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## **CHAPTER 8: SOME ISSUES RELATED TO PREMARITAL SEX AND LOVE**

The previous two chapters (VI and VII) of this book focused on voluntary premarital sexual intercourse. This chapter focuses on some other issues that are related to the topics of "Premarital Sex and Love": masturbation, petting and the proper expression of love in premarital relationships, sexual abuse and violence, friendship and dating, choosing a marriage partner, preparation for marriage and celibacy.

### **A. Masturbation**

"By *masturbation* is to be understood the deliberate stimulation of the genital organs in order to derive sexual pleasure" (CCC, n. 2352) "which is not a part of sexual intercourse."<sup>1</sup> As defined here masturbation is a "freely chosen act". It is distinguished from such things as involuntary "nocturnal emissions" and sexual arousal, as well as certain spontaneous behaviors of very young children and animals.<sup>2</sup> The focus in this section is on solitary masturbation, especially in the

1. Ronald Lawler, Joseph Boyle, and William E. May, *Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary, Explanation and Defense* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1985), 187.

2. Cf. e.g., St. Thomas Aquinas, who says that nocturnal emission in itself is not a sin, for until they come under the control of reason first motions of sensuality have nothing sinful about them (his view regarding nocturnal emission as expressed in ST 2-2,154,5 is summarized in Ch. III.C.3 above under "Fornication and Other Kinds of Lust"; and Germain Grisez, *Living a Christian Life*, Vol. 2 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1992), 649, note 189, who says with regard to masturbation as a "freely chosen act": "This act's outward similarity to animal behavior

premarital situation. Deliberate genital stimulation of a partner, that is not a part of sexual intercourse, in premarital relationships is treated in B below.

According to certain surveys most men and many women have masturbated during adolescence. These surveys do not always indicate how often this occurred, how the individuals felt about this, and whether they thought this behavior was good.<sup>3</sup> It seems that a certain sense of shame is often associated with masturbation and that most people who have masturbated are reluctant to share about this. In any case, what many people do or have done, occasionally or frequently (cf. e.g., also lying and selfish actions), is not in itself a criterion for how they should behave or what is morally good.

There exist various psychological and ethical interpretations of masturbation. Psychological views range from seeing masturbation as a normal phenomenon of sexual development, especially among the young, and a healthy sexual outlet, especially for people who do not have the opportunity for regular intercourse, to seeing it as a complex behavior with various meanings depending on the individual's situation and motivation, etc., to seeing it as an unhealthy and unfulfilling counterfeit of loving intercourse. Ethical views range from seeing masturbation as always an objectively and seriously immoral act, although culpability can vary depending on the subject's moral awareness and freedom, to seeing it as an act that is sometimes immoral and sometimes moral depending on the meaning of the act in the situation or the premoral values and disvalues involved, to seeing it as a

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is as irrelevant to morality as is the similarity of a parent's deliberate infanticide to the behavior of an animal killing its own young." The Pontifical Council for the Family [PCF], "The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality", n. 69, *Origins*, 1 Feb. 1996, 541, says it is not "repressive" for parents to correct gently any instinctive habits of genital activity in their young children that could become sinful later.

3. André Guindon, e.g., in *The Sexual Language* (Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1977), 251-2, presents some statistics on masturbation.

morally neutral or good act.<sup>4</sup>

Catholic teaching holds that masturbation is an intrinsically and seriously disordered act, although subjectively there may not always be serious fault. Concerning this the Vatican's 1975 *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics* says:

...both the magisterium of the Church - in the course of a constant tradition - and the moral sense of the faithful have declared without hesitation that masturbation is an intrinsically and seriously disordered act. The main reason is that, whatever the motive for acting in this way, the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty. For it lacks the sexual relationship called for by the moral order, namely, the relationship which realizes "the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love." (GS, n. 51) All deliberate exercise of sexuality must be reserved to this regular relationship. Even if it cannot be proved that Scripture condemns this sin by name, the tradition of the Church has rightly understood it to be condemned in the New Testament when the latter speaks of "impurity," "unchasteness" and other vices contrary to chastity and continence....

