



MODULE ONE

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# Foundations of Catholic Parenting

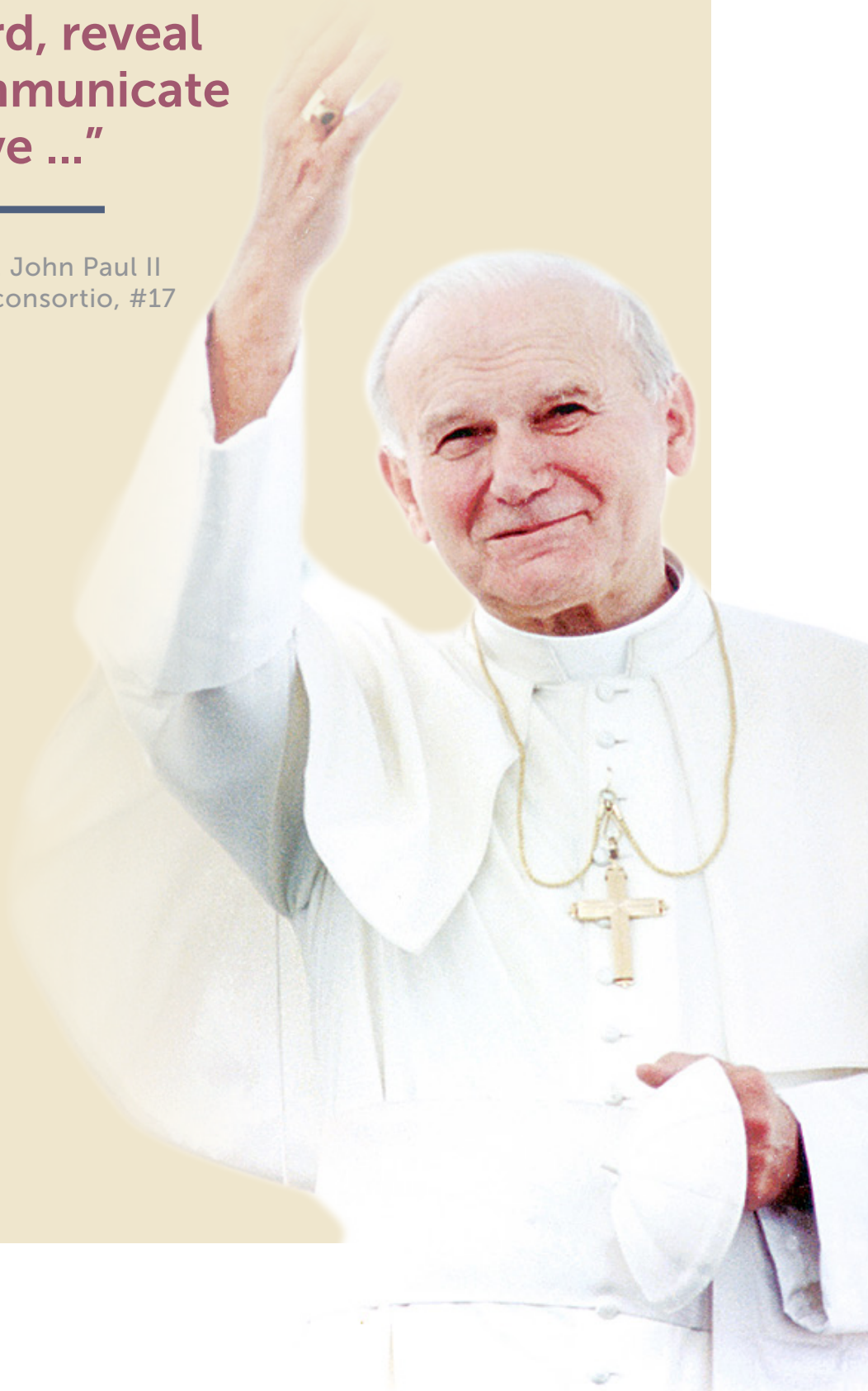
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**“The family  
has as its mission  
to guard, reveal  
and communicate  
love ...”**

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- Pope St. John Paul II  
Familiaris consortio, #17



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## Preface

Welcome to Catholic Parents Online, where we share tips and resources on Catholic parenting. This is brought to you by the Theology of the Body parenting team of the Apostolate for Catholic Truth. Presented with the lens of the Theology of the Body, we will see how we can be a sincere gift of ourselves to our kids, in ways that will help them find true happiness and flourish in accordance with God's wonderful plan for each and every one of them.

