

# The Interim

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Curriculum Supplement For Schools

**The *Interim Plus* is a periodical dedicated to educational matters and specifically designed to assist teachers in integrating relevant life issues in their lesson planning.**

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**I**n May and in June a special Sunday is devoted to mothers and fathers respectively. At a time when the family itself is under assault in many ways, it is wise and prudent to reflect on the true meaning and absolute importance of motherhood and fatherhood to the human family, for without mothers and fathers, there are no children and no future for the human race.

This supplement focuses on this theme and touches on the changing roles of men and women and the impact all this is having on modern civilization. It is a complex social problem, vastly complicated by the rapid pace of economic and social changes in society. The resulting confusion and pressures create spiritual, political and ideological fissures in the fabric of society.

This learning resource is but a little introduction. It is intended as an entry point to a larger discussion. It should be of interest to young people, hopefully, the future mothers and fathers in our society.



## **Quotes about mothers and motherhood by sons, daughters, mothers themselves, husbands and strangers.**

Education commences at the mother's knee, and every word spoken within the hearing of little children tends towards the formation of character. **Hosea Ballou**

My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her. **George Washington**

The mother's heart is a child's schoolroom. **Henry Ward Beecher**

If I had my life to live over, instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle. **Erma Bombeck**

A mom reads you like a book, and wherever she goes, people read you like a glowing book review. **Robert Brault**

A mother is a mother, still the holiest thing alive. **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**  
A mother is one to whom you turn when you are troubled. **Emily Dickinson**

A mother's love for her child is like nothing else in the world. It knows no law, no pity, it dares all things and crushes down remorselessly all that stands in its path. **Agatha Christie**

Mother's love is peace. It need not be acquired, it need not be deserved. **Erich Fromm**



### Quotes about fathers and fatherhood by sons, daughters, fathers themselves, wives and strangers.

A boy needs a father to show him how to be in the world. He needs to be given swagger, taught how to read a map so that he can recognize the roads that lead to life and the paths that lead to death, how to know what love requires, and where to find steel in the heart when life makes demands on us that are greater than we think we can endure. **Ian Morgan Cron**

An almost perfect relationship with his father was the earthly root of all his wisdom. From his own father, he said, he first learned that Fatherhood must be at the core of the universe. **C.S. Lewis**



Original sin is not only the violation of a positive command ... but ... attempts ... to abolish fatherhood, destroying its rays which permeate the created world, placing in doubt the truth about God who is Love and leaving man with only a sense of the master-slave relationship. **Pope John Paul II**

When a parent dies, for those left behind it can feel as though half the sky has fallen. My father was the sheltering sky, and beneath his mild firmament no storm ever raged, no hard rain fell. **John Birmingham**

Sons are born to make their fathers better men. **Mekael Shane**

Our heavenly Father understands our disappointment, suffering, pain, fear, and doubt. He is always there to encourage our hearts and help us understand that He's sufficient for all of our needs. When I accepted this as an absolute truth in my life, I found that my worrying stopped. **Charles Stanley**

Fatherhood is not a matter of station or wealth. It is a matter of desire, diligence and determination to see one's family exalted in the celestial kingdom. If that prize is lost, nothing else really matters. **Ezra Taft Benson**

The words that a father speaks to his children in the privacy of home are not heard by the world, but, as in whispering-galleries, they are clearly heard at the end and by posterity. **Jean Paul Richter**

The father who does not teach his son his duties is equally guilty with the son who neglects them. **Confucius**



## Questions

1. What different and common qualities are admired by the people quoted above regarding mothers and fathers?
2. If you had to choose only three major qualities that you would want in a mother or father what would these be?
3. Which of these many qualities are praised today in men and women?
4. Which qualities seem to be in short supply? Why?
5. If you watch some television, do the men and women portrayed in films or television series reflect the positive qualities described or aspired to in these quotes? Why or why not?
6. Which is your favourite quote about mothers/motherhood and which is your favourite quote about father/fatherhood?
7. Should parents be held responsible for the poor behaviour of their children (i.e. neglecting their duties) as Confucius asserts?
8. What do these quotes suggest about the complementarity of mothers and fathers?

<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-addresses-fatherhood-crisis-reminding-men-that-children-need-guidance>

### Pope Addresses 'Fatherhood Crisis,' Reminding Men That Children Need Guidance

In his general audience catechesis on Jan. 28, Pope Francis turned to the role of fathers, saying that they play an irreplaceable role in family life, and their absence leaves children prey to false idols.

"When children feel neglected by fathers who focus only on their problems, on their work or their own personal



realization, this creates a situation of orphans in the children and youth of today, who live disoriented, without the good example or prudent guidance of a father,” the Pope said.

The Pope’s reflection on fatherhood falls after a separate general audience address on the role of mothers earlier this month, during which he hailed motherhood as the “antidote to individualism.”

In today’s society, the word “father” is a reality understood throughout the world and which transcends history, he told today’s audience participants.

This word, he said, is the one “which Jesus taught us to call God, giving new depth and richness to the mystery of the intimacy of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which is the center of our Christian faith.”

However, in modern times, we frequently speak of a “society without fathers,” in which the crisis of fatherhood can lead one to associate the term with authoritarian and repressive tendencies, the Pope noted.

“Fathers are so necessary as examples and guides for our children in wisdom and virtue. Without father figures, young people often feel orphaned, left adrift at a critical moment in their growth and development,” he continued.

Pope Francis then recounted how he has often asked the fathers he encounters if they “had the courage and love” to play with their children and to spend time with them.

Rather than hearing a reassuring Yes, often, “the answer is ugly, eh? In the majority of cases, it’s: ‘I can’t; there’s too much work,’” the Bishop of Rome observed, and he said that it is the responsibility of Christian communities and civil society as a whole to find a remedy to the crisis of fatherhood.

The Holy Father also drew attention to the temptation of some fathers to try and be their children’s friend more than their parent, saying that although being a friend and companion to one’s child is good, the role of the parent is essential.

