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## **CHAPTER 6: SOME CONTEMPORARY ARGUMENTS AGAINST PREMARITAL SEXUAL INTERCOURSE**

This chapter and the next chapter respectively treat a number of arguments that are commonly raised today against and for premarital sex. These include arguments that have been typically raised by contemporary university students in my Christian theology classes on human sexuality and marriage at the University of Alberta, as well as in various media, including theological literature.<sup>1</sup> I not only present some arguments of others here, but also provide some analysis of these arguments, developing and/or critiquing them, in the light of human experience and the Christian vision and vocation (see Ch. V). In these two chapters the discussion focuses mainly on voluntary premarital sexual intercourse. The issues of masturbation, premarital sexual petting and sexual abuse are treated in Ch. VIII.A-C.

Many negative aspects of premarital sexual intercourse, including many of its harmful

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1. The University of Alberta is located in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Regarding the discussion of premarital sex in my classes, I generally invite my students to bring up all the arguments or "reasons", both for and against, that they have come across or can think of, and to comment on them, before I comment on them. One of the most comprehensive treatments of "Reasons Youth Have Premarital Sex" and "Reasons to Wait" is found in *Why Wait? What You Need to Know About the Teen Sexuality Crisis* by Josh McDowell and Dick Day (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1987), Parts 2 and 3 respectively. Their book makes interesting and informative reading. Incorporated in their treatment are comments from many young people, as well as references to many other sources, and the authors' own reflections which are rooted in the Christian vision. André Guindon in *The Sexual Language: An Essay in Moral Theology* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1976), Ch. 9 "Premarital Sex", also treats a number of the arguments commonly raised for and against premarital sex.

consequences and the various ways it involves a failure to love properly are treated in this chapter. Many people who seriously consider the negative aspects of premarital sex realize that they have made mistakes or have been irresponsible concerning this issue, in one way or another. For this reason, the last section of this chapter treats forgiveness, healing and hope. The fundamental direction of this chapter is positive. By considering a number of ways that premarital sexual intercourse fails to love persons properly, we also draw attention to the great dignity of persons, and the values that are important for human fulfillment in this area of life. The "negative" material in this chapter, therefore, implies a "positive" call to grow in loving persons better and to grow in appreciating, respecting and promoting some of the values that are so important for fulfillment in premarital and other human relationships. Sections A and I below explicitly treat nonmarital sexual abstinence, including premarital sexual abstinence, positively, as an expression of a properly ordered love that has many advantages.

### **A. The Virtue of Chastity Requires Nonmarital Sexual Abstinence**

Many people today, who argue against premarital sex, advocate "waiting" to have sex until marriage or complete sexual abstinence outside marriage, including before marriage, as something positive rather than negative. One way that many contemporaries speak and/or write about this is by speaking about chastity or the virtue of chastity. For example, there are a number of groups or movements of young people which promote chastity such as "TAC [Teenager And Chastity] Force", "Y Wait", "True Love Waits" and "The Challenge Team". Many adults, too, promote chastity in a positive way, including William May, who writes in part,

Today chastity ... is too often regarded as something negative, as an antisexual inhibition. Nothing

could be farther from the truth .... the chaste person is the one who is able to express his or her sexuality *well* in reaching out to touch others and be touched by them....

....the chaste person is the one who knows well the difference between affectionate, nongenital touches and genital/coital touches.<sup>2</sup>

The virtue of chastity corresponds to the requirements of holistic love and caring in the area of sex. Complete sexual abstinence or continence outside marriage is seen by many as a requirement of holistic or properly ordered love, as a requirement of the virtue of chastity.

From a Christian perspective, all of morality, including sexual morality, is related to loving God, oneself and others (other persons first of all, but also non-personal creation) in a properly ordered way. All genuine human virtues including chastity are governed by such a holistic love.<sup>3</sup> Since chastity is the virtue that pertains to attitudes and behaviors concerning sex and sexuality, it basically requires what a properly ordered love requires in the whole area of sex. It is, therefore, pertinent to ask, "What does properly loving God, oneself and others require with respect to sex and sexuality?"

Loving and caring for human persons properly includes appreciating and respecting goods or values that are important to human happiness and fulfillment. Such values that pertain to human sexuality include the great dignity of human persons, self-giving and faithful love, justice,

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2. William E. May, *Sex, Marriage, and Chastity: Reflections of a Catholic Layman, Spouse and Parent* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981), 143 and 145. See also, e.g., articles regarding young people promoting chastity in *The Edmonton Journal*, June 13, 1992, A11; June 20, 1992, D6; Dec. 18, 1993, B6; the news item, "To help promote chastity among youth," in *Ecumenism*, June 1994, 42; and prominent speakers such as Mary Beth Bonacci (see <http://www.reallove.net/>) and Molly Kelly, including her 60 min. video, *Teens and Chastity*, available from Life Cycle Books. Information on "The Challenge Team", which brings the message of chastity to tens of thousands of students each year, can be obtained from Box 4203, Station E, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B2, tel. (613) 567-1117, fax (613) 231-1203.

3. CCC, n. 2346, teaches that, "Charity is the *form* of all the virtues."

friendship, marriage, human life and health, procreation, truth, God, and the integrity of persons, including integral development of the person and bodily integrity. To love and care for persons properly it is indispensable to respect these values, and to try to appreciate, promote and protect them according to one's personal vocation.(cf. Ch. V above)

Loving God properly includes seeking to do God's will, to please him, in everything. Since God loves all human beings, his beloved children, with an infinite love, loving God includes loving people properly. Properly respecting the goods or values that we considered in the previous paragraph, which is necessary with respect to loving human persons properly, is thus also necessary with respect to loving God. There is, however, another reason for this. Values such as the inherent dignity of human persons created in God's image, self-giving and faithful love (cf. also friendship and marriage), justice, truth, the integrity of persons, and the sacredness of human life (cf. also procreation), are rooted in who God is. Since the very nature or essence of God is a community of three divine persons in self-giving and faithful love, justice, truth, life, and so on (cf. the divine attributes), we need to respect such values to love God.(cf. Ch. V above)

Another way of expressing our love for God in the whole area of sexuality is to respect properly God's purposes for sex. These include the marital ("nuptial", total giving and receiving, unitive) and procreative purposes or meanings of human sexual relations. With respect to these one can consider human experience and why God created sex, as well as God's plans concerning our redemption, including the sacrament of matrimony and other relationships "in the Lord". Although human beings can and do value pleasure, including sexual pleasures, our deliberately seeking and enjoying pleasure should always be subordinated to what a properly ordered love of God and people requires.(cf. Ch. V above) The virtue of temperance pertains to this, in particular with respect to

bodily pleasures related to food, drink and sex. The virtue of chastity, part of the virtue of temperance, pertains to the pleasures of sex. Chastity requires self-control or self-mastery. This is not self-control for the sake of self-control or to follow some arbitrary rules or to satisfy a guilt complex. Rather it is simply the self-control that a properly ordered love of God, oneself and others requires.<sup>4</sup>

Many are convinced that premarital sex is wrong or immoral because those engaging in it do not and can not respect properly the basic marital and procreative meanings or purposes of human sexual relations (cf. human experience and God's plan), and important values or personal goods related to human sexuality such as the dignity and integrity of human persons, self-giving and faithful love, truth, marriage, procreation, justice, and God. Those engaging in premarital sex also often fail to respect properly values such as human life (cf. the willingness to have an abortion if one gets pregnant in many cases) and health (cf. taking unnecessary risks with respect to contracting sexually transmitted diseases, etc.). These and other arguments will be developed further in following sections of this chapter.

In the light of the virtue of chastity, the requirements of holistic love and caring in the area of sex, advocating sexual abstinence outside marriage and saying nonmarital sex, including premarital sex, is objectively wrong or immoral is not negative or an arbitrary or unreasonable "do not". Rather, nonmarital sexual abstinence is very positive and reasonable, what a properly ordered love of God, oneself and others requires. The virtue of chastity does not hinder but promotes holistic

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4. Cf. parts of Chs. II-V regarding chastity and self-control (see the index). Cf. also CCC, with respect to "The Vocation to Chastity"(nn. 2337-59), which teaches in part: "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."(n. 2338); and "Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self. Chastity leads him who practises it to become a witness to his neighbour of God's fidelity and loving kindness."(n. 2346)

love, its proper expression, and a true communion of persons, both in nonmarital relationships, including premarital relationships (cf. I below; and Ch. VIII.B), and marital relationships.<sup>5</sup>

### **B. A Kind of Behavior That is Always Wrong to Choose**

In classroom discussions that I have had with university students on arguments for and against premarital sex, the first arguments raised on the against side often pertain to possible (and actual) negative consequences. These include, among others, the risks (and realities) of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including getting AIDS, and getting pregnant in a non-ideal situation. These two risks can vary significantly depending on the situation. For example, they are generally much higher for promiscuous teenagers or young adults than for a monogamous couple where one of the partners is most likely infertile. One can, therefore, raise the issue whether there are any valid arguments against premarital sex that would pertain to every possible situation. For example, is there any good reason why premarital sex would be wrong or immoral for a man and woman in their sixties (i.e. the woman is no longer fertile), both are still virgins, neither has an STD, and they later get married? (See sections D-H below for a fuller treatment of the possible and actual harmful consequences of premarital sex.)

In the following passage, Pope John Paul II teaches clearly that human sexual relations can only be truthful and responsible within marriage. This teaching clearly implies that nonmarital sex, including premarital sex, is always a "lie" and irresponsible (cf. the above case of the couple in their sixties, as well as any other case or situation that one can imagine or encounter in real life):

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5. Cf. May (see note 2 above), Chs. 4 and 5, regarding marital chastity and chastity and the unmarried; and Ronald Lawler, Joseph Boyle, and William E. May, *Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary, Explanation, & Defense* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 1985), Chs. 6-8.

God is love (1 Jn 4:8) and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. (cf. GS, 12) Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.

As an incarnate spirit, that is a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, man is called to love in his unified totality. Love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love....

Consequently, sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is by no means something purely 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 a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. The total physical self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving, in which the whole person, including the temporal dimension, is present: if the person were to withhold something or reserve the possibility of deciding otherwise in the future, by this very fact he or she would not be giving totally.

This totality which is required by conjugal love also corresponds to the demands of responsible fertility. This fertility is directed to the generation of a human being, and so by its nature it surpasses the purely biological order and involves a whole series of personal values. For the harmonious growth of these values a persevering and unified contribution of both parents is necessary.

The only "place" in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is marriage, the covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God himself, which only in this light manifests its true meaning. The institution of marriage is not an undue interference by society or authority, nor the extrinsic imposition of a form. Rather it is an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love

which is publicly affirmed as unique and exclusive, in order to live in complete fidelity to the plan of God, the Creator. A person's freedom, far from being restricted by this fidelity, is secured against every form of subjectivism or relativism and is made a sharer in creative Wisdom.(FC, n. 11)

This passage draws attention to a number of personal goods or values including love and communion, the body-spirit unity of human beings, truth (including that of the language of the human body and sexual relations), conjugal love (including its requirements of totality and exclusivity), responsible procreation and parenthood, marriage (including its freely chosen reciprocal covenant and its public affirmation), God (including his love and wisdom), and fidelity to God. These values and their call to human persons to respect them can be experienced by human persons, even without the benefit of Christian revelation. The Christian vision and vocation, however, reinforce and help clarify the importance of always respecting these personal goods or values for our happiness and authentic communion with others including God. The teaching of Pope John Paul II in the above passage, including the clearly implied conclusion that nonmarital sex is always a "lie" and irresponsible, is well-grounded in human experience, properly interpreted. This teaching is also well-grounded in the Bible (the Jewish and Christian Scriptures), Christian tradition, other Catholic teachings, and a holistic Christian anthropology.(cf. Chs. II-V above)

With regard to the Bible, many people today conclude that it presents nonmarital sexual relations including fornication (sexual intercourse between a man and woman not married to each other) as contrary to God's will and plan for human sexuality and marriage. This conclusion is supported by a careful examination of biblical perspectives on sex, marriage and love (see Ch. II above). Many Christians, who believe that the Bible is inspired by God and still relevant today, therefore, conclude that fornication (including premarital sexual intercourse) is always contrary to



God's will or wrong. They often speak of this prohibition as something positive in the light of God knowing and only wanting what is best for us.<sup>6</sup> This conclusion (not necessarily all the approaches and arguments of Christians who come to this conclusion) is supported by official Catholic teaching. Besides Pope John Paul II's teaching cited above, consider, for example, the Vatican's 1975 Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics, which teaches in part that:

[The opinion that sexual union before marriage can be justified, at least in some cases] ...is contrary to Christian doctrine, which states that every genital act must be within the framework of marriage .... it is a stable union that Jesus willed.... St. Paul ... shows that if unmarried people or widows cannot live chastely they have no other alternative than the stable union of marriage .... dissolute sexual union defiles the temple of the Holy Spirit which the Christian has become....

Experience teaches us that love must find its safeguard in the stability of marriage, if sexual intercourse is truly to respond to the requirements of its own finality and to those of human dignity. These requirements call for a conjugal contract sanctioned and guaranteed by society - a contract which establishes a state of life of capital importance both for the exclusive union of the man and the woman and for the good of their family and of the human community....

....As far as the faithful are concerned, their consent to the setting up of a community of conjugal life must be expressed according to the laws of the Church. It is a consent which makes their marriage a sacrament of Christ.(PH, n. 7)

This passage points to values such as a stable and exclusive marital union, human dignity, the dignity of Christians, and Christian marriage as a sacrament of Christ. For a fuller treatment of the

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6. See, e.g., McDowell and Day (see note 1 above), 189-99 and 227-47; Gary Chapman (Baptist), *Toward a Growing Marriage* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 23; John White, *Eros Defiled: The Christian & Sexual Sin* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1977), 50-1; and Andrew Kuyvenhoven, "God Created Sexual Beings", *The Banner: Weekly Publication of the Christian Reformed Church*, Feb. 3, 1986, 6.

teaching of this declaration see Ch. IV.D (cf. also IV.J) above.

A number of contemporary (or recently deceased) ethicists and theologians consider premarital sexual relations including premarital sexual intercourse (or nonmarital sexual relations in general) to be always wrong or immoral. Here we will consider only briefly some of the specific arguments of several of them.

Dietrich von Hildebrand says that if the sexual sphere for human beings is "really nothing more than a biological instinct", it would be incomprehensible why the satisfaction of this instinct should be immoral outside marriage. He considers this to be a seriously erroneous reduction, saying in part:

We cannot grasp the mystery embodied in this sphere until we grasp that its deepest meaning consists in being a unique fulfillment of spousal love and its desire for union. We must realize that this sphere is essentially ordained toward the constitution of a lasting, irrevocable union, the union to which spousal love aspires, and which is sanctioned by God; only then can we grasp the real sinfulness of every isolation of the satisfaction of sexual desire from the constitution of this God sanctioned union. Only when we understand that the sexual act implies a mutual, irrevocable self-donation and is by its very nature called and destined to constitute an indissoluble union, can we see the desecration [spelling corrected] involved in sexual satisfaction outside of marriage.<sup>7</sup>

Paul Ramsey (Methodist), speaking specifically of an "engaged couple", says that,

[if they are] ...really contemplating *pre*-marital sexual relations in the authentic moral meaning of this phrase, then they *know* that they .... are not yet ready to accept all that is implied in their unity in one-flesh and *into* one flesh. They know that ... their engagement to be married at some time in the future, does not make marriage, precisely because they realize that the love they now have for the being and well-being of the other under the concrete circumstances in which this has to be attained

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7. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966), 87.

does not make them as yet acknowledge and accept the responsibilities that should be honoured in the use of their sexual powers. They know they would be taking more and offering less than love requires. They can only *attempt* to act as if they were married... They can only attempt in vain to act as if they are giving and receiving more than they mean to.<sup>8</sup>

Karol Wojtyła, in a mainly philosophical work, says that thanks to man's reasoning power he realizes that he, as well as every other person, is at once his own property (*sui Juris*) and as a creature, the property of the Creator. In order to justify sexual relations between a man and a woman - in their own eyes, in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of society - it is necessary that they give themselves to each other in marriage, that God approves this, and that their union has social recognition (cf. not only the normal consequences of the relationship, but also the requirements of justice and mature interpersonal love). Sexual relations outside marriage (this applies to both premarital and extramarital relationships) are always morally bad.