This project began as a YouTube and podcast channel for Catholic parents, with various modules covering topics such as the foundations of Catholic parenting, bonding with our children, sexuality education, managing social media and so on. In our hope to help parents optimize its contents, we have developed a handbook to accompany each module.

While the contents of each chapter/episode can be accessed through print (handbook), video (YouTube) or audio (Podcast) format, depending on each individual's preference, parents now have the opportunity to run through its contents in greater detail through reflection questions at the end of each chapter. These questions are designed to help us assimilate the materials better, whether as individuals, as couples, or as parent support groups in parishes or Church groups.

We hope and pray you will find these handbooks and YouTube and podcast episodes useful. It is our hope and prayer that through these resources, through God's mercy and grace, we will connect better with our children and lead them to where God wants them to be, glorifying God as human persons fully alive in His image and likeness.

Humbly in His Love and Service,

The TOB Parenting Team, Apostolate for Catholic Truth

## Glossary of Terms

- AL** **Amoris laetitia** – Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “The Joy of Love”, 19 March 2016.
- CCC** **Catechism Of The Catholic Church** - Latin text copyright (c) Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano 1993.
- EV** **Evangelium vitae** - Pope St John Paul II, Encyclical “The Gospel of Life”, 25 March 1995.
- FC** **Familiaris consortio** - Pope St John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation “On the role of the Christian Family in the Modern World”, 22 November 1981.
- GS** **Gaudium et spes**, “Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World”, 7 December 1965.
- HV** **Humanae vitae**, - Blessed Pope Paul VI, Encyclical “Of Human Life”, 25 July 1968.
- TMHS** **“The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family”**, Pontifical Council for the Family, December 8, 1995
- TOB** **Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body**, Michael Waldstein, Pauline Books & Media (2006).

## Chapter One - Introduction to the Series

This introductory chapter seeks to provide an overall view of this Catholic parenting series – how it came to be, what it hopes to achieve, the format for the videos/podcasts, and why Catholic parenting will be presented through the lens of the Theology of the Body.

[Watch the YouTube video here](#)



## The Parenting Journey

As Catholic parents, have you ever felt inadequately equipped for the task of parenting? Unprepared? Have you ever felt you wish you could have done better? Or even felt lost sometimes, wondering how to raise your kids in today's world? If your answer is yes to any – or all – of these questions, welcome to the club!

Many of us have fumbled through parenthood, often doing things that we wish we had not done and failing to do things which we later wish we had. Often it is a journey involving lots of ups and downs – one in many of us would surely wish we would have had more help in.

## Why Catholic Parents Online

And things are not getting any easier. Modern challenges abound. These include work-life balance, societal pressures, the internet, social media, pornography – the list goes on. Life definitely seems tougher for parents today.

That is why we have established this website with its associated YouTube and podcast channels. Our aim? To share tips and resources on Catholic parenting which we have gathered over the years, so that you can be more equipped in your role as Catholic parents, and hopefully avoid the mistakes many of us made when we were younger parents. More than that, we hope that through God's grace, your children can truly flourish according to God's wonderful plan for each and every one of them.

## Why the Theology of the Body

In this series, we seek to share the various aspects of Catholic parenting through the lens of the Theology of the Body (TOB). Many have mistakenly associated the TOB with only the Church's teachings on sexual morality. However, it is much, much more than that. Delivered by Pope St John Paul II over a series of general audiences between 1979 to 1984, the TOB is



regarded by many to be a true masterpiece which gives us a clear vision of our identity and mission as human beings made in the image and likeness of God.

In so doing, it helps us know who we are, what we are destined for, why we feel what we feel, our attractions, our desires, and what only – and ultimately – can fulfil those deepest longings in our hearts in a way that helps us attain happiness. Indeed, eternal happiness.

And eternal happiness is precisely what we as Catholic parents ultimately want for our children, is it not?

As we embark on this journey, we will begin with a very brief overview of the TOB to familiarise ourselves with its main points, then share about the important foundation and pillars needed for Catholic parenting, before moving on to discuss more specific aspects such as communication, managing social media, sexuality education and so on.

We will keep these chapters short, because we know many parents are terribly busy both at home and at work. Each chapter will dwell briefly on an area of Catholic parenting and is based on the transcript from each podcast episode. At the end of each chapter there will be questions for us to reflect on. These are designed to not only help us understand the topic better, but also to help us apply the concepts presented, and in a more concrete way, to our lives as Catholic parents.

Where possible, references will be provided for parents who wish to delve deeper into the respective topics. At the end of each chapter there is an empty page for parents who wish to use it for jotting down their notes and reflections.

