

**PLEASE SIT WHERE YOU CAN READ THIS**

This too

**Learning about L.I.F.E.**  
and  
**L.I.F.E. Plus**

by  
Sister Kieran Sawyer, SSND  
Diocese of Orlando  
October, 2012



To: Pastors, Business Administrators, Directors of Religious Education  
From: Bishop John Noonan  
Date: August 1, 2012

“ ...After great discernment and discussion with many consultors, I introduce LIFE Plus (Love, Infatuation, Friendship and Exploitation) for our Religious Education students.

Beginning this school year, our parishes will be required to offer LIFE Plus, a faith-based, family-centered curriculum designed to serve two purposes: safe environment awareness as well as chastity, values, and virtues education.”



# Two Mandates

from the USCCB

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

**Promise to Protect,  
Pledge to Heal:  
The Charter for the Protection  
of Children and Young People**

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002

Dioceses will establish 'safe environment'  
programs...

providing education and training

for children, youth, parents,  
ministers, educators, and others

about ways to make and maintain  
a safe environment for children.

*"The Charter," Article 12*

# Results of the mandate

- Safe Environment training sessions for any adult who works with children
- Safe Environment training for children – at least one class each year on abuse prevention
- Catechetical leaders scrambling to find material and train catechists
- Strict diocesan guidelines covering all events for children and youth
- Mandatory reporting procedures for any suspected incident of sexual abuse
- The audit, diocesan and national
- Record keeping, reports -- paper, paper, paper
- Fear of “the press”

# **Catechetical Formation IN CHASTE LIVING**

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008

Assisting parents . . . in the formation of their children for chaste living is **essential** for their formation in the Catholic faith

and should be **mandatory** in Catholic schools and in parish religious education and youth ministry programs...

... preschool through twelfth grade...

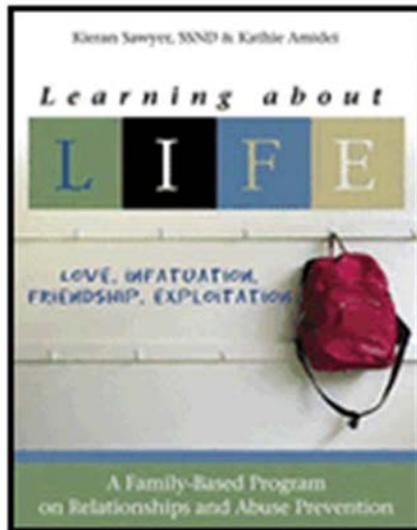
(CFCL Intro)

# Key concepts of sexuality and chastity formation as envisioned by the **Chaste Living** document

- Presents **Authentic Love** as the goal of sexuality education
- Promotes positive loving **relationships** in family life, friendship, and marriage
- Emphasizes **sexuality as a gift** -- to be shared only in marriage (“self-giving love”)
- Defines **chastity** as the power of authentic love to channel and control sexuality
- Calls for the **partnership** of parents and catechists in the formation of children for chastity
- Promotes the ongoing **cultivation of the virtues** (character strengths) needed to support chastity formation
- Spans pre-school through grade twelve; is taught in stages; is **age-appropriate** at each level
- Discusses as “special concerns” current sexuality problems

# HOW

are we going to do all  
that?



## Learning about L.I.F.E. and L.I.F.E. Plus (online)

offers the method and the content  
needed to fulfill both

- the Safe Environment mandate &
- the Chaste Living mandate

"...in the interests  
of full disclosure..."

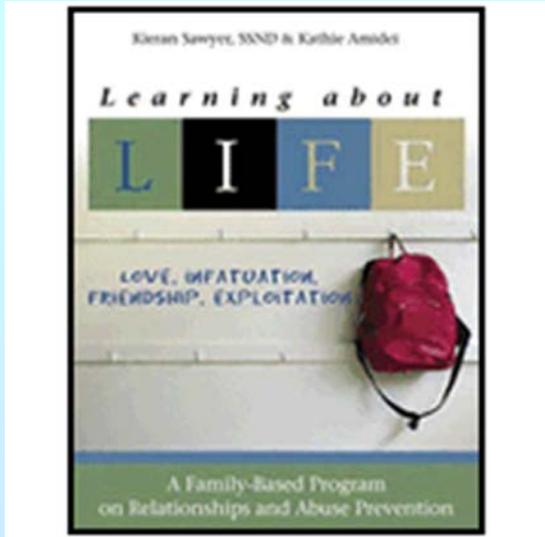
# Fall 2004

- **Kathie Amidei**
  - archdiocesan director of elementary catechesis
  - years of experience in family-based catechesis
  - former primary grade teacher
- **Sister Kieran Sawyer**
  - director of a youth retreat center called TYME OUT
  - author of *Sex and the Teenager*
  - former high school religion teacher

