyła, art. cit., 1-5, indicates that it is not enough to have the awareness that comes from possessing knowledge. He uses the term "conscientisation" but, in fact, talks about the necessity of providing sex education.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. J. Goleń, *Wychowanie seksualne w rodzinie. Studium pastoralne*, 102-3.

<sup>272</sup> J. Augustyn, *op. cit.*, 46.

<sup>273</sup> TMHS 59, 66; S. Gerstmann, *Rozwój uczuć*, Warsaw, 1976, 39. Young people experiencing changes linked to their sexuality readily accept the advice of adults under condition that it is given in a friendly way, without moralizing or imposing their views on them. I. Obuchowska - A. Jaczewski, *Rozwój erotyczny*, 233.

<sup>274</sup> I. Obuchowska - A. Jaczewski, loc. cit., claim that parents often have the impression that their advice and views are rejected by young people. However, in many cases, young people accept the arguments of adults but in a hidden way, because they are ashamed of their dependency.

line of behavior to their children, indicating the human and supernatural motives that recommend it (TMHS 51).

The Pontifical Council for the Family has defined four principles regarding information about sexuality: individualized formation, the moral dimension, the context of education for love and delicacy, and clear teaching at the appropriate time (cf. TMHS 65-76). The first principle, that of individualized formation, recall that every child as a unique, unrepeatable person, and as such should receive a formation that takes into account his or her individuality. Parents who know and love their children are in the best position to decide when to provide them with information about sexuality, adapted to each child's degree of development.<sup>275</sup> Parents should address topics related intimacy in a personal dialogue, characterized by love and trust. In this way, they witness to the emotional dimension of sexuality. It is indicated that this conversation be between the parent and the child of the same sex. The document "The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality" presumes that mothers have a special bond with their daughters and fathers with their sons. In the case of a single parent, there is a need for great sensitivity and, in intimate matters, someone of the same sex as the child should be asked to help (cf. TMHS 65-67).

The second principle emphasizes that the parents' teaching should include the moral dimension. It is essential to stress that sexuality is the gift of God, who is Love. It is also necessary to present the positive value of chastity, which brings forth and protects true love between people. The Council states that only a person who lives chastely is capable of love in marriage or in celibacy. Accordingly, parents should notice and correct sinful behavior as soon as it appears and teach their children modesty. Parents' recommendations to avoid certain kinds of behavior contrary to a person's dignity and chastity should be properly and convincingly founded. Rational and religious arguments are good grounds. Children should perceive that these recommendations arise out of concern for their true good (cf. TMHS 68-69).

The third principle requires that information about sexuality be given in the context of education for love. Information about sexuality alone is not enough. Children need constant help in their spiritual development. Their biological development and the impulses they experience should be accompanied by growing love for God and an increasing awareness of the dignity of the person and his or her body. Parents should draw children's attention to the person's vocation to love and holiness. They can do this by encouraging children to love God and their neighbor, through healthy activities, inner

---

<sup>275</sup> The Pontifical Council for the Family states that "No one can take this capacity for discernment away from conscientious parents" (TMHS 65); cf. FC 37.

discipline, and prudently watching to help them avoid occasions of sin and shame and to be temperate. This is possible, and it brings joy (TMHS 73). This joy springs from the ability to give oneself unselfishly in love and, thus, to reach full self-realization (cf. GS 24).

Parents have the task of forming their children's ability to evaluate their surroundings and to use the media properly. In connection with this, they must present positive models to their children and ways to use their energy, while teaching them the meaning of friendship and solidarity. With regard to deviant trends in today's society, parents should focus more on removing the causes than on repressing the symptoms. In this task, they should use the help of Christian specialists, especially doctors, educators, psychologists, and moral theologian (cf. TMHS 70-74).

The fourth principle of calls for specifying the proper time to discuss sexuality and the necessity of doing so with delicacy and clearly.<sup>276</sup> Parents, aware that their children must be treated in a personalized, should properly assess what to say to each child. The document on "Human Sexuality" recommends that they first seek light from God in prayer and speak with the other spouse so that their words will not be too explicit, detailed, or vague. It would be imprudent to delay speaking about this with the children because they are naturally curious and might start turning to irresponsible sources for information (TMHS 75).

The Pontifical Council for the Family stresses that "Parents must find time to be with their children and take time to talk with them" (TMHS 51). Parents should take into account the age and degree of their children's development (EGHL 49), and that teaching them is essential for their further development (TMHS 59).

