

Parent Resources for Chastity/Sexuality Education

Dear Parent(s):

The following pages contain:

1. **Excerpt from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:**
Official Church Teachings on matters related to Chastity and Human Sexuality (pages 2-11)
2. **Stages of Human Development Based on Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1991** (pages 12-13)
3. Articles:
 - a. **SUMMARY OF CATHOLIC TEACHING ON HUMAN SEXUALITY**
William E. May (pages 14-15)
 - b. **The Christian View of Sex: A Time for Apologetics, not Apologies**
by JANET SMITH (pages 16-22)
4. **OTHER RESOURCES FOR PARENTS** (pg. 23)

This is a reference document only. There are many things here which you will probably never have to discuss with your child. Look for what you need. Don't hesitate to ask for help from the school (either administration or teacher) if something needs further clarification for you.

Please remember when discussing the sinfulness of actions against chastity to do so with compassion and love: stressing how these things hurt those doing them, increase selfishness, slow our growth in maturity and true love, and lead to great unhappiness and lack of inner peace. This is more effective than the "hellfire and brimstone" approach.

Fr. Patrick and Mrs. Viles

Excerpt from the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Official Church Teachings on matters related to Chastity and Human Sexuality

(footnotes are referenced at the end of the excerpt)

ARTICLE 6 THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not commit adultery.¹¹³

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.¹¹⁴

I. "MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM . . ."

2331 "God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image . . . God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion."¹¹⁵

"God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them";¹¹⁶ He blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply";¹¹⁷ "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created."¹¹⁸

2332 Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others.

2333 Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral, and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.

2334 "In creating men 'male and female,' God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity."¹¹⁹ "Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God."¹²⁰

2335 Each of the two sexes is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. The union of man and woman in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator's generosity and fecundity: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh."¹²¹ All human generations proceed from this union.¹²²

2336 Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins. In the Sermon on the Mount, he interprets God's plan strictly: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."¹²³ What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.¹²⁴

The tradition of the Church has understood the sixth commandment as encompassing the whole of human sexuality.

II. THE VOCATION TO CHASTITY

2337 Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man's belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed,

becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman.

The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person and the integrality of the gift.

The integrity of the person

2338 The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech.¹²⁵

2339 Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.¹²⁶ "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end."¹²⁷

2340 Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the means for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an asceticism adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God's commandments, exercise of the moral virtues, and fidelity to prayer. "Indeed it is through chastity that we are gathered together and led back to the unity from which we were fragmented into multiplicity."¹²⁸

2341 The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of temperance, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason.

2342 Self-mastery is a long and exacting work. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life.¹²⁹ The effort required can be more intense in certain periods, such as when the personality is being formed during childhood and adolescence.

2343 Chastity has laws of growth which progress through stages marked by imperfection and too often by sin. "Man . . . day by day builds himself up through his many free decisions; and so he knows, loves, and accomplishes moral good by stages of growth."¹³⁰

2344 Chastity represents an eminently personal task; it also involves a cultural effort, for there is "an interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society."¹³¹ Chastity presupposes respect for the rights of the person, in particular the right to receive information and an education that respect the moral and spiritual dimensions of human life.

2345 Chastity is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a grace, a fruit of spiritual effort.¹³² The Holy Spirit enables one whom the water of Baptism has regenerated to imitate the purity of Christ.¹³³

The integrality of the gift of self

2346 Charity is the form of all the virtues. Under its influence, chastity appears as a school of the gift of the person. Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self. Chastity leads him who practices it to become a witness to his neighbor of God's fidelity and loving kindness.

2347 The virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends,¹³⁴ who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine estate. Chastity is a promise of immortality.

Chastity is expressed notably in friendship with one's neighbor. Whether it develops between persons of the same or opposite sex, friendship represents a great good for all. It leads to spiritual communion.

The various forms of chastity

2348 All the baptized are called to chastity. The Christian has "put on Christ,"¹³⁵ the model for all chastity. All Christ's faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life. At the moment of his Baptism, the Christian is pledged to lead his affective life in chastity.

2349 "People should cultivate [chastity] in the way that is suited to their state of life. Some profess virginity or consecrated celibacy which enables them to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner. Others live in the way prescribed for all by the moral law, whether they are married or single."¹³⁶ Married people are called to live conjugal chastity; others practice chastity in continence:

There are three forms of the virtue of chastity: the first is that of spouses, the second that of widows, and the third that of virgins. We do not praise any one of them to the exclusion of the others. . . . This is what makes for the richness of the discipline of the Church.¹³⁷

2350 Those who are engaged to marry are called to live chastity in continence. They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity, and the hope of receiving one another from God. They should reserve for marriage the expressions of affection that belong to married love. They will help each other grow in chastity.

Offenses against chastity

2351 **Lust** is disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes.

2352 By **masturbation** is to be understood the deliberate stimulation of the genital organs in order to derive sexual pleasure. "Both the Magisterium of the Church, in the course of a constant tradition, and the moral sense of the faithful have been in no doubt and have firmly maintained that masturbation is an intrinsically and gravely disordered action."¹³⁸ "The deliberate use of the sexual faculty, for whatever reason, outside of marriage is essentially contrary to its purpose." For here sexual pleasure is sought outside of "the sexual relationship which is demanded by the moral order and in which the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love is achieved."¹³⁹

To form an equitable judgment about the subjects' moral responsibility and to guide pastoral action, one must take into account the affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety or other psychological or social factors that lessen, if not even reduce to a minimum, moral culpability.

2353 **Fornication** is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children. Moreover, it is a grave scandal when there is corruption of the young.

2354 **Pornography** consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials.

2355 **Prostitution** does injury to the dignity of the person who engages in it, reducing the person to an instrument of sexual pleasure. The one who pays sins gravely against himself: he violates the chastity to which his Baptism pledged him and defiles his body, the temple of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁰ Prostitution is a social scourge. It usually involves women, but also men, children, and adolescents (The latter two cases involve the added sin of scandal.). While it is always gravely sinful to engage in prostitution, the imputability of the offense can be attenuated by destitution, blackmail, or social pressure.

2356 **Rape** is the forcible violation of the sexual intimacy of another person. It does injury to justice and charity. Rape deeply wounds the respect, freedom, and physical and moral integrity to which every person has a right. It causes grave damage that can mark the victim for life. It is always an intrinsically evil act. Graver still is the rape of children committed by parents (incest) or those responsible for the education of the children entrusted to them.

Chastity and homosexuality

2357 Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity,¹⁴¹ tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."¹⁴² They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

2358 The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

2359 Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.

III. THE LOVE OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

2360 Sexuality is ordered to the conjugal love of man and woman. In marriage the physical intimacy of the spouses becomes a sign and pledge of spiritual communion. Marriage bonds between baptized persons are sanctified by the sacrament.

