

Dear Family,

We are getting ready to begin Theme Three of *Fully Alive*, our family life program. Catholic schools recognize that parents or guardians are the first and most important teachers of their children. This is especially true in the areas that are introduced and explored in Family Life Education. Because the partnership of home, church, and school is so important, this letter is written to let you know what we talk about in class and to offer some ideas for your involvement.

Family Life Education, consistent with our faith, has been an integral part of the Religious Education program for many years. The goal is to present a Catholic view of human life, sexuality, marriage, and family, complementing your efforts as parents or guardians to teach your children at home. Family Life Education also incorporates content about human development and sexual health from the Ontario Health and Physical Education (HPE) Curriculum. More detailed information on the specific HPE expectations addressed in this theme of *Fully Alive* can be found on the website of the Institute for Catholic Education (www.iceont.ca).

The *Fully Alive* program is supported and approved by the Catholic Bishops of Ontario. Additional information about *Fully Alive* is available to you on the Ontario Bishops' website (www.acbo.on.ca).

About Theme Three

Theme Three of *Fully Alive* is called “Created Sexual: Male and Female.” God made us male and female, and all of God’s creation is good. As in earlier grades, this theme is presented through a continuing story. The message of this story is that we begin life as a result of the love our mothers and fathers shared. No matter what happens later, nothing can change that. It is part of God’s plan that we grow and are sheltered in our mother’s body before birth. After we are born, it is our family that loves and cares for us.

In Theme Three we will:

- read a story about the Casey family, including the parents’ celebration of 30 years of married life, the promises they made when they married, and their efforts to adjust to the changes in their lives after Mr. Casey’s serious accident.
- learn that mothers and fathers participate in God’s power to create new life.
- explore some of the gifts we receive at conception; and the gift after birth of ongoing love and care from family, friends, and others.
- discover more about the development and birth of babies, and learn the difference between identical and fraternal twins.
- explore the stages of human development, including adolescence and adulthood.

Working together at school and at home

- Ask your child to tell you about the story of the Casey family. What did your child learn from their story? Does your child have any questions? You will find detailed information about the topics in this theme in the Online Family Edition of *Fully Alive* (www.acbo.on.ca).
- Although the topic of puberty is not discussed until Grade 5, some Grade 4 girls may begin to show the first signs of development. It’s important to talk to your daughter about this and to

prepare her well in advance for the beginning of menstruation. Again, you will find helpful information in the Online Family Edition of *Fully Alive*.

- Your child will be bringing home a sheet about family stories. Children like to hear about older relatives (grandparents, great-grandparents, great-aunts and uncles), and how family traits and interests are often passed on in families. Be sure to tell your child about some of the people in your family.

Looking Ahead

New terms introduced in Grade 4 are *amniotic sac*, *amniotic fluid*, *ova* (the plural of *ovum*), and *sexual intercourse*. The term *sexual intercourse* is used in the student book but does not include a physical description. The Grade 4 teacher book has a simple explanation of sexual intercourse that may be presented by the teacher, depending on the readiness of the class. This information is not included in the student book until Grade 5. In Grade 5 the students will learn about the reproductive systems of males and females, the gift of fertility, and the changes of puberty.

As parents and guardians, you are the primary teachers of your children in all areas of faith and morals, including sexuality. In keeping with the primacy of your role as parent or guardian, you retain the right to request your child be exempted from the program if you believe it is in your child's best interest and prefer to accept the responsibility of providing an education in sexuality at home.

If you have any questions or concerns, I encourage you to contact me, or to arrange to discuss them with our school principal.

Teacher: _____ Date: _____