“It’s true that you need to be the friend of your child, but without forgetting that you are a father. If you are only there for your child as a friend, it won’t be good for [him],” he cautioned.

The absence of the father figure in society is something that persons at every level of society should be aware of because it leaves “gaps and wounds” in the formation of today’s youth, the Pope emphasized.

“Without guides to rely on, youth can be filled with idols that end up stealing their hearts, enthusiasm and genuine wealth,” he said.

Pope Francis closed his address by recalling Jesus’ promise in the Gospel of John: that “he would not leave us orphans,” and he prayed that the Lord would “deepen and renew our appreciation of fatherhood and raise up good fathers for the benefit of our families, our Church and our world.”

He said that although the prognosis he gave of the state of fatherhood today might have been a bit negative, next week he will follow-up with a reflection on the blessing and “beauty” of fatherhood.

“I chose to begin in darkness in order to arrive to the light,” he said, and he gave his blessing before greeting pilgrims present from various countries around the world.

## Questions

1. What is “the crisis of fatherhood” according to Pope Francis?
2. What are some of the negative consequences for society?
3. What factors or circumstances are causing this crisis?
4. How can children still be “orphans” if they have a father?

<http://naturalpapa.com/fatherhood/essay-fatherhood-vs-motherhood/>

## Essay: Fatherhood vs Motherhood

There has almost always been a strong emphasis on mother-child relationship on the child’s overall development and growth in interpersonal relationships. This is because most of the early research was focused on the bond





between mother and child. It was also based on the concept that women have the genetic gift for providing maternal love and care and everything the child needs for a healthy growth and development. It cannot be denied that women have rightfully been seen to be the major contributor to a child's development. However, assigning the role fully to the mother is a sign of incomplete understanding of the psychological needs of a child.

Fatherhood too has an important role to play in the growth and development of a child. Here we will explore the importance of both fatherhood and motherhood and why the emphasis shouldn't be tilted so heavily in one's favor.

### **Significance of Motherhood**

Motherhood has rightly been seen as the more important of the two aspects of parenthood. Women have both the physical and emotional endowment to bring life into this world and to ensure the overall well-being of the child. Her contribution to parenting cannot be removed from her gender. It is certainly due to her femininity that a woman contributes something better and richer to her child. The vast amount of evidence related to the psychological requirements for bringing up a child show how significant motherhood is in the lives of children. Her importance cannot be replaced by anything, including fathers.

### **Significance of Fatherhood**



Motherhood may contribute in a bigger way to the development of a child, but that doesn't mean that fatherhood can be eliminated from the overall development phase of a child. There is a lot of similarity between fatherhood and motherhood in terms of the shared human nature between man and woman. However, these similarities don't negate the big differences. When the objective is to have fully-developed and healthy children, both mothers and fathers should be part of a child's growth process.

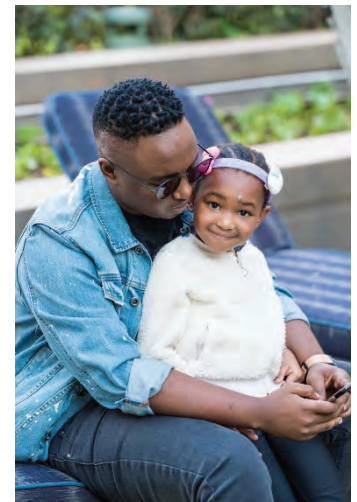
The influence of fatherhood on children at the psychological level has been found to be distinctive and irreplaceable. In fact, as the importance of fatherhood was realized at a progressive rate over time, its concept has undergone shifts at different levels. There was the strictly patriarchal system,

followed by breadwinner concept to the friendly playmate to eventually the co-parent concept.

In fact, the scientific community, before 1960s, believed that fatherhood was comparatively unimportant to the overall development of the child. Modern behavioral scientists, when they began studying the role of fatherhood, found that fathers could be as capable as mothers when it comes to being an effectively nurturing caregiver. It was also found that the bond between father and child can be almost as strong and influencing as between mother and child, at the emotional level.

### **Importance of Father's Love**

Father's love influences a child's development at a much deeper level than it has been believed to in the general perception. In fact, lack of it has been found to cause a wide range of developmental and psychological problems in children. This includes behavioral problems, adjustment problems, cognitive abilities, and even gender-role realization. Modern scientists have come to the conclusion that there are two aspects of fatherhood that have the biggest involvement in the child's overall development. The first one is the warmth of the father-child relation and the second aspect is how involved the father is.



The level of involvement from the father includes factors like how much time he spends with the child, how much they make themselves available, and how much of the responsibility they take over themselves in the welfare and care of the child. All these factors contribute to the overall quality of fatherhood. This quality of the relationship between the father and the child is what makes the biggest difference.

### **Relation between Lack of Father's Love and Psychological Well Being**

Many studies comparing fatherhood and motherhood have found that father love has a bigger impact on the child's psychological well being. It has been found that there is a deeper negative impact, often leading to aggression against peers, when there is lack of warmth from the father. Studies have also shown that depressed or offending young individuals were affected more deeply when they felt rejected by the father than their mother. Even important emotional and psychological consequences like distress, satisfaction with life and happiness was found to have higher impact from father-child closeness than from mother-child closeness. This was found both in the case of male and female children.

The level of impact fatherhood plays in a child's life has been found to be much deeper than ever thought before. Studies show that the impact of father-child relationship warmth is so deep that it has big influence on a teenager's perception and response towards some of the most important social aspects of life including roles of sex, marriage, and divorce. In fact, the impact of father's warmth is also significant on childbearing in teenage years.

One reason scientists believe why father's love and care contributes in a unique way is that they can engage in multi-faced interactions with their child compared to mothers. They are also more likely to inspire the child to become competitive, independent and open to risk taking.