2361 "Sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is not something simply biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and woman commit themselves totally to one another until death."¹⁴³

Tobias got out of bed and said to Sarah, "Sister, get up, and let us pray and implore our Lord that he grant us mercy and safety." So she got up, and they began to pray and implore that they might be kept safe. Tobias began by saying, "Blessed are you, O God of our fathers. . . . You made Adam, and for him you made his wife Eve as a helper and support. From the two of them the race of mankind has sprung. You said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself.' I now am taking this kinswoman of mine, not because of lust, but with sincerity. Grant that she and I may find mercy and that we may grow old together." And they both said, "Amen, Amen." Then they went to sleep for the night.¹⁴⁴

2362 "The acts in marriage by which the intimate and chaste union of the spouses takes place are noble and honorable; the truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude."¹⁴⁵ Sexuality is a source of joy and pleasure:

The Creator himself . . . established that in the [generative] function, spouses should experience pleasure and enjoyment of body and spirit. Therefore, the spouses do nothing evil in seeking this pleasure and enjoyment. They accept what the Creator has intended for them. At the same time, spouses should know how to keep themselves within the limits of just moderation.¹⁴⁶

2363 The spouses' union achieves the twofold end of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life. These two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family.

The conjugal love of man and woman thus stands under the twofold obligation of fidelity and fecundity.

Conjugal fidelity

2364 The married couple forms "the intimate partnership of life and love established by the Creator and governed by his laws; it is rooted in the conjugal covenant, that is, in their irrevocable personal consent."¹⁴⁷ Both give themselves definitively and totally to one another. They are no longer two; from now on they form one flesh. The covenant they freely contracted imposes on the spouses the obligation to preserve it as unique and indissoluble.¹⁴⁸ "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."¹⁴⁹

2365 Fidelity expresses constancy in keeping one's given word. God is faithful. The Sacrament of Matrimony enables man and woman to enter into Christ's fidelity for his Church. Through conjugal chastity, they bear witness to this mystery before the world.

St. John Chrysostom suggests that young husbands should say to their wives: I have taken you in my arms, and I love you, and I prefer you to my life itself. For the present life is nothing, and my most ardent dream is to spend it with you in such a way that we may be assured of not being separated in the life reserved for us. . . . I place your love above all things, and nothing would be more bitter or painful to me than to be of a different mind than you.¹⁵⁰

The fecundity of marriage

2366 Fecundity is a gift, an end of marriage, for conjugal love naturally tends to be fruitful. A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment. So the Church, which is "on the side of life,"¹⁵¹ teaches that "it is necessary that each and every marriage act remain ordered per se to the procreation of human life."¹⁵² "This particular doctrine, expounded on numerous occasions by the Magisterium, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act."¹⁵³

2367 Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God.¹⁵⁴ "Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children; they should realize that they are thereby cooperating with the love of God the Creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. They will fulfill this duty with a sense of human and Christian responsibility."¹⁵⁵

2368 A particular aspect of this responsibility concerns the regulation of procreation. For just reasons, spouses may wish to space the births of their children. It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood. Moreover, they should conform their behavior to the objective criteria of morality:

When it is a question of harmonizing married love with the responsible transmission of life, the morality of the behavior does not depend on sincere intention and evaluation of motives alone; but it must be determined by objective criteria, criteria drawn from the nature of the person and his acts criteria that respect the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love; this is possible only if the virtue of married chastity is practiced with sincerity of heart.¹⁵⁶

2369 "By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its orientation toward man's exalted vocation to parenthood."¹⁵⁷

2370 Periodic continence, that is, the methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods, is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality.¹⁵⁸ These methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them, and favor the education of an authentic freedom. In contrast, "every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its

natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" is intrinsically evil:159

Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality. . . . The difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle . . . involves in the final analysis two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality.160

2371 "Let all be convinced that human life and the duty of transmitting it are not limited by the horizons of this life only: their true evaluation and full significance can be understood only in reference to man's eternal destiny."161

2372 The state has a responsibility for its citizens' well-being. In this capacity it is legitimate for it to intervene to orient the demography of the population. This can be done by means of objective and respectful information, but certainly not by authoritarian, coercive measures. The state may not legitimately usurp the initiative of spouses, who have the primary responsibility for the procreation and education of their children.162 In this area, it is not authorized to employ means contrary to the moral law.

The gift of a child

2373 Sacred Scripture and the Church's traditional practice see in large families a sign of God's blessing and the parents' generosity.163

2374 Couples who discover that they are sterile suffer greatly. "What will you give me," asks Abraham of God, "for I continue childless?"164 And Rachel cries to her husband Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!"165

2375 Research aimed at reducing human sterility is to be encouraged, on condition that it is placed "at the service of the human person, of his inalienable rights, and his true and integral good according to the design and will of God."166

2376 Techniques that entail the dissociation of husband and wife, by the intrusion of a person other than the couple (donation of sperm or ovum, surrogate uterus), are gravely immoral. These techniques (heterologous artificial insemination and fertilization) infringe the child's right to be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage. They betray the spouses' "right to become a father and a mother only through each other."167

2377 Techniques involving only the married couple (homologous artificial insemination and fertilization) are perhaps less reprehensible, yet remain morally unacceptable. They dissociate the sexual act from the procreative act. The act which brings the child into existence is no longer an act by which two persons give themselves to one another, but one that "entrusts the life and identity of the embryo into the power of doctors and biologists and establishes the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person. Such a relationship of domination is in itself contrary to the dignity and equality that must be common to parents and children."168 "Under the moral aspect procreation is deprived of its proper perfection when it is not willed as the fruit of the conjugal act, that is to say, of the specific act of the spouses' union Only respect for the link between the meanings of the conjugal act and respect for the unity of the human being make possible procreation in conformity with the dignity of the person."169

2378 A child is not something owed to one, but is a gift. The "supreme gift of marriage" is a human person. A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea to which an alleged "right to a child" would lead. In this area, only the child possesses genuine rights: the right "to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents," and "the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception."170

2379 The Gospel shows that physical sterility is not an absolute evil. Spouses who still suffer from infertility after exhausting legitimate medical procedures should unite themselves with the Lord's Cross, the source of all spiritual

fecundity. They can give expression to their generosity by adopting abandoned children or performing demanding services for others.

IV. OFFENSES AGAINST THE DIGNITY OF MARRIAGE

Adultery

2380 Adultery refers to marital infidelity. When two partners, of whom at least one is married to another party, have sexual relations - even transient ones - they commit adultery. Christ condemns even adultery of mere desire.¹⁷¹ The sixth commandment and the New Testament forbid adultery absolutely.¹⁷² The prophets denounce the gravity of adultery; they see it as an image of the sin of idolatry.¹⁷³

2381 Adultery is an injustice. He who commits adultery fails in his commitment. He does injury to the sign of the covenant which the marriage bond is, transgresses the rights of the other spouse, and undermines the institution of marriage by breaking the contract on which it is based. He compromises the good of human generation and the welfare of children who need their parents' stable union.

