

**Creating *Fully Alive*: Keynote, Conference on *Fully Alive*
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The task of presenting an overview of *Fully Alive* involves a journey back in time. In 1984 I attended my first meeting of the OCCB Editorial Board, the group that was working toward creating a Family Life program for the Catholic schools of Ontario. At the time, I was working part-time for the Archdiocese of Toronto, and still functioning as a consultant to several private schools, assessing children with learning and behavioural difficulties. I did not realize it then, but that 1984 meeting, now almost 20 years ago, marked a change in my life, and the beginning of a long involvement in the world of Catholic education, and more specifically, Catholic Family Life Education.

The final texts of the *Fully Alive* series were published in 1992, more than ten years ago. I consider the years spent working on the program a significant part of my life, not only as a professional, but also as a person. The entire process of creating the series was an extraordinary experience and opportunity, difficult at times, as all major projects are, but one I would not change.

1. An overview

What follows is a brief outline of the areas I would like to touch on this morning. My intent is to:

- give you some sense of how and why the program came to be, and of the process that was involved in the program's development
- provide you with a brief description of the foundations of the program, laid out in Archbishop Gervais's foreword and in the long introduction, both of which are part of each teacher text
- probe the five themes of the program their rationale and significance within a Catholic Family Life program; offer some examples of the kinds of topics that are part of these themes at different grade levels
- briefly describe the nature and results of the ongoing consultation during the creation of the program; summarize the results of the *Fully Alive* Implementation Review of the mid 90's
- finally, indicate my own views about the program's strengths and weaknesses. In your group sessions, there will be opportunities for your questions and comments, and again in the final panel discussion session.

2. How and Why *Fully Alive* Came to Be

2.1 Some historical background

Programs like *Fully Alive* do not suddenly appear. Twenty years before the first two grades of the program were published, the first attempt to develop a curriculum in Family Life Education began at the Lakehead R.C.S.S. Board. Over the next five years or so, other Catholic Boards also established programs. In this same period of time, several courses in Family Life Education for Catholic teachers were begun.

As a consequence these developments in Catholic Family Life Education, a number of school boards and parents approached the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops (OCCB), and requested guidelines for this new curriculum area. To place this request in context, you must remember the period we are talking about — the late 60's and early 70's. These were heady times for North American society; it often seemed as if everyone was throwing out the old rules and adopting new ones, particularly in the area of sexual mores. To at least some observers, the first curriculum materials in Catholic Family Life Education showed evidence of this radical change. Some Ontario parents and trustees had genuine concerns about Family Life Education in Catholic schools and wanted the Bishops to exercise their appropriate authority as the moral teachers in this area.

The Ontario bishops responded, and the first OCCB guidelines for Family Life Education were published in 1978. The document outlined the roles of the home, school, and parish. With the publication of Pope John Paul II's *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, the OCCB reissued their guidelines to include a lengthy reflection on the Pope's message, as well as a suggested scope and sequence for Family Life Education for the elementary grades. This OCCB publication in 1983 proved so popular that it was reissued in 1987 with a revised and extended bibliography.

The Family Life committee that came together to help the Ontario bishops prepare the 1983 guidelines ultimately became the OCCB Family Life Program Editorial Board. It was this group that would work with the bishops to create an OCCB-sponsored program. I was not part of this history I have recounted, but entered the process about a year later. Because of my background in education and child development, I was asked to join the Editorial Board in 1984, and then became General Editor of the program in the spring of 1985.

2.2 Why did the OCCB decide to sponsor a Family Life Education program?

The creation of multi-grade program with materials for student, teachers, and parents is a massive undertaking, one that requires substantial resources of time

and money. The question of why a regional conference of Catholic Bishops would embark on such an enterprise is one I certainly asked myself when I became part of the process. I think there were two main reasons:

- Clearly, a Catholic Family Life Education program must definitively teach, support, and explain Catholic moral teaching in the area of sexuality, marriage, and family. The bishops recognized their responsibility to ensure that this was done. In the context of homegrown programs proliferating across the province, the use of materials from the United States (particularly the Benzinger program), concerns expressed by trustees and parents, and specific requests for guidance by school boards and parents, the Ontario bishops acted. In their view, guidelines, for this sensitive curriculum area were not enough. They needed to oversee a program.
- Important as clear and orthodox moral teaching is, however, the development of a Family Life program also demands literally thousands of prudential judgments: the timing of sensitive information, the appropriateness of certain topics at different grade levels, the use of language, visual representations in the area of sexuality, and the types of activities in which students will participate. People of good will and strong faith can, did, and do disagree about some of these judgments. By their decision to create their own Family Life program, the bishops, if you will, decided that they would assume the ultimate responsibility for making those prudential judgments. Certainly, they did not act without help from others, or without listening to arguments for and against certain decisions. But, in the end, they exercised their teaching role and their judgment, and produced *Fully Alive*.