.... Psychology helps one to see how the immaturity of adolescence (which can sometimes persist after that age), psychological imbalance or habit can influence behavior, diminishing the deliberate character of the act and bringing about a situation whereby subjectively there may not always be serious fault. But, in general, the absence of serious responsibility must not be presumed; this would be to misunderstand people's moral capacity.... (PH, n. 9)<sup>5</sup>

(See also Ch. V.A.3, the last 4 paragraphs, regarding the distinctions between material and formal

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4. For a summary of a range of psychological and moral interpretations of masturbation, see, e.g., Vincent J. Genovesi, *In Pursuit of Love: Catholic Morality and Human Sexuality* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987), 302-18.

5. Cf. USCC, *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1991), 62; CCC, n. 2352; and PCF (see note 2), n. 103.

sin, and natural desires, temptation to sin and committing sin; and Ch. VI.D regarding PH, nn. 9-13.)

In the rest of this section we will first of all consider some additional reasons why masturbation is a seriously disordered act, since this conclusion of Catholic teaching is often not appreciated today. I will then outline an appropriate educational and pastoral approach.

Catholic authors Lawler, Boyle and May concur with the judgment of Catholic teaching that masturbation is "an intrinsically and seriously disordered act". Referring to a number of sources, they say in part:

The Fathers of the Church, the medieval Scholastics, and all moral theologians until most recent times have been unanimous in condemning every deliberate act of masturbation as a serious violation of the virtue of chastity. This same teaching has been proposed by the magisterium of the Church from the time when it was discussed by Pope Leo IX in 1054 to the present....

.... Theologians have frequently cited certain key texts as witnesses to the scriptural condemnation of masturbation - for example, the Onan text in Genesis 38.8-10, or 1 Corinthians 6.9, where St. Paul lists among those who are excluded from the kingdom the *malakoi* or the "soft," or Romans 1.24, where he points out that those who reject God come to dishonor their own bodies.

Contemporary scholarship points out that these texts do not *unambiguously* refer specifically to masturbation. But in condemning irresponsible uses of sex generally, Scripture certainly does include a condemnation of masturbation....

The Church has rightly understood Scripture to teach that genital activity should take place only within marriage in ways that rightly express marital love. From St. Paul (1 Thessalonians 4.1-5, 1 Corinthians 6.15-20) Christians have learned that their bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, that their flesh has become one with the flesh of Christ. Our genital organs, Christians have thus rightly concluded, are not playthings or tools that we are to employ simply for pleasure. Rather, they are integral to our persons, and our free choice to exercise our genital powers is thus to be in service of

human persons and of the goods perfective of human persons. The goods to which sexual activity is ordered ... include procreation, marital friendship, and chaste self-possession. By respecting these goods when we use our genital powers, we honor the body that has, through baptism, become one body with Christ and a temple of his Spirit. When we do not respect these goods in our genital activity we act immorally, and we desecrate the temple of the Holy Spirit and abuse the body-person who has been purchased at such great price. It is this deeply biblical vision of human sexuality and of the human person that is at the heart of the Church's teaching on the immorality of masturbation.<sup>6</sup>

Some other contemporary Catholic authors argue along similar lines. For example, Grisez says in part that, "...masturbators violate the good of marital communion by violating the body's capacity for self-giving...."<sup>7</sup> With regard to the tendency for masturbation to quickly become a habit, and the premarital context, Quay says in part:

It is almost impossible for anyone enslaved to such a habit to enter into marriage positively and fruitfully because masturbation chops away, at their roots, the love, the outgoingness, the generosity, the openness to life and to responsibility that the true sexual act is meant to have.<sup>8</sup>

Some contemporary non-Catholic Christian authors also speak of certain serious problems with autoerotic or solitary masturbation. For example, Lutheran theologian Helmut Thielicke says in part:

Masturbation is as a rule regarded as offensive for the following reasons: First and above all because in masturbation sex is separated from the I-Thou relationship and thus loses its meaning as being the expression and consummation of this fellowship. Second, because the sexual phantasy is no longer

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6. Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 1), 187-9.