Divorce

2382 The Lord Jesus insisted on the original intention of the Creator who willed that marriage be indissoluble.¹⁷⁴ He abrogates the accommodations that had slipped into the old Law.¹⁷⁵

Between the baptized, "a ratified and consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death."¹⁷⁶

2383 The separation of spouses while maintaining the marriage bond can be legitimate in certain cases provided for by canon law.¹⁷⁷

If civil divorce remains the only possible way of ensuring certain legal rights, the care of the children, or the protection of inheritance, it can be tolerated and does not constitute a moral offense.

2384 Divorce is a grave offense against the natural law. It claims to break the contract, to which the spouses freely consented, to live with each other till death. Divorce does injury to the covenant of salvation, of which sacramental marriage is the sign. Contracting a new union, even if it is recognized by civil law, adds to the gravity of the rupture: the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery:

If a husband, separated from his wife, approaches another woman, he is an adulterer because he makes that woman commit adultery, and the woman who lives with him is an adulteress, because she has drawn another's husband to herself.¹⁷⁸

2385 Divorce is immoral also because it introduces disorder into the family and into society. This disorder brings grave harm to the deserted spouse, to children traumatized by the separation of their parents and often torn between them, and because of its contagious effect which makes it truly a plague on society.

2386 It can happen that one of the spouses is the innocent victim of a divorce decreed by civil law; this spouse therefore has not contravened the moral law. There is a considerable difference between a spouse who has sincerely tried to be faithful to the sacrament of marriage and is unjustly abandoned, and one who through his own grave fault destroys a canonically valid marriage.¹⁷⁹

Other offenses against the dignity of marriage

2387 The predicament of a man who, desiring to convert to the Gospel, is obliged to repudiate one or more wives with whom he has shared years of conjugal life, is understandable. However polygamy is not in accord with the moral law." [Conjugal] communion is radically contradicted by polygamy; this, in fact, directly negates the plan of God which was revealed from the beginning, because it is contrary to the equal personal dignity of men and women

who in matrimony give themselves with a love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive."180 The Christian who has previously lived in polygamy has a grave duty in justice to honor the obligations contracted in regard to his former wives and his children.

2388 Incest designates intimate relations between relatives or in-laws within a degree that prohibits marriage between them.181 St. Paul stigmatizes this especially grave offense: "It is actually reported that there is immorality among you . . . for a man is living with his father's wife. . . . In the name of the Lord Jesus . . . you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. . . ."182 Incest corrupts family relationships and marks a regression toward animality.

2389 Connected to incest is any sexual abuse perpetrated by adults on children or adolescents entrusted to their care. The offense is compounded by the scandalous harm done to the physical and moral integrity of the young, who will remain scarred by it all their lives; and the violation of responsibility for their upbringing.

2390 In a so-called free union, a man and a woman refuse to give juridical and public form to a liaison involving sexual intimacy.

The expression "free union" is fallacious: what can "union" mean when the partners make no commitment to one another, each exhibiting a lack of trust in the other, in himself, or in the future?

The expression covers a number of different situations: concubinage, rejection of marriage as such, or inability to make long-term commitments.183 All these situations offend against the dignity of marriage; they destroy the very idea of the family; they weaken the sense of fidelity. They are contrary to the moral law. The sexual act must take place exclusively within marriage. Outside of marriage it always constitutes a grave sin and excludes one from sacramental communion.

2391 Some today claim a "right to a trial marriage" where there is an intention of getting married later. However firm the purpose of those who engage in premature sexual relations may be, "the fact is that such liaisons can scarcely ensure mutual sincerity and fidelity in a relationship between a man and a woman, nor, especially, can they protect it from inconstancy of desires or whim."184 Carnal union is morally legitimate only when a definitive community of life between a man and woman has been established. Human love does not tolerate "trial marriages." It demands a total and definitive gift of persons to one another.185

IN BRIEF

2392 "Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being" (FC 11).

2393 By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity.

2394 Christ is the model of chastity. Every baptized person is called to lead a chaste life, each according to his particular state of life.

2395 Chastity means the integration of sexuality within the person. It includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery.

2396 Among the sins gravely contrary to chastity are masturbation, fornication, pornography, and homosexual practices.

2397 The covenant which spouses have freely entered into entails faithful love. It imposes on them the obligation to keep their marriage indissoluble.

2398 Fecundity is a good, a gift and an end of marriage. By giving life, spouses participate in God's fatherhood.

2399 The regulation of births represents one of the aspects of responsible fatherhood and motherhood. Legitimate intentions on the part of the spouses do not justify recourse to morally unacceptable means (for example, direct sterilization or contraception).

2400 Adultery, divorce, polygamy, and free union are grave offenses against the dignity of marriage.

- 113 Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18.
- 114 Mt 5:27-28.
- 115 FC 11.
- 116 Gen 1:27.
- 117 Gen 1:28.
- 118 Gen 5:1-2.
- 119 FC 22; Cf. GS 49 § 2.
- 120 MD 6.
- 121 Gen 2:24.
- 122 Cf. Gen 4:1-2, 25-26; 5:1.
- 123 Mt 5:27-28.
- 124 Cf. Mt 19:6.
- 125 Cf. Mt 5:37.
- 126 Cf. Sir 1:22.
- 127 GS 17.
- 128 St. Augustine, Conf. 10,29,40:PL 32,796.
- 129 Cf. Titus 2:1-6.
- 130 FC 34.
- 131 GS 25 § 1.
- 132 Cf. Gal 5:22.
- 133 Cf. 1 Jn 3:3.
- 134 Cf. Jn 15:15.
- 135 Gal 3:27.
- 136 CDF, Persona humana 11.
- 137 St. Ambrose, De viduis 4,23:PL 16,255A.
- 138 CDF, Persona humana 9.
- 139 CDF, Persona humana 9.
- 140 Cf. 1 Cor 6:15-20.
- 141 Cf. Gen 19:1-29; Rom 12:4-27; 1 Cor 6:10; 1 Tim 1:10.
- 142 CDF, Persona humana 8.
- 143 FC 11.
- 144 Tob 8:4-9.
- 145 GS 49 § 2.
- 146 Pius XII, Discourse, October 29, 1951.
- 147 GS 48 § 1.
- 148 Cf. CIC, can. 1056.
- 149 Mk 10:9; cf. Mt 19:1-12; 1 Cor 7:10-11.
- 150 St. John Chrysostom, Hom. in Eph. 20,8:PG 62,146-147.
- 151 FC 30.
- 152 HV 11.
- 153 HV 12; cf. Pius XI, encyclical, Casti connubii.
- 154 Cf. Eph 3:14; Mt 23:9.
- 155 GS 50 § 2.
- 156 GS 51 § 3.
- 157 Cf. HV 12.
- 158 HV 16.
- 159 HV 14.
- 160 FC 32.