# Three Principles:

The **Learning about L.I.F.E.** program is based on three controlling principles:

- a) that any teaching on sexual abuse should be looked at in the wider context of **positive, loving relationships,**
- b) that any teaching on sexuality, positive or negative, should involve the **parents talking with their own children,** and
- c) that the teaching on sexuality should be permeated with **faith** and rooted in the **moral teachings** of the Church.



# Learning about L.I.F.E.

## Six family-based sessions

- Pre-K – K with parents
- Grade 1-2 with parents
- Grade 3-4 with parents
- Grade 5-6 with parents
- Grade 7-8 with parents
- High School with parents

Love  
Infatuation  
Friendship  
Exploitation



# L.I.F.E. Plus online (2010)

- L.I.F.E. Plus includes:
  - Complete lesson plans (PreK-K, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10), revised
  - Master copies of handouts and teaching charts
  - PowerPoint for each lesson
- Offers online facilitator training
  - Background theology and educational theory
  - Upper-level lessons
  - Lower-level lessons
- Is available in English and Spanish
- Is now available in three formats

# L.I.F.E. Plus

Three formats:

## **L.I.F.E. Family** (original):

Presented by trained facilitator

Parents required to participate

Parent/child groupings

## **L.I.F.E. Classroom** (>Family)

Presented by catechist / teacher

Parents invited, not required to attend

Take-home parent packet; with report sent to parish

## **L.I.F.E. Home**

Parents download material and present program at home

Report sent to parish

Today's focus:

Preparing you to facilitate  
the FAMILY FORMAT

## **First Principle:**

any teaching on sexual abuse  
should be done in the context  
of **positive, loving relationships**

- L** LOVE (family love, commitment)
- I** INFATUATION (falling in love)
- F** FRIENDSHIP (peer relationships)
- E** EXPLOITATION ( in **L** or **I** or **F**)

## **LOVE** (as in family love, commitment)

Love is the most beautiful, the most rewarding, and the most challenging of all relationships. Let's think about love as it is found in the parent-child relationship. There we see that love has wonderful qualities like commitment and understanding, acceptance and respect, patience and forgiveness, and a constant willingness to make sacrifices.

Love is the core teaching of most of the world religions. Jesus teaches us that **God is love**. As Christians we believe that God's love is present in our love for one another, and that we are most like God when we love as God loves.

## **INFATUATION (or being-in-love)**

We are using the word “infatuation” to stand for any relationship that involves sexual attraction or sexual feelings. It includes a wide range of sexual feelings from just being *interested* in someone, to being *in touch*, to being emotionally *involved*, to being totally *infatuated*, to being very much *"in love,"* to being sexually *intimate*.

Romantic infatuation is exciting and all-absorbing. It seeks expression in kisses, hugs, touches, and eventually sexual intercourse. An infatuation relationship is usually exclusive, and can sometimes be possessive and jealous.

Infatuation can grow into love, but it is not the same as love. A romantic relationship can lead to a true and lasting love relationship, but it can also degenerate into exploitation and abuse. Learning to know the difference is one of the greatest challenges of life.

