

# Changes

## Sexuality Education



Aug 2012

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Isn't it funny the way children have the uncanny ability to ask those awkward questions at the most inconvenient times?

Aug 2012



## This Month...

- Sa 4 St Jean Vianney  
Su 5 **Ord. Time 18:  
Bread of Life**  
St Mary Major  
Mo 6 Transfiguration  
We 8 St Mary of the  
Cross MacKillop  
Su 12 **Ord. Time 19:  
Living in the  
Light**  
We 15 Assumption  
Su 19 **Ord. Time 20:  
Sing to God**  
We 22 Mary, Queen of  
Heaven  
Th 23 St Rose of Lima  
Su 26 **Ord. Time 21:  
Words of Life**  
Tu 28 St Augustine



## More than just Biology

A sound formation in sexuality is a critical aspect of raising our children to adulthood and setting them up for success in their own relationships. Yet for many of us, the business of sex education has us feeling overwhelmed. Children can learn about the **biology** of sex from many sources including excellent school-based sexuality programs. Yet often the important relational and spiritual dimensions are underdeveloped. This is where parents play a crucial role.

# Nature Abhors a Vacuum

It's a well noted scientific principle that also applies to human relationships: if you leave a vacuum of values or information, **someone**, or **something** will fill it. Increasingly, invasive mass media, and particularly internet pornography, are pushing their way into our children's lives and hearts. When children have questions about their emerging sexuality, unless there is a culture of openness and a practice of regular communication in the home, such as during family meals, kids will turn to external sources for answers.

These sources are not always well intentioned, nor is the information they offer reliable or accurate. More than ever, parents need to be proactive and vigilant in their role as primary educators of their children in this area.



**Don't let your kids figure sexuality out alone.**

**Print version**

# Media Messages

Make no mistake – your child is getting exposed to lots of different messages about human love and sexuality from many sources: magazines, friends, internet, movies, TV shows, social media, music, older siblings, fashion, outdoor advertising, online games, church, school curricula and more. Many of the messages are counter to Christian principles, endorsing the idea that love equals sex-on-demand and promoting promiscuity with a detachment from emotions.

*"I first heard about sex from a friend at school when I was ten. Other girls started talking about what they 'knew'. They described sex as something gross and shameful. Then the rumour went around that even your parents do it!*

*I hesitantly asked my mother who lovingly explained to me the detail I needed to hear in a way that changed my perception of sex from 'naughty' and 'dirty' to beautiful and pure.*

*I am now 22 and I see children as young as nine, not only confidently discussing sex, but dressing provocatively and acting as though they were on Sex and the City. I see my peers having their hearts broken by boyfriends who use them for sex. I am so grateful that my parents provided me with a firm grounding in the biology of sex and the relational and spiritual aspects."- **Jess***

There are two approaches parents can take to this bombardment:

One is to censor heavily what children are allowed to access. For this to be effective parents have to be diligent in enforcing the rules so that children will abide by them, even when visiting friends. This is easier when the child is younger and the parents can regulate which friends their child associates with.

The other is to take a more moderate approach with less censoring but active engagement by the parent in the games and shows children access so that appropriate counter messages can be supplied.

## Try This Experiment

Review the number of times pre-marital sex is referred to in a single episode of your teen's favourite TV series, for example Big Bang Theory or NCIS. In one episode of Friends, we counted over 30 references to pre-marital sex, 13 of them to homosexuality. While the references may be subtle, they have become so commonplace, that we barely question the morality of it any more.



# Wisdom from the Church

The role of parents in educating their children in the way of love begins with the child's first breath. Much of this formation takes place spontaneously, for example, the reaction of parents to toddlers playing with their genitals at bath time or how they answer a pre-schooler's questions about a new baby. The Pontifical Council for the Family\* identifies a number of essential aspects of this formation including:

1. A Christian concept of sexuality which includes gender complementarity and an understanding of the human person's call to serve and make a gift of self.
2. A holistic approach which acknowledges the spiritual, intellectual, biological and emotional aspects of the human person.
3. The role of the family in the sexuality education of the children is fundamental and the church community is urged to support parents in this role.

\* Educational Guidance in Human Love: [here](#)



**“Mum, what’s a lesbian?”,  
asked my seven year old  
after school one day. Where  
to begin?**

# Teachable Moments

While we may find it funny or embarrassing, these questions are the doorway to a ‘teachable moment’; the opportunity to engage with our child on an important issue and provide good information when they are ready to hear it.

By being alert to the Teachable Moments, parents can capture these brief windows of openness to deliver an age-appropriate message. Here are some tips to make the most of the Teachable Moment...