161 GS 51 § 4.
162 Cf. HV 23; PP 37.
163 Cf. GS 50 § 2.
164 Gen 15:2.
165 Gen 30:1.
166 CDF, Donum vitae intro.,2.
167 CDF, Donum vitae II,1.
168 CDF, Donum vitae II,5.
169 CDF, Donum vitae II,4.
170 CDF, Donum vitae II,8.
171 Cf. Mt 5:27-28.
172 Cf. Mt 5:32; 19:6; Mk 10:11; 1 Cor 6:9-10.
173 Cf. Hos 2:7; Jer 5:7; 13:27.
174 Cf. Mt 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mk 10:9; Lk 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10-11.
175 Cf. Mt 19:7-9.
176 CIC, can. 1141.
177 Cf. CIC, cann. 1151-1155.
178 St. Basil, Moralia 73,1:PG 31,849-852.
179 Cf. FC 84.
180 FC 19; cf. GS 47 § 2.
181 Cf. Lev 18:7-20.
182 1 Cor 5:1, 4-5.
183 Cf. FC 81.
184 CDF, Persona humana 7.
185 Cf. FC 80.

Stages of Human Development

*Based on Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning
National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1991*

Young Children (Ages infant –6)

Moral Development:

Highly developed curiosity: they ask many questions begin to make choices beginning understanding of right and wrong choices are made to avoid punishment or gain reward. OBEDIENCE vs. PUNISHMENT, PERSONAL INTEREST

Social Development:

Begin to move from total self-centeredness to a limited sense of others begin the process of socialization TRUST
Can interact with siblings, friends, and significant adults begin to learn to share. begin to experience, express forgiveness -- when this is experienced and expressed by adults, peers

Spiritual Development:

Verbal skills lead to spontaneous prayer beginning process of formal prayer. They have profound trust in God IF adults in their lives are stable, and they EXPERIENCE a secure and loving environment.
Beginning knowledge of God who loves and cares for them.

Sexual Development:

Discover their bodies through looking and touching grow in ability to control bodily functions.
Express themselves through word and gesture, music, dance, role playing naturally curious and imaginative --
Begin to discover themselves as unique understand their identity as boys or girls.

Middle Childhood (Ages 7-11)

Moral Development:

Altruism begins to affect moral choices.
They want to please, "GOOD BOY / GIRL".
Rules and guidelines begin to influence their behavior.
Relationships with peers often determine behavior. Beginning to learn how to be a friend to others.
Starting to recognize own strengths and weaknesses.

Social Development:

Peer relationships become increasingly important. Family maintains significance.
Social skills beginning to develop. AUTONOMY.
Friends of the same sex are preferred (older children begin to explore friendships with persons of the opposite sex).
Cooperation, responsibility begin to emerge. INITIATIVE.
Begin processing of abstract ideas and values.

Spiritual Development:

Images of Jesus are important.
They enjoy and respond to scripture stories.
They appreciate ritual celebrations.
BELONGING.
They will participate well in group prayer experiences.
Personal spirituality is not expressed clearly at younger ages.
Older children grow in knowledge, understanding of the faith tradition.

Sexual Development:

Develop a heightened sense of sexual differentiation.
Need to be reassured of their special-ness, goodness in being a boy or girl.
Are in a period of relative physical stability.
In later years, some may experience onset of puberty earlier than others.
Growing self-consciousness about the body.
Begin to be preoccupied with secondary sexual characteristics.

Early Adolescence (10-13)

Moral Development:

Begin to question traditional rules.

Struggle to make personal decisions.

Often inadequate ability to anticipate consequences of decisions because of a lack of experience.

Still want to please, but peer influence and peer “rules” contribute to moral decisions and choices. ORDER.

Social Development:

They are moving toward independence.

They seek out others like themselves and are moving beyond family circle. Concern for self and peer relationships are important.

Most comfortable with others of the same sex, but are gaining more confidence and comfort in mixed groups.

IDENTITY.

Spiritual Development:

Seek a more personal relationship with God.

Faith is nourished by the faith of the family and the sacraments of the Church. Involvement in formal religious activities depends on family encouragement and peer participation

They respond to personal or peer group invitation to participate.

Sexual Development:

Physical and emotional changes are accelerated and rapid physical growth begins.

They often feel awkward, confused, and uneasy about their bodies.

They are intensely concerned about their self-identity.

They want to learn more about themselves. Their bodies, thoughts and feelings about human sexuality are prominent. There is often resulting fear, anxiety, and confusion about personal sexuality.

Older Adolescence (15-18)

Moral Development:

Care for others replacing self-centeredness of childhood. Capable of more abstract thought.

Member of society; social responsibility. Duty.

Capable of challenging argumentation. Increased powers of thinking and reasoning.

SOCIAL CONTRACT.

Social Development:

Major quest is to find role in life. Personal choice more a reality due to independence.

Increased awareness of fairness, justice and equality. Important choices being made daily. INTIMACY.

Mutual responsibilities of friendship and respect for self and others.

Spiritual Development:

SEARCHING FAITH. They are seeking authenticity.

Becoming aware of universal moral principles.

Awakening to the transcendent.

Private spirituality developing.

Sexual Development:

Rapid, intense physical growth effects emotional, psychological, relational development.

New experiences in dating, infatuation, physical affection.

Dealing with questions of sexual identity and orientation.

Need more detailed information.

Maturity/Adulthood

Moral Development:

Decisions based on principles underlying society/religious rules, not merely rules for order's sake.

Reject blanket application of norms; doing what is judged to be right, fair, by personal conscience.

CONSCIENCE.

Social Development:

Seeks satisfaction through productivity, GENERATIVITY in career, family, civic life. Wants to pass on wisdom gained. Older: Reviews life accomplishments; deals with loss and death.

Spiritual Development:

Capacity to see and accept uncertainty and irony in life; more openness to the strange and “other”, recognizing limitations and humanity of church leaders (danger: cynicism). Making faith their OWN.

Sexual Development:

Deepening personal awareness, self-knowledge; body comfort; faithfulness to commitments; appropriate decisions; takes responsibility; self-disclosure appropriate; honesty and trust; INTEGRATION between sexual and other dimensions of life

SUMMARY OF CATHOLIC TEACHING ON HUMAN SEXUALITY

William E. May

Michael J. McGivney Professor of Moral Theology

Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at the Catholic University of America

When God made man, “male and female he created them” (Gen 1.27), that is, he created them as bodily, sexual beings, complementary in their sexuality. Men and women are body persons, not spirit persons, and their bodies are integral to their being. Indeed, the human body reveals a person, and since the human body is necessarily either a male body or a female body, the bodies of men and women are a sign that they are meant to “give” themselves to one another in love. Their bodies as, Pope John Paul II, so beautifully put matters, have a “nuptial” or “spousal” meaning. Both men and women are meant to “give” and “receive” one another, but their ways of doing so are asymmetrically complementary because the male is inwardly oriented to “give in a receiving sort of way” whereas the female is inwardly oriented to “receive in a giving sort of way.” Moreover, male and female are both created in the image and likeness of God. They are, as it were, two differing but complementary “epiphanies” of the living God. The male symbolizes, as it were, the “superabundance” of being---God’s transcendence---whereas the female symbolizes God’s “withinness,” his immanence. God is both the wellspring of the joy of living and the ocean depth of happy rest, and males and females are both meant to be such, but the male more emphatically manifests God as the wellspring of the joy of living whereas the female manifests him as the “ocean depth of happy rest.”