I should say in this regard that the Ontario bishops have always made it abundantly clear that their sponsorship of *Fully Alive*, their prudential judgment that it is suitable for use in this province, holds only in Ontario. Other conferences of bishops or individual dioceses might not come to the same judgment. They can be confident that Catholic teaching is clearly presented in *Fully Alive*, yet may not find the program suitable for their people. *Educational Guidance in Human Love* (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1983) makes it very clear that social and cultural factors must be taken into account in the development and use of educational materials related to sexuality.

2.3 Organization of the project

As some of you know, the OCCB is a very small organization in comparison to the CCCB. Its office has no separate departments to deal with areas such as communications, social justice, family life, or archives. The staff is made up of one General Secretary, and one office secretary. For *Fully Alive*, this meant that the organization of the project had to reflect this reality.

The OCCB chose two bishops to oversee and guide the project, one for the English program, and the other for the French program. In the case of the English program (*Fully Alive*) Archbishop Marcel Gervais, then the auxiliary bishop of London, became the head of the Anglophone Editorial Board. The amount of time it took to complete *Fully Alive* is indicated by the changes he experienced during the period: from Auxiliary Bishop of London, to Bishop of Sault Ste Marie, and, finally, Archbishop of Ottawa.

It seems appropriate to mention here that there is actually a third reason the OCCB decided to sponsor a Family Life program, or, more accurately perhaps, a reason for the ultimate success of the program. The right people were there at the right time. I want to mention two in particular, without whom *Fully Alive* would not have happened.

- Father Angus Macdougall, S.J., who wrote the lovely prayer for families we said just a short while ago, was the General Secretary of the OCCB, and was passionately committed to the development of a Catholic program in Family Life Education for Ontario
- Archbishop Marcel Gervais, who brought his wisdom and his deep love of family life to the project.

The Anglophone Editorial Board chaired by Archbishop Gervais was made up of a second bishop, Catholic educators, a moral theologian, parents, the OCCB General Secretary, and myself, the General Editor of the program. The publisher's representative (Collier Macmillan, later Maxwell Macmillan), Patrick Gallagher, also participated in Editorial Board meetings, as did the coordinators of the writing teams.

2.4 Creating *Fully Alive*: The process

Four writing teams had been established in late 1983: Primary (Grades 1-3, Junior (Grades 4-6), Senior (Grades 7-8), and High School. In the end, as a consequence of the need to focus on the elementary program (Grades 1-8), resources for secondary students were not prepared until after the completion of *Fully Alive*.

In consultation with the writing teams, additional teachers at each grade level, and with the help of the publisher's representative, I prepared drafts of student and teacher texts. These were piloted by Ontario Catholic School Boards, with teachers and parents responding to the pilot texts, as well as students in the higher grades. The pilot was an unusual one in that it included the majority of Catholic School Boards in all parts of the province. As a result, it provided an immense amount of feedback. The family books were prepared with the help of parents raising children of that age.

Beyond the school pilot, the bishops committed themselves to consulting within their dioceses. This diocesan consultation varied from diocese to diocese; in smaller ones, there were as few as ten people who read the pilot texts and wrote commentaries. In larger dioceses, such as the Archdiocese of Toronto, there were hundreds of responses.

Based on the pilot feedback and the diocesan consultation, I prepared revised texts that were then considered by the Editorial Board. As a result of the Board's comments, a further revision was prepared and sent to the entire OCCB for their evaluation. As well as the text, the bishops also received a guide to sensitive issues in the particular grade level that involved difficult prudential judgments.

Although it has been suggested by a few who did not approve of the program that the bishops could not have known what was in it, this is simply not true. For each of the texts, there was full and frank discussion about all issues. Here, briefly, are two examples related to visual representations: Should an illustration of a baby having his diaper changed show the genitals? Should a photograph of a mother nursing a baby be included? After general discussion, the answer to the first question was no, and to the second, yes. Another brief example: the few pages about homosexuality in the Grade 8 student and teacher texts were revised innumerable times until the precise wording met the satisfaction of the entire OCCB.