### **Conclusion**

Even today there is a strong belief that motherhood plays the most important role in the development of a child. The fact is that both motherhood and fatherhood are crucial to the proper development of the child. If the modern studies by scientists are to be believed, any lack in father's love and contribution to the parent-child relation can have more serious consequences than similar shortages in the mother-child relationship.

If anyone wants to bring up healthy child who is developed in all aspects of social, emotional and psychological factors, equal emphasis should be laid on quality fatherhood and motherhood. The influence of father's love and care is independent of the child's gender. The importance of father-child relationship is equally important to both sons and daughters.

### **Questions**

1. What is the chief finding reported in this essay comparing and contrasting roles of mothers and fathers in the healthy development of a child?
2. What does the writer conclude about the most important part of fatherhood in the raising of the child?
3. Is there anything surprising about any of the findings reported in this brief essay?
4. Does the Pope suggest that two mommies families or two daddys families in fact are not as beneficial to the healthy development of a child?

## **Motherhood and Fatherhood: the psychological foundations for children's security and flourishing in an increasingly complex world**

Frank J. Moncher, PhD Institute for the Psychological Sciences, Arlington, VA Alpha Omega Clinic and Consultation Services, Bethesda, MD Paper presented at the 22nd Congress of the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations (FIAMC): Symposium of Catholic Psychologists "Globalization and the Family: A Challenge for Psychology Today" Barcelona, Spain May 13-14, 2006

### **Part 1: The human person and the family:**

The dignity of the human person and the stability of the traditional family are under attack in the modern world. A variety of political and social ideologies have emerged which are antagonistic towards traditional Judeo-Christian values. Family values have lost much ground in recent decades to other, and in some cases competing





values, such as materialism, individualism and consumerism. At the transcendent level, Pope John Paul II (1981) exhorts families to “become what you are...” He continues by stating that “the family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love ... (and that) Family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice”.

At the natural level too, the family is known as the usual source of the most enduring and formative relationships in a child's life (Institute for American Values, 2003). In a series of declarations and conferences during the 20th century (United Nations, 1948; 1976), the international community developed a common understanding regarding the concept of family as the basic unit of society, and as such, entitled to receive comprehensive

protection and support. More recently, it has been noted that rapid demographic and socio-economic changes throughout the world have influenced patterns of family life, placing greater strains on the family (United Nations, 1994). Finally, some writers have attempted to use the language of “various forms of the family” to promote

agendas that are contrary to the family as a natural institution (Trujillo, 2004), and to challenge traditional family values (Saunders, 2006).



Although many difficulties confronted by families at this time have been present throughout time (e.g., geographic separation of the father to enable him to provide for the family, and absence of parents through death, divorce or abandonment), more recently, other complications have arisen (e.g., both parents working outside the home, and families living great distances from extended family members). One particularly harmful aspect of this trend is the widespread absence of fathers in children's lives (Popenoe, 1996; Pruett, 1997, 2000). Related to this aspect is the effective disconnection in our society from what Erikson (1968) called generativity in adults, where parents are challenged to transcend their own needs and to care for others. The overall situation is further complicated by globalization which has accelerated dramatically the degree and intensity of the contact among different cultures, beliefs, and ideologies, some of which appear unmindful of the potential impact on the next generations of traditional family life deteriorating. Since the family is the cornerstone of society, and the mental health of each family member directly impacts the health of the rest, a crucial aspect of globalization is the psychological effect on the individual human person, and especially on the child (Sweeney, in press).

## Part 2: Children and parents:

The Commission on Children at Risk, a group [of] doctors, research scientists, mental health, and youth service professionals, recently documented that many young people currently are suffering from emotional distress, mental illness, and behavioral problems, and in the future, are at risk for not achieving productive adulthood (AACAP, 1998; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Haggerty, 1995; National Institutes of Mental Health, 1999; Twenge, 2000). Their report concludes, that “in large measure, what's causing the crisis of American childhood is a lack of ... close connections to other people, and (a lack of) deep connections to moral and spiritual meaning” (Institute for American Values, 2003; p.5).

Furthermore, the report suggests that social institutions (e.g., the family), which foster these two forms of connectedness for children, have gotten significantly weaker. Therefore, the central thesis of this paper is that parents are at the core of the solution to the problem of childhood risk of mental distress or illness. Ultimately, many troubles and confusions of children as they grow and develop can be managed and assisted by improved relationships with parents; parents who are present physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually (Sutton, 2005).

Parents are called, as the primary educators of children, to foster their children's physical, emotional, and spiritual development. John Paul II (1981, n.25) states that each human being needs to be “educated”, which includes not only the informing of their minds, but also, and even more importantly, the forming of their hearts and characters in virtue. Realizing this, we can then best know how to guide parents through the complicated, global world in which we live.

## Part 3: Globalization:



A risk for persons and families, as well as an opportunity for good, through connection with cultural and transcendent values, the phenomenon of globalization may be thought of as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton, 1993). As a result of telecommunications and economic factors, the amount of interaction and communication among peoples has become increasingly prevalent and immediate (Arnett, 2002). Thus, globalization presents some risk to the dignity of the human person and to the stability of the family, as it challenges the culture in which they exist, changing dramatically the number and range of influences on the family: John Paul II (1981) states that "... in the modern world ...some

have become uncertain over their role, confused or unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life...others hindered by various situations of injustice".

The Holy Father warns that there has evolved from this phenomena a mistaken concept of independence of the spouses in relation to each other, misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children, concrete difficulties in the transmission of values, and the corruption of the idea of freedom, as an autonomous power of self-affirmation for one's own selfish well-being (John Paul II, 1981). Furthermore, many secular psychologists, as well as Pope John Paul II, warn that globalization as practiced today risks a stifling conformity among cultures and nations, resulting in a loss of the sense of particularity that is so valuable between cultures (Sweeney, in press).