Without the institution of *matrimonium* the person is necessarily degraded in the sexual relationship to the status of an object of pleasure for another person, and this is totally incompatible with the demands of the personalistic norm, without which one cannot imagine a relationship remaining at the level proper to the person.<sup>9</sup>

William May notes that although there may be some degree of tenderness, affection, and human concern "in the sexual coition of the nonmarried .... there is also something tragic, sad, evil." Concerning this he says in part:

The evil that is present is there precisely because the persons involved are *not* married. They have not

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8. Paul Ramsey, *One Flesh: A Christian View of Sex Within, Outside and Before Marriage* (Bramcote Notts.: Grove Books, 1975), 18.

9. Karol Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II), *Love and Responsibility* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), 222 (cf. 216-24).

given themselves to one another through an act of irrevocable free choice. They have not established the uniqueness and exclusivity of each other. They are, in principle, replaceable, and substitutable. The "love" they offer is not an unconditional, irrevocable gift of self, but a love that is far from being total, far from being oblativ and unconditional. It is a "love" focused on the benefit that each can gain from the other and contingent on this gain. It is a depersonalized kind of love. The unitive significance of human sexuality in its coital/genital expression is trivialized and rendered banal. For the beings united in this act are *not* irreplaceable spouses but replaceable sexual partners.

....the choice to engage in sexual coition by the unmarried violates not only the unitive meaning of human sexuality and dishonors the irreplaceable personhood of those who engage in it, it likewise violates the procreative good of human sexuality and does violence to the irreplaceable personhood of a human life that may be given in it.

[The unmarried] ....precisely because they are unmarried ... cannot - and do not - love in this act of coition one another as they are meant to love one another, to love even as they have been and are loved by God in Christ.

.... Every human being is not merely one individual among many, replaceable as a unit in a larger whole, but every human being is also a *person* made in the image and likeness of God. There is thus a deep connection between sexual morality and social justice. Justice requires that we give to every one what is his or her due. This means recognizing every human being for what a human being *is*: a precious, irreplaceable, nonsubstitutable person. Sexual coition by the unmarried violates justice as well as chastity, because in such coition the priceless worth of the human person is not recognized. The person is treated as an individual, *in principle*, replaceable by another individual, and the person is treated in this way because the uniqueness and irreplaceability of the person has not been established by the consent of the other to be with and for *this person* and no other....

....what makes the parties involved *unmarried* is precisely a lack of love, the inability or

unwillingness to *give oneself irrevocably* to another by the act of marital consent. It is this lack of love that makes it impossible for their genital embrace to have the meaning it is meant to have and ought to have if it is to be an act of true love. It is this absence of love that makes their act of sexual union one in which they needlessly exchange their vulnerability - and the vulnerability, too, of any child who might come into being as a result of their unloving choice.<sup>10</sup>

Paul Quay formulates the basic principle of Christian sexual morality as: "We ought so to engage in the natural sexual activity of body, mind, and heart that its basic symbolic structure is always preserved and honored, so that this structure may serve rightly to symbolize in turn the relations, in the Spirit of the Father, between Christ and His Church." He says that a certain falsehood is involved in fornication. When two unmarried people, even though perhaps engaged, have sexual intercourse with each other,

They sin because they are saying by their act, "I am yours totally, irrevocably, forever," and yet in fact they know that .... they do not mean by this word of love what it means in itself. If they did mean it, they would be married, right on the spot ... and they know that such is not their intention - or, if their intention, not within their power.

Quay continues, saying in part that the sexual union of two unmarried people can never represent

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10. May (see note 2), 150-3. Cf. all of 143-60 regarding "Chastity and the Unmarried", as well as 18-20 where he speaks of the inherent, reciprocal, meaning-giving interrelationship between the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexuality, which is why genital coition is a different kind of touch than every other touch. Regarding this cf. also Pope Paul VI who in HV, n. 12, teaches in part that there is an "inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning. Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman. 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 ordination toward man's most high calling to parenthood. We believe that the men of our day are particularly capable of seizing the deeply reasonable and human character of this fundamental principle." See Ch. IV.C above for a fuller treatment of this Encyclical.

God's relationship with his people, it can never represent "Christ in His union with the Church" or "the Church, to whom Christ has given His Holy Spirit to keep her faithful forever to Himself."<sup>11</sup>

John Kippley has developed a covenant theology of sexual morality. His basic thesis is that, "Sexual intercourse is intended by God to be at least implicitly a renewal of the marriage covenant." This can be rephrased in secular terms as, "Sexual intercourse is meant to be a renewal of the couple's own marriage covenant, a symbol of their commitment of marital love." He argues that a covenant theology of sex, among other things, is simple, biblical, in accord with ordinary language analysis, personalist, ecumenical, applies to all, uses realistic terminology, and simultaneously presents a norm and an ideal. With regard to why a couple should not engage in premarital sex, even if they intend to marry in the near future, he says in part:

The answer is simple: they aren't married yet. They haven't yet 'covenanted' with each other for life.... They are in no way ready to express a covenantal renewal until they have first of all entered something which they can then renew.

.... For a man and woman to attempt to celebrate their love in sexual union before they marry - and in the case of Christians, thus receive the Sacrament of Matrimony - is ... intrinsically dishonest and therefore sinful.<sup>12</sup>

Germain Grisez considers marriage to be a basic intelligible good which is intrinsically, not merely instrumentally, good. He holds that the traditional ends and goods of marriage "are included in the intrinsically good communion of married life itself." With regard to Catholic teaching that the unmarried should never engage in any sexual act (cf. PH, n. 5), he says in part:

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11. Paul Quay, *The Christian Meaning of Human Sexuality* (Evanston, IL: Credo House Books, 1985), 63, 66-67, and 76, respectively.

12. John Kippley, *Sex and the Marriage Covenant: A Basis for Morality* (Cincinnati: The Couple to Couple League International, Inc., 1992), 7-8, and 32-33 (cf. all of Chs. 1 and 2).

.... The basis of this teaching is that all human acts must be evaluated by objective criteria, based on the nature of human persons and human action, and all sexual acts must respect the full meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love (see GS 51).

For the unmarried, all sexual acts are wrong because in one or another way they violate the good of marriage, that is, the good of fully personal one-flesh communion realized in true marital acts. Sexual acts outside marriage also may violate various other goods....

... Fornicators achieve only the illusion of marital communion [because marital consent is necessary to bring about marriage]....<sup>13</sup>

The various ethicists and theologians whose views we have briefly presented here, all conclude that it is always wrong to choose to engage in nonmarital sexual relations, including premarital sexual intercourse. Some written sources have been referred to in the notes where they (and a few other authors who reach the same conclusion) have developed their approaches and arguments more fully. Although their arguments, approaches and language are not exactly the same, they all understand nonmarital sexual relations to violate the basic meaning(s) of human sexual relations and/or one or more important personal goods or values. In general, they argue along one or more of the lines indicated by the passages cited above from Catholic teaching, whether or not they refer

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13. Germain Grisez, with the help of others, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, Vol. Two, *Living a Christian Life* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 568, 648 and 651, respectively. Grisez develops his theology of "Marriage, Sexual Acts, and Family Life" quite extensively in Ch. 9 of this volume. For a few other scholarly treatments that conclude that premarital sexual intercourse is always wrong, see, e.g.: John M. Finnis, "Natural Law and Unnatural Acts", *Heythrop Journal* 11(1970), 365-87; Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 5 above), 177-87; and Benedict Ashley and Kevin O'Rourke, *Ethics of Health Care* (St. Louis: Catholic Health Association of the United States, 1986), "Principle of Personalized Sexuality", 98-100. Cf. also Richard A. McCormick, S.J., who after considering a number of authors' views on premarital sexual relations in his *Notes on Moral Theology: 1965 Through 1980* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1981), says in part, "All the authors cited above are basically at home with the classical Christian tradition that reserves full sexual intimacy to marriage... I am, too. In this sense the problem is above all pastoral..."(459-60).

to this teaching. Some authors say that human sexual relations signify or symbolize, naturally and/or by God's design, a mutual unconditional self-giving. Marriage, including the marriage covenant, reciprocal irrevocable marital consent, corresponds to this meaning. Nonmarital sexual relations are, therefore, dishonest. The unconditional commitment of marriage also corresponds to human sexuality's procreative meaning. Some authors say, implicitly or explicitly, that nonmarital sexual relations violate important goods or values such as the irreplaceable value of each person, truth, justice, procreation, and the good of a possible child. Nonmarital sexual relations therefore can not properly express love for persons and respect their dignity. Some authors also say that nonmarital sexual relations can not properly represent God's faithful unconditional love or the relationship of Christ and the Church.(cf. Ch. V above)

Although many ethicists and theologians are convinced that nonmarital sexual relations, including premarital sexual intercourse, are always wrong, some raise the question of "preceremonial sex". That is, is it possible in certain unusual circumstances for a man and woman to be "actually" married to each other, even though they have not yet expressed their marital consent in a formal legal ceremony? Even if this were possible, theoretically or in certain very unusual cases, this would not justify "premarital" sexual relations which are by definition "before" marriage. We will consider "preceremonial sex" further in Ch. VII.G.

In concluding this section, I would like to offer a few reflections. Being married to each other is an indispensable condition for a man and woman to have sexual relations with each other and to respect properly at the same time the truth and language of their bodies; their unity, integrity and dignity as persons; and God's plan concerning human sexuality, conjugal love, marriage, and procreation. People who are not married to each other cannot have sexual relations with each other



and properly respect these values (and the other values specified in this section) at the same time, under any circumstances. This is precisely because they are not married to each other. They have not reciprocally consented to marry each other in a valid manner. They have not irrevocably given themselves to each other, in a clear and definitive way, in their own eyes, in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of others. It is, therefore, always wrong to choose nonmarital sexual relations, including premarital sexual intercourse. They are objectively immoral or sinful (cf. Ch. V.A.3 regarding sin, including the 4th and 3rd last paragraphs regarding considering evil actions objectively and subjectively, and the question of culpability). They involve an objective impediment to one's unity and authentic communion with God and others, as well as one's true fulfillment, because the values they violate are rooted in who God is, and who we are and who we are called to become, created and redeemed in the "image of God". From a Christian perspective, nonmarital sexual relations violate values embodied in Jesus Christ, true God and true man. They contradict the call to follow Jesus, to love as God, as Jesus, loves. They are counterproductive regarding growing in the Christian virtues and one's transformation in Christ.(cf. Ch. V above)<sup>14</sup> Although nonmarital sexual

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14. What is said in this section concerning premarital sexual intercourse being a kind of behavior that is always wrong to choose, can be related to Catholic teaching that there are certain kinds of acts that it is always wrong to choose. Cf. CCC, nn. 1749-61; and Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (Ottawa: CCCB, 1993), nn. 76-83; regarding the object chosen of deliberate acts and intrinsically evil acts. Both of these documents name fornication and a few other kinds of acts such as murder as examples of such acts that it is always wrong to choose. CCC, n. 1755, says in part, "There are some concrete acts - such as fornication - that it is always wrong to choose, because choosing them entails a disorder of the will, that is, a moral evil." Catholic teaching, following Thomas Aquinas (cf. ST I-II,18,a.6), considers the object to be the primary source of the morality of human acts. The two other sources, which are also important to consider, are the intention (cf. the person's motive or motives) and circumstances (including consequences). Sections C-D below consider premarital sexual intercourse with respect to these. Neither circumstances nor good intentions, however, can make intrinsically evil acts good. "One may not do evil so that good may result from it."(CCC, nn. 1756 and 1761) "A *morally good* act requires the goodness of the object, of the end, and of the circumstances together."(CCC, n. 1755) For a few scholarly treatments that are consistent with this approach to the morality of human actions see, e.g.,

relations, including premarital sexual intercourse, are objectively immoral, they are not unpardonable "sins". See K below regarding forgiveness, healing and hope.

### **C. Not Motivated by a Properly Ordered Love**

Whenever a person deliberately does something, whether voluntary premarital sexual intercourse or some other act, he or she always has some reason or motive or purpose for acting. When one acts deliberately one has some intended goal or end in mind. People who engage in premarital sexual relations do so for various reasons. Josh McDowell and Dick Day, for example, treat thirty-seven reasons why many young people have premarital sex. Integrated into their treatment are many comments of a number of young people themselves. Often the motivation of a person engaging in premarital sexual intercourse is complex, involving more than one "reason".<sup>15</sup>

Some of the reasons why many people engage in premarital sex are clearly selfish. They are not related to a mutually caring relationship. The other person is not respected as a person but is merely used as a means of pleasure or release and/or something else.(see Ch. VII.C below) Along Thomas J. O'Donnell, S.J., *Medicine and Christian Morality* (New York: Alba House, 1975), 23-24; Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 5 above), 88-97, regarding "The Morality of Principles"; and Ashley and O'Rourke (see note 13 above), 85 and 88-9, regarding "Prudential Personalism" and "The Principle of Moral Discernment". In Ch. VII.I below we will consider a few other approaches to ethics, including the morality of premarital sex.

I personally agree with the Catholic approach to the morality of human actions. For an act of a person to be morally good, the person needs to respect properly all the morally relevant values involved in the choice of the act itself, in his (her) intention(s), and in the circumstances in which he (she) performs the act. This is consistent with a properly ordered love of God, oneself and others. Cf. also Ch. V.B.1 regarding following Jesus, in particular the 4th-2nd last paragraphs regarding loving as God loves and intentions, goals, actions, circumstances and consequences.

15. See McDowell and Day (see note 1 above), 71-185. Although they do not think that any of the reasons why many young people have premarital sex actually justifies this behavior, they think that considering these reasons can help one to understand the various pressures and lack of information and proper understanding of sex that many young people experience.

these lines, Germain Grisez observes that:

Sometimes one party to fornication is merely using the other to masturbate, and very often both parties' motives include a masturbatory component. Again, sometimes one party is treating his or her body as a mere instrument, either to motivate the other to do something - for example, to pay money or propose marriage - or to provide emotional and/or social satisfactions, such as a confirmation of masculinity or femininity, the thrill of conquest, and/or popularity. Such uses of the body as an instrument differ from masturbation in their motives but are like it in their moral character, since they violate the body insofar as it is a capacity for the self-giving which constitutes a communion of bodily persons.<sup>16</sup>

(We will consider masturbation in Ch. VIII.A.)

Some other reasons why many people engage in premarital sex "claim" to be related to love or to the good of the persons involved. Since a number of these reasons or arguments, which attempt to justify premarital sexual intercourse, will be analyzed in Ch. VII, we will only briefly consider here one such reason. The following motive for nonmarital sexual intercourse, discussed by Germain Grisez, may seem to many people to be conducive to mutual love and communion, but it really is not. Concerning this he says in part that:

...although [some] fornicators do choose the bodily union and experience of intimacy pertaining to the good of marriage, that good cannot be the immediate motive of their choice [because marital consent is necessary to bring about marriage]. Assuming their act is neither masturbatory nor manipulative, its immediate motive is only an emotional desire to share together in the experience of intimate communion. In choosing to act on that motive, they ensure that whatever experience of communion they achieve is only illusory, not an experience of the reality in which they are interested.

In choosing to do something which is capable of yielding only an illusion of participation in the

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16. Grisez (see note 13 above), 651.

good in which one is interested, a person forgoes choosing to do what would here and now really participate either in that good or some other available in the situation .... and such a choice always is unreasonable....<sup>17</sup>

In the next chapter of this book (VII), which provides some analysis of some contemporary arguments for premarital sexual intercourse, a number of the "reasons" why young and not so young people choose to have premarital sex will be examined more closely. None of the reasons or motives for engaging in premarital sexual intercourse, however, is really according to a properly ordered love of oneself, other persons and God (cf. the conclusions of this chapter and the next, as well as much of the material of Chs. II-V).