Because of sin (cf. Gen 3), however, concupiscence has entered into the human heart and as a result the nuptial meaning of the body has been, as it were, veiled, and there exists an inclination to respond to the body of another person, particularly a person of the opposite sex, not as a body revealing a person who is to be loved but as one possessing sexual values to be enjoyed and even consumed. The divine plan for human existence and for the happiness of man and woman in marriage has been skewed by human sin. A “re-creation” or “redemption” of man and woman—and of human sexuality--is needed, and this work of re-creation, of redemption, has been accomplished by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God’s only Son become man. God’s wise and loving plan for human existence can now be realized, and realized more fully, for in Christ men and women have become “new creatures,” children of God, members of the divine family, brothers and sisters of Christ, now capable of loving others not only as they love themselves but of loving others as God loves them in Christ, with a healing, redemptive love.

Because men and women are body persons, they need to be “touched” by others. Among the ways in which they can “touch” one another, perhaps the most intimate is the “coital” touch, when the man enters into the body of the woman in an act of coition. If, in this act, the man is in truth “giving in a receiving sort of way” and if, in this act, the woman is “receiving in a giving sort of way” the act is one of authentic marital love, open both to the communication of a special kind of love and to the gift of new human life. When nonmarried individuals engage in the coital touch they do not “give in receiving sort of way” or “receive in a giving sort of way” precisely because they have failed to “give” and “receive” each other as irreplaceable, nonsubstitutable persons. But husbands and wives have capacitated themselves to “give in a receiving sort of way” and “receive in a giving sort of way” because they have already irrevocably given themselves to one another and received one another through the act of marital consent. When they touch

each other “coitally,” their act thus unites two irreplaceable and nonsubstitutable persons. However, when fornicators or adulterers engage in coition their act merely joins two replaceable, substitutable, disposable individuals. In addition, married men and women, by marrying, have made themselves fit to welcome the gift of new human life lovingly, to nourish it humanely, and to educate it in the love and service of God and neighbor. Nonmarried individuals have refused to make themselves “fit” to do this.

The coital, genital act is thus both a unitive and a procreative act, i.e., the kind of act open to (a) the gift of love between man and woman and (b) the gift of life. Its unitive and procreative meanings—the goods of both love and life—are fully respected in the marital act. Neither of these goods, however, is respected in acts of fornication or adultery or in contracepted coital, genital acts. The choice to contracept is itself not a sexual act, but it is intimately related to a sexual, genital act. One chooses to contracept only because one thinks that the kind of behavior one might engage in—genital sex—is the kind or act through which human life can be given and one does not will that life be given through that act and therefore one chooses to do something, prior to, during, or after that act precisely to impede the beginning of the life that could begin.

Contraception is thus an anti-life kind of act and as such is always wrong because one has a good reason not to contracept since the beginning of a new human life is something good and no reason to contracept can be shown to be rationally superior to the reason not to contracept. Contraception is also an anti-love kind of act because those choosing to contracept their coital union do not in truth “give” and “receive” each other even if they do not recognize this. They overlay the “language of giving and receiving,” the “language of the body,” as Pope John Paul II so rightly said, with a contradictory language; they speak a “lie.”

Contraception is justified by those who think that human persons are conscious subjects aware of themselves as selves whose bodies, including their power to generate life, are special kinds of instrumental goods necessary for the existence of truly personal, i.e., consciously experienced goods. They regard the procreative power of the person as of itself subpersonal, subhuman, in need of being “assumed” into the human and personal, i.e., the conscious life of the individual. They likewise believe that one determines the morality of a human act only by viewing it in its “totality,” taking into account foreseeable consequences, and then choosing the alternative promising the “greater” good or “lesser” evil. They hold that one can rightly intend evil, i.e., intend that evil be, provided there is a “proportionate” reason for doing so. But this view of morality is utterly specious and ends up by redescribing what human persons do in terms of the hoped for consequences or benefits.

Persons of the same sex cannot marry because they cannot do what married persons are supposed to do: i.e., to give and receive one another in the kind of act that “consummates” marriage, i.e., a reproductive type act.

In order to live God’s plan for human existence, the virtue of chastity is needed, for this virtue enables one to come into possession of one’s desires and not be possessed by them and thus enable one to “give” oneself to others in love.

The Christian View of Sex: A Time for Apologetics, not Apologies

by JANET SMITH

To observe that we live in a society that is suffering greatly from sexual confusion or, if you will, sexual misconduct, is not a novel insight. There is little need to provide a full set of statistics to demonstrate the consequences of the sexual revolution, for who is not familiar with the epidemic in teenage pregnancies, venereal diseases, divorces, and AIDS? Our society has undergone a rapid transformation in terms of sexual behavior, and few would argue that it is for the better. Today, one out of two marriages end in divorce. Six out of ten teenagers are sexually active. The millions of abortions over the last decade and the phenomenal spread of AIDS indicate that our society has serious problems with sexuality. In the last generation, the incidence of sexual activity outside of marriage — with all of its attendant problems — has double and tripled — or worse. We have no particular reason to believe that we have seen the peak of the growth in sexually related problems.

Statistics do not really capture the pervasive ills attendant upon sexual immorality. Premature and promiscuous sexuality prevent many from establishing good marriages and family life. Few deny that a healthy sexuality and a strong family life are among the most necessary elements for human happiness and well-being. While many single parents do a worthy and valiant job of raising their children, it remains sadly true that children from broken homes grow up to be adults with a greater propensity for crime, a greater tendency to engage in alcohol and drug abuse, and a greater susceptibility to psychological disorders.

These realities touch every realm of life. They affect people's ability to relate to friends and family; they affect people's ability to do well at their studies and their jobs; and they affect the whole of society, which needs stable and secure individuals to lead us out of our troubles. Those who do not experience love from family and friends tend to seek any semblance of love they can find — and thus become involved in illicit sexual relationships — and the cycle starts again. The multiple varieties of abuse of sexuality and the grievous consequences of such abuse are not only damaging the current generation, they are threatening to ruin the chances of future generations to live happy and fulfilled lives.