The result of this process was the publication of 24 texts between 1988 and 1992 — student, teacher, and family books for 8 grades. The student books carry the main content of the program, and the teacher guides help the teacher make this content come alive in the classroom. The family editions let parents know exactly what is being taught, and offer them a variety of ways to integrate at home ideas and activities related to the program. In the case of the theme on sexuality, the family books also present the basic content of next year's program, and provide parents with many suggestions for talking to children, and answering their questions, about new life, the difference between boys and girls, puberty, etc.

2.5 Creating *Fully Alive*: The consultation

I want to backtrack for a moment to say a little more about the consultation that took place during the creation of *Fully Alive*. As General Editor of the program, it was my responsibility to read and summarize for the Editorial Board and the Ontario bishops all of the commentary that was received on each grade of the program. In total, the consultation process involved hundreds of teachers, thousands of parents whose children were in pilot classes, and about 500 lengthy evaluations and commentaries from Ontario Catholics who responded to the diocesan consultation.

A consultative process is pointless unless it is taken seriously and approached with an attitude of willingness to learn from it. I think it is fair to say that all

participants in the creation of *Fully Alive* considered the consultation an essential part of the process.

The following is just one example of a significant change that was made in the primary program as a result of the consultation: A controversial issue at this early grade level was the timing of information about sexual intercourse. About 25% of parents wanted this information to be delayed until the Junior level (grade 4). The most frequent reason was their desire to be the first people to speak of this intimate matter. In other words, they did not want their timetable hijacked, as it were, by the school program.

This parental concern about timing also led to a greater sense of clarity about the role of the family books. It became clear that the family component of the program had to alert parents as to what would be taught about sexuality, not simply in the present grade of their children, but also in the next grade.

Our general experience during the consultation was that the primary grades were of special concern to parents, which is not surprising. Typical of their questions were: How much will you say in the area of sexuality? What is my role as a parent in this program? How will the school and home work together in this area? In contrast, during the consultation on the later grades of the program, especially Grades 7 and 8, there seemed to be fewer concerns, and it was more difficult to get parents to comment.

3. Foundations of *Fully Alive*

What is Family Life Education? There are several ways this question is to be answered. Family Life Education is:

- sex education with a fancy name.
- a form of compensatory or therapeutic education, especially geared to children who are having problems because of difficulties at home
- a form of complementary education, which supports and enriches the role of the home.

The third answer describes the approach of *Fully Alive*. The program is designed to:

- complement, not replace, the efforts of families, and to support what parents are doing at home.
- pass on a distinctly Catholic view of human life, sexuality, marriage, and family.

- assist and encourage children to become the people God wants them to be — to be fully alive.
- finally, offer children and young adolescents who are growing up in difficult circumstances a different perspective — a sense of hope that lifelong marriage and a happy family life are possible with God's grace.

For you love all that exists, you abhor nothing you have made... because all things are yours, Lord, Lover of Life. This prayer from the book of Wisdom is the opening of Archbishop Gervais's foreword. Commenting on this prayer, he writes:

This beautiful prayer on the love of God expresses well the spirit that animates *Fully Alive*: the Lord is the lover of life, and of human life especially... There is a great deal in our world that speaks of the cheapness of human life; our children need to know that God is truly good and he is, even today, the "lover of life." *Fully Alive* will have succeeded if it gives our children even a glimpse of God's love of human life.

Archbishop Gervais's foreword to the program lays out the theological foundation of *Fully Alive*: that we are made in the image of God, which means that we are made to love and be loved, to know and understand, and to be known and understood, and, like God, to create and support life. He goes on to write about the effects of sin on our calling to be images of God: our struggle to believe that we are worthy of love; our tendency to refuse to be known and hide ourselves from others; and our rejection of the original blessing to be fruitful and multiply, witnessed in the rejection or destruction of fertility and in the view of sexual pleasure as a right for all, no matter their status in life.