The following insight of Pope John Paul II is also helpful with regard to evaluating motives:

...an intention [i.e. the motive of a deliberately chosen act] is good when it has as its aim the true good of the person in view of his ultimate end. But acts whose object [i.e. a freely chosen kind of behavior] is "not capable of being ordered" to God and "unworthy of the human person" are always and in every case in conflict with that good. Consequently, respect for norms which prohibit such acts and oblige ... without any exception, not only does not inhibit a good intention, but actually represents its basic expression.<sup>18</sup>

Premarital sexual intercourse, as we considered in the previous section (B), is a kind of behavior that is always wrong to choose. Such a choice always involves a failure to respect properly

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17. Ibid., 652 (cf. all of 651-3). Cf., e.g., Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 5), 182, who say in part that premarital sexual relations chosen to promote and express "love" abound "in self-deception and mutual exploitation."; and Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), 201, who speaks of the illusion that is almost always present as a result of premarital sexual intercourse.

18. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (see note 14 above), n. 82 (cf. also n. 78). Cf. also CCC, nn. 1749-61, regarding the sources of the morality of human acts including the intention(s) or end(s) in view of the acting subject; as well as the other sources referred to in note 14 above.

important goods such as truth, the unity and dignity of persons, and marriage, and God's purposes for human sexuality and marriage. Such a choice is, therefore, not conducive, but is rather an objective impediment, to one's integral fulfillment, true communion with other persons and God. Any motive or reason for choosing this behavior, freely doing this act, is, therefore, an improper motive. At the very least it is misguided. A properly ordered love of oneself, others and God will never motivate anyone to choose to have premarital sexual intercourse. Nor would God ever guide, influence or inspire anyone to do something that is objectively contrary to his will and human dignity. Such would involve God contradicting himself and his love for us which is impossible. Any motive for choosing premarital sexual intercourse is also incompatible with following Jesus and being transformed in Christ, because these include wanting to do God's will in everything and growing in loving as God, as Jesus, loves.(cf. Ch. V.B above)

### **D. Many Harmful Consequences**

Many contemporary discussions of premarital sexual intercourse consider harmful consequences such as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and pregnancy in situations when the mother and father are not ready to be parents. There is much written today, both by non-Christians and Christians, concerning the various risks and harmful consequences of premarital sex, and about which means to use to try to reduce or prevent these risks and harmful consequences.<sup>19</sup>

Premarital sex, in general, has many harmful consequences. These pertain to the various

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19. Cf., e.g., The Alan Guttmacher Institute, *Sex and America's Teenagers* (New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994); Dinah Richard, Ph.D., *Has Sex Education Failed Our Teenagers?: A Research Report* (Pomona, CA: Focus on the Family Publishing, 1990); and McDowell and Day (see note 1 above), Part 3.

dimensions of human persons and relationships including the biological or physical, psychological, social, economic, moral and spiritual dimensions. Not all of these harmful consequences, however, result in every individual case of premarital sexual intercourse. For example, although many people who have premarital sex acquire one or more STDs and/or the man (or boy) impregnates the woman (or girl), this does not happen in all cases. The risks of these consequences can vary significantly depending on such factors as how many sexual partners one and/or one's partner have had, and how fertile one and one's partner are, respectively.

The extent of premarital sex's harmful psychological, social and economic consequences can also vary somewhat, depending on various factors in individual cases. For example, psychological wounds or scars can vary depending on factors such as whether or not one was rejected in a relationship involving premarital sex, and one's level of emotional maturity. It seems to me that voluntary nonmarital sex, including voluntary premarital sexual intercourse, however, always involves a certain type of psychosomatic disorder. This is because there is a serious discrepancy between one's psyche (cf. the lack of total giving or commitment of mind, heart and will) and the inherent body language and symbolism of total giving, receiving and surrender of sexual intercourse. With regard to the varying social and economic costs of premarital sex, consider, for example, two women who are single parents as a result of premarital sex. One is in her thirties, is independent financially, and has a good network of social supports; the other dropped out of school at the age of sixteen when she was pregnant and had the baby, and is now nineteen years old, on welfare, estranged from her family, struggling to care for the child, and has many emotional problems herself.

In any case, there are always harmful moral and spiritual consequences for those who

voluntarily have premarital sexual intercourse, since this is a kind of behavior that is always wrong to choose (see B above). As one of many kinds of sinful behavior, premarital sex has negative effects on one's relationships with God, oneself, and others. Although certain factors can increase or diminish, or even eliminate in some cases, the sinner's culpability, the sin of premarital sex always has serious negative moral, spiritual and relational effects.(cf. Ch. V.A.3 above) This is because it is indispensable for our integral fulfillment that we properly respect the important values or goods that premarital sex always violates: the unity, integrity and dignity of the persons involved, truth, justice, self-giving and faithful love, marriage, and God. Premarital sex also violates God's plan concerning human sexuality, marriage, procreation and the family.(cf. all of Ch. V above).

In sections E-H below we will consider how choosing to have premarital sexual intercourse fails to love properly oneself and one's partner, a possible child, other people, and God. In these sections we will consider in more detail a number of the many possible and actual harmful consequences of premarital sexual intercourse. This is not intended as a kind of "scare tactic", but to provide some specific material relevant to informing consciences and fulfilling responsibilities, including professional and parental responsibilities, in this area.(cf. Chs. I and IX) Risks of negative consequences should be considered in a truthful manner, neither exaggerating nor minimizing them. They should also be treated in a way that promotes a properly ordered love of oneself, others and God. For example, in considering statistics of certain harmful consequences, one should keep in mind that each "statistic" is a real person who has been harmed.

Although one can not eliminate all risks from this life, the responsible person will seek to minimize or eliminate various risks of harm for oneself and others as much as is reasonably possible. In doing good actions, in carrying out one's responsibilities, the responsible person will

try to minimize any risks of harmful consequences that are associated with one's work, recreation, getting from one place to another, and so on. With regard to evil or immoral actions, however, the responsible person will simply choose not to do these. In this way one will also avoid the possible and actual harmful consequences associated with such actions or behaviors. Since premarital sexual intercourse is a kind of behavior that is always wrong and irresponsible to choose (cf. B above), the responsible person will never choose to engage in this behavior. If one has already had premarital sexual intercourse or is in a relationship involving premarital sex, the responsible course of action is to take the necessary steps not to engage in this behavior again. In this way one does not merely try to reduce the risks associated with premarital sex; one avoids completely all the possible and actual harmful consequences of having or continuing to have premarital sexual intercourse.

With regard to objectively immoral behavior, the focus needs to be on avoiding or stopping the behavior, not on trying to avoid only its harmful consequences. Compare someone who robs banks and the possible and actual harmful consequences for the person and others. Consider someone who takes and/or sells illegal drugs, or drinks too much liquor, or any other kind of behavior that is always irresponsible or immoral in itself. Do we merely focus on trying to reduce the risks of harmful consequences, or do we foster the appropriate attitude and behavior changes? Chapter IX below includes some discussion of one's responsibilities with respect to other people who already are or may become involved in premarital sexual relations, and some proposed means of trying to reduce or eliminate the risks they face.<sup>20</sup>

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20. With regard to Catholic teaching on the morality of human acts and circumstances, including consequences, CCC, n. 1754, teaches: "The *circumstances*, including the consequences, are secondary elements of a moral act. They contribute to increasing or diminishing the moral goodness or evil of human acts (for example, the amount of a theft). They can also diminish or increase the agent's responsibility (such as acting out of a fear of death). Circumstances of themselves cannot change the moral quality of acts themselves; they can make neither good nor



### **E. Fails to Love Properly Oneself and One's Partner**

Valid arguments against or reasons not to have premarital sexual intercourse can be related to the person who chooses to engage in this behavior failing to love properly himself or herself and his or her partner. As we have considered above (A-D), the virtue of chastity requires nonmarital sexual abstinence, premarital sexual intercourse is a kind of behavior that is always wrong to choose, it is not motivated by a properly ordered love, and associated with it are many harmful consequences.

Sexual intercourse between a man and woman of its very structure or nature involves a very intimate, reciprocal and total physical giving, receiving and surrender that naturally expresses or communicates a complete, unreserved, reciprocal giving and receiving of the partners as persons, because each is an embodied person.<sup>21</sup> If both have unconditionally given and committed themselves to each other in marriage, then they can give themselves completely to each other in sexual intercourse, without reservations or hypocrisy. In a premarital (before marriage) relationship the partners have by definition not given and committed themselves to each other in an unconditional, irrevocable, definitive manner (cf. the meaning of marital consent). In premarital right an action that is in itself evil." Cf. also the other sources mentioned in note 14 above. Since voluntary premarital sexual intercourse is an action that is evil in itself, the many harmful consequences associated with this behavior only increase the moral evil of the act. One who is an unwilling victim of an evil act, for example, sexual assault, however, is not doing evil.

21. Cf. Guindon (see note 1 above), 413-14; and Philippe Delhayé, Secretary of the International Theological Commission (in 1976), "Human and Christian Values of Sexuality", *L'Osservatore Romano*, English weekly ed., Feb. 12, 1976, 8, who says in part: "For a good many of our contemporaries, the appeal to nature brings with it the fear that the whole contribution of culture and human history will be forgotten. They tend at once to swing to the opposite error, which suppresses all stability in man's structure or in the 'plan' willed by God. This is to forget that nature and culture are closely mingled, since culture is the development, under God's eyes, of the nature that man has received .... it is necessary to be able to distinguish the changeable from the unchangeable. the accidental from the essential: 'The Church maintains that beneath all changes there are many realities which do not change and which have their ultimate foundation in Christ, who is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever'(GS, n. 10)...."

sexual intercourse, therefore, a man and a woman (or a boy and a girl) can not give themselves completely and unreservedly to each other. Engaging in this action voluntarily necessarily involves a "lie", some dishonesty, duplicity and hypocrisy on one's part.(cf. B above)

The person who voluntarily has premarital sexual intercourse thus violates his or her own dignity, integrity and authenticity as a personal subject, as well as the personal dignity of his or her partner. He or she acts irresponsibly or immorally by failing to respect properly not only the values of truth, in particular the inherent total giving and receiving language or nuptial meaning of human sexual intercourse, and the unity as embodied persons of oneself and one's partner, but also the values of justice, total self-giving and faithful love, procreation, marriage, including its irrevocable covenant of conjugal love, God, and the great dignity of oneself, one's partner, and a possible child, as human persons. Properly respecting these morally relevant personal goods or values is indispensable for one's integral fulfillment and for one to experience authentic communion with God and other persons. One cannot remain properly open to these values, if one chooses and acts in ways that fail to respect them properly, such as in voluntary premarital sexual intercourse. If one repeats such choices and actions, one will tend to become more and more insensitive and closed to appreciating the true worth of these values, perhaps even becoming completely blind to them.

The person who voluntarily has premarital sexual intercourse sins by failing to respect and love properly: these personal goods, which are rooted in God and reflect his goodness in a remarkable way; human persons (including oneself and one's partner), who are created in God's "image", loved unconditionally by him, and meant to be "temples" of his Holy Spirit; and God's purposes and plan for human sexuality and marriage. This not only harms one's own moral integrity. It also has serious harmful or alienating effects in terms of one's relationships with oneself and other persons,

including one's partner and God.(cf. A and B above; and Ch. V including A.3 regarding sin)

Anyone who is really a "partner" in premarital sexual intercourse is involved voluntarily. His or her choice is always wrong, irresponsible, immoral and sinful too for the same reasons. Such a choice has the same serious alienating effects for him or her and is counterproductive in terms of his or her integral fulfillment too. Partners in premarital sexual intercourse are thus accomplices in sin who hurt themselves and each other. If a man and a woman (or a boy and a girl) really love themselves and each other in a premarital relationship, they will choose to act in ways that are really conducive rather than counterproductive to their integral fulfillment. They will attempt to avoid all irresponsible, immoral and sinful behaviors, including having sexual relations with each other. They will attempt to limit their expression of love and affection to moral ways that are appropriate for their relationship.(See also Ch. VIII.B below regarding sexual petting and the proper expression of love and affection in premarital relationships) They will also encourage each other to grow in a properly ordered love of God, others and oneself, including the virtue of chastity. If they are Christians, followers of Jesus, they will also try to keep their relationship "in the Lord" by loving one another as he loves them. They will always try to treat each other as a beloved son or daughter of God the Father, as a brother or sister of Jesus, and as a "temple" of the Holy Spirit.(cf. A-D above and F-K below; and Ch. V)

In this section we are mainly focusing on premarital sexual intercourse that is freely consented to by both parties, and therefore immoral behavior on both their parts. If one has sexual relations with another person without her (or his) consent, there is added the grave injustice of sexual assault (cf. Ch. VIII.C below). We can also speak of the sin of sexual seduction, whereby one intentionally tempts or leads another to engage in an immoral sexual behavior such as premarital sexual

intercourse. "Seduction often involves grave deceit, for example, when a man persuades a woman to fornicate by insincerely promising to marry her if she should become pregnant."<sup>22</sup>

Dietrich von Hildebrand, however, correctly points out that:

...it is wrong to believe that we only injure another person when we impose something on him [or her] against his will. The fact that another person likes it does not yet decide whether it is really in his best interest, a real objective good for him. If I know that someone is in danger of becoming an alcoholic and I invite him to drink with me, he may like it very much; but I wrong him undoubtedly in doing so.... This is certainly a very different case than the one of sexual desire; but it proves that the question whether someone likes it is in no way decisive. In the misuse of sex .... it is something even more precious [than a person's health, which is hurt in the case of an alcoholic] which I hurt in him: his dignity as a person. In inducing him to abuse the bodily union, or even only yielding to his desire for such an abuse, I degrade his dignity as a person first, because he becomes a means for my pleasure; and secondly, because I accept the fact that he throws himself away, that he betrays his secret, that he accomplishes a false self-donation and stains himself by a desecration.

Apart from this immoral attitude toward the other, this disrespect and lack of charity against him, the very throwing away of *oneself* is something immoral. We also have moral obligations toward ourselves.

[The great good of marriage] ....includes the gift of our heart and body to another person .... the desecration of the mysterious bodily union of two persons is immoral and base; I wrong myself and the other person in cheating myself and him of the great gift which spousal love can bestow.<sup>23</sup>

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22. Grisez (see note 13), 655. He also says, "The seduction of a virgin, other things being equal, is especially wrong, since she loses both the intrinsic and social value of her virginity..."; and briefly treats bestiality, sadism and masochism regarding sex, rape, prostitution and incest, which all violate human dignity in serious ways.(655)

23. Von Hildebrand (see note 7), 26-27.

We can also recall here briefly Pope John Paul II's teaching regarding one of sin's negative effects on the man-woman relationship: the relationship of mutual giving and receiving is transformed into a relationship of unilateral or mutual selfish appropriation, "using" or exploitation, and the communion of persons is harmed or destroyed.(see Ch. V.A.3, par. 5) This "taking" is quite apparent, for example, when a man simply "uses" a woman for his sexual satisfaction. Anyone who freely engages in sin, including the sin of premarital sexual intercourse, however, is "taking", motivated by selfishness or a disordered love. Along these lines, Josh McDowell and Dick Day point out that:

Love always gives and always seeks the best interests of the other person. Premarital sex takes. Each individual has his or her own goal in having sex before marriage, but each is in it for personal reasons. The problem is, the taking can sometimes look like giving....

A girl may "give her boyfriend what he wants," thus making it look as though she is giving to him in love, but she does it from a personal motive. She may want the security he provides. She may want to achieve popularity by being his girlfriend. She may have one of a dozen other reasons, but her "giving" is actually a form of taking. She is manipulating him for her own ends. It takes maturity and understanding to realize this, something a girl who behaves like that does not have.<sup>24</sup>

Besides the basic and serious immorality on the part of both the man and the woman (or boy and girl) who freely have premarital sexual intercourse, anyone who voluntarily engages in this behavior also fails to care properly for oneself and one's partner by unnecessarily and irresponsibly exposing oneself and one's partner to many other possible and actual harmful consequences. Some of these consequences can impact a person long into the future, even if he or she repents of the sinful behavior, is open to God's redemptive love and receives God's forgiveness.(cf. D above; and

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24. McDowell and Day (see note 1), 255.

Ch. V.A.5 regarding redemption) Here we will consider some of these harmful consequences which are often referred to in arguments against premarital sexual intercourse.

### **Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)**

STDs are widespread today. For instance, in the United States there are now twelve million new sexually transmitted infections each year, up from four million in 1980.

