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 information is provided to you to let you know what we will be discussing 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 and guardians to teach your children at home. Family Life Education also incorporates content about human development and sexual health along with healthy living, mental health literacy, and many of the social emotional learning skills 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 onthe 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.

# About Theme Three

Theme Three of *Fully Alive* is called “Created Sexual: Male and Female.” God creates us and all of God’s creation is good. In earlier grades, this theme was presented through a continuing story that 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 in the image of God and following God’s plan for them.

**In Theme Three we will:**

* reflect on the gift of sexuality and God’s plan for us to be loving and life-giving persons.
* explore the role of sexuality within marriage and for those who are single.
* reflect on the virtue of chastity, which helps us to honour the gift of sexuality and live according to God’s plan.
* review some aspects of adolescence — changing appearance, moodiness, stress, and sexual attraction.
* examine some of the pressures on young people to become involved in exclusive relationships at an early age and discuss some serious abuses of sexuality.
* review basic information on sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections and their potential impact on fertility and introduce the topic of family planning from the perspective of living in harmony with the gift of fertility.
* complete Theme Three with a reflection on the meaning of true love as it is expressed in the enduring commitment of marriage.

**Working together at school and at home**

* Most parents and guardians find their children less open at this stage of life to talking about issues related to sexuality. Many young adolescents consider this topic very personal and prefer not to discuss it. Often, an indirect approach works best. Some natural openings might be a television show you both watched; an incident involving a friend that your child tells you about; or an item in the news or on social media.
* The essential message of this theme is the Christian understanding of sexuality: that male and female persons are called to build loving relationships with each other and that together they have been given the power to co-operate with God and bring new life into the world.
* If an opportunity arises, you might ask your child about the virtue of chastity, which is highlighted in this theme. It is the virtue that helps us to control our desire for sexual pleasure. At school, the students will discuss the need to be thoughtful consumers of media, ignore gossip or rumours about sexual matters, and to avoid situations that may lead to pressure for sexual intimacy. Reinforcing these values at home can make a big difference.
* We will also discuss pornography, which is widely available online and is particularly damaging for young people who are forming their ideas and values about sexuality. Many experts, including the police, strongly advise that children and young adolescents should not have access to unsupervised use of social networking sites and online platforms. There are simply too many temptations.
* There are many pressures for young people to become involved at an early age in exclusive relationships and to engage in sexual activity. These pressures include media, the influence of peers, and unmet personal needs that drive some young people to seek attention and love in a relationship. The best defence against these pressures on young people is the self confidence that comes from knowing that they have the love, support, and shelter of their families.

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 this theme of 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: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_