7. Grisez (see note 2), 651.

8. Paul M. Quay, S.J., *The Christian Meaning of Human Sexuality* (Evanston, IL: Credo House Books, 1985), 69.

bound to a real partnership and therefore roves about vagrantly. Third, because as a rule the absence of this bond leads to physical and psychic extravagance. The ethically decisive thing is ... the personal situation that underlies the masturbation, the very invertedness which in the spiritual realm Luther called man's being turned in upon himself [*incurvitas in se*]. All acts which are centered not upon God and my neighbor but upon my own self are actualizations of sin....<sup>9</sup>

John and Paula Sandford speak of solitary masturbation as "idolatry". The person who masturbates "is using his body to find the release he should find in prayer to God."<sup>10</sup>

The above views which consider masturbation to be intrinsically disordered, or which at least consider autoerotic or solitary masturbation to be contrary to a properly ordered love, are consistent with the conclusions of this book. Although Chapters II-IV do not focus on the issue of masturbation, the perspectives presented there on sex, marriage and love from the Bible, Christian tradition and Catholic teaching strongly support the view that deliberate autoerotic or solitary masturbation is not consistent with properly respecting God's wonderful plan for human sexuality and marriage. Deliberately masturbating is also not consistent with a holistic Christian anthropology, with a properly ordered love in which one finds fulfillment by sincerely giving oneself to God and others in love (see Ch. V above).

My own conclusion is that masturbation is a kind of behavior that is always wrong to choose (cf. Ch. VI.B), and that those who think that it is morally neutral or good, or that it can sometimes

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9. Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), 256. Thielicke does not speak of masturbation per se as intrinsically disordered. It seems that he focuses on the intention and circumstances, but overlooks the "object" which Catholic teaching considers the primary source of the morality of human acts (see Ch. VI, note 14, and the response to proportionalism in Ch. VII.I above).

10. John and Paula Sandford, *The Transformation of the Inner Man* (Tulsa: Victory House, Inc., 1982), 289.

be moral, are mistaken (cf. Ch. VII.I regarding relativism, hedonism, situation ethics and proportionalism).<sup>11</sup> Although pleasure or relief from tension and the like are not bad per se, one's seeking pleasure and relief from tension should always be subordinated to a properly ordered love of God and persons. This includes, among other things, always respecting God's 'nuptial' and 'procreative' purposes for human sexuality, and personal goods such as the truth of the language of the human body, self-giving love and our great dignity as embodied persons. One cannot choose to masturbate and properly respect God's purposes for human sexuality and these personal goods at the same time. Deliberate masturbation violates the virtue of chastity (cf. Ch. VI.A). It is contrary to the call to be holy, to grow in loving as Jesus, as God, loves. Deliberate masturbation is counterproductive to one's growing in an authentic communion of persons which includes God (cf. Ch. V).<sup>12</sup>

#### An Appropriate Educational and Pastoral Approach

Although the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that "masturbation is an intrinsically and gravely immoral act", it also teaches in part:

To form an equitable judgment about the subjects' moral responsibility and to guide pastoral action, one must take into account the affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety or other psychological or social factors that can lessen, if not even reduce to a minimum, moral culpability.(CCC, n. 2352. Cf. PH, n. 9)

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops' document on *Human Sexuality* summarizes a good educational and pastoral approach regarding the problem of masturbation. Concerning this

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11. See also the responses to certain objections by Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 1), 189-95.

12. See also Jean Vanier, *Man and Woman He Made Them* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 67-8.

it says in part:

...it is valuable to consider that masturbation may be a symptom of underlying psychological and interpersonal difficulties that provoke a certain amount of tension that the person seeks to release through these actions. Pedagogical efforts and pastoral care should be focused on the development of the whole person, seeing these actions in context, seeking their underlying causes more than seeking to repress the actions in isolation.