Twenty years ago, when the sexual revolution was in full swing, many argued that it would liberate men and women from the repressive view of sexuality pervasive in society; people would be free to make love without the strictures of marriage. Many pointed to Christianity as the source of sexual repression. But the Christian view of sex is looking a lot more like wisdom. Christians no longer need to offer apologies for their insistence upon sexual morality, for their insistence upon reserving sex for marriage. Some in high public places are now beginning to counsel abstinence before marriage and to extol faithful monogamous marriages. They have begun to see these as practices of great practical wisdom.

In a certain sense, Christian morality — especially sexual morality — is quite similar to natural or commonsense morality. One does not need to be a Christian to understand why certain sexual practices are wrong. Christians differ from unbelievers not so much in the understanding of what is moral as in their commitment to trying to live morally. A Christian understands that when he is doing wrong, he is not only violating good sense, he is violating God's law; he is failing to be the loving and responsible person, God made him to be. Thus, Christian apologetics about sex may not seem much different from commonsense apologetics about sex, but the Christian tradition has most faithfully preserved the common wisdom about sex. Clearly it is easy to “forget” or become confused about the common wisdom about sex; Christians are blessed with the powerful aid of revelation and tradition to counsel them regarding sexual morality.

Yet, despite the fact that most Christian denominations have remained steadfast in their allegiance to traditional Christian wisdom in sexual issues, few Christians have not been deeply affected by the saturation of modern culture with a view of sexuality radically opposed to the Christian view. Ten minutes of watching MTV or of a soap opera; ten minutes of listening to any rock, pop, or country music station; one visit to the corner-store magazine rack; or two minutes at the beach should serve to convince anyone that our society has very little respect for Christian moral norms regarding sexual relations. Christians, too, have begun to lose sight of the understanding of sexuality advanced by their tradition. Thus, now is the time for Christians to offer apologetics for their understanding of the role of sexual relations within human relationships. "Apologetics" is a term used to refer to the energetic attempt to explain one's position to others. But Christians, I think, need to be as concerned with providing apologetics to themselves and to fellow Christians about sex as with bringing their message to others. Both internal and external evangelization are necessary, for few, if any, can escape being adversely affected by the distortions of our times. Christians need to strengthen themselves as well as their compatriots.

Christians have to learn about their own tradition before they can become effective witnesses to those in the larger society who desperately need to encounter individuals who are in control of their sexuality and happy because of it. There are a multitude of Christian truths which can assist us in escaping the ravages of a disordered sexuality. The time seems to be ripe for making the most persuasive case we can for Christian morality. Certainly, many are ceasing promiscuous behavior because of their fear of contracting AIDS. But that is not the only reason for the growing disenchantment with the sexual revolution. Many find that their sexual encounters leave them lonely and looking for something more. There are increasing reports of sexual indifference, with many claiming to have lost an interest in sex, even with those whom they love. There seems to be an increasing weariness with premarital sex and abortion, and a growing interest in reducing both. Many are beginning to see that the call for more and better sex education or more and better access to contraceptives is not the solution. Rather, we need a better understanding of the relations between sex, love, marriage, and children. And it is this understanding that Christianity can provide.

Three truths of sexuality

Let us focus on three fundamental truths about sexuality stressed throughout the Christian tradition: that marriage is the only proper arena for sexual activity; that marriages must be faithful for the love of spouses to thrive; and that children are a great gift to parents.

Why should sexual union only take place within a marriage? It can hardly be denied that sexual relations create powerful bonds between individuals, even between those who do not desire such bonds. Those who have sexual intercourse are engaging in an action which bespeaks a deep commitment to another. Pope John Paul II uses an interesting phrase in his teachings on sex: "language of the body." He claims that, like words, bodily actions have meanings, and that unless we intend those meanings with our actions, we should not perform them any more than we should speak words we do not mean. In both cases, lies are "spoken." Sexual union means "I find you attractive"; "I care for you"; "I will try to work for your happiness"; "I wish to have a deep bond with you." Some who engage in sexual intercourse do not mean these things with their actions; they wish simply to use another for their own sexual pleasure. They have lied with their bodies in the same way as someone lies who says "I love you" to another simply for the purposes of obtaining some desired favor.

But some who engage in sexual intercourse outside of marriage claim that they do mean all that sexual union implies and that, therefore, they are not lying with their bodies. They are, though, making false promises, for those engaging in sexual intercourse outside of marriage cannot fulfill the promises which their bodily actions make. They have not prepared themselves to fulfill the promise of working for

another's happiness, or of achieving a deep bond with another. Such achievements take a lifetime to complete; they cannot be accomplished in brief encounters.

The Christian insistence on reserving sexual union for marriage, then, has as one of its chief justifications a concern that sexual relations are meant to express the desire for a deep and committed relationship with another. That relationship can only be built within marriage, because marriage is built upon a vow of faithfulness to one's beloved. The Bible, especially the Old Testament, regularly condemns the sin of adultery. Faithful marriage is used as the paradigm for the kind of relationship which God's people should have with God. Those who are not faithful to God are likened to adulterers. Proverbs and the whole of wisdom literature harshly condemn the adulterous spouse. Most spouses are devastated at the mere thought that their beloved desires another, let alone that their spouse may have actually been unfaithful. Faithfulness is essential to create the relationship of trust which is the bedrock of all the other goods that flow from marriage.

We take vows in marriage because we realize that we are all too ready to give up when the going gets tough; we realize that our loves wax and wane. Indeed, society at large seems to have a fondness for marriage. After all, in an age where there is little moral pressure against living together outside of marriage, most still choose to take marriage vows. Couples realize that marriage vows help them express and effect their commitment to each other. But as the divorce rate indicates, modern society ultimately does not take these vows very seriously — or at least modern couples do not prepare for marriage in such a way that they are prepared to keep their vows.

Preparing for marriage

A talk with a pastor, an “Engaged Encounter” weekend, or a “Pre Cana” conference does not prepare one for marriage. Real marriage preparation must occur for many years before we enter marriage. Young people enjoy the exercise of drawing up a list of characteristics that they would like their future spouse to have. But their time might be better spent drawing up a list of characteristics which they themselves should have in order to be a worthy spouse. They need to reflect upon their expectations of marriage; many may find that their expectations are largely selfish. Most of us dream much more about how happy our spouses are going to make us than about how much we are going to do for our spouses.

Since marriage requires loving, faithful, kind, patient, forgiving, humble, courageous, wise, unselfish individuals — and the list could go on — young people should strive to gain these characteristics. Marriages cannot survive unless the spouses acquire these characteristics. Certainly it would be foolish to require that individuals have all of these characteristics before they marry, for none of us do. Indeed, the experience of marriage itself undoubtedly helps foster these characteristics. But if we do not work at acquiring them before marriage, we will be acquiring their opposites — selfishness, haughtiness, impatience: characteristics that are death to a marriage.

