



**The Catholic Women's League of Canada
Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council**



**Christian Family Life Chair
Health & Education Chair
Community Life Chair
Joint Communiqué
November, 2021**

TO: Diocesan Christian Family Life; Health & Education; Community Life Chairpersons, Diocesan Presidents
CC: Provincial Executive (for information)
CC: National Chairperson of Christian Family Life; Health & Education; Community Life (for information)
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“God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (*Genesis 1:28, NRSV*).

Since the beginning of time, men and women, following God’s word, were deemed to be parents. In quoting Saint Augustine, “the good of offspring is more than just having children, it’s raising them to know, to love and serve God”. “It’s forming them in love and helping them to grow to be able to know God’s call to them.” This has not changed.

Over the course of centuries, family structure has changed. In 2021 one parent households, cohabitation, same sex families, and voluntary childless couples are increasingly common. With both parents working, day cares and limited time spent with the children, building a strong family unit has become an even more difficult task. There are so many distractions, hockey, dancing, scouts but one of the most destructive ones is access to all forms of social media with video gaming playing a major part.

In an all-too-familiar sight, how often do we see a family where both the parents and their children are sitting down in a restaurant for a meal with their devices in hand? It seems the idyllic moment for family bonding, with food, fellowship, and the deepening of relationships. However, nothing could be further from reality. Each one is not just distracted, but emotionally and mentally consumed by their “cyber connections”. We can’t expect our kids to understand the importance of face to face communication when the parents spend more time scrolling through “Facebook” rather than speaking with their spouse. These scenes exemplifies the challenge of raising children in a world where a good part of our time is involved with social media accessed through cell phones, tablets or other devices. The attention of the family is often focused on Facebook, U-tube, Tik Tok and similar sites rather than on each other.

Gaming has become a major part of the challenge to raise healthy families, as it is non-discriminatory. It can consume children, teens, adults, males and females alike. It is a multi-billion dollar industry that affects nearly all our lives in one way or another. Video games are designed to be naturally addictive. The game entices the player to spend more and more time playing because of their “need to get to the next level, to get the bonus points, to beat their opponent,” etc. etc. Because technology rapidly advances, parents need to know the ins and outs of digital technology and acknowledge its benefits and also understand its risks.

To have healthy families there needs to be a balance in activities. If countless hours are spent on gaming, an imbalance occurs with more time devoted to gaming instead of activities that strengthen the family unit. Daily activities that require all members of the family to interact such as time for prayer, chores, homework and housework give way to the time spent on playing the game. It becomes important for parents to ask themselves, how does gaming strengthen the family unit? What kinds of games strengthen the family unit? What values are being imparted to the family unit through the choice of games? It is the parent's responsibility to research the games that are being offered to their children.

Parents are the role models for maintaining balance in the family. They set the rules for time devoted to all daily activities and the children watch very closely to see that the parents follow them as well. If the rule is no devices at the dinner table during meal time it is universally applied.

Gaming itself is not evil. It can be a very positive activity for a family to engage in. Video gaming can be educational, entertaining and provide opportunities for families to bond. However excessive gaming can create unfavorable behaviors. It becomes harmful when it becomes addictive not only to the individual but the family and the community as well.

Understanding technology and taking steps to protect the family from its risks are important. Implementing phone curfews, Wi-Fi blackout times, screen bans at meal times are all important ways to manage its influence. Maintaining open communications with our children helps to establish a healthy digital culture in the family. Children must know that they are more important than our work, our social networks and our phones.

However, like most things, if the game contains inappropriate sexual themes, profanity, witchcraft/satanic content, brutal violence/bullying, false teachings and other similar content it can lead us away from God and has the potential to destroy the family unit. When we know what our children are playing, inappropriate games will not be the issue. In addition, video games should not become an idol that interferes with other activities that God has commanded us to do. As parents and grandparents given the gift and care-giving responsibilities of our children, we are called to use wisdom and discretion in all of our activities. Biblical teachings are pertinent to our life today although to some they may be seen as an inconvenient truth.

“Our life is a gift from God. What we do with that life is our gift to God.” – Samuel S. Sumner

My dear sisters, in keeping with the pillars of Faith, Social Justice and Service this communiqué is being shared in three parts. This first part discussed faith and the influences of gaming on Christian family life. Part two will discuss the influence of gaming on health and wellness and part three will talk on the effects of gaming on our community life.

Stay tuned for Part Two!

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” - 2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)