## Parenthood is a Prayer

Finally, let us never forget to pray. This is not just to remind ourselves of our absolute dependence on God's grace and mercy, which is absolutely true, but also to remind ourselves that parenthood, in essence, is a prayer.

It is not only a time when we communicate with God, but also a journey through which we communicate God to our children. Like it or not, parenting is where our kids first experience God, and His love – through us. The very first school of love is the family, as the Church tells us.

In the next chapter, we begin our series proper with an overview of the Theology of the Body.

## Reflection Questions

1. What have been my biggest challenges so far as a Catholic parent?
2. What challenges do I foresee in the near term or distant future?
3. What challenges do I fear most?
4. Am I committed to wanting to be a better parent?
5. How much do I want to invest of myself in this endeavour (to become a better parent)?

## Resources

### 1. Excerpt from 'Familiaris Consortio', Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World.

'According to the plan of God, marriage is the foundation of the wider community of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in whom they find their crowning.'<sup>1</sup>

In its most profound reality, love is essentially a gift; and conjugal love, while leading the spouses to the reciprocal "knowledge" which makes them "one flesh,"<sup>2</sup> does not end with the couple, because it makes them capable of the greatest possible gift, the gift by which they become cooperators with God for giving life to a new human person. Thus the couple, while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother.

When they become parents, spouses receive from God the gift of a new responsibility. Their parental love is called to become for the children the visible sign of the very love of God, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."<sup>3</sup>

### 2. Excerpt From 'Amoris Lætitia', Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis on Love in the Family

'Parents always influence the moral development of their children, for better or for worse. It follows that they should take up this essential role and carry it out consciously, enthusiastically, reasonably and appropriately.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 50.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Genesis* 2: 24.

<sup>3</sup> FC, n. 14

<sup>4</sup> AL, n. 259

## Notes

## Chapter Two - The Theology of the Body

This chapter gives a very brief summary of the Theology of the Body (TOB) of Pope St John Paul II, the lens through which Catholic parenting will be presented in this series.

[Watch the YouTube video here](#)



## A Brief Overview of the TOB

In our introduction to this website on Catholic parenting, I mentioned that the Theology of the Body will provide the lens through which we view our vocation, our mission, as Catholic parents.

We therefore begin this series proper with a very brief summary of the Theology of the Body.

1. Can we see God? No, He is pure spirit. But as bodily and spiritual beings, we can make Him visible in the physical world.
2. We are made in the image and likeness of God. Since God is love, and we are made in His image, we will find fulfilment only when we love as He loves.
3. God exists as an eternal exchange of love in the Holy Trinity: The Father loving and giving the gift of Himself to His Son; the Son, in turn, receiving and experiencing this gift, offers the total gift of Himself back to the Father. The love that they share is so real, so alive and so fruitful that it is the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Made in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity, we too are made for loving communion.
4. This call to loving communion is stamped right here, in our bodies. The husband, in his male body, offers the gift of himself in love to his wife. The wife, receiving and experiencing the total gift of her husband, reciprocates his love through the total gift of herself to him.

And their love, open to the Lord, the Giver of life, becomes, God willing, another person, their child. The complementarity and union of the husband's body and his wife's body, their one-flesh union, thus becomes an icon, an image of Trinitarian love, a love which is free, total, faithful and fruitful. This call to love as God loves, in and through our bodies, is referred to as the spousal meaning of the body. Of course, the Catechism is clear that in no way does this mean that God is sexual. He is pure Spirit. We must remember that we are made in God's image; He is not made in our image.

However, the union of a man and a woman in marriage serves as what St John Paul II refers to as a primordial sacrament, a visible sign, a template so to speak, to help us understand who God is. It also helps us better understand the spousal meaning of the body.

5. This spousal meaning of the body can be lived out in our lives, whether as married persons or persons who live celibacy for the sake of the kingdom (such as priests and religious). How?

6. Through the language of the body! When we speak this language well, when we love as God loves, in and through our bodies, freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully, we are true prophets. But when we do not speak this language rightly, we become false prophets.

7. Finally, our male and female bodies, with our call to communion, not only reveal who God is, but also gives us a little glimmer, a foretaste of Heaven. It points us to an infinitely greater reality – Paradise, the wedding of the Lamb, when we join the communion of saints in the heavenly wedding with our bridegroom, Jesus. And in and through that beautiful union with Jesus, He draws us into the life of the Holy Trinity, the Eternal Exchange of Love. It is only in that heavenly wedding that the spousal meaning of our bodies, and our ache for that ultimate love that satisfies, will be definitively fulfilled.