# FRIENDSHIP

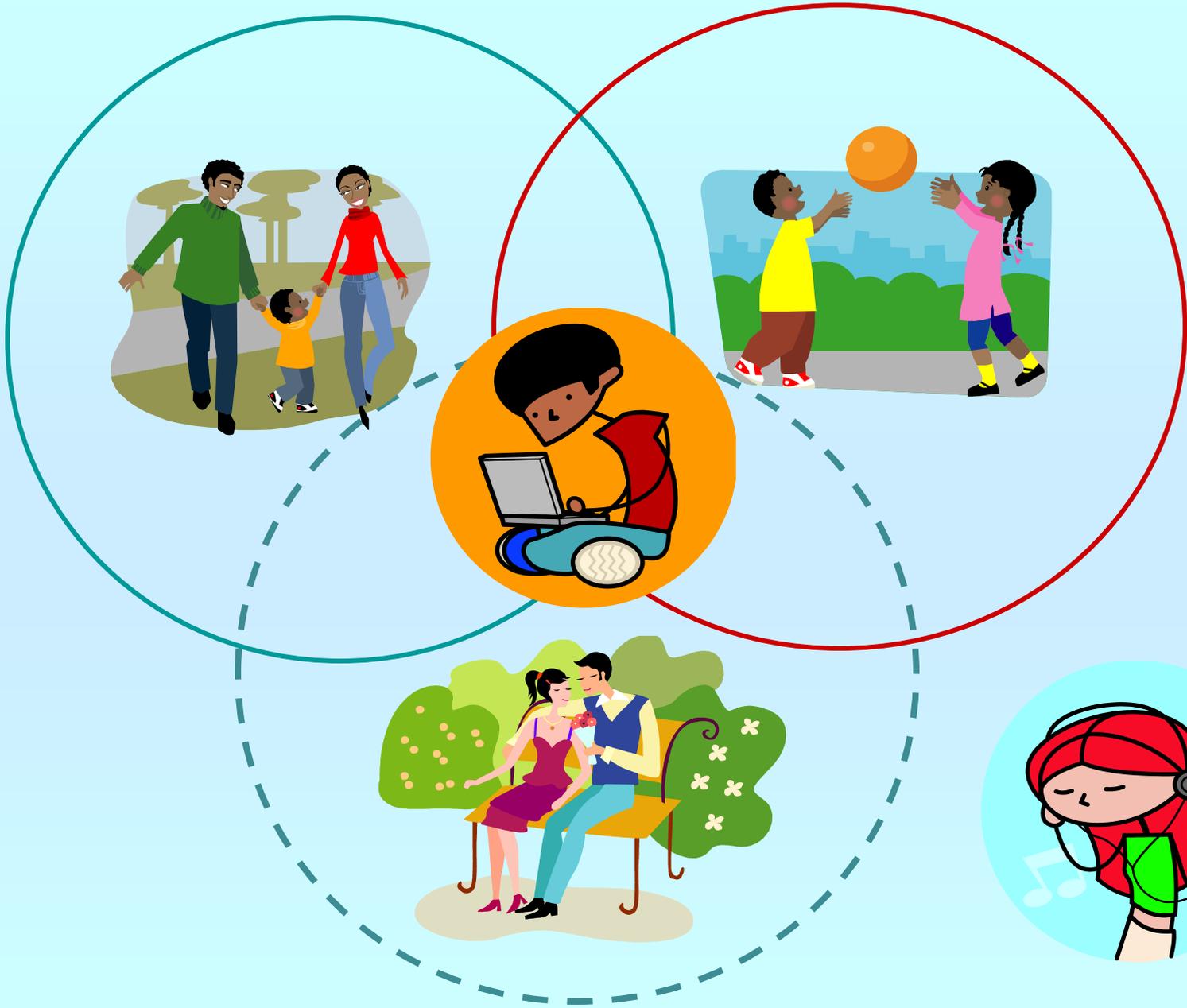
Friendship is the easiest relationship to understand. Friends are the people we talk to, go places with, compete against, get in trouble with, tell secrets to and, above all, **trust**. We depend on our friends for fun, laughter, acceptance, and understanding. We know that our friends respect us and that they will challenge us to do our best. And we should also know that they will tell us off when we need it.

Friendship is comfortable and easy, enriching and fun. It is based on mutual trust, understanding, acceptance, and enjoyment. Unlike infatuation, friendship is usually not exclusive or possessive, but leaves the other person free. Some friendships last a lifetime. The best of them grow into love.

# EXPLOITATION

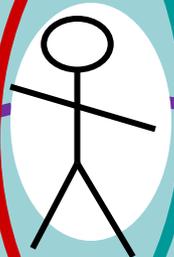
The word *exploitation* refers to any relationship in which one person **uses** another for his or her own selfish purposes. Exploitation takes what it can get without showing any real concern or respect for the other person in the relationship.