### Sexual Integration in an Atmosphere of Faith and Prayer

The atmosphere of faith and prayer in the family makes sexual integration easier. Parents who pray with their children and read the Holy Scriptures with them, introduce the children into the Church and, so, become parents in the fullest sense, spiritually and in the faith (cf. FC 39). In the light of the Church's teaching, educating to mature love in the family is possible when

---

<sup>276</sup> Premature sex education of children means their sexualization and makes them lose their childhood. Sexual stimulation and sexualization provided by milieu leads to corruption and premature awakening of the sexual desire. Premature education is also contrary to the hormonal development of children. This development has a long latent phase in both boys and girls that starts in the first months after birth continues until puberty. G. Kuby, art. cit., 47; L. Eliot, *Wie verschieden sind sie? Die Gehirnentwicklung bei Mädchen und Jungen*, Berlin, 2010, 141; cf. FC 37; EGHL 16.

it creates a "home of faith and prayer, in which God the Father's presence is sensed, the Word of Jesus is accepted, the Spirit's bond of love is felt, and where the purest Mother of God is loved and invoked."<sup>277</sup> Parents, thus, penetrate deeply into their children's hearts and traces that events later in life cannot erode (TMHS 63; FC 60).

The sexual integration of children is strengthened by the parents' constant care for their spiritual development, drawing their attention especially to man's vocation to love and holiness and forming their conscience. It is important to encourage children to love God and their neighbor, to practice inner discipline, avoiding occasions of sin and shame, while keeping and involving themselves in healthy activities. It is helpful to explain to children the role of the frequent prayer, the reception of the Sacrament of Penance and the Eucharist, as well as cultivating devotion to the Virgin Mary. God's grace makes it possible to experience chastity as a gift in loving God and one's neighbor. The testimony of faith, the sacramental life, and the parents' prayer should support the formation of children and young people. The ministry of a regular confessor, as well as the accompaniment of a spiritual director and reading books of formation, can also be helpful (TMHS 70-74).

Educating aims ultimately at teaching the young self-education (LtF 16). The family, therefore, cannot fail to keep them aware of the factor of conscious discipline, thus preparing them for self-education. Such disciplining should consist in explaining the positive value of the principles and demands, so that they may be understood. A close emotional parent-child relationship and the consistency in education makes it easier to present the principles of conduct and place demands on children.

The formation of the Christian virtues is beneficial for the sexual integration of the young. Therefore, children and adolescents should be supported in the development of their moral abilities. Chastity is the most important one because it harmonizes personality and increases self-respect (TMHS 17). It furthers maturation of love, enables understanding and respect for sexuality and experiencing it in the personal dimension. Chastity protects love against selfishness and aggression (TMHS 4). Life in chastity teaches respect for the gift of life and helps in the discovery of one's own vocation (see TMHS 22). Keeping chastity is a task that should be the aim of all the other tasks of sex education.<sup>278</sup> The moral abilities beneficial for sexual integration also include freedom, self-control, responsibility, fidelity, shyness, modesty, and temper-

---

<sup>277</sup> TMHS 62; FC 59-61; PH 12.

<sup>278</sup> See TMHS 3-5, 17-9, 31-3. John Paul II emphasized the meaning of education for chastity perceiving it as one of the most important evangelizing tasks. Cf. John Paul II, "Annunziante

ance (TMHS 18-19, 55). The formation of these virtues is furthered by the testimony of the parents' behavior and presenting them to children in a positive way, motivated by the Christian spirit (cf. Mt 5:1-12).

\*\*\*

Sex education in the family is a gradual process.<sup>279</sup> The Pontifical Council for the Family enumerates four stages in man's development and in sex education: childhood – "the years of innocence" –, adolescence, young adulthood, and maturity (see TMHS 77-111). The Council also defines the specific tasks of sex education at individual stages. The depth and the detail of this subject do not allow us to include it in our study. There are, however, detailed studies that the interested readers may consult.<sup>280</sup>

## 5. The Family as the Place of Moral Education

JACEK GOLEŃ

The responsorial character of morality is based on the fact that man was created in Christ "for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (Eph 2:10). This means that man is invited to give God an answer that flows from faith through his moral life. The Christian moral life of both the parents and the children must flow out of faith and cannot be fully developed without it. The encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* recalls that moral education should firstly help people to recognize and fulfill the call received from God (EV 92). For this reason, both parents' must cultivate their own moral development and ensure that their children's moral education is a response to God's call. Pope Francis links the fulfillment of the parents' vocation with their educational mission, because "in educating them, they build up the Church" (AL 85).

Education leads the person towards his or her full development in Christian perfection (see GE 2) and growth to personal maturity. Moral education

---

al mondo la "buona Novella" sulla purezza del cuore e trasmettete il messaggio della civiltà dell'amore, Sandomierz (12.06.1999)," in: IGP t. XXII, 1:1999, 1313-7.

<sup>279</sup> EGH 15, 41, 48; cf. TMHS 64-65, 75, 77, 94, 124-5.

<sup>280</sup> Cf. H. Joyeux, *op. cit.*; K. Meissner, *Skąd się biorą dzieci? Jak rozmawiać z dziećmi o przekazywaniu życia*, Poznań, 1999; K. Wiśniewska-Roszkowska, *Wychowanie seksualne*, Wrocław, 1998; J. Goleń, *Wychowanie seksualne w rodzinie. Studium pastoralne*, 127-44.