

## **Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living: An Overview for Parents/Guardians**

**by Marilyn Gorun**

When it comes to sex, "the talk" is a feared event for many parents. Now a recent study indicates that one discussion is inadequate. Communication between parents and children concerning important issues, sexuality among them, needs to be ongoing. And, like it or not, success in this communication rests on the willingness of parents to be open to their children's questions and to let their children know that any question is okay. If children's questions are addressed from an early age, in an age-appropriate manner, their more specific questions as they grow and mature can be answered with a certain degree of ease.

In its numerous statements on sexuality education, the Church has consistently stated that parents are the primary educators of their children, especially in this area. This is their God-given right. The U.S. Catholic Church's guidelines, *Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living* (© 2008), point out the need for parents to do more than teach their children the biology of sex. The document notes that parents have a duty to see that their sexuality education "occurs within the context of the moral principles and truths of the Catholic Church . . . ."

Considering the forces at work in our culture to separate sexuality from morality, this is a tall order for parents and those they enlist to assist them: schools and religious education programs. Nearly every extended family has one or more member(s) living sexually outside the Church's guidelines. Thus parents have to be sensitive to family situations while upholding the Church's values—wisdom is called for. Parents also know that prayer for their children and prayer for guidance are necessary and helpful.

The reward for open communication between parents and children regarding sexuality is mutual respect and closeness. This can go a long way toward surviving the teen years—families growing together rather than apart, despite the stretch toward freedom. When teens walk out to lead their own lives, parents who have kept communication open will see their children leaving with the Christian values they've witnessed at home firmly embedded in their hearts.