Psychology offers a framework for describing the results of intercultural contact and its effect on cultural identity. The process is called acculturation, which occurs when groups of individual having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, resulting in subsequent changes in the original culture pattern of either or both groups (Berry, 1997). Because of globalization, the challenge of acculturation now impacts not only immigrants to a new land, but potentially impacts all families and children, creating dilemmas heretofore not faced. However, a proper understanding of the human person, situated in culture can provide insight into how to manage the dilemmas presented by globalization.

John Paul II paints the picture of a modern world united in its recognition of the truth of the human person, yet diverse in a culture and tradition arising from dialogue and mutual respect (Sweeney, in press). He states that cultural identity reflects the person's natural desire to live community, to share life with others whom they love, to find meaning in personal relationships and in the context that frames those relationships. Man seeks to create community, and in psychological terms, to find his cultural home and cultural identity.

The individual, sure in his identity and insistent on retaining his core values, who comes face-to-face with the global culture and dialogues with it, is the one who benefits the most psychologically (Sweeney, in press). Christian parents can offer their unique contribution in the various situations and cultures in which their family is found (John Paul II, 1981). Yet, while parents attempt to preserve the family's cultural values, the impact of globalization instigates conflicts between parents and children (Jensen, 2003), disrupting parent-child attachment relationships, when children rebuff their cultural identity(Sweeney, in press). Pressure and conflict rise when the child seeks to identify with his peers in the dominant, secular culture while the family insists on maintaining its cultural and religious traditions (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). If a child exposed to the global culture routinely gets the message that his culture of origin is worthless, or that he must reject it in order to be accepted by the larger culture, he will suffer psychological conflict (Berry, 1997).

The implications of this psychological stress are significant because unsure of his own identity, the child is less able to give and receive love. This pattern may become ingrained, inhibiting future ability to have healthy, giving relationships, for when a child has impaired perceptions of emotional ties to his parents, he in turn may have impaired relationships with a future spouse and children (Sweeney, in press). These processes are vulnerable to the dilemmas of globalization (Sweeney, in press) and as a result, an increasing number of young people are at risk for suffering from emotional or behavioral problems because of confusion associated with a lack of connectedness to their parents and traditions that provide meaning.



In summary, it is important to recall that globalization per se is not necessarily problematic. John Paul II (2001a) offered a helpful critique of globalization, noting that “globalization, a priori, is neither good, nor bad. It will be what people make of it ... it is necessary to insist that globalization ... must be at the service of the human person...” Therefore, it is important to engage the phenomena of globalization with a keen eye towards respect for cultures, which support preservation of healthy psychological development of identity, and thus of the human person. A clear understanding of the human person at both a natural and supernatural level must be understood in order to navigate the changing world.

## **Part 4: An anthropology of the human person consistent with Catholic Church teachings**

While the social circumstances of human existence continue to develop and change, the truth of the human person remains unchanged. Consequently, the goods that mothers and fathers each uniquely bring to the task of parenting and family life must be understood both from bio-psychosocial and spiritual perspectives. The following conceptualization is based on anthropological premises generated by the faculty of the Institute for the Psychological Sciences in Arlington, VA (Brugger, Donahue, Moncher, Nordling, Palmer, Rondeau, Scrofani, Sweeney, Titus, & Vitz, 2006; I will provide a brief overview of key concepts and refer you to the Appendix for a complete description).

Regarding the supernatural aspect of the human person, we learn from the truth of revelation that the human person is created in the image and likeness of God, is fallen as a consequence of original sin, yet is redeemed in Christ, and ultimately called to holiness, with a vocation of love. Nonetheless, human nature is weakened by sin, that is, by concupiscence, with the consequences of disordered emotions, weaknesses of reason and will, and proneness to disorder in relationships, including relationships in the family. These weaknesses manifest in a variety of ways, but certainly in ways central to understanding the responsibility of mothers and fathers in providing for the formation of their children in a manner that promotes flourishing in their lives. This parental vocation to love is made evident in their relationship with their children, which is present at not only the supernatural but also the natural level. At the natural level, we understand the human person to be a unified, integrated whole, which is at once intelligent, bodily, and relational. While the coexistence of these aspects within the unity of the person can never be denied, it is helpful to consider each of the different aspects separately.



First we consider that the human person is intelligent, evident in their rational capacities to know themselves, others, and God; to know truth, good and evil; and in the will, as responsible and self-determining beings. Our freedom to choose for ourselves and our bearing the burden of these choices responsibly is a vital concept for children to learn from their parents. However, this must be understood in the context of natural limitations to our freedom which result from concupiscence. Thus, through multiple factors and to varying degrees, any particular human person will have limitations on their ability to enact their will. This is in some ways the task of the parents, to minimize the impact of their own natural limitations on their developing children, so that each child might be as free as possible to know and follow the will of God in his life.

Next we consider that the human person is bodily, that is, emotional, motoric, sensory, perceptual, and situ-

ated in a cultural situation. In terms of our focus on motherhood and fatherhood, it is crucial to understand that as bodily beings, human persons are gendered (Gen 1:27), and that maleness and femaleness are intrinsic and complementary, neither identical nor ontologically mutually exclusive. Healthy motherhood and fatherhood are manifest in marital love and actualized through a husband and wife first making a disinterested gift of self to each other.

Finally, we consider the relational nature of the human person, wherein we observe natural inclinations and needs for life in society. This interpersonal aspect of human nature is first developed in the family, as humans have natural inclinations and needs for marriage and children. Further, men and women are different, interdependent and complementary in relational as well as in physical ways. Therefore, proper fostering of the develop-



ment of a child requires mothers and fathers who each make indispensable contributions. As John Paul II (1981) states “God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion”. One’s sexuality affects not only one’s body but also the totality and unity of one’s body and soul, including one’s “affectivity ... capacity to love ... and (one’s) aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others” (CCC no. 2332). In particular, we highlight the essential appreciation of the unique contributions of fathers and mothers that are present in assigning meaning of gender to children as a human universal that deeply influences wellbeing. The importance of these last two aspects at the natural level of the human person, bodily-ness and relationality, is supported by what is observed clinically, where people most often seek help for problems when they are suffering interpersonal troubles or emotional (i.e., bodily) pain. Further, the biological reality that we are first bodily and relational, before we are volitional and rational, (personal communication, C. Brugger) highlights the importance of parental attachment relationships in clarifying for children their course in this complex world.