Although faithfulness is one of the cornerstones of marriage, it may seem odd to speak of the need to be faithful to one's spouse before marriage. But in a sense, one should love one's spouse before one even meets him or her. This means reserving the giving of oneself sexually until one is married — for in a sense, one's sexuality belongs to one's future spouse as much as it does to oneself. A few generations ago, it was not uncommon for young people to speak of “saving themselves” for marriage. While scoffed at today, this phrase is nonetheless indicative of a proper understanding of love, sexuality, and marriage. One should prepare oneself for marriage, and one should save oneself for marriage.

How does one do so? Obviously, by remaining chaste — and that is not an easy prescription. For instance, it means being attentive to what provokes sexual thoughts and desires and avoiding these provocations. It means, most likely, dissociating oneself from many of the forms of entertainment popular today. Those

who view sexuality as a gift which one offers one's spouse at the time of marriage cannot fall victim to the constant sexual stimulation that Americans face daily. We need to be careful what music we listen to, what movies and TV shows we watch, and what clothes we wear. We need to try to save sexual thoughts and sexual stimulation for the time when they will not be frustrations, but welcome preludes to loving union with our spouses. Sexual temptations are, of course, impossible to avoid, especially since our society provides temptations around the clock. Christ's teaching that lust in one's heart is wrong tells us that we must guard our inner purity as well as govern our actions.

Few people, Christian or not, think it sensible for those who are engaged to wait until their wedding night to enjoy sexual union. Many think waiting until marriage would make sexual intimacy too awkward. Most think that, since one is soon going to take vows, it makes little difference whether sexual intimacy begins before or after a ceremony which simply ratifies a commitment already felt.

What difference does waiting make? Well, certainly a vow is not a vow until it is spoken; unspoken, unratified commitments are all too easy to break. There are practical reasons as well. Father James Burtchaell at Notre Dame has written a marvelous book, *For Better or Worse*, explaining why it is best for couples to wait until marriage before they begin their sexual intimacy. He speaks eloquently of the period before marriage as an irreplaceable opportunity for lovers to get to know one another. Engaging in sexual intercourse creates a false sense of closeness; it creates a bond that may obscure elements in a relationship which need work. Courtship is a time for getting to know each other, for sketching out dreams and plans; for expressing worries and hesitations. The delight of sexual union can easily distract couples from preparation for marriage.

There is also a deeper reason, and that is the question of honesty and trust. Few of those who have sexual relations before marriage, especially Christians, can be fully open about their actions. This means that people engaging in such relationships inevitably are deceiving someone — their parents, their teachers, and perhaps their friends as well. The ability to practice such deception does not bode well for one's integrity. A woman observes that her lover is good at deception and will file away this information. She will have reason to wonder in the future if her spouse is being honest with her — after all, he had no trouble deceiving others whom he or she respected. Many Christians feel terrible guilt at violating their deeply held moral principles; after they are married, they may continue to have guilty feelings about sex. In a sense, they have programmed themselves to think of sexual intercourse as a furtive and naughty activity.

On the other hand, couples who do wait until marriage have a special kind of euphoria about their sexual union. Because they waited, they see sexual pleasure as a privileged good of marriage. They have an easier time developing a deep and abiding trust and consideration for each other. Their willingness to wait, to endure the strains of sexual continence out of love and respect for one another, is a great testimony to their strength of character. They have shown that sexual attraction is not the most important part of the relationship, and they can enjoy each other's company even when the delights of sexual union are not available to them. Such faithfulness and chastity before marriage ensure greater faithfulness and chastity during marriage. Because of pregnancy or illness or separation, all couples must abstain at some time in marriage; the acquisition of the virtue of self-mastery before marriage facilitates such abstention.

The contraceptive mentality

Chastity before marriage — and, consequently, chastity during marriage — has been undermined by the widespread availability of contraception. Indeed, contraception seems to be one of the chief facilitators of much of the sexual misconduct of our time. There were fewer teenage pregnancies, fewer abortions, and a lesser incidence of sexually transmitted diseases before contraception became widely available. Contraception has made people feel secure that they can engage in sexual union apart from the obligations

of marriage and child rearing. Yet contraceptives do not remove the responsibilities that come with the child-making possibilities of sexual intercourse, since contraceptives do not always achieve their purpose. We must help our young people to understand that they are not ready for sexual intercourse until they are ready to be parents, for sexual intercourse always brings with it the possibility of being a parent.

Getting young people to associate sex with child bearing is not easy, but it is necessary; in fact, it is important for adults to encourage young people to try to think like parents. It is good to get them thinking about what they would like to do with their children; to get them thinking about what they want to be able to provide for their children. Parents must convey to their children that they are not a burden to them, that they consider their children to be great gifts from God. Our society tends to look upon children as a burden; they are expensive, noisy, troublesome; they stand in the way of careers and adventuresome travel. This view, of course, has not stopped people from having babies, but one senses that many children are just another possession of their parents, or just another experience that adults wish to have. Many couples seem to want a few “designer children” as adornments to their lives not as reasons for their lives.

God, it seems, has a preference for children; after all, one of His first commands was to “be fruitful and multiply.” Throughout the Old Testament, having many children is listed among the signs of prosperity that indicate God's favor. Psalm 127 states “Behold, sons are a gift from the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one's youth. Happy the man whose quiver is filled with them.” Psalm 128 is one of my favorites; it states:

Happy the man who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! You shall eat of your hand's labor; blessed are you, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your house; Your sons, like olive shoots around your table. Behold, in this way shall be blessed the man who fears the Lord.

God has arranged matters such that parents and children need each other. The experience of child rearing, like the experience of marriage, both requires and fosters many virtues. Having children generally does adults a lot of good; most find they become more selfless, patient, kind, loving, and tender when they have children. Learning to live with children has many of the same advantages of living with a spouse: it forces one to accommodate oneself to others, to acknowledge that one has constant tendencies to be selfish. Staying awake at night with children, dealing with their daily joys and sorrows, and learning to be a good example for them contributes greatly to the maturity of adults.

Recently, a relative of mine mentioned that he wanted to have a large family, but he didn't know how it would be possible to manage financially. He had noticed that I had a large number of friends who started their childbearing early and had lots of children. Few of the women are employed outside their homes. He wanted to know how they did it. I think I know the answer: they trust in God. They regularly live on the edge of things — for the first few years, they experience occasional anxiety that another child will be an undue strain on the budget, or that they will not be able to afford a car or house large enough for the growing brood, or that they may not be able to meet food and medical costs. But after a few years, they find that their needs are fulfilled. To be sure, they learn to budget and scrimp and save, they are not ashamed to take hand-me-downs, and they often learn to live a life that is a little tacky around the edges. But they lack none of their true needs and often enjoy luxuries of which they never would have dreamed. So they come to trust God and live without a lot of obvious security. Trust in God replaces the standard American understanding of perfect security: accumulating enough money and material goods to serve as a buffer against the world. With trusting and light hearts, they proceed to enjoy their growing families and to soak up the love that flows in big families. Those with large families seem to have a special generosity and hospitality about them. Guests are always welcome and interruptions seem not to be an annoyance; members of large families seem quite ready to drop everything to help someone else. Slowly but steadily, they become better Christians.

