

*The glory of God is man and woman fully alive,  
but life for them consists in seeing God revealed in God's Word.*  
**St. Irenaeus**

Dear Families:

I would like to introduce our Family Life Education program, called *Fully Alive*. This program, which is for Grades 1–8, is the result of many years of discussion, consultation, and work by bishops, Catholic educators, Catholic school trustees, and parents. It has been approved by the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario as consistent with Catholic teachings and appropriate for use in Catholic classrooms. It is intended to complement the efforts of parents or guardians to teach their children at home.

In Catholic schools, Family Life Education has been an integral part of the Religious Education program for many years. Family Life Education also incorporates content about human development and sexual health from the Ontario Health and Physical Education (HPE) Curriculum. *Fully Alive*'s approach to human life, relationships, and sexuality is guided by our Catholic faith and by the wisdom accumulated through many years of Christian human experience.

*Fully Alive* is organized into five themes:

- **Theme One — Created and Loved by God:** The first theme provides the foundation of the program. We are created in the image of God, and God loves and sustains each one of us. This theme explores some of the ways in which each person is unique and irreplaceable, yet shares a common human nature with all others.
- **Theme Two — Living in Relationship:** Human beings are created to live in relationships with others. The bonds of family and friendship, which are explored in this theme, are central in our lives, and shape our identity and our development.
- **Theme Three — Created Sexual: Male and Female:** Sexuality is a fundamental dimension of our identity as children of God. In this theme, sexuality is presented as a gift from God that is intended for life and love.  
Note: 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](http://www.iceont.ca)).
- **Theme Four — Growing in Commitment:** God's call to faithfulness is explored in this theme. Learning to be committed and trustworthy is a lifelong challenge that begins in childhood.
- **Theme Five — Living in the World:** Our relationships with others go beyond the circle of family and friends. In Theme Five, we examine what it means to participate in society, and to fulfill our responsibilities to care for and build God's world.

Before we begin each theme, I will send you a letter about the theme and the topics we will be discussing. Since parents or guardians are the primary teachers of their children in the area of sexuality, the family letter for Theme Three (Created Sexual: Male and Female) will provide you with details about the content in this year's program, as well as next year's.

Full information about *Fully Alive* is available on the website of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (ACBO): [www.acbo.on.ca](http://www.acbo.on.ca). For each grade level, you will find:

- a summary of the main ideas in each of the topics within the themes
- copies of stories that the teacher and students read
- information and suggestions for you and your child related to the topics

If you do not have access to the Internet, please let me know, and we will arrange to print a copy of the website material for you.

I look forward to working with you and your child during this school year. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I hope you will enjoy participating in *Fully Alive*. If you have any questions about the program, please get in touch with me.

*Teacher* \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family,

We are ready to begin the first theme of *Fully Alive*, our family life program. 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.

### **About Theme One**

The first theme of *Fully Alive*, called “Created and Loved by God,” is like the foundation of a house. Everything else depends on it. In this theme we explore the Christian belief that we are made in God’s image, and that God knows and loves each one of us. We are a very special creation. Because of this, we respect and value ourselves and others. For more information go to: [www.acbo.on.ca](http://www.acbo.on.ca).

### **In Theme One we will:**

- meet a group of six imaginary Grade 5 students and their teacher, Mr. Talbot.
- recognize and appreciate God’s everlasting love for us.
- explore the importance of respect for ourselves and others.
- examine the many ways we develop during our life journeys, and learn about the end of our life journey on earth and the beginning of a new life with God.
- discover that we are connected to many people, both living and dead, through their influence on our family members.

### **Working together at school and at home**

- Ask your child to tell you about the story of Paul and what happened when he stole a magazine from a store.
- You might also ask about the “rule of respect,” which the students learned about in a story about Mr. Talbot’s classroom. What is the rule? Why is it important?
- One of the stories we will discuss is about the death of an elderly person. Ask your child to tell you about this story. Children often have questions about death, and this story provides an opportunity for you to answer some of these questions.
- In the last topic of this theme, the students will be bringing home a sheet about special people who influenced your life or the life of another person (grandparent, other relative, close family friend). Your child has been asked to interview you (or another person) about these special influences.

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family,

It's time for the second theme of *Fully Alive*, our family life program. 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.

### **About Theme Two**

Theme Two of *Fully Alive* is called "Living in Relationship." God created us to live in relationship with others and to respond to each other with love. Living in relationship begins in the family, the setting in which people first learn about love. As children grow up, friendship becomes more and more important to them. In this theme we will be exploring both important relationships — family and friendship. For more information go to: [www.acbo.on.ca](http://www.acbo.on.ca).

### **In Theme Two we will:**

- consider some of the ways that families are both unique and alike.
- examine the purpose of rules, and the role of family rules.
- explore some of the ways families change, and discuss the importance of family members helping each other during times of change.
- learn more about the qualities of true friendship, and examine possible solutions to friendship difficulties.
- discuss a story about bullying, and learn about the responsibility to help those who are being mistreated.

### **Working together at school and at home**

- Your child will be designing a family coat of arms. Be sure to ask about this project. What symbols did your child choose to represent your family?
- When children are having friendship difficulties, they often mention them at home. At school we will examine the consequences of different solutions to these problems, and the problem of making bad choices when we're upset or angry.
- Ask your child to tell you about the story of Luke and the bullying incident. We will be discussing the responsibility of people who witness bullying to stand up for the victim, or to tell an adult about the incident. You may want to talk to your child about this. If bullying is a concern you have, please talk to me or to our principal.