About 25% of sexually experienced adolescents become infected each year.... A wide variety of diseases can be transmitted through sexual intimacy.... Some diseases, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis and syphilis, can generally be cured quite easily if they are detected and treated early. On the other hand, viral infections - such as HPV, genital herpes, hepatitis B and HIV - cannot be cured and can be transmitted to sexual partners even years after initial infection. Some 56 million Americans - more than one in five - are estimated to be infected with a viral STD other than HIV; 1 million are believed to have the virus that causes AIDS.<sup>25</sup>

Some STDs such as chlamydia are hard to detect. Some generally curable STDs such as gonorrhea and syphilis have penicillin-resistant strains. The non-curable and widespread viral disease of HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) increases a woman's chances of developing cancer of the cervix, vulva, vagina or anus, and a man's chances of developing cancer of the penis or anus. The risk of cervical cancer increases the earlier the woman (girl) first has intercourse (especially under the age of seventeen) and the more sexual partners she has. Hepatitis B increases one's chances of getting liver

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25. Guttmacher (see note 19 above), 38. For some statistics on STDs in Canada see: *Report on Adolescent Reproductive Health* (Ottawa: Health and Welfare Canada, 1990), 2-5. It is beyond the purposes of my book to provide a comprehensive analysis of the statistics that are reported from other sources, or to present statistics from many places. The reader should keep in mind that many factors can affect certain statistics and how they are presented. The statistics that are reported in this book are simply meant to show in a general way how widespread certain problems are, whether or not certain means effectively deal with these problems, how prevalent certain behaviors and attitudes are, and so on. The underlying concern here is with real people and what is beneficial or detrimental in terms of their integral fulfillment.

cancer. Thus AIDS is not the only STD that can lead to a premature death.<sup>26</sup>

...Many of the most serious problems associated with STDs result from undetected chlamydial and gonorrheal infections. If untreated, these diseases can develop into pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women and epididymitis in men, which in turn can lead to infertility and... in women, to ectopic pregnancy.<sup>27</sup>

Both chlamydia and gonorrhea can initially have no symptoms in a man or woman and do damage before they are recognized. "Infertility following the development of pelvic inflammatory disease occurs in ... approximately 100,000 American women each year..."<sup>28</sup> Many women, as well as many men, who become infertile as a result of an STD, only realize this later when they want to become parents. STDs including HIV, which can be transmitted during pregnancy and by breast milk, can have various devastating effects on the human fetus and newborn child.

Condoms are often promoted as a means to "safe" or "safer" sex. In practice, however, they are not a highly effective means of birth control and there are reasons to think that they offer even less protection against STDs. For instance, sexual relations between a man and woman can only result in pregnancy during a few days of her cycle (taking into account the time of ovulation, and sperm and ovum survival times), whereas STDs can be transmitted at any time.

Among the data that dispel safe sex is the fact that condoms have an overall 10 percent failure rate

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26. Cf. Hanna Klaus, M.D., "The Existential Isolation of Contraception", *Linacre Quarterly*, Nov. 1992, 29; Richard (see note 19 above), 24; and Guttmacher (see note 19 above), 38-40.

27. Guttmacher (see note 19 above), 38-9.

28. Marsha Goldsmith, "Sexually Transmitted Diseases May Reverse the 'Revolution'", *Medical News and Perspectives*, 255 (Apr. 4, 1986):13, 1665-72, as cited in McDowell and Day (see note 1 above), 214. Cf. also Stephen Genuis, M.D., *Risky Sex: The Onslaught of Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (Edmonton: KEG Publishing, 1991), 27-29. This interesting and informative book, based on the author's medical practice and research, clearly illustrates the seriousness of STDs and the problems associated with them.

to prevent pregnancy [i.e. per woman user year], and they have an even higher failure rate in preventing the spread of the AIDS virus, evidently because the AIDS virus is so small. When condoms are not used in a highly disciplined way, the failure rate increases, which accounts for why teenagers have a higher condom failure rate (18%).<sup>29</sup>

Although it may be accurate to say that the "proper" use of a condom reduces the risk of transmission of some STDs including AIDS by sexual intercourse involving an infected partner, the risks are still significant. With regard to this, the United States Public Health Service, for example, has

...cautioned that - even with a condom - any type of intercourse with a person known to be infected with the AIDS virus is so dangerous to an uninfected partner that anyone in such a situation should "consider alternative methods of expressing physical intimacy."<sup>30</sup>

There also exist a number of STDs, including the common HPV and genital herpes, for which the condom offers "little, if any, protection". There is no cure for either of these viruses which "are frequently found in various locations of the external genital tract (e.g. vulva, clitoris, anal and groin areas)", that is, beyond the range of the condom. "...this is particularly disturbing when one considers that there is at least a 50% chance of transmission of HPV with a single sexual encounter with an infected person." HPV increases the risk of various cancers; genital herpes often produces

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29. Richard (see note 19 above), 25.

30. Allan Parachini, "Condom Failure Stressed by Panel", *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 18, 1989, 24. Cf. also Margaret Fischl, MD, et al., "Evaluation of Heterosexual Partners, Children, and Household Contacts of Adults With AIDS", *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Feb. 6, 1987, 640-4; and "Chastity urged to slow AIDS spread", *The Edmonton Journal*, Feb. 7, 1993, A6, which reports that in Uganda, the country in Africa worst hit by AIDS, not only the country's Catholic bishops, but also its Anglican bishops, have fought efforts by various groups to promote condom use to fight AIDS.



recurring painful sores or ulcers; both can harm the human fetus and newborn.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from condoms being an inadequate means to prevent the transmission of STDs, their use for this purpose also contradicts the inherent marital/total reciprocal self-giving and receiving and procreative meanings of human sexual intercourse. Their use certainly can not justify premarital sexual intercourse which is in itself always wrong to choose.(Cf. B above; Ch. IV.E, FC, nn. 11 and 32; and the treatment of the morality of contraception under "Premarital Pregnancy" below.)

The reality of STDs and their various serious harmful consequences, for the well-informed, strongly discourage promiscuity and support the position that sex should be reserved for a mutually monogamous lifetime relationship or marriage. "...many physicians and public health officials are redefining safe sex to mean premarital abstinence, marital fidelity, and total abstinence among infected persons."<sup>32</sup> If Christian and other teachings (cf. e.g., B above, and that of the Jewish writer Philo cited in Ch. II.B, par. 1) on sexual abstinence for the unmarried and marital fidelity were universally practiced, human STDs would virtually disappear.

Human STDs are detrimental to such important values as human health, life and fertility. In a premarital relationship the parties are not unconditionally committed to each other and often do not know each other really well. If one is sexually involved, the risks of getting one or more STDs is generally quite significant. If one's partner is willing to be dishonest with his or her body by

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31. Genuis (see note 28), 72. Cf. *ibid.*, 30-32, and Ch. 8; Guttmacher (see note 19), 39; and Focus on the Family, *In Defense of a Little Virginity* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1992), which appeared in over 1200 U.S. and 120 Canadian newspapers in 1993 (*The Edmonton Journal*, Dec. 18, 1993, B6).

32. Richard (see note 19), 26, referring to the Joint Statement of Bennett and Koop and James J. Goedert, "What Is Safe Sex? Suggested Standards Linked to Testing for Human Immunodeficiency Virus," *New England Journal of Medicine* (5/21/87), 1339-41. Cf., e.g., also Guindon (see note 1), 395-404; and McDowell and Day (see note 1), 215-16, who refer to a personal interview with Surgeon General Koop, among some other sources.

having premarital sexual intercourse (cf. this section, par. 2), he or she may also be dishonest about his or her sexual past. We should also note here that fairness requires that a person, who knows he or she has or may have an STD (e.g. one has had sexual relations with someone else), not hide this from a prospective marriage partner. With regard to such things compare Catholic Church law which states: "A person contracts invalidly who enters marriage inveigled by deceit, perpetrated in order to secure consent, concerning some quality of the other party, which of its very nature can seriously disrupt the partnership of conjugal life."(CIC, canon 1098) An STD can seriously harm or destroy the health, life and/or fertility of oneself and/or one's spouse/sexual partner, as well as the health and/or life of one's children (cf. the various harmful effects of STDs on the human fetus and newborn). It seems to me that it could "seriously disrupt the partnership of conjugal life", if one enters "marriage" with someone, while deliberately concealing the fact that one has or may have an STD.

### **Premarital Pregnancy**

Pregnancy as a result of premarital sexual intercourse, in general, results in many problems or difficulties, first of all for the woman and man (or girl and boy) directly involved. (We will consider some of the disadvantages or costs to the child and others in F and G below.) When pregnancy, childbirth and parenting occur responsibly within a loving, committed marriage, where they are meant to occur, they are meaningful experiences which contribute in many ways to the couple's overall fulfillment. Although pregnancy can also pose difficulties for a married couple, it generally is much more problematic in a nonmarital relationship, where the partners have not irrevocably given and unconditionally committed themselves to support each other for life. They are, therefore, not in a situation to parent together properly, as a deeply united team. There is always something

"tragic" about premarital pregnancy. In a premarital relationship, the parties have often not completed their schooling and/or job training. They are often not ready to be parents - financially, emotionally, and in other ways. There is also often some stigma to conceiving and raising a child out of wedlock, although tolerance and acceptance of this varies culturally.

Many women (or girls), as well as men (or boys), who engage in premarital sex use contraceptives for the purpose of avoiding unintended pregnancy. No method of conception prevention, however, except complete sexual abstinence is 100 percent effective. For example, according to one source, from 1984-1987, the percent of never-married women who became pregnant in the first year of condom or pill use was: a) for condoms, 13-27% for women aged 19 and younger, 15-31% for women aged 20-24, 13-27% for women aged 25-29, and 10-21% for women 30 and older; and b) for pills, 6-13% of women aged 19 and younger, 7-15% for women aged 20-24, 6-13% for women aged 25-29, and 4-10% for women 30 and older.<sup>33</sup> Another source reports "that among teenagers who used the Pill with a high rate of compliance, 18 percent reported at least one pregnancy within the first year of use."<sup>34</sup> Thus, many who engage in sexual relations experience pregnancy, notwithstanding the use of contraceptives such as condoms and birth control pills.

According to research, oral contraceptives also "increase the risk of blood clots, strokes and

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33. Guttmacher (see note 19 above), 37, Figure 27, Source: E.F. Jones and J.D. Forrest, "Contraceptive Failure Rates Based on the 1988 NSFG, *Family Planning Perspectives*, 24:12-19, 1992, Table 2, p. 15. The lower and higher percentages for each age group represent a classification according to higher and lower (poor and low) incomes respectively. Guttmacher, 35, also reports that most users of condoms and pills do not use them perfectly since they require "both motivation and a constancy of attention and action that is difficult for married adults, let alone teenagers and others who are not in stable, long-term relationships, to maintain." All contraceptive methods have pregnancy rates, however, even if used "perfectly".

34. Richard (see note 19), 23, Source: Martin Fisher, et al., "Comparative Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Diaphragm and Birth Control Pill During the First Year of Use Among Suburban Adolescents," *Journal of Adolescent Health Care*, Sept. 1987, 393-5.

heart attacks..."; they can affect the action of certain medications, and they may give unpleasant reactions such as nausea and water retention. Not only anti-implantation methods such as the "morning after pill", but also other oral contraceptives may work at times by preventing the implantation of an early human embryo, in particular, "in cases where ovulation may not have been blocked, for example when a woman forgets to take one pill or a few, or is on the low dose formulas."<sup>35</sup>

Besides possible pregnancy with all methods of contraception, and health risks with some of them, all methods of direct contraception are immoral in themselves. In the context of premarital sexual intercourse which is already always wrong to choose (cf. B above), their use adds another immoral behavior. In deliberately using or agreeing with the use of direct contraceptives, one or both of the parties aims at contradicting the inherent total self-giving and receiving meaning of sexual intercourse (one's fertility and/or that of one's partner, which is an integral part of oneself and one's partner, is deliberately rejected), as well as its procreative potential or meaning. Directly contraceptive methods fail to respect properly important personal values such as the personal dignity of the parties and human procreation, as well as God's marital/unitive and procreative purposes for conjugal genital relations. The deliberate rejection of an integral part of oneself can also harm one's proper sense of personal worth. Consider, for example, how oral contraceptives treat a woman's

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35. Dr. Suzanne Parenteau-Carreau, *Love and Life: Fertility and Conception Prevention* (Ottawa: Serena Canada, 4th ed. 1989). The quotations are from 43 and 42 respectively. Cf. all of 41-44 regarding oral contraceptives, and 39-46 regarding other contraceptive and anti-implantation methods as well. Cf. also, e.g., Stuart Fox, *Human Physiology* (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1984), 660-1, regarding serious health risks of oral contraceptives and intrauterine devices. May (see note 2), 128, speaks of the abortive character of intra-uterine devices (IUDs), and says, "...the pills now in use, may also at times act not contraceptively but abortifaciently, and their users can not tell whether they inhibit conception or abort. Thus, to use them is to be willing to destroy the life of a child already conceived."

great gift of fertility as a "disease" and how condoms treat a man's gift of fertility as a "contagious infection".<sup>36</sup> Since the life of a new human being begins at fertilization, someone who, for birth control purposes, deliberately uses a method that impedes implantation is also failing to respect properly the great value of human life. Methods that aim at treating a pathological condition or some other serious problem (e.g. treating cancer, an ovarian cyst, a serious problem with a woman's cycle...), and which unintentionally render a person infertile, however, can be moral for proportionate reasons. The intention of the parties and the moral meaning of such is quite different from direct contraception.<sup>37</sup>

In the United States over one million adolescent women (roughly 12%) get pregnant every year.

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36. Cf., e.g., May (see note 2), 129, who regarding barrier methods of contraception such as condoms and diaphragms says in part: "When we wish to touch someone tenderly, with a depth of human affection, we do not put on gloves to keep ourselves from getting into too close contact with them. Yet this is what barrier methods of contraception require! It is as though contracepting partners regard one another as diseased objects that they can touch only with caution."

37. Cf. parts of Chs. IV and V regarding contraception (see the index); Klaus (see note 26), 31-2; and works such as Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 5), 151-72; Ashley and O'Rourke (see note 13), 119-31; and Janet Smith, *Why Humanae Vitae Was Right: A Reader* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), regarding the morality of contraception and sterilization, including the moral difference of contraceptive and natural family planning (NFP) methods. The newer ovulation and sympto-thermal methods of NFP can be highly effective if used properly. Using NFP within marriage for just reasons can be an exercise of responsible parenthood. The periodic abstinence involved in using NFP to avoid conception can involve refraining from using the great God-given gift of fertility when it is inappropriate to use it, rather than rejecting it. Using NFP, however, can not be used to justify premarital sex which is always wrong to choose. Regarding the life of a new human being beginning at fertilization see, e.g., Paul Flaman, "When Did I Begin? Another Critical Response to Norman Ford", *Linacre Quarterly*, Nov. 1991, 39-55; William E. May, "The Moral Status of the Embryo", *Linacre Quarterly*, Nov. 1992, 76-83; and CDF (approved by Pope John Paul II), "Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation" *Donum Vitae* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1987), I.1, which says in part: "...the fruit of human generation, from the first moment of its existence, that is to say from the moment the zygote has formed, demands the unconditional respect that is morally due to the human being in his bodily and spiritual totality. The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life."

Roughly 80% of these are unmarried. "If present trends continue, researchers estimate, fully 40% of today's 14-year-old girls will be pregnant at least once before the age of 20."<sup>38</sup> Of adolescent women who get pregnant, roughly 35% have an abortion, 14% miscarry, and 51% give birth. The problem of teenage pregnancy and abortion, however, is only a small part of a larger problem. "Teenagers account for fewer than a third of all abortions, nonmarital births and unintended births each year."<sup>39</sup>

In the case of pregnancy as a result of premarital sex, none of the options, in general, is really easy. Each of the options can itself present serious difficulties and problems for the man and woman involved.

