

# CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WATCH

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## IRELAND, SPECIAL EDITION

### CONTENTS:

- Catholic parents urged to fight Irish bishops' RSE programme page 1
- Irish Episcopal Conference bows to government policy on contraception page 4
- Archbishop Martin pays lip-service to parents as primary educators page 6





## Catholic parents urged to fight Irish bishops' RSE programme

The Relationships and Sexuality Education resources recently published by the Irish Episcopal Conference's Council for Education<sup>1</sup> run contrary to Catholic teaching, as shown by a consideration of their content.

The slides included in the resources, for use in post-primary-school classrooms throughout the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, expose young people — and their teachers — to occasions of sin. In a lesson on “sexual attraction”, for example:

- Pupils are invited to “choose a film which portrays two people being attracted to each other” and they are asked to “describe how the film portrays the attraction”. (Slide 4)
- Teachers are prompted to talk about physiological manifestations of sexual attraction including: “hands sweating, butterflies in the stomach ... sexual organs sensitised as they prepare for sexual intercourse”. (Teacher's notes, Slide 5)

Imagine how such discussions, whether in a mixed or single-sex classroom, might easily develop in a vulgar and dangerous way.

In another lesson, on “sex and marriage”, pupils are asked to say what they think of the following ideas:

“Everyone has a right to sexual pleasure ... I can do what I like with my body, including masturbate to achieve sexual pleasure ... It doesn't matter how you achieve sexual pleasure so long as it's between consenting adults ... No one has the right to tell me what to do with my body ... The only rule about sex that I need to listen to is that of consent ... I can't be truly fulfilled in life without sexual pleasure.” (Slide 20)

Again, this part of the RSE lesson is an open invitation to pupils to engage in an (at best) inappropriate or (at worst) salacious discussion.

Pope Pius XI condemned the kind of sex education promoted by the Irish Catholic bishops in the following terms:

“Another very grave danger is that naturalism which nowadays invades the field of education in that most delicate matter of purity of morals. Far too common is the error of those who with





Pope Pius XI

dangerous assurance and under an ugly term propagate a so-called sex-education, falsely imagining they can forearm youths against the dangers of sensuality by means purely natural, such as a foolhardy initiation and precautionary instruction for all indiscriminately, even in public; and, worse still, by exposing them at an early age to the occasions, in order to accustom them, so it is argued, and as it were to harden them against such dangers.

“Such persons grievously err in refusing to recognise the inborn weakness of human nature, and the law of which the Apostle speaks, fighting against the law of the mind; and also in ignoring the experience of facts, from which it is clear that, particularly in young people, evil practices are the effect not so much of ignorance of intellect as of weakness of a will exposed to dangerous occasions, and unsupported by the means of grace.”<sup>2</sup>

Church teaching makes it clear that parents in Ireland not only have the right but the serious obligation to resist the profanation of their children’s innocence through a warped and un-Catholic education. In the words of Pope Leo XIII:

“By nature parents have a right to the training of their children, but with this added duty that the education and instruction of the child be in accord with the end for which by God’s blessing it was begotten. Therefore it is the duty of parents to make every effort to prevent any invasion of

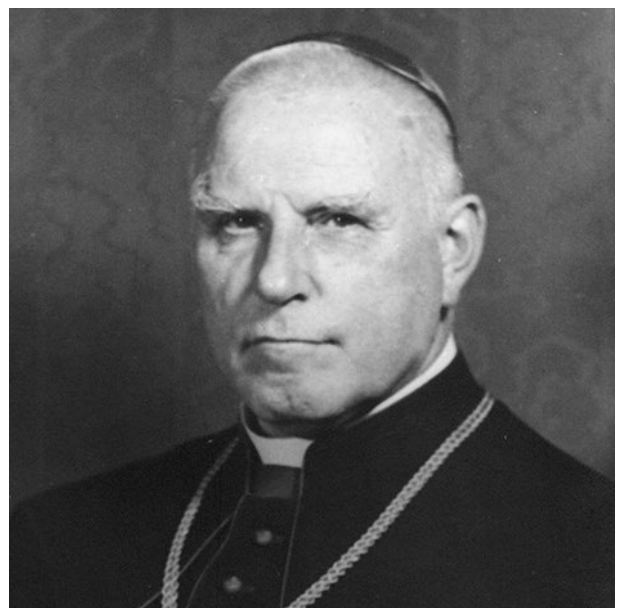
their rights in this matter; and to make absolutely sure that the education of their children remain under their own control in keeping with their Christian duty, and above all to refuse to send them to those schools in which there is danger of imbibing the deadly poison of impiety.”<sup>3</sup>

