

LOVE LETTER TO MY CHILDREN

Most of which was written by Frances Neville (Mother of four) but I, Fr Paddy took the liberty of elaborating on one or two points (*in italics*).

My dear children, your school is about to give you its secular explanation of sex. This means you will be offered "knowledge of sexual issues, firmly embedded, we are told, within the understanding of relationship". The "comprehensive programmes" includes contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. But because the society in which we live no longer wishes or is able to talk about God, your sex education class is bound to be flawed and superficial. How can an account of the most powerful and mysterious aspect of human life be anything but flawed if the origin and destiny of human beings is ignored? If human relationships are not understood as being formed in the image of God, the giver of all life, who calls us to love each other and Him above all things, then they will be formed in the image of man. Without the imperative to put God at the centre of his life, man inevitably puts Himself there.

Sex is not just another optional, recreational activity, which, if you don't take care, harms your health and freedom. If it is treated trivially, sex will reduce, rather than enhance, your humanity. Sex is part of the powerful and dynamic energy of love that created the world. Not surprisingly, it is also the means for the creation of new human life which is a miracle in itself.

In a permanent, loving relationship, sex is a powerful engine to keep a couple together and a family happy. As an experience divorced from marriage it can be a pleasurable roller coaster, full of excitement and fun. But if sex is treated like a fairground ride, where the main point is how I feel, the experience becomes recreation, not deep bonding and growing awareness of the loved one. The other person involved becomes an object to give me excitement. Moreover, if sex is just a recreational excitement for me, then there is no reason why it should not be engaged in as often as possible with any available body.

Of course the high divorce rate in the UK is a clear indication that something is clearly amiss in the realm of love relationships and marriage. Sex is no longer special, the cement for marriages, but can be had easily with the help of a few condoms. *Contraception*

has had a lot to do with compromising how people understand sexual relationships. It purports to make them easy and unproblematic. Sex becomes the defining badge of those who think they have grown up. Of course the truth is that there is a lot more to growing up than sex and sex is no way to learn about growing up.

The Government and education authorities have become neurotic about providing sexual and contraceptive information to everyone who knows the mechanics of sex on the grounds that this supposedly deters teenage pregnancy. But it's been known from ancient times that sexual information is strongly erotic. It stimulates a strong urge for sexual experience. If you combine that message with the stream of advertising aimed at removing all inhibitions to satisfying one's whims as quickly as possible, *it's not rocket science to deduce why teenage pregnancy is on the increase.*

Artificial contraception, typically, focuses on controlling female fertility. The Pill blocks it out. Rarely is there any distinction drawn between contraception designed to prevent fertilisation and those which are intended to act as abortifacients, causing early abortions of fertilised eggs.

The Pill was promoted as setting women free. But did it? Does it? Women generally are more concerned about ongoing affection and having children than men, whose role in the reproduction of the species is geared typically to engaging in numerous sexual acts. Contraception creates choice. One choice is to exclude children. Children become an optional extra to a relationship. Of course, children come with obvious disadvantages compared to the 'freedom' of the single state.

Sexual attraction is the design of the Creator to bring men and women together as procreators. Sexual intercourse, by contrast, is properly understood as being embedded in marriage, not just in any relationship (*e.g. partners*). It is part of the relationship of married people, because one of the main reasons for marriage is the creation of new life, a life which will grow and thrive against the backdrop of the mutual and ongoing love of husband and wife. *Living as partners is very far removed from marriage in the Lord.*

Not every marriage act ends in the creation of new life even if marriage itself is directed to this end. Marriage concerns itself with more than regeneration of the species. Christian marriage is understood as the principal means by which married people grow

from self-absorption to the fullest love of someone else of which they are capable. In this sense it is modelled on God's love for us. But this special nature of marriage is no longer clear and understood because the complete availability of contraception to people who are not married means that sex has simply become an aspect of consumer choice.

This perhaps explains why the Church has been so hostile to contraceptives, unwilling to accept in its official teaching that artificial contraception has any place within a permanent vowed loving relationship. The church rightly insists that marriage and the procreation of children are inextricably linked. Pope Paul VI took a strict position on this in 1968 to the dismay of many committed Catholics at the time and since. Many felt this was not attuned to the realities of marriage in the modern world. More recently Pope John Paul II insisted that the ban on contraceptives was absolute and not susceptible to a different conscientious decision. *Is this an ideal towards which we should aim or is it a sin against the nature of married love which we need to repent of in earnest?* Over the past 25 years catholic family sizes have not been very different from those in other parts of society. *Does this mean that the church's positive message about sexuality has not been heard? The Pope, the Successor of St Peter, teaches absolute*

truth in the realm of faith and morals. Today, alas, it seems that everyone is infallible except Him. Where do we stand as a couple?

The notion that sexual attraction must lead to sexual intercourse is wrong. Let me give you a practical example: sexual attraction does not end when you marry. A married person may notice someone else who is admirable in some way. The vows to remain faithful to their spouse mean, though, that married people promise to place their joint long-term good and goodness, and that of their children, above the pleasure of engaging intimately with someone else. Meanwhile secular society is hostile, for a number of reasons, to vowed marriage and vocation of any kind. So it isolates sex and depersonalises it, by regarding it as a means to individual fulfilment – a fulfilment made to look respectable under the banner of the word "relationship". People are reduced from being images of God and become consumers of things and each other.

For the greatest value in the modern world is "me". I must do what makes me feel good. I must be "honest" and pursue my own desires rather than be a hypocrite and pretend to suppress them in favour of someone else. I must create my own philosophy of life, which makes sense to me. If God is dethroned

man enthrones Himself and all sense of shame is abandoned. Everybody absolves themselves, while being quick to condemn others.

Sex is an issue, perhaps more than any other, which distinguishes the believer from the non-believer. By understanding it in God's way and living accordingly it will lead to fulfilment in marriage and to the wellbeing of the whole human family.

Your loving mother.