Abortion can be a tempting "solution", but it is always wrong to directly will or choose, not only for the woman and her partner, but for anyone else involved such as a doctor, parents, friends or counselors. This is because anyone who directly intends abortion fails to respect properly the life and personal dignity of a new human being, created in God's "image". Direct abortion, which deprives the new and unborn human being of his or her right to life and the possibility of developing his or her potentialities, involves a serious injustice. Since it is indispensable to respect properly the values of justice, and the life and personal dignity of all human beings, to experience integral human fulfillment, including true communion with God and others, anyone who directly intends

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38. Claudia Wallis et al., "Children Having Children: Teen Pregnancies are Corroding America's Social Fabric," *Time*, Dec. 9, 1985, 79. Guttmacher (see note 19), 41, referring to National Center for Health Statistics (U.S.), reports an increase from 109 pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in 1985 (10.9%) to 117 per 1,000 in 1990 (11.7%). Health and Welfare Canada (see note 25), 2, reports that the total teen pregnancy rate in Canada in 1987 "ranged from a high of over 146 to a low of 20.9 with an overall rate" of "38/1000 population".

39. Guttmacher (see note 19), 46. Cf. *ibid.*, 41-63, for some more statistics regarding adolescent pregnancy. Richard (see note 19), 26, reports a somewhat higher abortion rate than Guttmacher, saying that 40-50% of teen pregnancies end in abortion in the U.S.

abortion also fails to love properly himself or herself. Abortion can result in other harmful consequences as well. For example, according to one source, "...healthy women undergoing an abortion suffer 12 to 15% [medical] complications, and almost 1% major complications."<sup>40</sup> Possible physical complications, among others, include perforation of the uterus, laceration of the cervix, persistent bleeding, varying degrees of infection and clotting, possible adverse effects on subsequent fertility and intended pregnancy, and even death.

With regard to possible negative psychological consequences of abortion, Dr. Anne Catherine Speckhard found that five to ten years after women had abortions:

Eighty-one percent reported preoccupation with the aborted child.

Seventy-three percent reported *flashbacks* of the abortion experience.

Sixty-nine percent reported feelings of "craziness" after the abortion.

Fifty-four percent recalled *nightmares* related to the abortion.

Thirty-five percent had perceived *visitations* from the aborted child.

Twenty-three percent reported *hallucinations* related to the abortion.

Dr. Speckhard found that "72 percent of the subjects said they held no religious beliefs at the time of their abortions, and 96 percent in retrospect regarded abortion as the taking of life or as

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40. Parenteau-Carreau (see note 35), 50-1, referring to C. Tietze, *Induced Abortion: 1979* (New York: Population Council, 3rd ed. 1979), Table VII, Rate of Early Complications with Medical Abortion for 100 Women, USA, 1971-1975. Regarding various harmful consequences of "illegal" and "legal" abortions, cf., e.g., also Dr. and Mrs. Willke, *Handbook on Abortion* (Cincinnati: Hayes Publishing Co., Inc., 1979). For a good overview of the morality of abortion, see, e.g., Ashley and O'Rourke (see note 13), Ch. 8.6. For Catholic teaching on abortions see, e.g., CDF (approved by Pope Paul VI), *Declaration on Abortion* (Battleford, Sask.: Marian Press, 1974); CCC, nn. 2270-75; and Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* The Gospel of Life (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), nn. 58-63.

murder."<sup>41</sup>

Consider, for example, also the experience of Eloise Jones, a Canadian psychiatrist, who says in part:

An abortion has not helped the self-image of any woman I have talked with .... I have been presented with psychosomatic problems, sexual frigidity, hatred for the boy friend or spouse, sometimes transferred to "all men", anxiety, all kinds of neurotic disturbances and some deep depressive reactions .... post-abortion neurosis and psychosomatic disorder are more common than is often realized, and may be masked in terms of the presenting symptoms .... headaches, backache, inability to sleep, irritability, depression, perhaps stomach or intestinal symptoms, and so on - the whole gamut of physical and psychological complaints.

It may take some time for symptoms of emotional disturbance reactive to therapeutic abortion to show up. They may not surface for several years, or even until the time of menopause, when women are more vulnerable to unresolved conflicts and guilt over past actions.<sup>42</sup>

Many male partners of women who have abortions also experience feelings such as "isolation, grief, guilt, anger at themselves and their partners, recurring thoughts and dreams of the child, and fear of physical and emotional damage to the women."<sup>43</sup> In section K below we will consider forgiveness, healing and hope, also with respect to abortion.

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41. The quotations are from McDowell and Day (see note 1), 218, referring to Anne Catherine Speckhard, Ph.D., "The Psycho-Social Aspects of Stress Following Abortion", a thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, May 1985, 89-92 and 69 respectively.

42. Eloise Jones, "A Psychiatrist's Experience with Legal Abortion in Canada", in John E. Thomas, *Matters of Life and Death: Crises in Bio-Medical Ethics* (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1978), 61-2.

43. Matthew and Dennis Linn, S.J., and Sheila Fabricant, *At Peace With the Unborn: A Book for Healing* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 25. Cf. 20-24 regarding women's experience; and Guttmacher (see note 19), 46-7, regarding the involvement of male partners and parents in abortion.



Another option, in the case of pregnancy as a result of premarital sex, is for the woman (or girl) to keep and raise the child, with or without the support of the father and others such as parents. This is often most difficult for the woman. She is often young, immature, has not completed her formal education, and has little prospect for a good job. According to one report,

Teen mothers are, for instance, many times as likely as other women with young children to live below the poverty level. ...only half of those who give birth before age 18 complete high school (as compared with 96% of those who postpone childbearing). On average, they earn half as much money and are far more likely to be dependent on welfare...<sup>44</sup>

Adolescent mothers often live with one or both parents for sometime. While this can provide them "with crucial support during pregnancy and after the child is born, it may delay the assumption of other adult responsibilities, as well as hinder the role of the baby's father." The father is often forgotten and left out of the picture, often feeling guilty and confused for his part in the tragedy. While many unwed fathers abandon their partners and children, many are willing to help. Many of them, too, however, are young, immature, have not completed their formal education, and have little prospect for a good job. Many young unwed fathers compound their first mistake of having premarital sex, and thereby impregnating their girlfriend, by falling into the trap of dropping out of school to get a low-paying job.

[In the United States] ...only a third of women under 30 raising children apart from the children's fathers received any child support in 1987 .... the average annual payment received from their children's father was only \$1,945, but it amounted to about 22% of their total monetary income.<sup>45</sup>

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44. Wallis (see note 38), 79. Many adolescent mothers are themselves children of single-parent mothers who are living on a low or poor income.

45. Guttmacher (see note 19), 58 and 59. By 1988 the number of women under 30 with a child whose father was not living with them rose to 3.2 million in the U.S. This increase is related not

In the case of pregnancy as a result of premarital sex, rushing into marriage is not advisable. First of all, the irresponsible and unchaste behavior of premarital sex is not good preparation for a responsible and chaste marriage. Moreover, one or both of the parties may not be ready for marriage in other ways, and may not have even been seriously contemplating marriage before the news of the pregnancy. One or both of the parties may lack the due discretion required to give valid marital consent (cf. Ch. IV.F, CIC, canon 1095.2, above). "Divorce rates for marriages of pregnant girls are about twice as high as for the marriages of other girls."<sup>46</sup> Marriage is a very serious commitment that should not be entered into until both parties are properly prepared (see Ch. VIII.E and F below regarding choosing a marriage partner and preparing for marriage).

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only to increased rates of out-of-wedlock childbearing, but also to increased divorce rates.(Ibid., 59) Cf., e.g., also Richard Stengel et al., "The Missing-Father Myth", *Time*, Dec. 9, 1985, 88; and Mary Aquin O'Neill who says, "The talk should be as much about fatherhood as about motherhood, as much about unwed impregnation as about unwed pregnancy, as much about fathers bringing up the child as mothers bringing the fetus to term."(156): "The Mystery of Being Human Together", Ch. 6 in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1993), ed. by Catherine Mowry LaCugna. Although voluntary premarital sexual intercourse is seriously immoral in itself for both the man and the woman, women in general experience more difficulties related to some of its consequences. E.g., in the case of pregnancy the woman carries the child in her womb and gives birth; in the case of single parenthood it is usually the woman who is the main or only parent; and it is the woman who faces health risks related to the use of the pill and abortion. Because "the genital/coital touch is a touch that is of its inner nature life-giving, open to the transmission of human life", May (see note 2), 151, argues that a man "can hardly be expressing love for the woman ... if he chooses to touch in this way a precious human person [i.e. the woman] with whom he is not united by the covenant of marriage." Besides seeing abortion and contraception as immoral in themselves, he also thinks that even in marriage, a man fails to properly love his wife if he wants her to use methods such as pills that can seriously harm her health and well-being (cf. 128). In many places a woman's reputation also suffers more than a man's as a result of sexual promiscuity and/or pregnancy. This is sexist. The traditional Christian position that both the man and the woman should abstain sexually outside marriage is not sexist. Nor is the Catholic position of responsible parenthood, including the use of NFP, sexist, since this involves both the man and the woman as equal partners and the means of NFP pose no health risks to either partner.

46. Guindon (see note 1), 406. Cf., e.g., also Wallis (see note 38), 80.

Another option in the case of pregnancy as a result of premarital sex, is to place the child for adoption. With childbearing outside marriage being less stigmatized in many places, there has been a dramatic decline in this (e.g. from roughly 35% in the early 1960s to less than 5% in 1985, in the U.S.).<sup>47</sup> Surrendering one's child for adoption is often and understandably difficult, but it is often the best solution for all concerned when one is not capable or ready to be a good parent. Today various adoption and foster care arrangements exist. The aim should be to meet as well as possible the needs of the children, as well as those of the respective parents.

### **Some Other Problems Commonly Experienced by the Parties to Premarital Sex**

It is natural for a person who has premarital sex to experience various negative emotions such as guilt, a poor sense of one's worth, and anxiety. Since it is immoral to choose to have premarital sexual intercourse, the constructive response to any feelings of guilt and a poor sense of one's worth is not to try to suppress them, but to stop the irresponsible behavior and receive God's forgiveness, healing and love (see K below). A person who has premarital sex may feel anxious about possible negative consequences, such as regarding STDs and getting pregnant or impregnating out of wedlock. Such anxieties are not unfounded since the risks are generally quite significant for people having premarital sex. Since the relationship lacks unconditional acceptance and commitment, both parties may also feel anxious about such things as their sexual performance and being rejected by their partner.<sup>48</sup>

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47. Cf. Wallis (see note 38), 80-1; and Guttmacher (see note 19), 47-50. Regarding Canada, Health and Welfare Canada (see note 25), 41, says, "Approximately 10% of young single mothers choose to release their infants for adoption."

48. Cf., e.g., McDowell and Day (see note 1), 249-305, who present a number of emotional and relational reasons to wait to have sexual relations until marriage or not to have premarital sex. They

Many premarital relationships breakup. This is often difficult for one or both of the parties. If the two have had sexual relations, which naturally foster emotional ties and attachment, the hurt, disillusionment, and feelings such as being used, discarded, rejected, betrayed and/or guilt, are generally much worse. One, especially if one has experienced premarital sex with a number of partners, may also become, more or less, hardened or insensitive, trying to suppress unpleasant feelings and/or trying not to become emotionally involved and vulnerable again. Although many "marriages" breakup as well, the likelihood of breakup of a true marriage, in which both parties unconditionally committed themselves to each other, is much less than in conditional relationships such as premarital relationships and sham "marriages", which are really morally equivalent to fornication for the person who realizes he or she never gave true marital consent.<sup>49</sup>

Premarital sexual relations by definition are before marriage. They tend to take away from the special times of courtship and engagement, as well as from the specialness of sexual relations in a subsequent marriage, since they tend to blur the demarcation between being married and not being married. Many people who have premarital sexual relations, especially young people, eventually marry someone else.<sup>50</sup> These are likely to further reduce the quality of sexual relations within the

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not only offer their own insights and those of a number of other experts, but share anonymously some relevant experiences and insights of a number of young and not so young people.

49. In Canada and the United States roughly 40% of all marriages are followed by divorce. Interestingly, *Horizons*, Jul./Aug. 1992, 10, based on 1980 U.S. census figures, reports, however, that only 1 in 50 marriages in the Church, where both partners regularly attend services, and only 1 in 1,105 marriages in the Church, where both partners regularly attend services and have a home prayer for life, are followed by divorce. Cf. Paul Flaman, *Family Unity: A Christian Perspective* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 2nd ed. 1986), for a treatment of many factors that contribute to marital and family disorganization and unity.

50. Cf. e.g., Philip G. Zimbardo, *Psychology and Life* (Boston: Scott, Foresmand and Company, 12th ed. 1985), 95, "...relatively few adolescents actually end up marrying their first sexual partners. The average sexually active adolescent has been described as a 'serial' monogamist'...."

subsequent marriage for each party. If one has had premarital sexual relations with someone other than one's spouse, then one may have mental flashbacks of previous sexual experiences, make comparisons, feel guilty, and so on. Consider, for example, one man's experience:

I would do anything, ANYTHING, to forget the sexual experiences I had before I met my wife. When we start having intercourse, the pictures of the past and the other women go through my head, and it's killing any intimacy. I'm to the point where I don't want to have sex because I can't stand those memories. The truth is, I have been married to this wonderful woman for eight years and I have never been 'alone' in the bedroom with her.<sup>51</sup>

If one's spouse has had premarital sexual relations with someone else, then one may feel insecure about his or her fidelity. Some researchers have indeed found premarital sexual permissiveness to be highly related to extramarital permissiveness, although other factors such as the quality of the marriage are also important.<sup>52</sup> One's disposition, in voluntarily having premarital sex, necessarily includes an openness to having sex with someone to whom one is not bound by marriage. If one has not had a deep and enduring conversion with respect to certain values concerning sexual relations and the marriage covenant, this same disposition in certain circumstances could favor adultery, which also involves sex with someone to whom one is not bound by marriage.

In line with the above, E. S. Geissler says:

Something is missed in experiencing sex / with anyone except your husband / something is missed in learning sex / in any other way than from your wife / ... / That way the total discovery can be slow and easy - / unique to them - / and last a lifetime / ever new / never exhausted / an endless learning

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51. McDowell and Day (see note 1), 288.

52. See, e.g., J. Ross Eshleman, *The Family: An Introduction* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 4th ed. 1985), 402.

in depth.<sup>53</sup>

Premarital sexual relations can also cause or contribute to other problems. Because of the "unitive" aspect of sexual relations, they can sometimes mislead one or both of the parties into thinking that the relationship is deeper than it is, "trap" them in an unhealthy nonmarital relationship that should break up, or easily be misused to try to cover up other problems in the relationship. In the words of one young person:

Not only does premarital sex cloud the issue of true love, it tends to thwart the communication process. Most of us by nature gravitate toward what comes easily and is pleasurable. Therefore, sex offers an easy out to those who have never learned to communicate intimacy apart from the physical.<sup>54</sup>

According to Josh McDowell and Dick Day,

Hunger for an intimate relationship is built into each of us. We all want to love and be loved. Sex is merely the physical expression of that intimate love we seek, not the source of it. That is why premature sex will shortcut an immature relationship. It tries to express something that isn't there yet.

When we delay physical involvement to its proper time, we allow the relationship to grow and mature. Then, once that relationship has developed into a lifelong marriage commitment, sex can become meaningful, constructive and beneficial to the relationship. Until that commitment is sealed, however, the couple needs to spend time discovering each other, finding out what it is that makes the other unique and attractive. This forms the friendship that lays the foundation for love, which leads

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53. E. S. Geissler, *Dreams to Dream and Promises to Keep* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1971), 453, as cited by Guindon (see note 1), 429. I have inserted slashes to represent the end of lines.

54. McDowell and Day (see note 1), 281.

to the personal intimacy each seeks.<sup>55</sup>

The dishonesty, the lack of proper respect for the dignity and welfare of oneself, one's partner and others, the lack of a properly ordered love, and the lack of proper self-control, that are involved in choosing to have premarital sexual relations, can carry over into other areas of life including a subsequent marriage. Along these lines, Hanna Klaus, M.D., says in part that the sexual behavior of adolescents and adults today is often driven by impulse:

Since sexuality is part of our ability to love and is not restricted to the genital area, sexually impulsive persons are quite likely to act impulsively in other ways - lying, driving recklessly, stealing, abusing alcohol or drugs, not making good on promises, striking out at people when there is real or apparent provocation.<sup>56</sup>

Josh McDowell and Dick Day treat the addictive character of premarital sex, sharing the experiences of a number of young people, including the following:

I won't try to pretend passionate physical exchange isn't enjoyable. But I do want to say that outside of marriage, the enjoyment is short-lived. And when it is over you are left disappointed, looking for another fix to appease your lust, much like a drug addict craves another hit.<sup>57</sup>

Since it is objectively immoral or sinful to voluntarily have premarital sexual intercourse (cf. this section, especially the first eleven paragraphs), it shares in the addictive aspect of sin in general.(cf. Ch. V.A.3, par. 6) People who consent to have premarital sexual intercourse, especially if they

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55. Ibid., 282. Cf., e.g., also Rusty Wright and Linda Raney Wright, *How to Unlock the Secrets of Love, Sex and Marriage* (Westwood, NJ: Barbour Books, 1981), 51; and Thielicke (see note 17), 201.