## Part 5: Connectedness with parents:



Key to healthy relationships and moral development, the formation of one’s identity is profoundly impacted by early formative experiences attaching to, or bonding with, one’s parents. While identity depends to some extent on personal variables, it is intimately tied to relationships with attachment figures who afford emotional support and protection (Bretherton & Mulnholland, 1999). Bowlby’s (1969) seminal work on attachment theory has generated a remarkable amount of interest and research on the processes by which infants (e.g., Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978), and in later research, adults (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987; 1994; Parkes, Stevenson-Hinde, & Marris, 1991), develop the capacity to form bonds with their parents, family members, and ultimately with all human persons. Attachment is an inborn system in the brain that evolves in ways that influence and organize motivational, emotional, and memory processes with respect to significant caregiving figures. The attachment system motivates an infant to seek proximity to parents and to establish communication with them (Bowlby, 1969). It is important to note the universality of attachment across cultures.

Psychological research has demonstrated that concepts such as parental support, nurturance, closeness, and caring are important for children and adults everywhere, regardless of race, language, gender, or culture (Rohner, 1975, 1986, 2006). The basic fact of this capacity to attach also is found in biological research, animal studies, cross-cultural research, and in studies with institutionalized children. In addition, the importance of attachment is persistent throughout the life cycle. For not only young children, but human beings of all ages are found to be at their happiest and best able to deploy their talents when they are confident that standing behind them, there are one or more trusted persons who will come to their aid should difficulties arise (Bowlby, 1973). The capacity to attach has been categorized into a finite number of attachment styles or types: the healthy attachment style (called Secure or Autonomous), and a variety of unhealthy, insecure attachment styles (e.g., Resistant/Ambivalent/Preoccupied; Avoidant/ Dismissing; or Disorganized/Unresolved/Fearful).

Parents who are perceptive, emotionally available, and responsive to their infants’ needs and mental states have infants who are most often securely attached (Siegel, 1999). The theory posits that internal working models are developed based upon early experiences which form mental representations of caregivers’ sensitivity and responsiveness, which then proceed to influence how people perceive, interpret and act in relationships across the life span (Bowlby, 1969, 1988). In this way, attachment relationships may serve to create the central foundation from which the mind develops, and thus secure attachment appears to confer a form of emotional resilience (Rutter, 1987, 1997). Alternatively, insecure attachment, resulting from parents who are unavailable, unresponsive, and/or lacking attunement to their child, may serve as a significant risk factor for the development of psychopathology.

Furthermore, the beginning of morality is biologically primed in attachment relationships. Stilwell (2002) describes the child’s quest for parental approval as the foundation for the emergence of conscience: “moralization is a process whereby a valuedriven sense of oughtness emerges within specific human behavioral systems ...governing attachment, emotional regulation, cognitive processing, and volition....” (quoted in IAV, 11 2003; p.25-6). Similarly, Karen (2002) describes the dangers of these attachment needs being ignored or denied: “All of the early researchers had found the same symptoms in children who’d been deprived of their mother: (those symptoms being) superficial relationships, poverty of feeling for others, lack of emotional response, pointless

deceitfulness and theft, and inability to concentrate in school” (quoted in IAV, 2003; p.26). In this way, it becomes clear that the task of nurturing children into healthy, functional adults is one and the same as raising children who are able to function as persons with a clear sense of identity and honorable purpose in their lives. The call for both mother and fathers to be part of this attachment process is supported in psychological research that finds differences in the impact upon children of paternal versus maternal love (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001).

## Part 6: Motherhood.



The attachment literature makes clear the profound influence of the mother-child relationship on future psychological growth, development and potential for flourishing in interpersonal relationships. Early attachment research focused on the mother-child bond, based on the premise that women are genetically endowed for child care, and that maternal love and care provide everything that children need for normal, healthy development (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001). While this is an incomplete understanding of the child's psychological need for both mother and father, we should not lose sight of the truth contained in it, that mothers have always been seen, and rightfully so, as essential to child growth and development. This is related to how the infant's attachment and bonding experiences connect them in a unique manner to the mother, because of, not in spite of, her femaleness.

In addition to the psychological importance for children of females, as mothers, John Paul II made clear their profound importance at a spiritual level: “The moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that God entrusts the human being to her in a special way. A woman is strong because of her awareness of this entrusting. That is why when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women imbued with a spirit of the gospel can do so much to aid humanity not falling” (John Paul II, 1988, no. 1).

All motherhood is understood more deeply as a personal calling from God for women to humanize humanity in serving the temporal and eternal welfare of any children whom their lives touch (Sutton, 2005)<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, an essential aspect of what it means to be human, the gift of self, specifies a more complete understanding of women's motherhood. In the openness in conceiving and giving birth to a child, the woman discovers herself through a sincere gift of self. In this way, there can be no doubt that a mother's contribution to the task of parenting is not disconnected from her gender, and that it is precisely because of her femininity that she brings a specific good to her children. In summary, the overwhelming evidence psychologically and the clear teachings of the Church, both reflect the unique significance of mothers in the lives of children, which cannot be replaced by society, public institutions, nor by fathers alone.

## Part 7: Fatherhood.

While there is certainly commonality between mothers and fathers based on their shared human nature, it is important to understand that similarities do not eliminate differences, and if the goal is flourishing children, both mothers and fathers are needed. Consequently, in a similar yet distinct and irreplaceable way, fatherhood's influence on children and the family can be seen clearly both psychologically and spiritually.

