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***Sexuality Explained, a Guide for Parents and Children***  
By Louise Kirk

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This practical resource is not just another of those manuals for “sex education”. Louise Kirk’s ***Sexuality Explained, a Guide for Parents and Children*** represents something deeper and richer, centred on our Judeo-Christian understanding of the person, created male and female, and guided by Catholic ethics and morality.

In late 1995, the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for the Family published: *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family*. I was part of the team that worked for ten years preparing these guidelines for the whole Church. *Parents and the family* are put back at the centre of forming children in human sexuality. This overturns a widespread assumption that education in sexual matters should normally happen outside the family, that is, through books, DVDs, etc. or in courses presented by people who are not members of the family. Beyond the home, a biological “value free” sex education is advocated by some governments and secularist “sex educators”.

The Vatican guidelines also question a common assumption that parents “do nothing” in this area, so others must ignore their rights and assume their duties in the classroom. The guidelines encourage parents to affirm and protect their rights and to take up their duties, at the same time

spelling out what can be done, and what ought *not* to be done in this delicate area. Yet the guidelines allow space for Catholic schools and others to play a *subsidiary* role in supporting the family-centred approach required by the Church.

That family-centred approach taken in *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* will not seem revolutionary to anyone aware of the teaching of Blessed John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* 36 and 37. The Holy Father consistently maintained and applied the classical Natural Law position of the Church: that “the first educators” are parents, that their rights and duties must be respected and hence that they are to be helped to fulfil the duties that accompany their rights. However, in practice these principles have not always been observed well. Educating children and young people in human sexuality has become an unsettled and controversial field, even within the Catholic Church.

Louise Kirk offers parents a helpful practical resource which they can use with older children at the time of puberty. The chapters of this book are steps to help parents to pass on in a personal dialogue the intimate biological and personal formation, which is their right and duty, primarily within the home. I note that her work is endorsed by Christine Vollmer, a friend of mine who has worked with imagination and expertise in this field, helping many parents particularly in Venezuela.

The experience of Christian experts working with parents, children and young people is so important today. Moreover a healthy theme of natural fertility regulation runs through this book, citing the scientific basis of the Billings Ovulation Method in some very interesting and useful footnotes.

Through this original emphasis on natural fertility, Louise Kirk rejects the dangerously sterile tendency of a so called “sex education” that is hedonistic, selfish and amoral. Cultivating an awareness of procreation is essential in developing good formation in human sexuality that is naturally ethical, healthy and positive. It shifts the emphasis away from “sex” to the mystery of being a woman and of being a man, which is really what sexuality means. In these times this emphasis is particularly important in the face of the deceitful delusions of same-sex “marriage”.

I am happy to commend *Sexuality Explained, a Guide for Parents and Children* to parents, and to those who support them and work respectfully with them. This book reflects the two principles required by the Church for all education in human sexuality: 1 that it be “positive and prudent”, as in *Gravissimum Educationis* of the Second Vatican Council, and 2. that it should be “clear and delicate”, as required by Blessed John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio*.