In order to help an adolescent learner "to feel accepted in a communion of charity and freed from self-enclosure," a parent, teacher, or counselor "should undramatize masturbation and not reduce his or her esteem and benevolence" for the person. We encourage all educators and counselors to help those who masturbate to move toward better social integration, to be more open and interested in others, in order eventually to be free from this form of behavior. Thus, they will advance toward the kind of interpersonal love proper to mature affectivity. At the same time, we encourage people who struggle with masturbation "to have recourse to the recommended means of Christian asceticism, such as prayer and the sacraments, and to be involved in works of justice and charity."<sup>13</sup>

Speaking to young men in particular, Fr. Robert Fox treats some of their common worries concerning masturbation and nocturnal emissions in a sensitive caring manner. While a young man with a problem of deliberate masturbation must work at self-control with God's help, he should not become depressed if he falls in a moment of weakness, but pick himself up and "answer God's call back to confession." He should be confident that he can overcome this problem, even if it takes a few years, as thousands of men have overcome this problem. Understanding the cause can help overcome the problem, including any feelings such as depression, loneliness, and a sense of failure

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13. USCC (see note 5), 62-63, quoting from the CCE's document, *Educational Guidance in Human Love* (see Ch. VI.G above regarding this document), n. 100. Cf. also PCF (see note 2), n. 103, which says in part: "...adolescents should be helped to overcome manifestations of this disorder, which often express the inner conflicts of their age and in many cases a selfish vision of sexuality."



that may be associated with it. With regard to sacramental confession, "Jesus gave us this sacrament of His mercy because He knew our weakness and wanted to give us all the spiritual help we would need to become saints." If a Catholic has deliberately masturbated, normally he (or she) should go to confession before receiving Holy Communion:

Anyone who is conscious of grave sin may not ... receive the Body of the Lord without previously having been to sacramental confession, unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, which includes the resolve to go to confession as soon as possible.(CIC, canon 916)

As an example of "a grave reason", Fox speaks of the case where one would be publicly admitting that one committed a mortal sin if he did not receive Holy Communion (e.g. a young man who goes to Mass with his family and had no opportunity for a priest to hear his confession first without exposing himself). The Church does not expect us to reveal our secret sins to anyone "except the priest and then only under the sacramental seal of the confessional." Fox explains that "perfect contrition" is "sorrow based on love of God Who has been offended by the sin." If someone is in doubt whether he sinned seriously because he "acted more *impulsively* than with full deliberation", he may presume that he did not sin more than venially. "You need not stay away from Holy Communion because of a doubt." Fox describes a nocturnal emission or wet dream as "natural": "If he awakens during the process, he should do nothing to help or to hinder what nature is accomplishing. He should strive not to consent to sexual pleasure in his mind although he cannot deny that some pleasure may be experienced in his body."<sup>14</sup>

Pazhayampallil also presents some good insights and practical points with regard to

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14. Rev. Robert J. Fox, *Charity, Morality, Sex, and Young People* (Manassas: Trinity Communications, 1987), 79-87. See CCC, nn. 1854-63, regarding mortal and venial sin. Regarding nocturnal emissions see also the reference to Aquinas in note 2 above.

masturbation. Among other things, he says:

Among the remedies that are suggested to overcome the vice of masturbation, practice of humility comes first.... Secondly, self discipline or mortification is necessary... A life of prayer is an indispensable means to preserve the virtue of chastity. A personal love of Jesus Christ and a tender devotion to Our Lady is also a guarantee for living a chaste life....

... Self centredness often is the main cause of masturbation. The problem then can be solved only if one opens oneself to God and to one's neighbour. One should then do something in the way of doing some service to others.

There are also many physical aids ... such as a diet that is free from stimulants, airy, cool, hard bed, early and prompt rising in the morning, some kind of sports in the evening, some useful and enjoyable work, and interesting hobby undertaken, etc. One must avoid periods of solitude; one must keep busy with activities that demand the total attention. Plan deliberately to become physically tired by the end of the day so that sleep comes quickly and is deep.... When one experiences the urge, one should deliberately try to postpone the urge [for periods of five seconds at a time] .... the desire will eventually weaken and one will have gained a victory.

When temptations come, one could vividly represent to oneself some other good or indifferent object, thus one could divert one's attention away from the evil thought. Although turning to God in prayer may not be always effective in halting temptation, it serves as one of the surest proofs of one's not consenting to them because it is a direct act of the will choosing God against evil....