The concept of fatherhood has shifted dramatically over the course of history, from the stern patriarch, to the distant breadwinner, to the genial playmate, to the more recent co-parent (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Furthermore, scientists prior to the 1960s and 1970s assumed that fathers were relatively unimportant for the healthy development of children (for





a review, see Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000). Most recently, however, when behavioral scientists began to study fathers and father love directly, they found that fathers are as capable as mothers of being competent and nurturing caregivers (Bronstein & Cowan, 1988; Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999), and that the father-child bond often parallels the mother-child bond both emotionally and in intensity (Fox, Kimmerly, & Schager, 1991; Hanson & Bozett, 1991). Father love is implicated in a wide array of psychological and developmental issues (e.g., adjustment, behavior problems, gender role development, cognitive achievement, social competence).

Two themes appear to be key: the warmth of the father, and the involvement of the father (see Rohner & Veneziano, 2001 for review). In terms of father involvement, important factors appear to include the amount of time that fathers spend, the extent to which fathers make themselves available, and the extent to which they take responsibility for their children's care and welfare (Lamb, Pleck, Chernov, & Levine, 1987). It is important to note, however, that one review concluded that it was not the simple fact of paternal engagement, availability, or responsibility for child care that was associated with positive adjustment and competence, but rather that the quality of the father-child relationship made the greatest difference (Lamb, 1997).



Support for the importance of father love, above and beyond the impact of mother love, has also been found in comparative studies of psychological illness and well-being (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001): for example, paternal but not maternal warmth was negatively associated with disruptive aggression towards peers (Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000); depressed or delinquent youth felt rejected by their fathers but not necessarily by their mothers (Andry, 1962, Cole & McPherson, 1993); and perceived closeness to fathers, over and above perceived closeness to mothers, was related to adult sons' and daughters' happiness, life satisfaction, and psychological distress (Amato, 1994). Finally, in a longitudinal study 14 (Brody, Moore, & Gleib, 1994), fathers' warmth had a significant effect in shaping adolescents' attitudes toward such social issues

as marriage, divorce, sex roles, and teenage childbearing.

Apparently, the impact of fathers is not only important for preventing certain psychological problems, but also for encouraging virtuous attitudes and behavior. It is hypothesized that part of the reason for fathers' unique contribution is that they initiate different types of interactions than mothers, engaging in more physical, rough and tumble, and idiosyncratic play. In addition, fathers are more likely than mothers to encourage children's competitiveness, risk-taking, and independence (Cabrera et al., 2000). In addition to these psychological findings, the role of father is important from a Christian perspective. Spiritually, the role of a father in guiding his family and demonstrating to children how manhood is powerfully yet appropriately manifest in the world, has its own dignity and place. The Church especially venerates St. Joseph as a model of spiritual fatherhood. John Paul II (1989) states that all men are called, like St. Joseph, to make a total sacrifice of their lives by submitting their wills to God and giving themselves permanently, faithfully, and generously to their wives, and defending their families from the perils of the world. A man's self-gift to his wife promotes and secures her ability to give to the children. Authentic love and spiritual fatherhood for his children requires that a man develop a profound respect, esteem, and generous concern for each child's dignity and well-being (Sutton, 2005). A father's sacrificial approach, in humility to God's providence, teaches children valuable lessons that may be counter to what the globalized world suggests. For example, competent fathers importantly teach the following: that children are "grown up" when they can take care of others (not when they can take care of themselves); they teach that success comes from long term planning (not from instantaneous gratification of needs); and they teach that long term commitments, such as honoring one's wife and leading children to do so are valuable (as opposed to spending leisure time away from family responsibilities) (Stenson, 2000). Fathers also project moral leadership in the family, by monitoring and evaluating what they allow children to be exposed to from outside the family.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Therefore, through faith and reason, we know the crucial importance of both father and mother in the well-being of children, and their essential need in these times of unparalleled complexity in the world, for parents to effectively nurture and guide the next generation. Parents are at the forefront of the encounter between the unchanging essence of motherhood and fatherhood, and the changing world in which we are living, where the meaning of motherhood and fatherhood is being challenged. For these reasons, it is important to support individual fathers and mothers with a solid declaration of not only their right, but also their duty, to retain

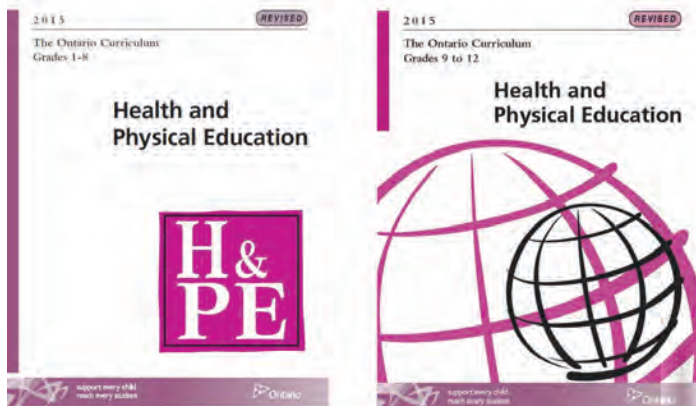


their role as primary educators of their children. An integrated, Catholic anthropology of the human person supports this duty in the context of globalization because the individual maintains his core integrity and fundamental identity. The unity with which the human person was created by God transcends contextual influences and compels parents to foster healthy psychological development of the children in the family. This fundamental identity is developmentally formed first in the bodily and interpersonal aspects of our nature. Therefore, an essential need for children is that their parents, both mothers and fathers, are physically and emotionally present in order to provide a secure attachment base from which they can grow and develop. It is from this secure attachment base that children's intellect and will can

reach their full potential, unencumbered by anxieties, conflict, and emotional burdens that weigh down those who are not confident in their mother's and father's love and support. Therefore, it is recommended that fathers and mothers be supported at multiple levels in their unique and irreplaceable roles as primary attachment figures, educators, and guides of their children.