The “deadly poison of impiety” is being actively promoted by the Irish bishops in classroom presentations and discussions which endanger young people’s purity of morals at an age when it is most vulnerable. It’s time for Catholic parents to fight back.

In 1941, Blessed Clemens von Galen gave a number of unambiguous commands to parents in his diocese of Münster; whose children, he said, could not be protected “from the hammer strokes of unbelief, of hatred of Christendom, of false teachings and morals” under the Nazi regime:

“Christian parents, you must keep an eye on all these things, or else you will be neglecting your most sacred duty; you will not be able to be justified before your conscience and before Him who entrusted those children to you so that you would show them the way to heaven!”

Cardinal von Galen’s message could not be more relevant for Irish Catholic parents today whose children are threatened both by the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) agenda of the secular world and by the corrupting influence of the resources provided for this very purpose by Church authorities.



Cardinal August von Galen, Bishop of Münster

**ACTION:** Write to the Irish bishops' conference to raise your concerns at: [info@catholicbishops.ie](mailto:info@catholicbishops.ie)

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**NOTES:**

1. Catholic Education Partnership, "Living Love" (RSE resources).
2. *Divini Illius Magistri*, 65–66.
3. *Sapientiae Christianae*, 46.



## Irish Episcopal Conference bows to government policy on contraception

The Irish bishops state that their Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) resources have been “developed in harmony” with the policies of the Irish Government’s National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). This “harmony” is particularly manifest in the bishops’ attitude towards contraception, which fails to reflect Catholic teaching on the unequivocal immorality of contraceptive acts.

The NCCA draft guidance requires students to be able to “explore sexual and reproductive health”, which they further define to include “learning about ... contraceptive options”.

The bishops’ RSE lesson on “the gift of fertility” bows to this requirement by listing various contraceptive drugs and devices, and by undermining Catholic teaching, stating that, “The Church *encourages* spouses to ... respect their procreative potential and not deliberately frustrate it through contraceptive measures.” (Slide 7, emphasis added)

The claim that the Church merely *encourages* parents not to contracept is essentially incorrect and dangerously misleading; it might equally be said that

the Church *encourages* the faithful not to commit adultery. The RSE content fails to state anywhere that contraceptive actions are “intrinsically evil”<sup>1</sup> — in other words, contracepting is a mortal sin, which, when carried out with full knowledge and consent, “causes exclusion from Christ’s kingdom and the eternal death of hell”.<sup>2</sup>

In the only slide dedicated to the subject of abortion, the RSE resources (thankfully) teach young people that, “Direct abortion, or the intentional killing of a human being living in the womb, is always seriously immoral because as persons the right-to-life is the most basic and fundamental right we possess”. (Slide 5)

This passing acknowledgment, however, is compromised by the bishops’ silence on the immorality of contraceptive actions:

- firstly, by their use of the pro-abortion rhetoric of “choice” when correctly referring to the abortifacient nature of hormonal birth control methods: “These can also be abortifacient — i.e. prevent the fertilised egg (embryo) from surviving

that students need to be aware of in terms of any future choices they might consider later in life.” (Teacher’s notes, Slide 10)

- secondly, by the emphasis placed on “not making any moral judgement” when teaching pupils about the benefits of natural family planning: “It is important to point out to students that in explaining to them why and how natural fertility awareness and natural family planning has multiple benefits, physically, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically ... this is not making any moral judgement on those who for whatever reason have chosen or choose artificial methods of contraception and birth control.” (Teacher’s notes, Slide 9)