Those who cannot sleep unless they cause pollution [deliberately masturbate] are not allowed to do so. They should consult a good conscientious doctor.<sup>15</sup>

A number of the principles presented in other parts of this book can also be helpful with regard to the issue of masturbation. See, for example, Ch. I "Making Good Choices"; Ch. VI.K regarding

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15. Thomas Pazhayampallil, S.D.B., *Pastoral Guide: Moral Canonical Liturgical* (Bangalore, India: Kristu Jyothi College, 1977), 1080-4.

forgiveness, healing, and hope; and Ch. IX "Counseling, Pastoral Action, Sex Education and Spirituality". A holistic Christian anthropology, which appreciates the basic created goodness of human sexuality, and considers sin in relation to redemption, following Jesus and transformation in Christ, is also needed to keep the whole issue of masturbation in proper perspective.(see Ch. V)

## **B. Petting and the Proper Expression of Love in Premarital Relationships**

Many people, including many young people and many Christians, have concerns regarding petting and the proper expression of love in premarital relationships. Questions regarding these issues are regularly raised in Christian theology courses on human sexuality and marriage, which I teach at the University of Alberta. They are also addressed in much of the literature on premarital sex. For example, Eshleman, a sociologist, notes that:

Some men and women who accept abstinence [regarding premarital sexual intercourse] feel that as long as coitus is avoided, they can pet heavily with most people who physically attract them or when strong affection or love is present.<sup>16</sup>

Researchers Bibby and Posterski surveyed a sample of 3,600 Canadian teenagers (15-19 years old) in 1984 and found that more of them approved of petting than premarital intercourse. For example, for two people who like each other after a few dates, 84% (92% males and 79% females) reported thinking that it is all right to pet, whereas 53% (70% males and 36% females) reported thinking that it is all right to have intercourse. In similar circumstances 95% (97% males and 94%

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16. J. Ross Eshleman, *The Family: An Introduction* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 4th ed. 1985), 356.

females) approved of necking, and virtually 100% approved of kissing and holding hands.<sup>17</sup> For some other statistics regarding premarital sexual intercourse see Ch. VII.C, F and J above, noting differences between what some people approve and what they do, as well as differences between incidence and prevalence rates. As explained in those sections, however, the fact that many people approve something or do it, does not in itself mean that the behavior is responsible or a proper expression of love.

In Chs. VI and VII of this book many arguments were considered regarding premarital sexual intercourse. It was concluded that this is a kind of behavior that is always wrong to choose. Premarital intercourse involves many possible and actual harmful consequences. Choosing to engage in this behavior involves a serious failure to love properly oneself, one's partner, a possible child, other people and God. There are also many advantages to waiting until marriage to have sexual relations. None of the arguments for premarital sexual intercourse is valid.

It seems that some unmarried people indulge in deliberately sexually arousing behaviors, including necking and petting for this reason, often to orgasm, but stop short of intercourse to avoid the risks of pregnancy and contracting STDs. A woman can get pregnant, however, without intercourse. Not only the male's ejaculate but also the initial secretion from a man's penis shortly after erection can contain millions of sperm. If any of these sperm are transferred to the woman's vagina, or even to her vulva, for example, carried by a finger in the course of petting, she can get pregnant. Short explains that this can happen "More often than one might think. A social services

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17. Reginald W. Bibby and Donald C. Posterski, *The Emerging Generation: An Inside Look at Canada's Teenagers* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1985), 76. Regarding the use of statistics in my book see Ch. VI, note 25.

director in a small city recently told me that she's now getting about a case a year."<sup>18</sup> STDs have also been transmitted by sexual petting and exploration. Dr. Sever, an AIDS expert, even warns against "deep kissing because of the possibility of transmission (of AIDS) either by saliva or bleeding (in the mouth) in the process."<sup>19</sup>

Some Christians who believe that premarital sexual intercourse is against God's will (cf. e.g., a number of translations of the Bible condemning fornication by name), nevertheless, are not sure or are not convinced that the Bible excludes all other types of premarital sexual activity. For example, while Chapman concludes that Scripture excludes premarital sexual intercourse and that, "*Perhaps the most common danger in dating is to allow the physical aspect of the relationship to predominate*", he also says:

....sexually-motivated physical activity ... ought to wait until some degree of maturity has been reached in the relationship. Some will find such a suggestion objectionable...

