

The expression of sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage where it becomes a sign and pledge of spiritual communion. The union of husband and wife achieves the two-fold 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 good of marriage and the future of the family. God created the human person with intrinsic value and a dignity which entitles us to never be used by others as a means to an end, that is, as objects. The only way to respect another is to fully love him/her and work for what is best for that individual. No one should ever be used as an object for another's selfish desires.

God created sexuality and established the true meaning of sexual intercourse. He established a connection between the "unitive and procreative" powers of intercourse, that is, between the power of sexual intercourse to strengthen the bond of love between the husband and the wife and the power to create new life. God intends intercourse to be the most profound way humans communicate love by seeking complete union (total self-giving) with one's spouse.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is the only relationship in which sexual activity can possibly achieve the full meaning it is given by God: the committed, faithful, exclusive and total gift of self to another in a way which is open to love and open to the creation of new life. The gift of sexual intercourse is diminished if it occurs outside of marriage, as the life-long commitment necessary to realize its true, God-given meaning is lacking and the risk of using a person as an object is greater. Marriage, then, is the only relationship in which the potential for this totally selfless, committed love exists.

CONTRACEPTION

The gift of sex is also diminished by the use of contraceptives. God intends sexual intercourse to say, "I surrender myself to you totally and receive you totally." Contraception says, however, "There is some of me I don't want to give you or receive from you." This is so because one's fertility (ability to procreate), is withheld

robbing sexual intercourse of its most unifying power. Contraception, therefore, suppresses the power of procreation, preventing complete and total self-giving between the husband and the wife. The use of contraceptives inhibits love, as the contracepting couples tell each other that they cannot love one another as they are. This may set in motion a "contraceptive attitude" in which other life-giving areas in the relationship (e.g., communication) are denied. In addition, a contracepting couple is telling God that they do not accept the way God has created them and refuses to cooperate with God's plan for sexual activity. In this way, they work against their own desire for complete union with one another and God.

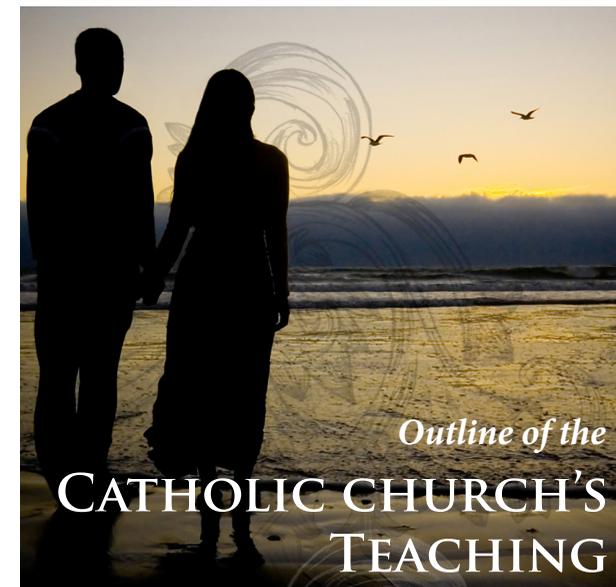
Contraception hampers relationship with God as it intentionally alters the body in ways contrary to the way God created it. Since God has given the body as an expression of the person we are, altering the body intentionally alters who we are as a "person," God's unique creation.

REFERENCES

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994.
- Humanae Vitae, Pope Paul VI, 1968.
- Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, Vatican City, 1986.
- Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination, USCCB, 2006.

OFFICE OF MARRIAGE & FAMILY

FAMILY LIFE-RESPECT LIFE-NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING



Outline of the CATHOLIC CHURCH'S TEACHING

ON SEXUALITY



OFFICE OF MARRIAGE & FAMILY
FAMILY LIFE-RESPECT LIFE-NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING
305 SEVENTH AVENUE NORTH
SUITE 100
SAINT CLOUD, MN 56303-3633
320-252-4721
WWW.STCLOUDDIOCESE.ORG/OMF

Diocese of
SAINT CLOUD

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STERILIZATION

When circumstances lead to the decision which, for serious reasons, the couple must avoid pregnancy, the Church has a role in providing loving care, understanding support and moral direction. The Church has consistently and clearly taught that sterilization directly attacks a basic human good and degrades human sexuality by altering its value of being life giving and love giving. Specifically, there is no medical reason for tubal ligations and vasectomies. However, women, who for medical reasons must have a hysterectomy (i.e., due to a diseased uterus) are not acting against Church teaching.

MASTURBATION

The Church teaches that, objectively, masturbation is an intrinsically and seriously disordered act because the sexual activity is meant to be shared with one's spouse in the committed relationship of marriage, not as a solitary act. It frustrates the essential purpose of the sexual activity, namely, the strengthening of the marriage relationship and the procreation of children. For some persons the habit of masturbation becomes addictive behavior which interferes with their personal, moral and spiritual growth, and, therefore, with their interpersonal relationships as well. The respected view of counselors and confessors is that habit and anxiety can lessen the person's freedom to choose his/her actions, and therefore can lessen personal responsibility for individual actions. Habit and anxiety make changes in behavior more difficult. All persons do have the responsibility to attempt to control their sexual expression and come to psychosexual maturity. Thus a person must use those practical and spiritual aids at his/her disposal.



HOMOSEXUALITY

What the Church teaches about homosexual conduct is brief and clear: "The purpose of the sexual faculty is the expression of married love and the generation of new life in the context of the family. God calls us to use our faculties for the purposes for which they have been given to us. To use the sexual faculty in a way which causes the generation of new life to be impossible is to misuse it and is wrong. Genital sexual behavior between two persons of the same sex is such a misuse and is therefore wrong."

While the Catechism of the Catholic Church acknowledges that "homosexual inclination constitutes for many a trial," homosexual activity (engaging in genital activity with persons of the same sex) is wrong. Deliberate homosexual activity is wrong because it misuses the sexual faculty and is sinful to the extent that it is done knowingly and freely.

In view of every person's basic human worth, those who experience same-sex attraction also need to "be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity." We are all called to chastity with "disinterested friendship, prayer and sacramental grace." The Church's ministry is to be as wide as God's love, a love which excludes no one for "God has created every human person out of love and wishes to grant him or her eternal life in the communion of the Trinity." (From "Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination")

ABORTION

Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right to life.

Abortion is the intentional killing of the unborn child, which violates that inalienable and most basic right to life, the foundation and condition for all other human rights. Abortion can never be used as a means of birth control, which includes some forms of contraception that are in fact abortifacient.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

Natural Family Planning is considered a moral means of following the teaching of the Church regarding birth regulation within marriage. It offers a lifestyle in which sexuality is respected and promoted in its true and fully human dimension (unitive and procreative), and in which a person is never used as an object. With NFP, the couple lives out God's plan for marriage and sexuality through a total self-giving, framed by dialogue, shared responsibility and self control.

Natural Family Planning is a very effective moral means for planning one's family, for helping spouses to get pregnant when they want to have a child and for helping them avoid a pregnancy when it would not be responsible to have a child. This cooperates with nature and with God's design in our procreative potential.