First, individual therapy for fathers or mothers who had not benefited from secure attachment relationships with their own parents; to the extent to which parents have personal histories that were less than ideal, they will have greater difficulty embracing their calls to be fathers and mothers, physically and spiritually (Sutton, 2005), resulting in difficulties being perpetuated across generations;

Second, marital therapy for parents who are struggling in sustaining a healthy giving of self in their marriage, which would inevitably have bad consequences for the children. This should include attention by the Church to comprehensive marriage preparation programs and assistance for troubled marriages (e.g., Retrouvaille);



Third, family interventions that focus on enhancing the filial, parent-child relationship, as well as interventions that support extended family members who play an invaluable role; and

Finally, systemic interventions that impact the societal organizations by which parents are impacted; for example, corporate policies that free workers to be better parents and better guides for the next generation (Institute for American Values, 2003); schools policies that encourage parental involvement and input regarding curricula; social or political actions that promote traditional family values, for example, encouraging the removal of confusing messages about sexuality (e.g., legalized same-sex marriage and abortion). With support

at these multiple levels, the above mentioned psychological interventions, as well as support from the Church through cultivation of a sense of meaning and transcendence in their lives, fathers and mothers will be better positioned to provide their children with the nurture and guidance needed for them to negotiate an increasingly expanding and interconnected world.

### Questions for discussion

1. What is alarming about the pressures upon the family today?
2. Identify some of the traditional pressures and more recent complications that threaten the family and its members as the basic unit or cornerstone of society?
3. According to this report what are children suffering from increasingly?
4. What do parents have to do with the situation either as cause or solution?
5. Explain how globalization could impact negatively the healthy development of children, their relationship with their parents, and their ability to integrate into their society?



6. How might the new health and physical education curriculum introduced in Ontario create problems for both traditional families and for families new to Canada?
7. Explain in your own words the four characteristics of the Christian understanding of human anthropology, e.g. rational, volitional, relational, bodily?
8. What is the ultimate purpose or plan for the human being according to this Christian anthropology?
9. What is meant by "attachment" or bonding? Why is this so crucial to the healthy growth and development of the child?
10. What are the positive and negative consequences of proper attachment or the absence thereof?
11. What valuable, practical influences do good mothers and fathers have on the development of their children?
12. What specific lessons do children learn from their mothers and fathers respectively?
13. The report's authors conclude that the family is in danger and suffering fragmentation. What recommendations are suggested to help correct the problem and put families on a more stable and healthy course?
14. The most important recommendation may well be the declaration about the primacy of parents in their child's education. Should there be a charter for parental rights in this regard?



<http://www.fiamc.org/bioethics/motherhood-and-fatherhood/>

Fédération Internationale des Associations de Médecins Catholiques

World Federation of the Catholic Medical Associations

Federación Internacional de Asociaciones Médicas Católicas

## Time to salute what fatherhood is all about

Editorial, *The Interim* June, 1998

It's probably no coincidence that the status of fathers has declined in proportion to the overall depreciation in family life, morality and culture during the last few decades



Much has been written in recent years about the negative portrayal of fathers in the news media and in the entertainment world. Indeed, the incompetent father has become something of an icon in North America.

Those for whom *The Simpsons* or *Married With Children* is an example of intelligent entertainment probably see fathers as existing on the level of Shakespeare's Fool, or maybe the Three Stooges combined into one.

Those with a greater grasp of reality, however, will probably see fathers as part of the backbone of what a healthy, stable society is all about. They help bring new life into the world. They help nurture that life into independence while passing on

the best influences they can. And, in advancing years, they offer the wisdom gleaned from troubles and travails that we haven't yet experienced.

But a healthy, stable society is exactly what some elements out there don't want to see. As William Gairdner so competently pointed out in his book *War Against the Family*, it's in the best interest of these certain



elements that society remain as unstable and in as much turmoil as possible.

That way, they can advance their agenda while families everywhere try to cope with factors such as increased taxation, unemployment and general social decay. “Divide and conquer,” seems to be the strategy, and unfortunately, fathers – and families in general – have become the victims.

Of course, there’s no denying the fact that some fathers don’t measure up to the heavy responsibilities placed upon them. Some have trouble raising children. Some work too much. Some, tragically, even abuse their wives and/or children.

But despite vociferous media campaigns, we know that the overwhelming majority of fathers try to fulfill their vocation with everything they’ve got – and then some – even if it isn’t always enough.

Apart from this, though, there’s no getting away from the fact that the institution of fatherhood itself is as integral to human civilization as the air we breathe. Some elements out there (how about Madonna? Or the producers of *Murphy Brown*?) may tell you that children can get along quite well without a father, thank you very much – that a single mother can handle the task of childrearing on her own just fine.

Others will suggest that two lesbians bringing up children is quite normal, and that the results of such child-raising are compatible with what would happen if the child was raised with a mother and father.

These lines of thought may well be patterned on modes of thinking pioneered during the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s and developed in the *Declaration of Feminism*, passed in 1971.

As the *Declaration* pointed out: “The end of the institution of marriage is a necessary condition for the liberation of women. Therefore, it is important for us to encourage women to leave their husbands.”

William Gairdner has said radical forms of feminism found a perfect vehicle to spread their influence through the growth of the modern welfare state. Craven politicians (many of them men) eagerly traded the status of the traditional family for votes and an expanded role for government. Vast amounts of public funding suddenly became available to special interest groups, including those chomping at the bit to tear at the role of dads in society.

The womb-to-tomb state, with its accompanying hordes of therapists, administrators, commissioners and counsellors, made it possible to start chipping away at a family institution that until then had survived the rise and fall of nations.

Twisted ideologues gave an intellectual backing to the whole scenario. “Love,” declared 1960s radical Abigail Rockefeller, “is debilitating and counter-revolutionary.” Males everywhere were seen as prime social agents of exploitation, from which women were urged to free themselves.

That’s an example of the sort of nonsense conscientious fathers everywhere have had to deal with.