.... I believe that here we move on a continuum from little to much depending upon the degree of commitment and the date of the wedding....<sup>20</sup>

Such a suggestion is, indeed, found objectionable by some other Christians. For example, McDowell and Day note that although the Bible "does not give specific black-and-white answers

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18. Ray E. Short, *Sex, Dating and Love* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 57. 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), 56.

19. Dr. John L. Sever, Chief of Infectious Diseases, National Institute of Health, Bethesda, MD, in a reported interview, *The Edmonton Journal*, 12 Aug. 1987, B1. Cf. also Guindon (see note 3), 399; and Ch. VI.E above under "Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)" and "Premarital Pregnancy".

20. Gary Chapman, *Toward a Growing Marriage* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 23-24. Although I recommend most of Chapman's book, I do find this suggestion of his "objectionable". Regarding the Bible and "fornication" / "*porneia*" see relevant parts of Ch. II above.

in every area of sexual behavior", it does provide some "clear guidelines for avoiding sexual immorality" that can also be applied to "necking" and "petting". Concerning these issues they offer a number of good insights and practical suggestions including the following:

[The "Everything but--" philosophy is a] .... kind of legalism [which] searches for loopholes to get around the laws of God .... [but which] totally disregards the *spirit* underlying the law.

.... Doing everything but - certainly disregards the spirit of God's commandment to "flee fornication." ....

.... It is human nature to test the limits, to go as close to the brink of disaster as we can without getting hurt....

The problem is that if we lose control and go further than intended - and the odds are that anyone playing "sexual brinkmanship" will - we end up hurting ourselves and other people....

Many young couples don't understand that sex is a progressive activity that culminates in intercourse.... Once arousal begins it is unnatural to stop short of full expression.

Sexual stimulation was designed by God to prepare marriage partners for intercourse, not as a pleasant activity that can be easily interrupted. Stimulation, or foreplay, is intended for one thing only: precipitating a married couple into a complete expression of their sexuality.

... the interruption of sexual foreplay ... is also highly frustrating....

Lust has an insatiable appetite.... With each progressive step of sexual intimacy we take, desire is increased, never decreased. That's why allowing ourselves "minor" compromises of ever increasing sexual intimacy ultimately violates the spirit of the law....

[Referring to 1 Th 4:3-6a regarding God wanting our sanctification, and that we abstain from sexual immorality and not "defraud" another, they continue] .... Within the boundaries of a loving marriage, arousal is not defrauding, because our sexual fulfillment is pleasing to God. However, in a dating relationship arousal is defrauding....

Some teens do not actually understand what "turns on" members of the opposite sex. Arousal can be the result of your words, actions, activities in which you participate, what you read and look at, and even the way you dress.... Also, there are erogenous zones, primary areas of sexual sensitivity in the body. Obviously, it is wise to "stay far away" from these sensitive areas before marriage....

In setting limits, teens need to consider their backgrounds and their emotional and spiritual maturity. Your parents ... [can be among] your best resources when setting your limits. The decision needs to be made both individually and as couples....

.... Drinking or taking drugs affects the mind. They give a false sense of security and well-being, weakening the brain's decision-making ability....

...regardless of how the decision is made, you, your date, and often others, will have to live with the consequences....

The Holy Spirit can help us know when we are going too far....

It is important for young people to be concerned about the *other person*....

.... Never overestimate your or your partner's ability to resist sexual temptation.

At times a *quick exit* is the smart thing to do....

Of course the best way to keep from going too far is never to start. Instead of asking how far I can go without suffering the consequences, it is best to avoid precarious situations altogether....

.... "Flee youthful lusts."(2 Timothy 2:22...) ....

When you ask the question, How far can we go? you are coming at the whole dating issue from the wrong perspective. Instead you should ask, What can I do to help my dating partner and myself grow closer to Christ?<sup>21</sup>

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21. Josh McDowell and Dick Day, *Why Wait? What You Need to Know About the Teen Sexuality Crisis* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1987), 399-404. Regarding their biblical references compare Ch. II.B.2 "Some Pauline Teachings". Cf. also John White, *Eros Defiled: The Christian & Sexual Sin* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 52-6, regarding "The Dead Issue of Petting".