As Dr Christopher West likes to say, the whole biblical message can be summed up in five words: **“God wants to marry us!”**

What has been presented above is a very truncated and obviously inadequate treatise of the Theology of the Body.

There is so much more to share about the Theology of the Body (TOB). The above summary only scratches the surface of the teaching in a very superficial way. In no way does it do any justice to this vast and beautiful teaching of Pope St John Paul II. We encourage you to avail yourself of the resources available online we have shared at \_\_\_\_\_.

## A Blueprint for Catholic Parenting

What does the Theology of the Body have to do with parenting, you might ask? The short answer is – everything.

Not only will we find fulfilment and our meaning in life by living out the spousal meaning of our bodies as spouses and parents; it will also help our children know who they are, whose they are, and where their ultimate address is meant to be. It is now our task, our mission, to form their conscience, their GPS, so to speak, to help them get there.

How do we do that? By living out our triple role as priest, prophet and king, in our family. We will discuss this in the next chapter.



## Reflection Questions

1. Do I believe that the human body is a unity of body *and* soul?
2. What makes us different from other animals?
3. What do I understand by the “spousal meaning of the body”?
4. Do I see myself as a gift to my spouse and children?
5. If so how do I want to live my life as a gift to them?
6. How have I fallen short of this ideal?
7. Do I believe that Christ can help me achieve this aim to be a sincere gift to my spouse and children in ways that will help them flourish according to God’s plan?

## Resources

1. Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body, Michael Waldstein, Pauline Books & Media (2006).
2. Theology of the Body for Beginners: A Basic Introduction to Pope John Paul II’s Sexual Revolution, Revised Edition, Christopher West, 2009.
3. <https://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/media/articles/what-is-the-theology-of-the-body-christopher-west/>
4. [Theology of the Body in One Hour](#). Jason Evert, Totus Tuus Press (December 21, 2017)

## Notes

## Chapter Three – Priest, Prophet and King

This chapter gives an overview of the special role of the Catholic parent as priest, prophet and king, and how we can fulfill that baptismal calling as Catholic parents.

[Watch the YouTube video here](#)



## Foundational Role of Parents in the Family

After Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 1979, she was asked what could be done to promote world peace. Her reply: “Go home and love your family.”

That simple, yet profound statement shows precisely how important and foundational our role as parents is. In fact, as Catholic parents, we speak that language of the body, that language of love expressed in and through our bodies, in a special way, through the triple role that we have been given as baptised Christians – as priest, prophet and king.

### Priest

As priest, we lead the family in right praise and worship of God Almighty, and in so doing, lead our spouse and children to Heaven, where we continue this right praise and worship for all eternity.

### Prophet

As Prophet, we proclaim the Good News, the truth about who God is, first and foremost in our family, through our words, through our deeds – in other words, through our bodies.

### King

As King, we go on the march with Christ our King, and for Him. We do this not with physical means such as swords or guns or firepower, but with love. We build His Kingdom of love here on earth, first and foremost, in and through our family.

This is precisely the foundational basis that, as St Teresa of Calcutta said, is the building block for bringing about peace, and love, in the world.

## A Sharing

Allow me to share the example of my mother.

Mum taught us to pray simple prayers when we were young. She would also get us to pray the family rosary often.

Now, as a young boy, I was quite a rascal. I remember trying to evade family prayer or make her forget to gather us round, but she didn't. Guess what was my favourite part of the rosary? The Hail Holy Queen. Because that meant we were finishing soon!

You can probably guess what my favourite part of the Mass was, when I was a kid. Yes, it was when the priest said, "Go, the Mass is ended." To which I replied with a resounding, "Thanks be to God!"

Thank God, through His Grace, and thanks to my mum for her guidance and example, I have come to appreciate the Mass and the rosary a whole lot more, and these have now become a beautiful and indispensable part of my life today.

Mum did not have any formal education at all. Reading and writing were a challenge, but she compensated for this by attending Bible and catechism classes when she had the time, and she never failed to teach us the elements of our faith whenever she could.

I was the youngest of eleven children, or twelve if you include my eldest sister who passed away as a young child long before I was born. As you can well imagine, the housework seemed never-ending – washing, cooking, ironing...

Despite this, Mum still made time for us, to bond with us, to love us, to show us she cared. My father did too, in his own quiet way. Sure, there were times when things were tense at home, and I remember being sternly disciplined on a few occasions, but that is another story for another time.