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family,

We are 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](http://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](http://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. In earlier grades, this theme was presented through a continuing story, which emphasized God’s plan for new life as the result of the love of mothers and fathers. In later grades, the message is unchanged, but the approach is more direct. As students enter puberty, they need to know about the changes they will experience, and about the responsibilities of being created male and female and following God’s plan for them.

### **In Theme Three we will:**

- explore the idea that we do not *have* bodies, we *are* bodies; God created us as body/spirit persons.
- consider the major systems of the body, and learn that the reproductive system has unique characteristics.
- learn about the adult female and male reproductive systems and about human fertility in adult women and men.
- discuss the physical changes of puberty, as well as some of the emotional and social changes.

### **Working together at school and at home**

- At school, the students will be completing several sheets about the adult reproductive systems, human fertility, and the changes of puberty, and will bring these sheets home. One section of these sheets asks the students to list any questions they still have about these topics. Be sure to ask your child about the questions he or she may have. Some children are not comfortable asking questions in front of other students, and prefer to ask at home. You will find detailed information about the topics in this theme in the Online Family Edition of *Fully Alive* ([www.acbo.on.ca](http://www.acbo.on.ca)).

- Girls need to know about changes of puberty and be prepared well in advance of the beginning of menstruation. Again, you will find helpful information in the Online Family Edition of *Fully Alive*. You should also be aware that girls who develop early can experience teasing by peers. It is difficult to be among the first people going through the changes of puberty, and equally difficult to be among the last. Parents or guardians can help ease the situation by being present, listening to their child, and discussing their concerns.
- At school, the students will be discussing modesty and the importance of respect for the gift of sexuality by the way they speak, dress, and act. Unfortunately, they are also exposed to many examples of disrespect for sexuality, especially in the media. When the opportunity comes up, such as watching together television programs and commercials, it's important to discuss this issue with your child, and emphasize the need for respect for oneself as a girl or boy, and for others.

### **Looking Ahead**

New terms in Grade 5 that are related to the female reproductive system and have not appeared previously in the student book are *vulva*, *cervix*, *ovaries*, and *fallopian tubes*. New terms related to the male reproductive system are *urethra*, *scrotum*, *testicles*, and *vas deferens*. The only new term related to female fertility is *menstruation*, and new terms related to male fertility are *semen*, *ejaculation*, and *erection*. Other new terms introduced in Grade 5 are *fertilization* and *implantation*. In Grade 6, the students review human reproduction and the changes of puberty, and study the development of a new human life from conception and implantation through the three trimesters of pregnancy.

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family,

We have come to the fourth theme of *Fully Alive*, our family life program. 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.

### **About Theme Four**

Theme Four of *Fully Alive* is called “Growing in Commitment.” Each one of us is challenged to grow in commitment to God and to each other. This is part of what it means to be fully human. Growth toward maturity is never a straight path. As children learn to make more decisions about their lives, they need to know that freedom is best understood as a freedom *for*, rather than a freedom *from*. Commitment is really the free gift of ourselves to being the best people we can be at each stage of our lives. For more information go to: [www.acbo.on.ca](http://www.acbo.on.ca).

### **In Theme Four we will:**

- discover the importance of accepting responsibility for our actions, and of recognizing that actions have consequences for ourselves and others.
- explore the meaning of a commitment to ourselves, which is a commitment to be the person God created us to be.
- examine the commitments we have that involve other people: families, friends, being a student and a classmate, special activities, and our communities.

### **Working together at home and at school**

- At school we will be talking about excuses, and why people make them. The most common reason for excuses is to avoid consequences. It’s good to talk to children about this issue when they aren’t feeling defensive. You might point out an example when your child accepted responsibility for something that happened, even when it was difficult. Accepting responsibility is a sign of growing up.
- The students will be reading a story about an e-mail that spreads false information. The point of the story is the responsibility to live up to our beliefs and refuse to participate in actions that are designed to hurt others. Bullying by electronic means (e-mail, instant messages) is an issue you may want to discuss with your child. You will find additional information about this topic in the Online Family Edition of *Fully Alive* ([www.acbo.on.ca](http://www.acbo.on.ca)).

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Family,

We are ready to begin the last theme of *Fully Alive*, our family life program. 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.

### **About Theme Five**

Theme Five of *Fully Alive* is called “Living in the World.” We are not simply individuals who have relationships with family members and friends. We are also members of human society, brothers and sisters within the whole human family, and caretakers of the earth. As the students get older, they are encouraged to recognize that they have a unique contribution to make to the world, one that cannot be made by anyone else. Their participation in creating a world that reflects the goodness of God is needed. For more information go to: [www.acbo.on.ca](http://www.acbo.on.ca).

### **In Theme Five we will:**

- explore the meaning of *community* through the example of the family.
- discuss an example of a strong community, and identify some of the signs that are present in good communities: respect, communication, sharing resources, and depending on each other.
- learn about a parish community in Ontario that has established a relationship with a parish near Nairobi in Kenya, and is sharing much needed resources, and their prayers.

### **Working together at school and at home**

- If your family is involved in an effort to share resources with those in need, be sure to include your child in these efforts. Whether it is collecting items for the food bank, sponsoring a child in another part of the world, or supporting a group of missionaries, it’s important for your child to be part of this activity. Children learn to get involved and participate in efforts to make the world a better place by the example of their families.
- If you or someone in your family has been involved in helping communities in other parts of the world, you could visit our class and tell the students about this experience.

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_