Fully Alive was designed to encourage developing persons – children — to grapple with what it means to be a person created in the image of God:

- to recognize and respond to the signs of love in their life, which are so important for helping them understand God's love for them
- to grow in the ability to offer unselfish love to others
- to allow themselves to be truly known by their family members and friends
- to grow in their understanding of the gift of friendship
- to understand that fertility is a blessing, a gift to be protected, and be used according to God's will
- to recognize and accept their responsibility to use the gift of freedom as God intended

A final quote from Archbishop Gervais' foreword:

If we had to reduce the goals of Fully Alive to one phrase, it would be "education for chastity." Chastity is the virtue that governs our sexuality according to the will of God. But our sexuality is an integral part of every person. To prepare youngsters for chastity is to tend to their whole person, their view of themselves, their maleness and femaleness, and their relationships and responsibilities to others.

4. Themes of *Fully Alive*

What does it mean to be human? The five themes of *Fully Alive* may best be understood as part of the answer to this question, pieces of the puzzle of human existence.

Theme 1: Created and Loved by God

Theme 1 is the foundation of the program; all of the other themes depend on and find their meaning in what is said in this theme. To be human is to be created in the image and likeness of God --created out of love and for love, and destined for eternal life. Our Christian understanding of the dignity of the person, of respect for human life from conception until death, and of human rights rests on this understanding of what it means to be a person.

This basic Christian belief is explored in Theme 1 across 8 grades. Human beings grow, develop, and change. There are stages in our development. We are unique as individuals, yet share a common human nature. Human beings have feelings, and need to be able to identify, understand, and be in charge of their emotions. We have God-given gifts and talents that we are responsible for developing.

Among the topics explored in Theme 1 at various grade levels are:

- **Primary** — we are special and unique people, who are loved by God; we have likes and dislikes; we can do some things and are learning to do others; we are both like and unlike other people
- **Junior** — the stages of human development from birth to old age, including a focus on physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual development; exploration of the role that other people play in our development, especially family members; in contrast with the primary level, greater emphasis on self-reflection: gifts, strengths, weaknesses, uniqueness, and what one shares with others; greater emphasis on respect for the uniqueness of others, and awareness of our common human nature.

- **Intermediate** (grades 7 and 8) — personality, heredity and the environment; the ultimate mysteriousness of human beings; realistic self-acceptance; the amazing capacities of the human mind; human emotions; the will; personal responsibility to develop these God-given gifts.

Theme 2: Living in Relationship

To be human is to live in relationship with others. The relational nature of the human person is a reflection of God, who is the supreme model of relationship. Since it is within the family that each person learns the first lessons about love, generosity, trust, commitment, and loyalty, family relationships are the primary focus of Theme 2. The lessons provided by families are fundamental, not only for future relationships, but also for a sense of identity and self-worth. As well as the experience of family, the meaning and importance of friendship is also part of Theme 2.

Among the topics explored in Theme 2 at various grade levels are:

- **Primary** — the family as a place of love; relationships with siblings; family traditions and history; the pleasures of friendship; the importance of cooperation in friendship
- **Junior** — family responsibilities, rules, and heritage; honest communication in the family; the nature of friendship; making and keeping friends; stress in friendship
- **Intermediate** (grades 7 and 8) — key elements in relationships, including intimacy, choice, and quality; family structure and birth order; communication; qualities of authentic friendship; peer pressure; balancing friendship and family; privacy; moods.

Family life, as we all know, is not always smooth and free of troubles. Normal family stresses and difficulties are addressed in Theme 2, as well as some more serious problems.

- **Primary** — family changes, including a new baby, moving to a new house, and the death of a grandparent
- **Junior** — separation of parents from the perspective of a child; unemployment; an older relative moving in with the family; coping with normal and serious stress in families
- **Intermediate** — issues related to adolescence that cause stress in families, such as moods, and the desire for more freedom and independence; particular situations such as serious illness,

unemployment, families with children with serious disabilities, alcoholism, sexual abuse, family violence.

It is important to note that the approach to serious problems in families is primarily informational, rather than personal. In other words, the message is not: If you are part of a family that is suffering because of a parent's problems with alcohol or are part of an abusive family, this is what you should do. The goal of the program in this highly sensitive area of family life is to help all students understand that families can have very serious problems, that these problems have an impact on every member of the family, and that there is help available.

Theme 3: Created Sexual: Male and Female

“Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality.” (*Educational Guidance in Human Love*, Congregation for Catholic Education, 1983) Sexuality is not simply the genitals and their function. To be human is to be sexual, male or female. Sexuality is an essential component of our identity as persons made in God's image.

The early grades of *Fully Alive* are almost entirely focused on the pro-creational, life-giving dimension of sexuality. The later grades give more attention to the relational, loving dimension of sexuality, and to the developmental facts and issues of puberty. Issues related to sexual identity and sexual roles are also touched on in later grades.

