



*"Young people especially are at risk of being deceived by the glamour of modern secular culture. Yet, like all the hopes that appear on first sight to promise so much, this turns out to be a false hope ... If their youthful energy and enthusiasm can be directed towards the things of God, which alone are sufficient to satisfy their deepest longings, more young people will be inspired to commit their lives to Christ."*

Pope Benedict XVI,  
December 15, 2007

## Raising Love-Wise Teens

You, as the parent, are invited to joyfully embrace your responsibility to form your children in the ways of true love and maturity. Here are some starting points:

1. Create a climate of Christian virtue in your home by practicing open, loving communication as you work, pray, and play together. Select entertainment and leisure activities that inspire goodness, truth, and beauty.
2. Set clear and consistent boundaries for behavior. Explain and hold firmly to them. Remember, everyone is NOT doing it. Monitor choices of friends, language, and clothing.
3. Help teens avoid destructive influences by using internet controls, movie screening websites, and guidelines for the use of TV and reading materials.
4. Seek help from God's grace through the Church, offered freely through Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Discussion of each Sunday's Scripture readings can inspire a living faith. Participation in the life of the parish helps teens to experience themselves as part of the *Body of Christ*.
5. Build a network of family and friends who are supportive of Catholic values to whom you can turn when in need of encouragement, direction and affirmation.
6. Continue to educate yourself on the beauty of the Catholic teachings on sexuality. If you understand them better and live them yourself, you can pass the treasure of truth on to your children.



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For more teachings on chastity and life, go to  
[www.dioceseofjoliet.org/life](http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/life) or  
[www.sexrespect.com](http://www.sexrespect.com).



## Sexuality, Chastity & Our Youth:

### A Challenge for Parents Today

Are you concerned when:

- *You can't find a modest outfit for your 10-year-old daughter or son?*
- *Your 11-year-old asks to hang out at the mall with friends... some girls, some boys?*
- *Your 13-year-old was allowed to view an R rated movie at a friend's house?*

You are not alone...

## What's a Parent to Do?

- Do we go with the flow and accept this as the *real world* today?
- Do we trust our parental instincts when we feel uncomfortable with a situation?
- Do we look to our Catholic faith while making important parenting decisions?

## Our Youth: Made In God's Image

Parenting teens and preteens today is not easy. They are bombarded with pressures from peers - media - advertisers - magazines - shopping centers - and even schools!

Years ago, we baptized our children into the Body of Christ, the Church. We promised to parent them in the light of Christ and protect them from darkness. Today, they are frequently exposed to unchristian values, messages and pressures. They need our help to stand strong in their Catholic faith in order to experience the fullness of life that comes only in and through Christ.



## Your Child Looks to You for Guidance

- Studies show that teens and preteens actually desire more time with their families! They want love, limits, and discipline - even if they appear to resist it.
- It takes effort and scheduling for parents to make faith and family relationships a priority. If you make the effort and take the time, your whole family will benefit.



## Adolescence: Bridge to Adulthood

- Adolescence is a time for youth to get to know themselves, their strengths, and weaknesses in light of God's love.
- It is a time for them to make their faith their own.
- It is a time to grow closer to God while facing the new challenges of life.
- It is a time to develop their talents in order to spread the message of Christ through the vocation they are called to and the career they choose.



## God's Invitation to Mature Love

God asks all people to give themselves - body, mind, and soul - to loving service as disciples of Christ. As St. Paul tells us, all are called to a mature and selfless love that is "patient, kind, not rude, not jealous." (1 Cor. 13:4) Adolescents need preparation for and practice in this unselfish love in order to succeed in life.

Catholic parents can help by slowing down the social pressures and offering what teens and preteens need:

1. fortitude to avoid evil and practice morality.
2. knowledge for defending the truths of the faith and willpower to choose what is good and true.
3. loving support to understand and deal with feelings appropriately.
4. a personal prayer life and a sacramental life that is rooted in weekly Eucharist and regular Reconciliation.
5. opportunities to volunteer in service to others so as to foster generosity of spirit.
6. modeling of kindness, patience, humility and obedience.

God's plan for a life of grace and self-discipline includes practicing virtues such as honesty, charity, justice, and chastity. It is in this life of Christian virtue that teens and preteens discover themselves and become their "best self" before they can enter into mature relationships with others.

## Chastity: The Path to Real Love

Chastity is the virtue of sexual purity. A chaste person tries to practice purity in his or her thoughts, words, and actions. Out of respect for the dignity and sacredness of married love, all intimate physical expressions belong within marriage. Chastity keeps love honest, personal, selfless, and faithful. In this world of superficiality, chastity makes love real.



God's desire is that each married couple will have the best love experience possible; a reflection of his love, faithful and open to new life. A man and a woman enter into the Sacrament of Matrimony to publicly proclaim their loving commitment and to ask God's blessings and graces for their new family. A lifetime of joys, struggles, and sacrifices offer couples opportunities to grow deeper in love and closer to God through the vocation of marriage.

As a parent, you can help your teens and preteens begin now to appreciate the beauty and wisdom of God's plan for sexuality, chastity, and married love. They can discover more happiness and freedom when they choose to live in accordance with God's will.

*"Chastity is the joyous affirmation of someone who knows how to live self-giving, free from any form of self-centered slavery. This presupposes that the person has learned how to accept other people, to relate with them, while respecting their dignity in diversity. The chaste person is not self-centered, not involved in selfish relationships with other people. Chastity makes the personality harmonious. It matures it and fills it with inner peace."*



*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* par. 17  
Vatican.va