56. Klaus (see note 26), 31. Cf., e.g., also Eshleman (see note 52), 370, who includes "deviant attitudes" as a major factor apparently associated with nonmarital intercourse among adolescents, both males and females, as supported by a number of investigations.

57. McDowell and Day (see note 1), 199 (cf. 199-202).

repeat this, will tend to become more and more enslaved to the disordered desires and/or fears that motivate this sinful behavior. Only the power of God's redemptive love can free them to love themselves and others in a properly ordered way, and so find true fulfillment.(cf. Ch. V.A.5)

In this section we have considered a number of arguments and reasons why a person who voluntarily has premarital sexual intercourse fails to love properly himself or herself and his or her partner. In summary, this is because choosing this behavior is always counterproductive in terms of the integral fulfillment of oneself and one's partner. Since many people have acted irresponsibly in this area, it is important to note again that the last section of this chapter treats forgiveness, healing and hope.

## **F. Fails to Love Properly a Possible Child**

Some contemporary arguments against premarital sexual intercourse are along the lines that anyone who voluntarily engages in this behavior fails to love properly a possible child. In general (i.e. unless one or both of the parties is *absolutely* infertile, which is usually not the case regarding premarital sex), a child is a very *real* possibility, even if one or both of the parties uses a modern method of conception prevention (see E above under "Premarital Pregnancy"). In this section I will present a few arguments and insights of others, and offer some reflections of my own, noting, among other things, the possibility of a single parent being a good Christian.

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in *Donum Vitae* (1987) teaches that:

*Every human being is always to be accepted as a gift and blessing of God. However, from the moral point of view a truly responsible procreation vis-à-vis the unborn child must be the fruit of marriage.*

For human procreation has specific characteristics by virtue of the personal dignity of the parents



and of the children: the procreation of a new person, whereby the man and the woman collaborate with the power of the Creator, must be the fruit and the sign of the mutual self-giving of the spouses, of their love and of their fidelity....

The child has the right to be conceived, carried in the womb, brought into the world and brought up within marriage: it is through the secure and recognized relationship to his own parents that the child can discover his own identity and achieve his own proper human development....

The tradition of the Church and anthropological reflection recognize in marriage and in its indissoluble unity the only setting worthy of truly responsible procreation.<sup>58</sup>

(Regarding "the tradition of the Church and anthropological reflection" see Chs. II-V above.)

Jean Vanier, who shares the Catholic Christian vision of human sexuality, including the view that genital sexual relations can only be honest and responsible within the covenant of marriage, says in part with respect to the demands of education:

During the years of development, the child needs both man and woman, but it needs also that they be united to each other. If they are divided, the child will experience division within and will enter into a state of confusion. Just as the abandoned or inadequately loved child lives in a state of insecurity, so too does the child who senses conflict between its parents. In this insecurity, it is necessary to protect the heart by building barriers....

Certain deviations and sexual difficulties in a child arise from the lack of unity between its parents. The body of man is made to be united with the body of woman. The psychology of one is complementary to the psychology of the other. They are created to be companions and friends; they are made to have children and to educate them together. The gifts of one harmonize with the gifts of the other; their differences are enriching. If, at the dawn of life, the child senses discord, rivalry and

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58. CDF (see note 37), II.A.1. Cf. also parts of PH, n. 7 (quoted in Ch. IV.D); FC, n. 11 (quoted in Ch. VI.B); and Thomas Aquinas (see Ch. III.C.3 above) regarding the responsible generation of a human being requiring marriage.

even hatred between them, then the development of his or her own sexuality will suffer....

The emotional life of the child whose father is totally absent cannot develop in a healthy way....

Growth toward the healing of the heart and inner unity implies not only the attention of others, but the presence of a loving unified milieu....<sup>59</sup>

Although a husband and wife may not always parent in unity as they should, if they are validly married, they have unconditionally given and committed themselves to each other for life. In spite of their faults which they should try to overcome with God's help, they are in principle a united man-woman parental team. A man and woman in a premarital relationship, however, have not established such a definitive partnership.

John Gallagher, speaking of the purpose of the partnership of marriage and its ordination to the procreation and education of children, says in part:

Other relationships involve partnerships in this or that activity. The marital union is a partnership of the whole of life.... This partnership is expressed in living together, in sharing a home. Above all, spouses are partners in helping each other become good human beings.

This partnership is an exercise in mutual responsibility. .... we are most responsible when we take our lives in hand and decide what kind of persons we will be and what kind of lives we will live in the whole of our lives.... In marriage, spouses make this decision.... Each decides to be a particular kind of person in relation to, and for the sake of, the spouse. What kind of people two spouses will become is a mutual affair....

.... *Agape* [love] takes us outside of ourselves to live for others. Spousal *agape* takes the spouses outside of themselves to live for each other .... [and] reaches out to others.

Spousal love can move people to reach out to others in several ways. Procreation is a very special

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59. Jean Vanier, *Man and Woman He Made Them* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 27-28 (cf. Ch. 7 regarding his insights on "Unity in Marriage").

form of extension of spousal love. Procreation is not only an act of doing good to someone. It is an act of giving life, of joining one's love to the love of God in the awesome act of calling a new and immortal person into existence....

.... A healthy spousal union provides a uniquely effective situation for children to flourish and develop as human beings. Love as *agape* and a partnership between two people in the whole of their lives create a milieu of generosity, stability, responsibility, concern, intimacy, respect, loyalty, tenderness. This is precisely the kind of milieu that children need if they are to grow as human beings.

.... Procreation is not merely technical. It is intensely personal. Children don't simply need people to perform functions for them. They need a milieu created by people who cherish each other as persons.<sup>60</sup>

William May, speaking of the interrelationship between the unitive (marital) and procreative dimensions of human sexuality, says in part:

[Marriage allows a man and a woman] to be procreative in a way that nonmarried persons cannot be. Nonmarried persons, it is true, may exercise their life-giving power of sexuality, but in exercising it they abuse it, for they cannot truly procreate inasmuch as they are incapable of giving to the life that they may bring into being the home it needs if it is to take root and grow as it should. The newly formed and developing human person is one of the most helpless and dependent of all living things, requiring a home where it can take root and develop the capacities it possesses by virtue of being human. The only way to provide this new human person with the love it needs and to which it has a right is to give it a mother and a father who share their life and love and who are willing to share their life and love with one who comes into being in and through the same act whereby they express in a

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60. John Gallagher, "Fidelity, Permanence and Growth in Marriage: Theological Reflections", in *Christian Marriage Today: Growth or Breakdown? Interdisciplinary Essays* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), ed. by Joseph A. Buijs, 117, 120, 121, and 122.

unique way their own deep, intimate, and exclusive love for one another.<sup>61</sup>

After considering fornication (which includes voluntary premarital sexual intercourse by definition) to be always immoral, Germain Grisez succinctly says:

Any illicit sexual intercourse that could result in conception involves readiness to do injustice to the possible child. Sometimes the couple is open to new life; the injustice lies in accepting the risk that the child will come to be without the stable parental principle necessary for a human being's full development. In other cases a baby is not wanted, and the injustice lies in accepting the risk of a child's coming to be as unwanted, and then perhaps being aborted or else resented and abused after birth. If contraception is used to prevent the coming to be of an unwanted child, still the couple accept the risk of the child's coming to be as unwanted, and also have a contralife will (see 8.E [of his book where he treats "Why is contraception always wrong?"]). Whether or not contraception is used, if there is an intention to abort an unwanted child, that intention is homicidal.<sup>62</sup>

Procured abortion certainly fails to love properly the child, an unborn human being, since it fails to respect him or her as a person with great dignity and violates his or her inviolable right to life. See E above, with respect to direct abortion, as well as contraception, being immoral (under "Premarital Pregnancy"), and the various harmful effects on the child of STDs (cf. their transmission during pregnancy and with breast milk).

According to the sociologist J. Ross Eshleman, empirical research indicates that in various parts of the world children born and raised out of wedlock generally have a higher infant mortality rate,

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61. May (see note 2), 19. Cf. also William E. May, *Marriage: The Rock on Which the Family is Built* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).

62. Grisez (see note 13), 655. Cf. also Thomas Pazhayampallil, S.D.B., *Pastoral Guide: Moral Canonical Liturgical* (Bangalore, India: Kristu Jyothi College, 1977), 1084, who says, "Fornication is a violation of the basic order established by God. It is opposed to the good of the offspring which requires the stable union of the two in marriage protected by juridical rights and duties."

fare poorer on a number of measures including school performance, and continue to face poorer life chances than legitimate and adopted children.<sup>63</sup>

If a man and a woman are still having sexual relations within a premarital (or nonmarital) relationship, they cannot set an example of the virtue of chastity (see A above) for their child (or children). Being a good, responsible, loving parent includes teaching one's child how to live morally with one's *actions*, as well as one's words and attitudes. It would be a living contradiction for a parent, who is continuing to freely have nonmarital sexual relations, to try to teach his or her children God's plan with respect to sex and marriage (see Ch. V).

Many people who have voluntarily had premarital sexual relations, however, have confessed this sin and received God's forgiveness.(see K below) If they are now trying their best to live virtuously in all areas of their lives, including living chaste lives, they can be good and effective moral educators of their children. Also, many single parents and others who are not in a healthy marriage, are doing their best to live morally and be the best loving parents they can be within their circumstances. Many of these people make tremendous sacrifices for their children whom they love unconditionally. Such people can be good, even exemplary, followers of Jesus, and can inspire not only their children, but also many parents in "good" marriages. This, however, should not be used to deny the tragic elements of a child being conceived and/or raised outside a loving marriage.

### **G. Fails to Love Properly Other People**

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63. Eshleman (see note 52), 467-8. Cf., e.g., also Guindon (see note 1), 406, who says, "Recent research has shown convincingly that early father absence on female and, particularly, on male children is detrimental to personality development...."; and McDowell and Day (see note 1), 298-9, regarding various ways that children can pay a heavy price for premarital pregnancy.

Some of the arguments against premarital sexual intercourse are along the lines that anyone who voluntarily engages in this behavior also fails to love properly other people (i.e. other than oneself, one's partner and a possible child). First of all, since this behavior is unchaste, immoral, sinful and irresponsible (cf., e.g., A-F above and I below), it sets a bad example for others. Awareness of premarital sex in general is widespread. In a particular case, almost always some other persons - friends, siblings, peers, parents and/or other acquaintances - know about or come to know about one's behavior, whether or not one or one's partner tells them. This can influence others, especially those without solid moral convictions, to think that this gravely irresponsible and sinful behavior is "not so bad" or even "good" and/or to engage in it. Others who engage in premarital sexual intercourse expose themselves and others to various actual and possible harmful consequences associated with it (cf. not only all the problems regarding premarital pregnancy and STDs, but also the various negative spiritual, moral, psychological, and relational effects, including serious harm to the sinner's relationship with God). If one or more other people sin because of one's bad example, teaching, advice, innuendoes and/or sharing, then one, in a real sense, shares some responsibility for their sin and the harmful consequences that befall them.(see K below regarding forgiveness of sins, healing and hope)

With respect to this, consider, for example, Raniero Cantalamessa's saying:

It is not true that the sin of impurity [i.e. any kind of sexual immorality] ends with the sinner. There is a solidarity among all sins. Each sin, no matter where it is committed or by whom, infects and defiles man's moral environment. Jesus calls this infection "scandal" and he uses some of the most terrible words in all the Gospel to condemn it (cf. Mt 18:6 f.; Mk 9:42 f.; Lk 17:1 f.).... Every sin causes an erosion of values and all sins together create what St. Paul defined "the law of sin" whose

terrible power over all men he illustrated (cf. Rom 7:14 f.). In the Hebrew *Talmud* we find a story which is a good illustration of the solidarity in sin and the harm that each sin, even personal, causes to others. "Some people - we read - find themselves on a boat. One of them takes a drill and starts boring a hole directly beneath himself. When the other passengers see this they ask him what he is doing and he answers: 'What does it matter to you? Am I not making a hole under my own seat?' But they answer: 'Yes, that's true, but the water will get in and we'll all be drowned!'"<sup>64</sup>

Premarital sex trivializes or undermines appreciation and respect for such values as self-giving and faithful love, truth, the dignity of persons, and marriage including its value for the couple, children and society, and as instituted by God. It also trivializes and undermines appreciation and respect for the marital/unitive and procreative meanings and God-given purposes of human sexuality (cf. B and E above; and Ch. V) Besides the bad example, and its related negative effects, of voluntarily having premarital sexual intercourse, this behavior can hurt or harm some other people in additional ways.

Many parents are not in favor of their children having premarital sex. Indeed, if parents are well-informed and really care for their children, they would try their best, using appropriate and moral means, to influence their children not to engage in this and other behaviors which are seriously detrimental to their integral fulfillment and happiness. Josh McDowell and Dick Day point out a few ways that parents can be hurt by their children having premarital sex:

First, the parents may feel that the child is bringing them embarrassment; they feel hurt for themselves. They take the child's disobedience toward God as a personal blow. Second, the parents may be genuinely hurt on the child's behalf, since they want the best for their child at all times. They know that straying ... will bring pain to the child's life. Parents may also feel personal hurt because

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64. Raniero Cantalamessa, *Life in the Lordship of Christ: A Spiritual Commentary on the Letter to the Romans for a New Evangelization* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 242-3.

of what the unplanned pregnancy takes away from their expectations or desires.<sup>65</sup>

Many parents, including caring compassionate parents, thus understandably suffer when their children irresponsibly engage in premarital sexual relations and suffer its harmful consequences. Many parents are also saddled with extra burdens, including extra financial costs, related to helping their immature, unprepared and unmarried children raise the children (their grandchildren) who are a consequence of premarital sex. Nevertheless, children should know that they can count on their parents' unconditional love, also when they sin. Loving parents will never encourage their children to try to solve their problems with immoral means such as abortion. As we considered in E above under "Premarital Pregnancy", adoption can often be the most loving solution for all concerned, including the biological grandparents.

Premarital sex in general involves considerable costs for taxpayers and others who pay for health and other social services. For example, according to one reported study by the Center for Population Options:

[The United States government spent an estimated] ...\$16.5 billion last year [1985] in welfare costs to support the families started by teenage mothers. This estimate includes payments for AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children], Medicaid and food stamps as well as the costs of administering these programs.

This figure represents minimal public costs in that it does not include other services such as housing, special education, child protection services, foster care, day care and other social services...<sup>66</sup>

According to another source, from 1985-1989, regarding first births to women in the United States:

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65. McDowell and Day (see note 1), 300.

66. "Teen Pregnancy: 16.6 Billion," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 19, 1986, Section 1, 3. Cf., e.g., also Wallis (see note 38), 85; Guttmacher (see note 19), 59; and Health and Welfare Canada (see note 25), 8.



a) of those aged 15-17, 92% conceived and 81% gave birth outside marriage (i.e. 11% were "Legitimated births"); b) of those aged 18-19, 78% conceived and 59% gave birth outside marriage (19% were "Legitimated births"); and c) of those aged 20-24, 42% conceived and 27% gave birth outside marriage (15% were "Legitimated births").<sup>67</sup> With respect to the financial costs related to STDs, including the costs of treating AIDS victims, according to one 1987 estimate, Americans, roughly 12 million of whom contract an STD each year, would soon be paying at least \$30 billion a year.<sup>68</sup> As was reported in E above, under STDs, roughly 25% of sexually experienced American adolescents become infected each year. Although it seems to me to be an extremely complex task to give a reliable estimate of the total economic costs of premarital sex in a country such as the USA, the figures reported here, even if they do not present the whole picture, suggest that such costs are indeed very high.