Among the topics explored in Theme 3 at various grade levels are:

- **Primary** (grades 1 and 2) — life before birth; the birth of a baby; differences between males and females. The context for these topics is a series of stories that focus on marriage and family, new life as a gift from God, the need to care for new life, and the body as part of the gift of the person. Within these stories, correct terms for relevant parts of the body are introduced in a natural way.
- **Primary and Junior** (grades 3 and 4) — life before birth; the birth of a baby; a simple explanation of sexual intercourse; an introduction to some ideas about heredity and environment in the context of adoption; identical and fraternal twins. Again, the information is contextualized in stories about marriage and family. These stories reflect the value of family relationships, new life as a gift from God, the need to care for new life, sexual intercourse as a unique sign of married love, and adoption as a way of becoming part of a family.
- **Junior** (grades 5 and 6) — the uniqueness of the reproductive system; introduction to the meaning of fertility; fetal development by trimester; development during puberty (physical, emotional, social); introduction to

the idea of sexuality as a gift of the whole person, and the responsibilities involved in the use of this gift. In contrast with the earlier grades, the approach is somewhat more personal in the sense that information is directly conveyed to the students themselves rather than integrated within stories.

- **Intermediate** (grades 7 and 8) — the meaning and purpose of sexuality (pro-creational and relational); chastity; different states in life; sexual attraction; body image and appearance; infatuations; dating; the gift of fertility and its protection; homosexuality. In Grades 7 and 8 there is greater stress on moral issues. For examples, sexually transmitted diseases and family planning are approached in context of fertility as a gift to be respected and used in the way God intended.

Theme 4: Growing in Commitment

To be human is to be faithful to God and to others, and to use the gift of freedom wisely. This is, of course, a lifelong task that begins in childhood. Among the topics explored in Theme 4 at various grade levels are:

- **Primary** — making promises and choices; the meaning of commitment as we experience it through our families, teachers, and people who live and work in our communities.
- **Junior** — meaning of commitment; how we learn to make and keep commitments; personal responsibility; qualities of committed people; daily commitments; models of commitment.
- **Intermediate** (grades 7 and 8) — practical decision-making; the meaning of freedom; our responsibility to become the people God wants us to be; being true to oneself at this stage of life

Theme 5: Living in the World

To be human is to live as a member of society, to be connected to all other persons, to engage in work, to join together with others, and to help make the world a good home for all. Theme 5 enlarges the focus of the program to examine what it means to be a member of human society, and to contribute to the common good.

- **Primary** — the world as a wonderful place to live, a gift from God; our responsibility to care for the world; world is full of people who do many kinds of work; our dependence on the work of others.
- **Junior** — caring for creation; the qualities of a good community; the notion of a widening community in their lives; values and the media;

personal influence on the social and physical environment.

- **Intermediate** (grades 7 and 8) — the nature of groups; some reasons people join together in groups(celebration, support, working for change); responsibilities of group membership; prejudice and the harm it creates; an introduction to social justice and some issues, including poverty, the environment, and abortion; developing the personal qualities essential to the work of social justice

5. Response to *Fully Alive*

Beyond anecdotal reports from classroom teachers and students, which have been very positive, there are two main sources of information about the reception of *Fully Alive* within the Catholic community in Ontario. The first of these sources is the ongoing consultation during the preparation of the program, about which I have already spoken.

The program was very positively reviewed, with the timing of information in the sexuality theme at the primary level the only problematic area. The evaluation form used during the consultation had three categories: *acceptable*, *some reservations*, and *unacceptable*. About 25% of parents who reviewed the primary texts indicated their concerns about the sexuality theme; this percentage represents a combination of the categories of *some reservations* and *unacceptable*. Across all grades, the number of parents who found the material in the sexuality theme *unacceptable* was between 5 and 7 percent. In some cases it was a matter of the timing or amount of information, particularly at the primary level; in others, the negative evaluation reflected the view that no information about sexuality should be provided at school.

I should mention that sexual matters were not the only controversial issue. Adoption, which is touched on in various ways in the first four grades because of the stress on procreation and families, was a very sensitive topic for adoptive parents. It was not so much that they disagreed with the text, but more a matter of being very specific about what they wanted said, and how it was to be said. My own sense was that this concern reflected their need to ensure that their children understood that they were awaited as lovingly and with as much anticipation as all babies. I believe the texts reflect this view.