I brought up the example of my mum here for this main reason:

To share with you that no matter where we are in life, no matter what background we come from, no matter what our education level may be, no matter what life throws at us, through

the grace of God, we can speak the language of the body, to love as God loves, as priest, prophet and king.

## Our Baptismal Call

In summary, once again, we exercise our baptismal call to be priest, prophet and king, in a special way, as Catholic parents, in our families. How?

As priest, we lead the family in right praise and worship of God Almighty.

As Prophet, we proclaim the truth about who God is, first and foremost in our family.

And as King, we build God's Kingdom of love here on earth, first and foremost, in and through our family.

To do this, we need to lay the important foundation for our entire mission, who is none other than Jesus – our Lord our Saviour and the source and goal of our mission as Catholic parents.

## Reflection Questions

1. How can I live out my calling to be priest in my family?
2. How can I live out my calling to be prophet in my family?
3. How can I live out my calling to be king in my family?
4. In what ways have I shown the face of God to my children? Is God challenging me to do more?

## Resources

1. Priest, Prophet And King, by Father Robert Barron, January 2014
2. How To Live Out Your Baptismal Call of Priest, Prophet, and King, by Grace Bellon

## Notes

## Chapter Four – Jesus, the Foundation of our Mission

This chapter seeks to establish why Jesus is needed as *the* foundation for Catholic parenting, upon which the 3 pillars of Catholic parenting can be built to support the project, or rather the vocation, of Catholic parenting.

[Watch the YouTube video here](#)





## Jesus – our Model

As Pope Francis wrote, “The mystery of the Christian family can be fully understood only in the light of the Father’s infinite love revealed in Christ, Who gave Himself up for our sake and Who continues to dwell in our midst.” (Amoris Laetitia, 59)

In other words:

1. Jesus showed us how to love each other as God loves, beginning in the family, and
2. He continues to be present to us and with us in a very real way today, giving us the grace, mercy and strength to live out this call as priest, prophet and king.

In a sense you might say that Christ, truly God and truly man, models for man divine love, and transmit to man divine life, through all the graces that He wants to pour upon us today.

## Jesus Heals

Have you ever been in a situation when there was such a bad misunderstanding, conflict or argument with your spouse or children, where you felt so powerless and hurt that you didn’t know what to do? When you felt like just giving up? I have. Many times!

But I can share with you a powerful weapon which I learned from my mum to overcome these: Jesus. Whenever these situations cropped up and I felt helpless (which was often as a spouse and father), I would turn to Him in prayer, and ask our blessed mother to pray for us too.

In a matter of time, usually sooner rather than later, healing and reconciliation takes place. Somehow our Lord settles everything in His own special and powerful way through the graces that He pours upon us when we turn to Him.

## Jesus Protects

As Pope St John Paul said, “Christ’s union with man is power and the source of power.”  
(Redemptor Hominis, 18)

Christ made us for Himself, and He will give us all the graces and strength we will need as Catholic parents.

The devil stands no chance against Jesus, our Lord and God of all, but we must let Jesus come into, and be the centre of, our family life.

## Our Source and Strength

As mentioned in our chapter on the Theology of the Body, Christ is our Bridegroom Who wants us to be joined to Him here, and forever in Heaven. He must be our source. He must be our strength. He must be our food for the journey. He must be our life. No one else, nothing else, can fill this void that only He can fill. Not wealth, not honour, not power, not pleasure.

We must let Him lead our family. Only when our children find Jesus will they find meaning in life. It is only then can their deepest desires, their infinite thirst for love, fulfilment, and happiness, true happiness, be quenched by the One Who is absolute goodness, beauty and truth.

## Encountering Jesus

How can we encounter Jesus? How can we deepen our relationship with Him?

There are three main ways, as proposed by the Church:

- The Word (the Bible)
- Prayer
- The Sacraments

Let us turn often to the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist – the Mass, the source and summit of the Christian life, as the Catechism tells us.

In summary, we need Jesus to be at the centre of our family, to be at the centre of our mission as Catholic parents, because Christ, truly God and truly man, models for us divine love, and transmits to us divine life. And it is precisely God's life and love that our families need, always.

As such, we need to enter into an ever-deeper intimacy with Jesus, through the Word, through prayer, and the Sacraments.

## The Three Pillars

Now that we have established that Christ is the foundation of Catholic parenting, and indeed all our family life, we are ready to discuss the three important pillars built on this foundation to support our whole mission. These three pillars are:

1. Connection with the Church;
2. Connection with our spouse in marriage; and
3. Connection with our children.

In the next chapter, we will explore our connection with the first of these pillars - the Church.