In a world eschewing love, fathers go against the grain by harkening back to a time when love ruled family relationships, and qualities like compassion, self-sacrifice and concern for others held sway.

Maybe those qualities will return to dominate once again. If so, we likely won’t be crediting the governments, institutions or elites of our time, who, instead of improving matters, tend to worsen them.

Instead, the shift back to sanity will probably be led by our “natural institutions”: families, churches, friends ... and fathers, one at a time.

The world at large may not recognize the degree of their importance, but we do.

Happy Father’s Day.

### Questions for discussion

1. What is decried in the editorial?
2. What is the agenda behind the belittling of the role of fathers in the modern society?
3. Has the growth of the social welfare state and spread of a radical feminist agenda harmed or enhanced the role of fathers in our society? How and why or why not?
4. Has the male sex actually suffered generally from these “attacks: on maleness qualities?



## The true meaning and value of motherhood

Editorial, *The Interim* May, 2010

The second Sunday of May, Mother's Day, gives families a chance to thank, honour and celebrate the people who are closest to us and who teach us how to love: our mothers. Indeed, mothers make families possible. As such, motherhood is necessary and essential for society itself. This fact, of course, is rarely acknowledged and motherhood is not highly esteemed in our society. Mother's Day, then, is not only a day of joy to honour our mothers, but gives us an opportunity to ask what motherhood means to our culture. Of course, the need to ask the question is part of the answer. A society so confused that it does not implicitly understand the crucial role played by the women who make families is one that cannot honour or respect them.

The loss of a sense of motherhood is a cultural problem, affecting everyone. And, because it affects everyone, it seems to come from everywhere. Citizens, for example, are given an endless number of signals telling them that the commitments made by mothers are neither heroic nor special. The government, by redefining marriage to include same-sex unions, indicates that marriage is not unique to men and women. If unions that can produce children are no different from those that cannot, motherhood cannot be that special. A similar prejudice is seen in the Canadian tax code, which makes it harder for married men and women to raise children – the current tax laws favour childless cohabitation, rather than fruitful marriage.

Our cultural elites repeat this same message. Affluent, oligarchic feminists, who never defend or promote motherhood, pay lip service to the belief that women should be free to do whatever they decide. Yet, in effect, they preach that the only valid choice is the one they themselves have made. While cultural and political elites insist on equality, their real message is that they are indifferent to the supreme challenges (and privileges) unique to motherhood. And so, fewer and fewer women choose to accept the demanding, but rewarding, vocation of being full-time mothers.

Our elites pretend not to understand that this is their message and feign incredulity as they watch Canadian fertility rates plunge to reach the levels of famine-stricken countries. They surmise that women themselves have suddenly and spontaneously decided that motherhood is not worth the trouble. This creates a dangerous situation, in which the elites are receiving the signals they themselves have sent. And, as they push motherhood to the margins of society, they propose solutions that make the problem even worse.

The plan for universal daycare is a perfect example of this. If it is impossible for a mother to be with her child during the day, the solution they offer is to hire someone else to do her work. It is a solution that compounds the problem, because it further reduces the role of the mother in a family to a job, a mere labour without love. Motherhood thus becomes a commodity, a service – an educator or a babysitter, even the very best, can never have the concern for a child that a mother does. Even though these employees may be well intentioned, the system ensures that they will never be better than adequate. Children in a universal daycare system are not being civilized and raised in a loving family, but merely socialized, and brought into a world where they can manage with the least trouble. There is neither the incentive nor the ability for someone to do the job of a mother, because only mothers love without incentive, without cause and without limit.

While universal daycare may claim to help families, not all proposed programs have the same good intentions. Some people in power even begin to see motherhood itself as the problem. They reason that if programs like universal daycare do not work, it is because they do not go far enough. Natural mothers, then, become obstacles to the ambitions of radical social engineers. At the United Nations, for example, "motherhood" is thought

to be a prejudicial term. This thinking leads to more extreme solutions, which compound problems still further in a vicious cycle. It never occurs to them that there is an indispensable role that only mothers can play. As Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his first encyclical:

"The state, which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person – every person – needs; namely, loving personal concern." The state cannot give what is most needed and what moms provide most abundantly: love itself.

Love, after all, creates families in the first place. The family is the school of love and it is taught only as it is given. The cultural



problems arising from the lack of mothers (and their terrible solutions) are solved by the family itself. Families must be examples of love, beacons of light to those around them. Children, likewise, as living symbols of love, fidelity and sacrifice, should be welcomed and celebrated by society, not menaced, even before birth, with the threat of death by abortion. And parents, especially mothers, should be examples of love to others, their children first of all.

This month, let us celebrate the unique and crucial role of motherhood. A mother's work is love, and only she can do it. No one else should try to replace her. Motherhood remains an exciting and daunting adventure and we will all benefit from those who have accepted this calling.

Indeed, we already have.

### Questions

1. How does the editorial make a strong case for motherhood?
2. What are some of the worst negative factors that downgrade the importance of mothers?
3. What can and should society do to uphold and strengthen the unique and indispensable role of mothers in the formation of families and raising of children?

### Other valuable resources that might be consulted on this topic of motherhood and fatherhood:

<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/regretting-motherhood-is-a-symptom-of-21st-century-anti-natalism>  
<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/the-greatest-profession-on-earth-6-moms-spreading-the-word-about-motherhood>  
<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/washington-post-reporter-motherhood-is-not-a-job-it-is-a-joy>  
<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/un-committee-attacks-motherhood-demands-new-rights-for-women>  
<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/the-physiology-of-motherhood-studies-show-natural-high-in-brains-of-mothers>  
<https://www.jordanbpeterson.com/podcast/episode-47/>  
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/25-facts-on-the-importance-of-fathers/>  
<http://www.thefatherhoodproject.org/10-facts-about-father-engagement/>  
<https://www.firstthings.com/media/the-future-of-christian-marriage>