Discussions of the Christian preference for large families always seem to broach a topic which is sensitive and controversial, namely, contraception. Although the belief that contraception is not in accord with God's will has, since *Humanae Vitae*, been identified almost exclusively with the Catholic Church, the fact is that all Protestant denominations were opposed to contraception up until 1930. Early in this century, the Anglican Church twice condemned contraception, before passing a resolution in 1930 that its use was morally permissible for married couples. Thus, acceptance of contraception is a relatively new phenomenon. Catholics have, perhaps, preserved the teaching against contraception more faithfully, but it is not a teaching exclusive to them.

In much the same way, Protestants have more faithfully preached the necessity of tithing, a doctrine not exclusive to Protestants. Many Catholics are now rediscovering the practice of tithing at the prompting of their Protestant brethren. They have found great spiritual growth through this practice and now regularly urge their fellow Catholics to embrace this time-honored way of expressing gratitude to God and of trusting in Him. Indeed, I think the doctrine on tithing has some similarities with the teaching that in one's childbearing, one must be generous with God. Some refuse to tithe since they believe it is foolish to give away money that they think they need for their own well-being. Yet those who are committed to tithing know that, on occasion, one must give to God what one believes one needs oneself. They give to God and His causes because they know He wants them to, and they trust Him to provide. Being generous in childbearing is not very different. Many a married couple will testify that they thought having another child would be an undue hardship, only to find that having another child was a source of wonderful blessings and splendid joy to them.

Oddly enough, NFP, or natural family planning, is one of the most effective means, if not the most effective means, of planning one's family. NFP, of course, is not the outmoded rhythm method, which was based simply on the calendar. Rather, NFP is a highly scientific way of determining when a woman is fertile, based on observing various bodily signs. The statistics of its reliability rival the most effective forms of the Pill. Moreover, NFP is without the health risks and dubious moral status of contraceptives. The IUD is an abortifacient: that is, it works by causing an early-term abortion. Ovulation still occurs, and, therefore, conception may occur; the IUD then prohibits the fertilized egg, the tiny new human being, from implanting in the wall of the uterus. Most currently popular forms of the Pill work the same way. Furthermore, the Pill and the IUD have proven to be dangerous to women in many ways — and no one yet knows what the long term effects may be. So those who are opposed to abortion and those interested in protecting the well-being of women would certainly not want to use or promote these forms of contraception. The other forms, known as barrier methods, have aesthetic drawbacks or are low on reliability.

NFP no longer means “not for Protestants.” Many non-Catholics are turning to NFP as a means of family planning precisely because they do not want to use abortifacients, and they fear the physical risks of contraception. They are finding that the use of NFP has positive results for their marital relationships, for their relationship with their children, and for their relationship with God.

Many find it odd that periodic abstinence should be beneficial to a marriage. Certainly, most who begin to use NFP, especially those who were not chaste before marriage and who have used contraception, find the abstinence required to be a source of strain and a cause of considerable irritability. Abstinence, like dieting or any form of self-restraint, has its hardships; but it also has its benefits. As spouses learn to communicate better with one another, as they learn to communicate their affection in nongenital ways, and as they learn to master their sexual desires, they find a new liberation in the ability to abstain from sexual intercourse. Many find that an element of romance reenters the relationship during the times of abstinence, and an element of excitement accompanies the reuniting. Spouses using NFP find that they come to understand and respect one another more.

Spouses using NFP become very good examples to their children, especially their teenagers who may be wrestling with new and powerful sexual feelings. One man told me that his practice of NFP assisted him in being a good witness for chastity among the young men at his place of work. They would tease him about being able, as a married man, to have sex on demand, but he responded that through the use of NFP, he was required to abstain. He argued that if, night after night, he was able to sleep beside the woman he loved and not have sexual intercourse with her, they could learn to refrain from sexual intercourse with their girlfriends. He believed that parents who practice NFP could much more persuasively urge their children to be chaste before marriage.

Another reason for the enthusiasm for NFP is that couples who use it experience a greater bonding than those who use contraception. There is a more complete giving of oneself to another in a non-contracepted act of sexual intercourse. This may be why divorce is nearly non-existent among couples who practice NFP

Couples who use NFP also claim that it brings them closer to God. They believe that God made the human body and that respecting the way the human body works is a way of respecting God. They believe that contraceptives are an obstacle not only to union with their spouses but also to union with God. They believe that God is the source of love and life and that He has privileged them with being the transmitters of life through an act of love. They feel that they are leaving God space to perform His act of the creation of a new soul, if He so chooses.

Christian teaching on contraception is indissolubly linked with the Christian understanding of the need for faithful marriages and for the reservation of sexual intimacy to marriage. We should never lose sight of the link between sexual activity and childbearing. If only those who were prepared to care for children engaged in sexual relations, the modern world would experience a radical change in its sexual behavior.

Christians need to explain why faithfulness and responsibility toward children are two of the defining characteristics of marriage. Men and women today are tired of unfaithfulness, tired of shallow and brief relationships. They crave something more meaningful, something on which they can rely. Young people are sick of divorce. There is virtually no one who does not know children who have suffered greatly from divorce. Certainly many of us, because of our own foolishness, weakness, or wickedness, or because of the foolishness, weakness, or wickedness of others, may not be able to form the marriages and families which we want and need. We must trust in the grace of God to provide for all those who turn to Him for aid. Christians, who have the wisdom of the centuries, should strive to live chaste lives and to form loving marriages and families, for such is vital to their eternal salvation and such may well be vital to the temporal well-being of the whole of society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Smith, Janet. "The Christian View of Sex: A Time for Apologetics, not Apologies" In *The Family in America* 10:5 (May 1996): 1-7.

This article was first published by the Rockford Institute in *The Family in America*, 10:5 (May 1996) 1-7. 815-964-5811. Subsequently it earned Ms. Smith the \$10,000 first prize in the 1996 Amy Foundation Writing Awards competition.

Resources for Parents

(all are available for purchase online):

For further information on these and other important questions and issues related to human growth and sexuality, we recommend the following resources:

Aquilina, Mike – General Editor, *Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parents' Guide*; Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1995

Bonacci, Mary Beth. *Real Love*, Ignatius Press

Evert, Jason. *Teen Relationships and Sexual Pressures*, (DVD), Ignatius Press

Evert, Jason. *Pure Love*. Catholic Answers.

Evert, Jason. *If You Really Loved Me*. Catholic Answers.

Mast, Colleen Kelly, *The Sex Respect Program* (check it out at www.sexrespect.com).

Mast, Colleen Kelly, *Love and Life*, Ignatius Press

Popcak, Greg, *Beyond the Birds and the Bees* – St. Michael Media.

Tomeo, Teresa, Cops, Monica and Miller, Molly. *All Things Girl* series. Bezael Books.