Of course, we don’t judge others, but we must make a judgement about contraceptive actions according to Catholic moral principles. Indeed, the Church teaches that husbands and wives “are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life, as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, they are bound to ensure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator”.<sup>3</sup>

The deafening silence of the bishops on the intrinsic evil of contraception can also be observed in their teaching on “responsible parenthood”, where they

emphasise that “Catholic teaching does not say ... that a couple must intend to have a child every time they make love ... that couples should have many children”; but they maintain silence on the Church doctrine that “each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life”.<sup>4</sup>

The bishops’ silence in the RSE resources also extends to the overwhelming evidence that the contraceptive pill has damaged women’s social welfare — as well as the welfare of men and of children — in that:

- making the conception and birth of the child the physical choice of the mother effectively makes marriage and child-support the social choice of the father;
- by legislating in favour of its widespread use, governments can use contraceptive technology coercively;
- contrary to common prediction, the pill has led to an increase in illegitimacy and abortion.

In their RSE resources, the Catholic bishops of Ireland have bowed the knee to the Irish Government’s policy, played down the intrinsic moral evil of contraceptive actions to the point of making it invisible and, thereby, endangered children’s welfare in this life and their hope of eternal happiness in the next.

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#### NOTES:

1. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2370.
2. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1861.
3. *Humanae Vitae*, 10.
4. *Humanae Vitae*, 11.



# Archbishop Martin pays lip-service to parents as primary educators



Archbishop Eamon Martin

Archbishop Eamon Martin has spoken about parents' "inalienable" right — a term which admits of no legal interference — in relation to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).<sup>1</sup> The Irish Bishops' Conference, meanwhile, refers to the "central" right of parents, citing the provisions of European Convention on Human Rights for the "right to education" and "the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions".<sup>2</sup>

These declarations of the Irish bishops, however, lack all credibility in the light of the practical policies of their 2021 document "Relationships and Sexuality Education: guidance for Catholic post-primary schools", which states that:

"All children and young people in a Catholic school, in all schools, have a right to have their stories heard and their concerns or questions heard. Equally, all parents who send their children to a Catholic school have a right for their voices to be heard in terms of what values and what

ideals they wish to have shared with their children in the area of Relationships and Sexuality Education."<sup>3</sup>

Whilst the bishops describe consultation with parents — "the first and foremost educators" of their children — as "key to the effective delivery of the school's RSE programme", they make it clear that such consultation must also include, in accordance with the Irish Government's requirements, the School Board of Management, the School Trustees, the Teachers, the Senior cycle students, the Student Council, the Diocesan Advisor; the local bishop ... in addition to which the school's RSE co-ordinator has a most influential role.<sup>4</sup>

As the bishops put it themselves in their 2021 document, "This working out of the school's RSE policy requires dialogue with all education partners."<sup>5</sup> The powerlessness of parents is underlined above all by the "cross-curricular" approach to teaching RSE, which is emphasised by the bishops. Their 2021 document says that, "in so far as possible RSE will be taught in a cross-curricular way. The following subject areas could contribute to a cross-curricular approach: Home Economics; Physical Education; Religious Education; Science; English; Music; Art".<sup>6</sup>

Whilst the bishops, citing government documents and Irish law, insist that "parents have the right to withdraw their child from any aspect of RSE if they so wish", how is it possible for them to avoid all the subject areas which might be covering RSE without withdrawing their children entirely from state education?

The declarations of Archbishop Martin and the Irish Episcopal Conference merely pay lip-service to parents in their rights and duties concerning the education of their children.

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**NOTES:**

1. Archbishop Eamon Martin address "Catholic Schools Supporting Families: Towards a Better Education of Children".
2. Relationships and Sexuality Education, "Guidance for Catholic Post-Primary Schools: Republic of Ireland"
3. Council for Education of the Irish Episcopal Conference, p 41.
4. *Ibid.*, pp 26–32.
5. *Ibid.*, p 21.
6. *Ibid.*, p 40 and elsewhere.



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