1. **Stay calm!** ...especially when the awkward question comes at a tricky time, like in the checkout queue or when visitors are over for dinner. You don't want to discourage them from asking questions by chiding them or brushing them off. Their questions are precious opportunities to meaningfully engage with your child and establish a trust that carries over into their adolescent years.

2. **Understand the Question.** A young boy asked his mother: "Where did I come from?" His enthusiastic mother explained how babies are made to which the little boy listened without comprehension. Finally, she asked: "Why do you ask?" To which he replied: "A new boy came to school today, and he comes from Wagga. I just wondered where I come from." The moral of the story: understand the context of the question – sometimes children have heard something they don't understand and want a simple answer.







**3. Language.** Avoid using slang or crude language when talking about body parts and sexual activities. Using the proper names conveys respect and reverence. If you don't know the proper names for some things, the right information can be easily found with an internet search or in one of the references listed on page 10.

**4. Age Appropriate.** Children do best when the information about sex, marriage and procreation is provided steadily throughout their growing-up years. One of the short-comings of school-based programmes is that they impose information on the whole class, even though some children lack the maturity to process it.

**5. Holistic Approach.** Always frame your explanations in the context of your relationships and spiritual lives. Speak factually about the biology of sexual intercourse but also explain how husband and wife communicate their love for one another through their bodies. For more information about the sacred meaning for sexual love visit [www.smartloving.org](http://www.smartloving.org)

# School of Love

It's time to restore beauty and truth to the way the mystery of marital love is revealed. Parents are among the greatest examples of love and sacrifice, and as such are the best candidates to offer children valuable insights about human sexuality. It is the parents who instinctively know when each of their children are best able to understand the various aspects of sexuality and marital love.

Authors: Jessica Lubgans  
& Francine Pirola



This can be a daunting task but the alternative of letting the culture educate your children in sexuality will only set your children up for disappointment and heartache.

Take heart and take hope! You don't have to do it alone, and you can make a huge impact on your child's life and future relationships!

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## Resources

***Things are Changing***, Choicez Media (Jonathan and Karen Doyle), an online parent resource for talking about puberty with your child.  
[www.puberty.co](http://www.puberty.co)

***As I Have Loved You: A Program for Christian Education in Human Sexuality*** by Dr Gerard O'Shea.

***Teachable Moments*** by Lisa Black and Julianne Whyte is a thorough guide for parents to initiate conversation about sexuality.

Print version

# Talking about Sex

**Francine & Byron Pirola**

*Katrina wasn't looking forward to the parent puberty information night hosted by the school. She had been fondled by a stranger when she was twelve and somehow that made everything to do with sex feel dirty.*

*Matt was only seven when the neighbour's boys showed him some centrefolds. Fortunately, his dad was able to talk to him about the meaning of sex within marriage. Matt was determined to give his kids the right introduction to sex.*

When it comes to talking to our children about sexuality and their developing bodies, our own experiences will deeply influence our reactions. Before you tackle the 'birds and the bees', do this reflection on your own experiences.

**1. When I first learnt about sex ...**

- a. I was too young
- b. I already had an idea about it
- c. I was confused
- d. The messages were negative
- e. My parents were really understanding
- f. I felt grown up
- g. I couldn't stop thinking about it
- h. I felt guilty or ashamed

**2. When the Church teaches that sexual love is something beautiful between husband and wife...**

- a. I love it! It's a very affirming message
- b. I don't really believe it
- c. I like it but I don't understand it
- d. I want to convey that to my children
- e. I think it's idealistic nonsense
- f. I wish I could explain it better



**3. Regarding my own children and talking to them about sex ...**

- a. I am looking forward to sharing this milestone
- b. I feel anxious because I don't know enough
- c. I feel embarrassed – it's too private
- d. I hope it will bring us closer
- e. I wish the school or my spouse would just handle it
- f. I worry that they won't listen to me

**4. Share your thoughts with your spouse or a friend. How can you support each other in this important task?**



**Smartloving.org**

Resources and seminars for couples to enrich and energise their relationship.

## Mary MacKillop Thanksgiving

Australians are always looking for an excuse to roll out the festive foods that our Northern hemisphere brethren enjoy in their Winter season. Instead of 'Christmas in July', how about celebrating a MacKillop Thanksgiving? The Solemnity of St Mary of the Cross is the perfect opportunity to gather family and friends to give thanks for this wonderful woman. Check out [Cathfamily.org](http://Cathfamily.org) for loads of craft activities on Mary Mac and links to recipes and menu plans.

