

The following is a summary of the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love) on love in the family as provided from the Vatican on April 8, 2016. Over the coming weeks we continue to present the summary. Today we continue with Chapter Seven.

Chapter seven: “Towards a better education of children” (259-290)

The seventh chapter is dedicated to the education of children: their ethical formation, the learning of discipline which can include punishment, patient realism, sex education, passing on the faith and, more generally, family life as an educational context. The practical wisdom present in each paragraph is remarkable, above all the attention given to those gradual, small steps “that can



be understood, accepted and appreciated” (AL 271). There is a particularly interesting and pedagogically fundamental paragraph in which Francis clearly states that “obsession, however, is not education. We cannot control every situation that a child may experience... If parents are obsessed with always knowing where their children are and controlling all their movements, they will seek only to dominate space. But this is no way to educate, strengthen and prepare their children to face challenges. What is most important is the ability lovingly to help them grow in freedom, maturity, overall discipline and real autonomy” (AL 260). The notable section on education in sexuality is very expressively entitled: “Yes to sex education”. The need is there, and we have to ask “if our educational institutions have taken up this challenge ... in an age when sexuality tends to be trivialized and impoverished”. Sound education needs to be carried out “within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving” (AL 280). The text warns that the expression ‘safe sex’ conveys “a negative attitude towards the natural procreative finality of sexuality, as if an eventual child were an enemy to be protected against. This way of thinking promotes narcissism and aggressivity in place of acceptance” (AL 283).