Nonmarital sex, including premarital sex, also harms the development of true culture or civilization. With regard to this, many refer to the findings of the anthropologist J. D. Unwin, among others. Unwin studied the sex and culture of more than eighty civilizations in human history extensively. As a scientist, he observed that whenever a society condoned sexual activity outside some regular form of the institution of marriage, within three generations that society was falling apart. He was not sure why this happened, but thought it could be related to the dissipation of sexual energy. He also observed that whenever a society restricted sexual activity to regular

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67. Guttmacher (see note 19), 56, Figure 45, referring to: A. Bachu, "Fertility of American Women: June 1990," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 454, 1991, Table E, p. 7.

68. McDowell and Day (see note 1), 48-9.

marriage, then that society was strengthened.<sup>69</sup>

Dr. James Dobson, a widely-recognized expert on the family, concurs with this. He says that sexual energy is analogous to nuclear energy. The same energy that holds an atom together can also cause great destruction. When sexual energy is released only within the family (he certainly does not approve incest), it draws a man and a woman together to form a stable partnership and motivates them to raise their children in a responsible way. When a society is made up of many such stable and responsible family units the society will also be a stable and responsible one. But, when sexual energy is released outside the family, it tends to be used irresponsibly and can lead to much harm and destruction - illegitimate births, heartbreak, shattered personalities, abortions, disease, and even death.<sup>70</sup>

With regard to the above, I think we can also distinguish between the mere existence, technical progress, and moral progress of a people or society, among other things. Since voluntary premarital sexual intercourse is immoral or irresponsible (cf. this whole chapter), this behavior is certainly detrimental to a society, morally and in other ways. This is because various kinds of sexual immorality, as well as other kinds of irresponsible behavior, have various negative effects on human persons and relationships.(cf. Ch. V.A.3; and this chapter, C-H)

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69. See J. D. Unwin, *Sex and Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934). Cf., e.g., also Delhaye (see note 21), 9, who says that Sigmund Freud also affirmed "that civilization and culture can be born and develop only to the extent to which men control their sexual desires and bring their aspirations to bear on higher objects"; and Guindon (see note 1), 389.

70. See Dr. James Dobson, *Emotions: Can You Trust Them?* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1981 ed.), 66-7. Cf., e.g., also CDF (see note 37), II.A.1, which says in part that, "By reason of the vocation and social responsibilities of the person, the good of the children and of the parents contributes to the good of civil society; the vitality and stability of society require that children come into the world within a family and that the family be firmly based on marriage."

## **H. Fails to Love Properly God, Jesus Christ and His Church**

Anyone who voluntarily has premarital sexual intercourse, or even agrees with this behavior, fails to love properly God for a number of reasons. As we have considered above (cf. especially A, B and E), such choices fail to respect properly values such as the dignity and integrity of persons, justice, self-giving and faithful love, and truth, in particular human sexual intercourse's inherent language of total unreserved reciprocal personal giving, receiving and surrender. These personal goods or values are rooted in God, who is infinitely good and the source of all that is good. They reflect who God is in a remarkable way.(cf. Ch. V.A.1) For instance, it is impossible to love properly God, who is truth, when one "lies" with one's body by voluntarily having premarital sexual intercourse.

As we have also considered above, voluntary premarital sexual intercourse also fails to respect properly the "nuptial" / marital / unitive / love-giving and generative / procreative / life-giving meanings of human sexuality. Since God, as a personal intelligent agent, wisely created or "designed" us as embodied persons, including the marvelous design of our bodies and sexual or reproductive organs, these human experiential "meanings" are also God's "purposes" for human sexuality. The institution of marriage corresponds to these God-given purposes. In God's plan marriage, including its reciprocal covenant of faithful love, also serves to symbolize God's relationship with his people. One can not love God properly when one fails to respect properly his plan for human sexuality and marriage.(cf. many parts of Chs. II-V)

God, who is an ineffable mystery of infinite love, loves human beings perfectly and unconditionally. As our Heavenly Father, he loves us as his children or sons and daughters, and cares for us better than the best of human parents. He wants our salvation and sanctification, our

liberation from sin and our growth and perfection in his love - our complete intimate union with him to share his infinite life, love and happiness forever.(cf. Ch. V) In choosing to have premarital sexual intercourse, however, one fails to love properly oneself, one's partner, a possible child and other people.(cf. E-G above) This behavior cannot express proper love for oneself and others (God's children) as God wants us to love. It is, therefore, contrary to God's will and loving God properly. It is counterproductive to integral human fulfillment and involves a serious objective impediment to loving union and true communion with God. With respect to this consider, for example, part of a letter of one young person to another:

Alice .... I couldn't help crying when you told me that since you and Jay started sleeping together your relationship with God has deteriorated. You even told me how helpless you felt, knowing that sin looms between you and your Maker. I think you'd agree with me when I say the biggest problem I see with premarital sex is not wondering if you'll get caught, catch something, or even get pregnant. The tragedy is the feeling of separation from fellowship with God....<sup>71</sup>

(In K below we will consider God's forgiveness and healing.)

Voluntary premarital sexual intercourse also involves a failure to love properly Jesus Christ for a number of reasons. Since Jesus is not only a human being but also God, according to the Christian vision (cf. Ch. V.A.4), the reasons given above also apply to Jesus. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus taught, among many other things, that one needs to keep his commandments to love him, and that his commandment is that we love one another as he loves us, that is, as God loves him.(see 13:31-15:17) Since it is always wrong to choose to have premarital sexual intercourse (cf. B above), this behavior can never be an expression of loving as Jesus loves since such love cares for the true well-being of human beings. Unmarried people cannot and do not love in the "act of coition one

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71. From McDowell and Day (see note 1), 231.

another as they are meant to love one another, to love even as they have been and are loved by God in Christ."<sup>72</sup> The lack of proper respect shown for oneself and other persons by this behavior, also involves disrespect for Jesus because of his solidarity with all human beings.(cf. Mt 25:31-46) Moreover, this behavior fails to respect properly values such as the supreme goodness of God, the dignity of persons, truth, sincerity, justice, faithful and self-giving love, and marital fidelity and stability. These values are among the important values that Jesus' teaching as a whole, and his teaching on sex and marriage, call us to respect.(cf. Chs. I.D, II.B.1 and V.B.1) Voluntary premarital sexual intercourse is incompatible with the character traits needed to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.<sup>73</sup>

Raniero Cantalamessa speaks of a number of additional Christian motives for purity and for avoiding sexual immorality including fornication. Referring to 1 Cor 6:12-20 (see Ch. II.B.2), he says in part:

The Apostle's answer contained an absolutely new reason for purity which springs from the mystery of Christ. It is not lawful, he said, to be immoral or to sell oneself or to dispose of oneself for one's own pleasure simply because we no longer belong to ourselves but to Christ. We cannot dispose of what is not ours.... Pagan motivation has been reversed in a certain sense; the supreme value to be safeguarded is no longer to be masters of ourselves but to let Jesus be our master.... The final motivation for purity is, therefore, that "Jesus is the Lord!" In other words, christian purity doesn't consist so much in establishing the control of the reason over instinct as in establishing Christ's control over the whole person - reason and instincts.... We should certainly make every effort to acquire self-control but only to offer it to Christ. This christological reason for purity becomes more pressing from

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72. May (see note 2), 152.

73. Cf. Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 5), 183.

what St. Paul adds in the same text: we do not only "belong" to Christ generically speaking, we are not simply his property or something that belongs to him but we are the very body of Christ, his members! This makes the whole question immensely more delicate because it means that by committing an act of impurity, I prostitute the body of Christ committing a sort of hateful sacrilege; I commit an "outrage" against the body of God's Son....

To this christological reason, another pneumatological one is immediately added which concerns the Holy Spirit: *Do you not know your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?* (1 Cor 6:19). To abuse ... one's body is therefore to profane the temple of God.... To commit an act of impurity is to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (cf. Eph 4:30)

Together with the christological and spiritual reasons, the Apostle also mentions an "eschatological reason" referring to man's ultimate destiny: *God raised the Lord and will also raise us* (1 Cor 6:14). Our bodies are destined to be resurrected; they are destined to participate, one day, in the beatitude and glory of the soul. Christian purity is not based on contempt for the body but on the greatest esteem for its dignity.<sup>74</sup>

The Church of Christ is his "mystical" body as distinguished from Jesus' body as a man. It is also the bride of Christ and the people of God.(cf. 1 Cor 12:12-30; Eph 5:21-33; 1 Pet 2:4-10; and LG, Chs. 1 and 2). Ronald Lawler, Joseph Boyle and William May point out that, "...since Christians are united with Christ in baptism, the relationships and integrity harmed are not just those of the parties involved but include the body of Christ, which is defiled by such actions."<sup>75</sup>

Christians as members of Christ's body or Church have the mission to continue the saving mission of Jesus Christ, to bring his teaching and life to all people, to make disciples of people of all nations (cf. Mt 28:18-20). This is very much related to loving people properly as followers of

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74. Cantalamessa (see note 64), 238-9.

75. Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 5), 181.

Jesus, since the failure or success of this mission is related to people failing to come to know or coming to know in a fully conscious way the love of God for them as manifested in his Son, Jesus Christ.

As Christians we are a witness to non-Christians during our lifetime. As we go through life we need to remember that our actions will *always* speak *louder* than our words. Premarital sex is a very "loud" action; therefore, it would not be good for our testimony as Christians.<sup>76</sup>

Voluntary premarital sexual intercourse is objectively sinful and contrary to the teaching of Jesus as properly interpreted.(cf. Chs. II-V) The behavior of those who claim to be Christian and who attempt to justify and/or deliberately engage in premarital sexual relations, in particular, and/or any other sin, gives a counter witness to Jesus. It gives a bad example and can be a "scandal" for both non-Christians and Christians (cf. G above). Among other things, voluntary premarital sexual intercourse, as a kind of sexual immorality, dishonors marriage (cf. Heb 13:4) and God's wonderful plan for human sexuality and marriage, including the marriage of Christians being a sacrament of Christ and the Church.(cf. Ch. V.A.2-5)

Sin, including voluntary premarital sexual intercourse, is a form of "idolatry" in which the sinner prefers his or her disordered "wants" to God and his loving will. It is an obstacle to remaining in union with Jesus and bearing the fruit he wants the Christian to bear (cf. Jn 15). It is also an obstacle to the unity of Christians (cf. UR; and CCC, nn. 813-22) and the Church being a fruitful "mother" (cf. Gal 4:26; and LG, n. 6). Jesus prayed that his followers would be one with him and

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76. From McDowell and Day (see note 1), 235. Cf. Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* "On Evangelization in the Modern World" (Vatican City: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1975); and Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* "On Catechesis in Our Time" (Ottawa: CCCB, 1979). Regarding the references to a few biblical passages in this section cf. Ch. V, note 1, par. 2.

each other as he and God the Father are one. He said that the unity of his followers would enable the world to know and believe that he was sent by God and to know the love of God (see Jn 17:20-23). Premarital sex is detrimental, therefore, to the spread of God's Kingdom, to the growth of the Church, the People of God. Those who voluntarily have premarital sexual intercourse, or even approve of this behavior, thus not only fail to love properly God and his Son Jesus Christ. They also fail to love properly the Church, as Christ loves his beloved Bride, the people of God.

## **I. Nonmarital Sexual Abstinence and Waiting Until Marriage**

### **Have Many Advantages**

All the "negative" disadvantages of having premarital sex (cf. above) can be seen as "positive" advantages of nonmarital sexual abstinence and waiting until marriage. Here we will not repeat all of the above arguments formulated in this light, but only highlight a number of points to illustrate this. Nonmarital sexual abstinence and waiting until marriage are inherently good kinds of behavior. If they are motivated by a properly ordered love of oneself and others including God (which excludes any sense of self-righteousness, etc.), they are conducive to integral human fulfillment, growing in integrity as a person, and growing in holistic love and authentic communion with other persons and God.

As an expression of true caring, these behaviors show respect for the great personal dignity of oneself and others, including the personal dignity of one's body, created and redeemed in the "image of God". By these behaviors one can promote a proper appreciation and respect for other important personal goods or values such as truth, justice, self-giving and faithful love, marriage, procreation, and God. One can also promote a proper appreciation and respect for: the profound "nuptial" and



"generative" meanings of the human body, male and female; and God's purposes for human sexuality and marriage, including Christian marriage being a great sacrament of Christ and the Church.(cf. Ch. V)

Premarital sexual abstinence, motivated by a properly ordered love, is conducive to growing not only in the virtue of chastity, but in all the other virtues as well. This includes the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance (self-control); the theological virtues of faith, hope and love; as well as more specific virtues such as honesty, patience and fidelity. Since this behavior is according to God's plan and will, it is also conducive to growing in and experiencing the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit such as wisdom, peace and joy. These make one a better person, a more caring friend, a more responsible citizen, and a more effective minister of God's love to others. If one will get married and have children in the future, they prepare one to be a good, responsible and loving spouse and parent. If one is a Christian, whether or not one marries, they make one a better follower, witness and friend of Jesus.(cf. Ch. V.A.4 and 5, and B)

By abstaining sexually outside marriage people avoid all the actual and possible harmful consequences associated with nonmarital sex including premarital sexual intercourse (cf. D-H above). One is *free* from the many worries, and unnecessary complications and problems, associated with these. If one is very young or immature, one also avoids the possibility of having to face certain responsibilities (e.g. parental) for which one is not yet ready. One can focus one's energies and attention on developing healthy friendships, relationships "in the Lord", and in preparing oneself for a future career, marriage, and/or other worthwhile goals.

The following presents some of the advantages of premarital sexual abstinence in the words of a number of young people:

The strength to say no will do one of two things to your relationship. Either it will win you the respect of your loved one and increase confidence and trust in the relationship (by making it obvious you care about him as a person, not a body), or the relationship will end. If it does end, be glad its true colors were shown at last. For if that was the basis of your love, it was very shaky.

If you jump into sex for the first time before marriage, you will remember that time for the rest of your life... Sex after marriage will be extra special to me because it will be new and exciting, and the result of our love....

...I would not want any man to have had sex with the girl I plan to marry; therefore I would not want to destroy another man's dream by being sexually involved with the girl he will someday marry.

...I am going to love the man I marry more than anyone else in the world. If that isn't the case, I shouldn't marry him. Because of this, abstaining from sex before marriage is one way to show my future mate how much I love him. Abstinence shows that my marriage is so important to me I am willing to practice faithfulness to my mate even before we meet.

The command to wait until marriage to become sexually involved not only protects a person from destroying himself by linking harmful emotions to the sex act, fracturing his inner self, but it also presents him as a gift to his marriage partner. It promotes the greatest fulfillment in sex by paving the way for trust, emotional satisfaction, joy and passion unthreatened by mental battles. How good and intelligent the Creator is.

Since becoming a Christian, I have realized that the spiritual emptiness I thought could be filled only by another person could actually be filled only by Jesus Christ. I can feel deep, intimate love without sex. I also see that because the sexual union is so sacred, and you do become *one* with the person, God has reserved it for the sanctity of marriage....

On the positive side, waiting will help one to subject his or her physical drives to the lordship of Christ and thereby develop self-control, which is an important fruit of the Holy Spirit.<sup>77</sup>

With regard to self-control Rusty and Linda Wright also point out that:

Learning to control your sexual impulses before you marry is a good way to help learn to control them after you marry. It not only helps give you the confidence that you can do it, but it also helps show your partner that you *will* do it.<sup>78</sup>

Proper self-control and self-possession, motivated by a properly ordered love, enable one to live chastely outside and within marriage. They also enable one to be able to truly give oneself in love to others in chaste nonmarital relationships, to a spouse if one marries, and to God.

With regard to building trust and there being "only one first time" for a person to have sexual relations, Josh McDowell and Dick Day say:

Trust is built by consistency and commitment backed up by sacrifice, a sacrifice demonstrated by a desire to meet the need of the other person, not merely to get our own needs met. It is built by showing love in action....

In the true physical sense, there is only one first time....

What a joy it is to be able to share that first time with the one committed to you for life!....

[God's ways give] ...us the opportunity to learn the ways of sexual pleasure with the one we will spend our lives pleasing. This learning process forms one of the strongest bonds in the marriage.