*"May Christ the Lord, the Universal King, the King of Families, be present in every Christian home as He was at Cana, bestowing light, joy, serenity, and strength."*

(Pope St John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, 86)

## Reflection Questions

1. Jesus asked His disciples: “*But you, who do you say I am?*” (Matthew 16:15) For a moment imagine Jesus looking at me with eyes full of love and mercy. What is my response to Him? How important really is Jesus to me?
2. Do I place knowing and loving Jesus as a topmost priority in my life?
3. How have I shared Jesus with my children? Is there more that I can do?
4. How often do I turn to Jesus in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist? Is Jesus calling me to even greater intimacy with Him?

## Resources

‘Jesus Christ is the chief way for the Church. He himself is our way “to the Father’s house” and is the way to each man.’ (Redemptor hominis, n. 13)

## Notes

## Chapter Five – Our Connection with the Church

This chapter explores why and how our connection with the Church will help us immensely in our mission as Catholic parents.

[Watch the YouTube video here](#)



## Our Need for the Church

There are two aspects in which the Church can help us in our mission. These are the vertical and the horizontal dimensions.

### Vertical Dimension – Divine Life

In chapter 5 of St Paul's letter to the Ephesians he describes, as a great mystery, the spousal union of Christ and His Church. A passage that St John Paul II describes as "the 'crowning' of the themes and truths.... in Sacred Scripture." (Theology of the Body, 87:3)

As His bride, the Church receives the gift of Christ into herself, His life, His love, His graces, His redemptive power, and transmits these to us, in her teachings, in her liturgical life, and in a very special way, in her sacraments.

As we gather as one Body in the Church, with Christ as our Head, the Church herself is, in a sense, like a sacrament – a visible sign of God's grace, a sign and instrument of our communion with God and of unity among men.<sup>5</sup>

And as the Church unites all men in the "community of faith, hope, and charity", she becomes a "visible organisation through which [Jesus] communicates [His] truth and grace to all men."<sup>6</sup>

### Horizontal Dimension: the Christian Community

As that community of faith, hope, and charity in the Church, we are also called to connect with each other, support each other, and lead each other on our pilgrimage to Heaven.

This is the horizontal dimension of the Church, whereby we journey with and support each other in our mission.

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<sup>5</sup> "The Church, in Christ, is like a sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men." (CCC, 775)

<sup>6</sup> CCC, 771

Hence we strongly encourage you to be part of groups of like-minded individuals, couples or families in your communities. This can take the form of ministries, communities or support groups of people going through similar journeys in life, be it for couples, fathers, mothers, single parents, grandparents, and so on.

Through being part of a group of like-minded individuals on a similar journey together, we can also help each other when the need arises, for example helping with child care when another set of parents is not feeling well, or when they need some time for a couple date.

We suggest it would be a good idea to take turns in helping with each other's kids so we can have dedicated date nights with our spouse, knowing that our kids are in good and safe hands.

This can really help in sharing our values with our children too, providing them with trusted mentors who can model our beliefs to them.

### Summary:

1. The Church serves as a wonderful and efficacious channel of Christ's love, graces, truth and power.
2. As a community of believers, we can and should support each other on this journey together.

### The Church is Missionary

However, let us remember that the work of our Church does not stop here. The Church by our nature is missionary, and as her members we must feel compelled to go forth and make disciples of all the nations, beginning with our children, our families.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "The Church in her very nature is missionary, sent by Christ to all the nations to make disciples of them." (CCC, 767)



To facilitate this, we will need to first connect with our spouse and our children – the second and third pillars of Catholic parenting, respectively. These we will discuss in the following chapters.

## Reflection Questions

1. How often do I turn to the Sacraments, in particular the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist? Can I do better?
2. Do I read the Bible regularly? Can I do better?
3. How disciplined am I in my prayer life? Do I devote regular time for God in prayer every day?
4. How connected am I to the Church and its members?
5. If I am not involved in any church group yet, do I think that God may be calling me (and my spouse) to be part of a ministry where I can contribute my talents and grow through my interaction with others as well?

## Resources

### The Church as teacher and mother for couples in difficulty

(Familiaris consortio, n.33)

In the field of conjugal morality the Church is Teacher and Mother and acts as such.

As Teacher, she never tires of proclaiming the moral norm that must guide the responsible transmission of life. The Church is in no way the author or the arbiter of this norm. In obedience to the truth which is Christ, whose image is reflected in the nature and dignity of the human person, the Church interprets the moral norm and proposes it to all people of good will, without concealing its demands of radicalness and perfection.