We are all guilty of using others, often the people we love the most. We take our friends for granted, we abuse our parents' trust, we flatter our teachers, we blackmail our brothers and sisters, we have fun at the expense of another person, we take advantage of somebody's weaknesses, and we manipulate people to get our own way. More serious forms of exploitation include things like stealing, cheating, blackmail, child abuse, extortion, rape, incest, pornography, prostitution, and sexual abuse.

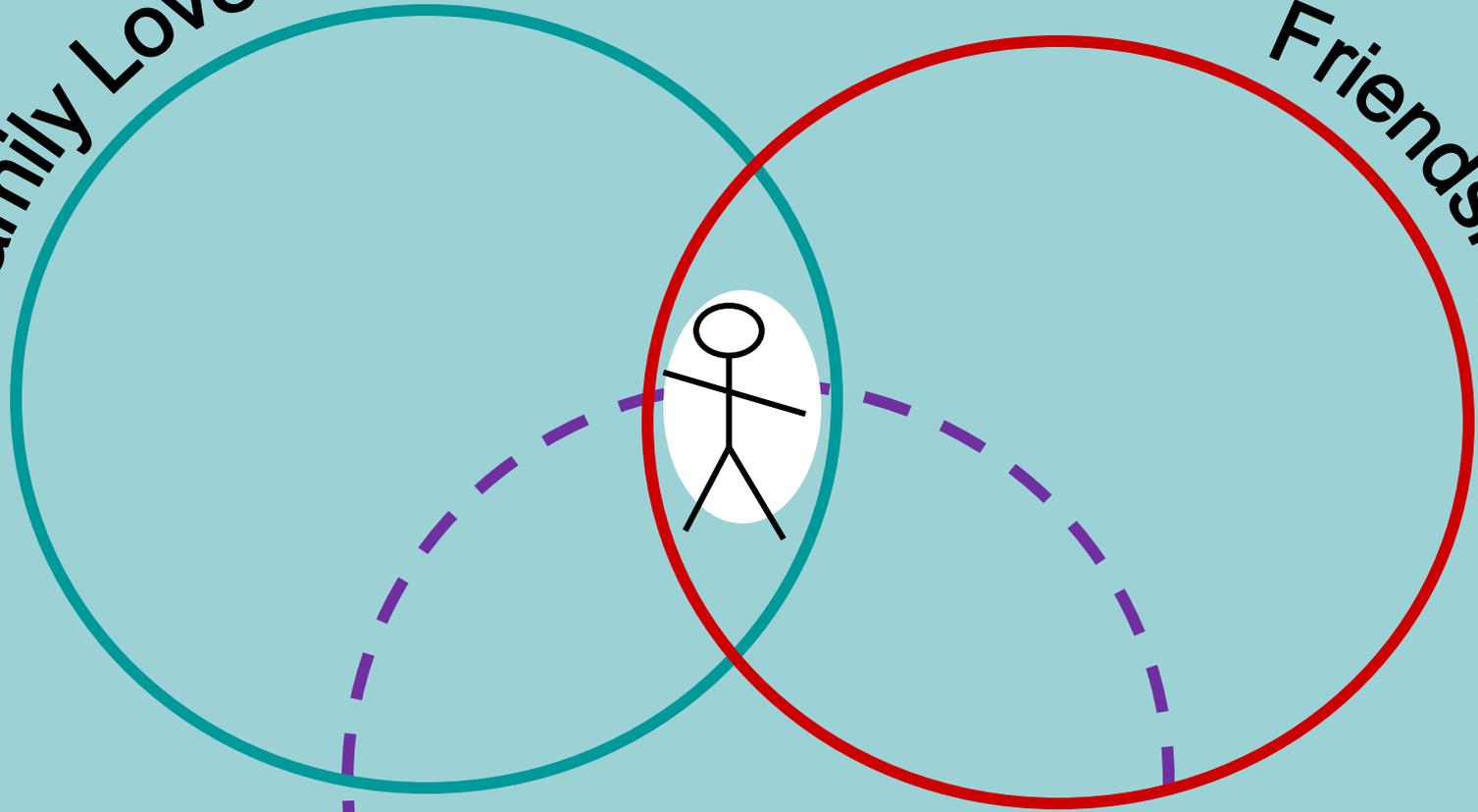


Family Love

Friendship



Infatuation



## **Second Principle:**

any teaching on sexuality,  
positive or negative,  
should involve the **parents**  
**talking with their own children**

# Teaching vs Facilitating

“Parental love is an untapped power that should be harnessed for teaching children about these important topics.” Kathie Amidei

“Parents **want to have meaningful conversations** with their own children on the topics of relationships and sexuality.