The special nature of sex within marriage is clearly seen when we remember what marriage is: a lifelong opportunity to minister to another person. Sex within this context of giving and meeting the needs of the other then becomes a matter of emotional, spiritual and psychological oneness, as well

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77. From McDowell and Day (see note 1), 273, 278, 303, 304-5, 244, 244, and 238, respectively.

78. Wright (see note 55), 50.

as of physical oneness....

When we wait until the wedding night to have sex, we establish a bond of trust and love that has no equal.<sup>79</sup>

With respect to couples who were sexually involved and decided to discontinue this activity before marriage, and who shared this with him, James Burtchaell says:

...invariably they have told me their friendship was reinvigorated. No longer able to substitute sex for personal exchange, they found themselves once more creative in entertaining one another, and more frank and truthful in confronting their shortcomings. Without exception, they told me their courtship became even closer without the sexual involvement.<sup>80</sup>

Sexual abstinence in premarital relationships tends to foster better communication and getting to know each other in other ways. If the parties discover that they are not well-suited to marry each other, it is easier for them to break up if they have not been sexually involved. Everyone who abstains from sexual relations outside marriage and who tries to grow in loving properly God, oneself and others, can also experience a real peace of conscience.(cf. Ch. I) Trying to live according to God's will and give glory to God, including glorifying God with one's body and trying to please him as one's best friend and beloved (cf. Chs. II.B.2 and V.A.4-B.2), can also contribute significantly to a healthy sense of one's worth. Since many have not abstained sexually outside marriage and waited until marriage, we will consider forgiveness, healing, "secondary virginity", and hope in K below.

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79. McDowell and Day (see note 1), 243, 279, 302 and 305. Steve Potter and Nancy Roach in *Sexuality Commitment and Family* (Spokane: Teen-Aid, 2nd revised 1984 ed.), 177, also speak of premarital sexual abstinence as a way of valuing one's body as "a unique and profoundly meaningful gift to a spouse..."

80. James Tunstead Burtchaell, *For Better, For Worse: Sober Thoughts on Passionate Promises* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 62-3.

## **J. The Above Arguments in the Light of Human Experience and Christian Faith**

It seems to me that many of the arguments in this chapter present a solid case against premarital sexual intercourse to human intelligence or reason (reflection on human experience, including experience of morally relevant facts and values - cf. Ch. I), even if one is not religious or a believing Christian. As one single young woman, Rebecca Morcos, says:

The chastity message is not necessarily a religious one .... it's a commonsense solution to a number of social problems, from violence against women to failed marriages and the welfare conundrum that snares many teenage moms. "You don't need to be religious to get a sexually transmitted disease."....

A condom can't heal a broken heart. Telling them [i.e. young unmarried people] to do it safely isn't going to protect their emotions.

The chastity message tells teens their future happiness and well-being are more important than a few minutes of pleasure.<sup>81</sup>

One does not need to be religious or a Christian to appreciate the values of human health, life, well-being and happiness. One also does not need to be religious or a Christian to appreciate other important values or personal goods that voluntary premarital sexual intercourse violates: the dignity, unity and integrity of human beings as personal subjects and embodied persons; justice, fidelity or trustworthiness, and self-giving love; honesty or truth, including the inherent total reciprocal personal giving and receiving meaning of human sexual intercourse; procreation and responsible parenthood; and the value of marriage for couples, their children and others.

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81. Tom Arnold, "The Chastity Challenge", *The Edmonton Journal*, Dec. 18, 1993, B6. Rebecca Morcos is a former student of mine. Recently she has toured Canada with some other young people promoting a chaste lifestyle to thousands of students in many public, private and Catholic schools.

If one, however, is aware that these values transcend human subjective and interpersonal experience, and that they have their source in a supremely good transcendent being, God, then the arguments presented above against premarital sexual intercourse can be seen to have an even firmer foundation. The Christian perspective properly appreciates these fundamental human values and affirms their grounding in the one infinitely good, loving and personal God. It, however, also provides some additional reasons for affirming the greatness of these values. For example, human beings have great value or dignity not only because they are conscious, feeling, thinking and acting personal subjects, but also because they are created and redeemed in the "image of God". Moreover, a baptized Christian has dignity as a member of the body of Christ, and a person filled with the Spirit of God and Christ is a true "temple of the Holy Spirit". Marriage is valuable not only in terms of meeting certain human needs and promoting personal and social responsibility and order. A good intimate loving committed marriage is also a good symbol of the kind of relationship that God wants to have with us. Christian marriage is a great sacrament of Christ and the Church. God, who is a communion of three divine Persons in the fullness of truth, and reciprocal self-giving faithful love, is the highest model for human interpersonal relationships including premarital relationships.

The Christian vision and vocation, including specific teachings on human sexuality and marriage, thus provide additional motives for premarital sexual abstinence. Christian teachings on love, including Jesus' teaching to love one another as he, as God, loves, as well as the Christian calling or vocation to become radically transformed in Christ, also confirm certain arguments that voluntary premarital sexual intercourse is always morally wrong.(cf. B above; and Ch. V.B)

Having a firm conviction that premarital sex is contrary to God's will can be particularly helpful, especially in times of temptation. In such times there can be a powerful enticement to have

premarital sex, which can appear to be "good". This illusion can easily fool someone, especially someone who does not have firm correct convictions in this area. One's appreciation of the real important goods or values that voluntary premarital sexual intercourse fails to respect properly is often not as good as it should be, particularly in such times when certain "feelings" can obscure a clear understanding. If one believes or is convinced that God is infinitely intelligent and wise, that he loves us perfectly and only wants what is best for us, and that premarital sex is contrary to God's plan or will because it is really not good for human beings, then one can more easily keep things in proper perspective. One can also unreservedly trust God who is completely trustworthy, ask him for the help that one needs to resist temptations, fully cooperate with the help he offers, and completely entrust oneself to God and his providential care.(cf. Ch. V.A.3, last two paragraphs)

With respect to the above, we can also note that Ronald Lawler, Joseph Boyle and William May correctly observe that:

...the [Catholic] Church's teaching on sexual matters is always presented both as the revealed will of God, and also as eminently reasonable. The Catholic vision of sexuality teaches a way of living sexually which is liberating and genuinely good for human beings. Those who reflect carefully in the light of faith can see and experience this for themselves.<sup>82</sup>

Voluntary premarital sexual intercourse is an objectively and seriously immoral behavior in the light of both human experience, and Christian and Catholic faith (cf. all of the above material in this book). As the Introduction points out, what God has revealed, and what we accept properly in faith, does not contradict human experience but helps us to understand it better.

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82. Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 5), 65.

**K. Forgiveness, Healing, "Restored Virginity", and Hope**

Although many people have sinned with respect to premarital sex and related issues, we should never forget that God wants to forgive us and liberate all of us from all sin and all its negative effects (see Ch. V.A.5) Although voluntary premarital sexual intercourse is always an objectively grave sin because it fails to love God, oneself and others as one should in serious ways, and it violates a number of very important personal goods (cf. A-H above; and Ch. V.A.3), it is certainly not the only kind of sexual sin and sexual sins are certainly not the only kinds of sin. For example, many married people sin with respect to sexuality and related issues, and violate some of the same values as do those who have premarital sex, by selfishly "using" their spouses, by being unfaithful to them, by using immoral means of family planning, and/or by being irresponsible parents in various ways (cf. parts of A-H above). A virgin can also sin, for example, by scorning God's wonderful gift of sexuality, by being self-righteous, by condemning others in their weakness and/or by failing to love God and people properly in many other ways such as by ingratitude, lying, and acting unjustly. We are all called to grow in chastity and the other virtues, to grow in loving God, others and oneself in a properly ordered way (cf. Ch. V.B)

To receive God's forgiveness and healing for our sins, we need to collaborate with God's merciful love and grace. This includes acknowledging one's sins, converting from sin to God with all one's heart, being appropriately contrite or sorry for one's sins, confessing them to God and asking for and accepting his forgiveness, having a firm purpose to amend one's life and taking appropriate means to try to avoid sin, including sins of thought, in the future, and seeking to be reconciled with all concerned including oneself. Reconciliation, depending on the circumstances and the requirements of a properly ordered love, can include forgiving others who have hurt us,



asking the forgiveness of those we have hurt, fraternal loving correction, trying to repair or make up for the harm one has caused, forgiving oneself, and praying for the healing of oneself and others.

Healing includes inner healing and becoming detached from any sinful attachments. For instance, with respect to attachments formed with others in immoral sexual unions such as fornication, John and Paula Sandford speak from their counseling experience of the liberating effect of an appropriate "prayer for separation". They also point out that sexual immorality including fornication is often connected to other things:

There may have been anger and rebellion toward parents, or a need to throw oneself away to prevent one's parents from rejoicing in their child's glory. Or a hunger for a father's love, so that the touch of a man became so tonic.... Or simply the lack of a functioning conscience....<sup>83</sup>

Unresolved issues and wounds of the past can be obstacles to loving properly in the present. Becoming aware of these and dealing with them in constructive, healing ways can be very helpful. Complete healing includes being healed of all the wounds of sin, of oneself and others, including childhood wounds that one may have suppressed. Healing in a fully holistic sense includes becoming fully open to God's love and the healing of all one's relationships. God who is infinitely loving and powerful wants to and can liberate and empower each of us so that we can grow in true love of him, others and ourselves, and so experience true communion with God and others. This includes growing in an intimate friendship with God and growing in appreciating the great dignity of oneself and other people as created and redeemed by God.(cf. Ch. V)

Many people who have been involved with premarital sex have also been involved with

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83. John and Paula Sandford, *The Transformation of the Inner Man* (Tulsa, OK: Victory House, Inc., 1982), 276-9. Cf. all of Chs. 8-10 and 15-20 of their book regarding early life, sexual sins and difficulties, teens and marriage, and inner healing. See Ch. V, note 41, for a couple of other sources on inner healing and healing of memories.

abortion, in one way or another. With regard to abortion, Matthew and Dennis Linn, and Sheila Fabricant, say in part:

We have often prayed with women who, many years after an abortion, still struggled with unresolved grief. Grief for an aborted child may remain buried and unresolved because of the depth of guilt attached to it .... such a woman often subconsciously fears judgment so much that she cannot bear to face her feelings of guilt .... Only when these women asked for and received forgiveness from their dead child and from Jesus were they freed from the torture of guilt.<sup>84</sup>

In their book, *At Peace with the Unborn*, they also treat healing of male partners and other family members who have been negatively affected as a result of abortion or miscarriage, in a sensitive way.

Many biblical passages speak eloquently and profoundly of God's mercy, the forgiveness of sins, including sins of sexual immorality, and healing.(cf. Ch. II) See, for example, Psalm 51; Jesus' parable of the prodigal and 'righteous' sons, and the merciful father (Lk 15:11-32); and his handling of the case of a woman caught committing adultery (Jn 8:1-11). Jesus' ministry includes forgiveness of sins, reconciliation and healing. He calls his followers to continue his ministry in various ways, according to their personal vocations.

With regard to the forgiveness of sins committed after Christian baptism, the sacrament of penance (also called the sacrament of conversion, confession, forgiveness and reconciliation) is very important, according to Catholic teaching. This sacrament, like the other sacraments, is a special means of God's saving grace for those who approach it with the right dispositions. In it one can have

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84. Linn and Fabricant (see note 43), 20. Cf. also Ch. I.D regarding the experience of the Silverwind singer who had an abortion; Paul Flaman, "Abortion's Solution: God's Love in Human Hearts", *Salt: Journal of the Religious Studies and Moral Education Council, The Alberta Teacher's Association*, Spring/Summer 1990, 28-31; and Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (see note 40), n. 99, par. 3.

a real personal encounter with Jesus, and experience his forgiveness and healing in a very powerful way. Fr. Robert Fox notes that some people "find it most difficult to confess that one has deliberately been guilty of impure actions alone or with another. *They should not.*" There are many understanding, compassionate priests who have heard "everything" and who can provide good counsel. The secret of the confessional is inviolable. In the light of his personal experience, including hearing the confessions of many young people, Fr. Fox speaks well of "this beautiful sacrament of God's mercy" and explains how to make a good confession. In line with Catholic teaching and Church law, he speaks not only of confessing serious sins, including premarital sex, as soon as reasonably possible, but of the value of frequent confession.<sup>85</sup>

The Eucharist, if one receives it with the proper dispositions, can also be a profound means of healing, also regarding the wounds of sexual sins, and growing in union with Jesus and living the Christian life. In the Eucharist one can meet Jesus, even daily if possible, in the fullness of his divinity and humanity, as the great Healer, Reconciler and giver of new life and peace. With respect to living the Christian life, including living chastely, the Sacrament of Confirmation gives a special strength of the Holy Spirit to be true witnesses of Christ to those who have been incorporated into Christ by Baptism.<sup>86</sup>

"Restored virginity", or "regained" or "secondary virginity", is something that many people, including many young people, speak about today with respect to premarital sex, starting again and

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85. Fox, 92 (see all of his Ch. VIII). Cf. CIC, canons 959-97, and CCC, nn. 1422-98, regarding Roman Catholic canon law and teaching on the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. Anyone who is unsure about how to make a good confession can simply ask a good priest for guidance.

86. See CIC, canons 849-958, and CCC, nn. 1213-1419, regarding Roman Catholic canon law and teaching on the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist. Cf. also Ch. V.A.4 and 5, including note 42, regarding the sacraments as special means of God's saving grace.

hope. With respect to this, one young single woman, for example, who had had premarital sex and became a Christian, says,

I am *very* grateful to be forgiven and released from my guilt, and to have a new beginning by being a virgin again in God's eyes. I am grateful for the opportunity to *wait* this time and share that intimacy [i.e. sexual union] *only* with my husband.<sup>87</sup>

Concerning such experiences, Josh McDowell and Dick Day say in part that although physical virginity cannot be regained, "one's spiritual and emotional virginity can be regained", and:

If someone has had sex but is not yet married, he (or she) can't technically be a virgin again. But the forgiveness and regeneration of being a new creation in Christ make it possible for a sense of innocence to be restored. God always meets us right where we are - no matter where we are - and offers us a fresh start. He can instill forgiveness where there is guilt; self-control where there is none; a healthy appreciation of sex where there is either obsession or aversion.

If an unmarried couple is sexually active, they may feel that since neither of them is a virgin any more, they may as well continue right up until marriage. God, however, can work in a person's life at any time. If the couple stops sleeping together, they can begin to reestablish their self-control and their appreciation and respect for themselves and each other, aspects of their relationship which they have ignored. They can show one another they are capable of submitting to God and of controlling themselves, each for the sake of the other.<sup>88</sup>

The theme of God restoring human innocence after sin, including the renewal of human hearts and minds, is not a new one. See, for example, a number of biblical passages including some of the

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87. From McDowell and Day (see note 1), 244. Cf. e.g., also Jim Walker, "Teens for Chastity: Selling the virtues of Virginity", *The Edmonton Journal*, Jun. 13, 1992, A11.

88. McDowell and Day (see note 1), 428 and 279-80, respectively. Their book concludes with a treatment of forgiveness which includes a fairly detailed account of a young woman named Tracy's experience of tragedy, forgiveness and healing.

prophetic literature, Eph 4:1-5:20, and 1 Jn 1:8-9 and 3:1-3 (see Ch. II.A.5 and B.2-3), and other writings from the Christian heritage such as Augustine of Hippo's autobiography and Thomas Aquinas' treatment of virginity (see Ch. III.B.1 and C.3).

In the light of an integral vision, including a proper understanding of God, creation, sin, the incarnation, redemption, the forgiveness of sins, healing and reconciliation, as well as the Christian vocation (see Ch. V), one who has fallen into sin, including serious sins such as voluntary premarital sex, even if repeatedly, should never despair. Rather, one should always start again and have hope, placing one's complete trust in God who is completely trustworthy and infinitely merciful. In closing this chapter, I would like to again refer to Rm 8:28 (NJB): "We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good."(cf. Ch. V.A.4, par. 3, A.5, 3rd last par., and B.1, last par.) Although it is better if we do not sin (fail to love God...) in the first place, the "everything" here includes our sins, including the sin of voluntary premarital sexual intercourse. The necessary condition though is that we truly repent and love God. If we do, then God, who is infinitely powerful and loving, certainly can and will turn everything to our good.