As Mother, the Church is close to the many married couples who find themselves in difficulty over this important point of the moral life: she knows well their situation, which is often very arduous and at times truly tormented by difficulties of every kind, not only individual difficulties but social ones as well; she knows that many couples encounter difficulties not only in the concrete fulfillment of the moral norm but even in understanding its inherent values.

But it is one and the same Church that is both Teacher and Mother. And so the Church never ceases to exhort and encourage all to resolve whatever conjugal difficulties may arise without ever falsifying or compromising the truth: she is convinced that there can be no true contradiction between the divine law on transmitting life and that on fostering authentic married love.<sup>[91]</sup> Accordingly, the concrete pedagogy of the Church must always remain linked with her doctrine and never be separated from it. With the same conviction as my predecessor, I therefore repeat: “To diminish in no way the saving teaching of Christ constitutes an eminent form of charity for souls.”<sup>[92]</sup>

On the other hand, authentic ecclesial pedagogy displays its realism and wisdom only by making a tenacious and courageous effort to create and uphold all the human conditions- psychological, moral and spiritual- indispensable for understanding and living the moral value and norm.

There is no doubt that these conditions must include persistence and patience, humility and strength of mind, filial trust in God and in His grace, and frequent recourse to prayer and to the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation.<sup>[93]</sup> Thus strengthened, Christian husbands and wives will be able to keep alive their awareness of the unique influence that the grace of the sacrament of marriage has on every aspect of married life, including therefore their sexuality: the gift of the Spirit, accepted and responded to by husband and wife, helps them to live their human sexuality in accordance with God's plan and as a sign of the unitive and fruitful love of Christ for His Church.

## Notes

## Chapter Six – Our Connection with our Spouse

This chapter explores why and how our connection with our spouse forms a strong pillar for Catholic parenting. A strong marriage not only provides a positive environment for our children to flourish in, but also shows and teaches our children what it means to love as God loves, as a communion of persons made in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity.

[Watch the YouTube video here](#)



## Trinitarian Icon of Love

Why is our marriage an important pillar for Catholic parenting?

Because the union of husband and wife is an icon, an image, of the eternal exchange of love, the Holy Trinity.

As St John Paul II said, through this mutual gift of self to each other in our marriage, we become a “sign... that efficaciously transmits in the visible world ... the mystery of divine life.”

<sup>8</sup>

By being that visible sign of love, we will be able to help our children flourish according to God’s wonderful plan for them in the following ways:

1. Teaching them by word and example;
2. Providing a positive atmosphere of love, virtue and respect; and in so doing,
3. Helping them discover their vocation in life, whether it is in the vocation of marriage or in living celibacy for the Kingdom of God.

## God’s Grace and Mercy

Of course, we are not perfect, and I will be the first to admit how much I have messed up over the years, how much I have hurt my wife through the things I said and did, and probably even more through what I did not say or do for her.

But I’m just so thankful for the immense mercy God has shown us over the years, that we were able to forgive each other and allow Him to heal our hurts. So here is another gentle reminder - never forget to tap on the abundant graces and mercy that Christ wants to pour upon us! Be not afraid. He will never abandon us when we turn to Him.

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<sup>8</sup> TOB 19:40

## Single Parents

At this point, we would like to acknowledge that some of us on this journey may be single parents, often due to circumstances beyond our control. We know it is not easy. Perhaps you can turn to trusted family members, relatives and friends who can support you on this journey, maybe even helping to be another role model for your children as well.

Whatever the case may be, do remember that Jesus loves you so, so much, and wants to be with you on this journey. Let Him in, let Him heal, let Him guide. And let Him calm the storms that all of us must face at various points of our lives.

As St John Paul affirmed, “it is also proper to recognise the value of the witness of those [single parents] who... too give an authentic witness to fidelity, of which the world today has a great need.”<sup>9</sup>

## Channel of Grace and Love

In conclusion, let us recap what has been discussed in this chapter:

1. Our marriage is an icon of the Holy Trinity
2. It shows our children Whom God is, provides them with a positive environment to grow in, and helps them realise that their vocation, and fulfilment in life, is to love as He loves.
3. Through this realisation, they will gradually discover and discern their vocation in life, whether it be the gift of self in the married life or in living celibacy for the Kingdom of God.

In other words, our marriage serves as a wonderful and efficacious channel of Christ’s love, graces, and power in the flourishing and happiness of our children.

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<sup>9</sup> Familiaris Consortio, 20

In fact, the best scientific literature to date suggests that children fare better physically, academically, and emotionally when their parents have a healthy marital relationship.