They don't always know how to do that.

They **appreciate any help** we can give them in this area.”

Kathie Amidei

It is easier for families to have these discussions

if they are surrounded by other families and are given a set process to follow.

The formal parent-child session  
begins an ongoing conversation  
that can be integrated into family life.

Once the topic is introduced,  
it becomes safe and comfortable  
to continue the discussion at home.

## **Third Principle:**

all teaching on sexuality should be permeated with **faith** and rooted in the **moral teachings** of the Church.

- God is love. God created us **from** love, **for** love, **to** love.
- We are created in God's image. Every person has **intrinsic dignity and worth**.
- The human **body** is a **sacred gift** from God, meant to be cared for, protected, and treated with honor and respect.
- Relationships are an **essential** and **sacred** part of human life.

- Sexual intimacy is a treasure to be shared **only within marriage**.
- The church's moral teachings concerning sexuality are meant to **protect** the sacredness of sex and marriage.

**“Theology of the Body”** -- John Paul II

## What participants are saying about Learning about L.I.F.E.

### Feedback from the fathers:

“Hesitant and skeptical at first but found it to be surprisingly enjoyable!”

“It was done in a non-threatening, non-judging way. It was good.”

“It opened discussion with my son.”

“This was a great lesson!”

“Was very well done.”

“Well organized and very relevant for this age group.”

“Gave me the words to continue the talking.”

“It was good to share with my son in a non-threatening way.”

“Very touching...great time together with my child.”

“Allowed breaking the ice with my child.”

“Proactive.”

## Feedback from the sons:

“Talking about it with my dad was the best part.”

“Good hearing experiences of others.”

“This setting made it comfortable to talk about some uncomfortable issues.”

“The one-on-one talk with my parent was a very special moment.”

“It is very true.”

“It was good at shedding some light about the true world.”

“I learned a lot in this lesson.”

“Sex isn’t something you just do.”

## Feedback from the moms:

“Our son talked! He never talks to us...but he talked!”

“Good, open, honest discussions.”

“I think more discussions will follow.”

“Well directed...realistic...infused learning with laughter and reflection.”

“Mature talk to teens.”

“It was very helpful looking at different kinds of relationships.”

“It broke the ice with my son. It was very helpful.”

“Great! Nice to share and laugh. Well done!”

“Helped me reassess my own (relationships) and improve them.”

“We had a good conversation about her relationship with her boyfriend.”

“This gave me strength to continue what I have been doing.”

“This frank discussion will help open up more communication.”

“Outstanding!” “I felt all of it was beneficial.”

“Thanks for giving me this time. We need to make time for this in our busy lives.”

## Feedback from the daughters:

“It makes a lot of sense.”

“I have a new perspective on L.I.F.E.”

“The lesson helped me learn why you should wait.”

“It was comfortable. The part about sexual abuse was helpful.”

“A good experience with my mom.”

“Helpful. I will use this whenever I am pressured or curious.”

“The talk with the parents thingy was helpful.”

“I liked being alone with my parent.”

“Sexual abuse, it’s not your fault.....”

## Feedback from a LIFE facilitator

We at Holy Name Parish have engaged in intergenerational faith formation for 6 years now and the LIFE program seemed custom-made for our situation. I got more feedback after the LIFE program than any other offering. I was a skeptic when you said you get only positive feedback, but that was in fact what happened. From grades Kindergarten through 8th, parents and children alike appreciated the opportunity of opening a dialogue and having a safe place to do it. The materials were easy to use and engaged the attendees. This worked for any parent with any child and when both parents were able to attend, it was even better! Thank you for creating a program that involves parents and that calls us to recognize loving relationships in our lives.

Mercedes Austgen

# When life hands you lemons, make LEMONADE!

- positive relationship education (vs sex ed)
- offers a taste of family-based programming
- helps parents do something they WANT to do  
(but often don't)
- provides a context for anti-bullying sessions
- helps to deepen the family bonds needed for growth in authentic love relationships
- motivated by "the mandate", audits, press