The second major source of information about the reception of the program is the *Fully Alive* implementation Review, which was undertaken in the mid 90's. This evaluation was not a repeat of the consultation, but more a matter of gathering information about the implementation and use of *Fully Alive* across the province. The *Fully Alive* implementation Review consisted of two surveys:

- a General Survey of Catholic school board administrators (42 responses) and persons responsible for Family Life Education (39 responses)

- a Representative Board Survey (8 boards) of principals (23) teachers (60) parents (261) and parish priests (19)

The following is a summary of the results of this review.

- Overall, the response to *Fully Alive* has been very positive. The program is appreciated; its themes and topics are seen as an integral part of a Catholic education.
- Implementation of the program has been a relatively smooth process. Financial considerations, however, especially in the last few years, have had an impact on both material and human resources and on in-service opportunities. Given the sensitive and challenging nature of Family Life Education, there is a pressing need to maintain support for this distinctive expression of Catholic education.
- The goal of consistent family involvement has not been reached. In many cases, the *Fully Alive* Family Editions for each grade are not readily available to parents; when they are available, it is not clear that they are being used to any great extent. Those parents that do have books, and have had some explanation as to how to use them, find them helpful. But, overall, many of the parents who responded to the survey are not really familiar with the program. The need for additional resources and strategies to keep parents informed and to encourage consistent involvement is apparent.
- The initial stages of implementation were marked with regular in-service and information meetings. In the last several years, in-service training and information meetings have been much less frequent. For example, a substantial proportion of teachers responding to the survey have not had an in-service session for the division in which they are presently teaching. Although the results of the Implementation Review indicate that teachers feel confident about presenting the program, it is clear that if they are to respond to the variety of experiences of their students that in-service training on sensitive issues/topics is essential.
- Virtually all of the teachers surveyed find the program easy and enjoyable to teach. Some discomfort with the theme on sexuality, however, is apparent. This ranges from concern about student questions to worry that they may say something that will upset parents or is not an acceptable answer from a Catholic perspective. Again, the need for ongoing in-service and adult education is apparent.
- Opposition to *Fully Alive* has been relatively minor. Where it exists, the main focus is the sexuality theme. Results from the General Survey (42 boards) indicate that 88 students, representing 45 families, have been

withdrawn from part or all of the program. This number (88) represents .00034 of the elementary student population of the responding boards.

6. Strengths and Weaknesses of *Fully Alive*: A Personal Perspective

In my view, the consultation that took place during the creation of *Fully Alive* is one of its notable strengths. The consultation was unprecedented in its scope, and the feedback it provided was acted upon. Beyond this obvious benefit, the consultation also created a rare sense of community among the partners in Catholic education — parents, teachers, clergy and parish members who wished to contribute their viewpoint. I say rare because too often we do not seem to know how we are to come together to serve our children and to pass on our faith.

A second strength, I believe, is its holistic approach, which is made apparent through the five themes. The program represents the view that Family Life Education is much more than learning the “facts of life.” One simply cannot speak about sexuality in a Catholic context without this holistic approach to persons made in God’s image, their dignity, and their ultimate destiny.

Fully Alive embodies a strong sense that life is good. Yes, there are problems, there are sorrows, and there is evil. But the fundamental message of the program is that it is good to be alive; to be a person whom God loves, and to engage in human relationships; to experience the joy of loving and being loved; to believe in yourself because God believes in you; to experience forgiveness when you fail; to cherish new life — and on, and on. Life is good. I think, at its best, the program encourages idealism in children, and above all, the notion that we, as Christians, are people of hope.

The involvement of families — a genuine partnership between home and school — has not happened in the way we had hope. This failure is, in my view, the greatest weakness of the program. In part, this may be due to the lack of visual appeal of the family books, the result of the need to keep the price low. But, more fundamentally, I do not think we have found the right kind of models for common enterprises between home and school either in Religious Education or Family Life Education.

By highlighting this weakness, I certainly do not mean to suggest that Family Life Education is not happening at home as it has been for thousands of years. But we all know that the challenges for Catholics raising children in North America are monumental, particularly in the area of sexuality where our fundamental values are both ignored and attacked. During the consultation, parents said very clearly that they wanted and need all the help they could get. Their desire and that of those who worked on *Fully Alive* were not in conflict. But despite good intentions, the question remains: How do we strengthen the partnership of home and school in the area of Family Life Education?