With this, we are ready to move on to the third pillar of Catholic parenting – the connection with our children. We will discuss this from the next chapter and onwards.



## Reflection Questions

1. Do I realise how powerful our marriage is in being a channel of God's grace and love to each other, to our children and to the world at large?
2. Do our children see God's love alive and active in our marriage?
3. In what ways have I failed to love my spouse as Christ loves in a total and selfless gift of self?
4. In what ways have I hurt my spouse? If you are not sure, pray about it first and then ask your spouse to share with you how you might have hurt him/her. Remember to be gentle with yourself and your spouse. Then ask Jesus to heal and bring about reconciliation in your relationship.
5. How open are my spouse and me to attending a marriage enrichment program to make our marriage even better?

## Resources

### Marriage Enrichment Programmes



**Worldwide  
Marriage  
Encounter  
Singapore**



**Couple  
Empowerment  
Programme  
(CEP)**



**Couples for  
Christ**

## Notes

## Chapter Seven – Connecting with our Children

This chapter provides an introduction to the next series that will explore how we can connect with our children in ways that will not only deepen the parent-child bonding, but also help them flourish according to God’s beautiful plan for each and every one of them.

In the previous chapter, we saw how our marriage serves as a wonderful and efficacious channel of Christ’s love, graces, and power in the flourishing of our children.

In this chapter, and in subsequent ones, we will discuss how we can connect with our children in ways that will strengthen our bonds with them. This bonding with our children will serve as the next important pillar to support our mission as Catholic parents.

[Watch the YouTube video here](#)



## A Firm Foundation

Studies have shown that a positive parent-child relationship is associated with better outcomes for children later in life, such as better self-esteem, higher resilience, and lower incidence of high-risk behaviour, in areas such as drugs, immoderate alcohol consumption, casual sex, and so on.

In addition, this bond with our children will make it easier for them to find and to love Jesus as they become more receptive to us in areas such as faith formation, virtues formation, sexuality education, proper use of the internet and social media – porn-proofing our children, so to speak – and so on.

As we make the sincere gift of ourselves to our children by bonding with them in a positive way, it will give them much opportunity to flourish as human persons according to the wonderful plan that God has for each and every one of them.

## ABCs of Connection

We will discuss each of these in a little more detail in the following chapters. For now, I would like to share with you an acronym by which I believe we can more easily remember these aspects. These are the ABCs of connecting with our children.

**A** stands for **affirmation**;

**B** is for **being there** for them;

**C** is for **communication**;

**D** is for **discipline**;

**E** is for **empathy**;

**F** is for **forgiveness**;

**G** is to be **God-centred**;

**H** is for **honesty**;

**I** is for **integrity**; and

**J** is to be **joyful**.

Once we get these right, we will be able to embark more confidently, with God's ever-present and ever-needed grace and mercy, on the exciting journey of Catholic parenting.

## God Redeems All

There is a critical point I wish to bring up. If, like me, you have made mistakes before in the upbringing of your children, even big ones, do not despair, and please, please do not beat yourself about the head.

No-one is perfect. I am sure there must have been many factors beyond our control, and things did not turn out as well as we would have wished. But be not afraid. Nothing is beyond the redemptive power of Jesus. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is beyond His infinite mercy.

So let us entrust our children to Him. Let us entrust ourselves, our mission to Him. He writes straight with our crooked lines. Our Lord, our Saviour, our Redeemer. Come, Lord Jesus!

With that, let us journey together. In the next module, we will explore these ABCs, starting with the topic of affirmation.

## Reflection Questions

1. Do I want a good relationship with my children?
2. What are the positives I like about my relationship with my children?
3. What are the areas in which I think I can do better?
4. Am I ready to offer all these aspects of my relationship with my children (both good and bad) to Jesus and let Him heal us in His own special way?

## Resources

1. [Strong Catholic Family Faith](#) website
2. [The Peyton Institute for Domestic Church Life](#)

## Notes



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THROUGH THE GRACE OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE, PARENTS RECEIVE THE RESPONSIBILITY AND PRIVILEGE OF EVANGELISING THEIR CHILDREN. PARENTS SHOULD INITIATE THEIR CHILDREN AT AN EARLY AGE INTO THE MYSTERIES OF THE FAITH OF WHICH THEY ARE THE 'FIRST HERALDS' FOR THEIR CHILDREN. THEY SHOULD ASSOCIATE THEM FROM THEIR TENDEREST YEARS WITH THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.'

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- CCC, #2225