Along similar lines, the Sandfords note that there was no need for the Bible to lay down direct guidelines regarding petting, etc., since there was no dating in Bible lands then. Among other things, they consider it good that today's "children .... have been delivered from inhibitions of touch and sight which were born of prudery" rather than respect for the dignity of persons.

.... However, today's culture is much too devoid of the sense of the holy, and of proper respect for modesty.... Add to that today's relaxed views of chaperoning... The culture also teaches the opposite of Christian love - to get what you want, with no respect for others....

.... Certainly all genital areas should be off limits before marriage. The breasts should be reserved for the husband only (see Prov. 5:18-19, and especially verse 20, "For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress, And embrace the bosom of a foreigner?"). How can a young man know whether this one whose bosom he desires to embrace will be his or another's wife? Our counsel to couples as they become more serious is that they not give themselves opportunity by being together alone too much, and to double date and go to parties together.... Not love, but carnality, will push us to go too far.

... a counselor's work may ... be ... to uncover the childhood flaws which create vulnerability....<sup>22</sup>

Based on the biblical vision of sex, marriage and love (cf. Ch. II), the tradition of the Church, and a holistic anthropology (cf. Chs. III-V), Catholic teaching states:

....the use of the sexual function has its true meaning and moral rectitude only in true marriage.(PH, n. 5)

....the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty. For it lacks the sexual relationship called for by the moral order, namely, the relationship which realizes "the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context

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22. Sandford (see note 10), 291-3. Regarding their reference to Proverbs compare Ch. II.A.6 "Wisdom Literature".



of true love."(GS, n. 51) All deliberate exercise of sexuality must be reserved to this regular relationship....(PH, n. 9)<sup>23</sup>

....according to Christian tradition and the Church's teaching, and as right reason also recognizes, the moral order of sexuality involves such high values of human life that every direct violation of this order is objectively serious.

It is true that in sins of the sexual order, in view of their kind and their causes, it more easily happens that free consent is not fully given; this is a fact which calls for caution in all judgment as to the subject's responsibility. In this matter it is particularly opportune to recall the following words of Scripture: "Man looks at appearances but God looks at the heart."(1 Sam 16:7) However, although prudence is recommended in judging the subjective seriousness of a particular sinful act, it in no way follows that one can hold the view that in the sexual field mortal sins are not committed....(PH, n. 10)

With regard to the "tradition of the Church" in this area, one of the sources often referred to is St. Thomas Aquinas' teaching regarding libidinous kisses, embraces and caresses in ST 2-2,154,4.<sup>24</sup> Aquinas taught that kisses, embraces and caresses can be done without libidinousness. They are not sinful acts in themselves, but can be made bad by a bad intention. Consent to the pleasure of a mortal sin is itself a mortal sin (cf. Mt 5:28), not only consent in the act. Therefore, kisses and the like for the sake of the pleasure of fornication are libidinous and mortal sins.(cf. Ch. III above regarding seeing this specific teaching of Aquinas in the broader context of his life and teaching,

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23. Although this quotation from PH, n. 9, is from a section on masturbation, the meaning of the teaching would also certainly exclude any "deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations" in premarital sexual petting, etc. With regard to this we can note that the definition of masturbation in CCC, n. 2352 (quoted in section A, par. 1, above), can be applied not only to solitary masturbation but also to one person "masturbating" another. Cf. e.g., also Catholic authors Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 1) saying that, "Masturbation can be done either by a person acting on himself or herself ... or by one person acting on another."(187)

24. Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 1), 267, note 47, say that ST 2-2,154,4 "is the standard reference for the common teaching of the manuals."

as well as Christian tradition) With regard to Aquinas' referring to Mt 5:28, can we not also speak of committing "fornication in one's heart"?<sup>25</sup> Regarding Mt 5:28 see also the commentary in Ch. II.B.1; and the explanation of the difference between natural sexual desire, being tempted to lust and committing the sin of lust in Ch. V.A.3, 2nd last par.; above.

With regard to unmarried people indulging in deliberately sexually arousing behaviors, including necking and petting for this reason, often to orgasm, but stopping short of intercourse, the following Catholic teaching is also significant:

It seems that there is an increase among adolescents and young adults of certain manifestations of a sexual kind which of themselves tend to complete encounter, though without reaching its realization: manifestations of the merely genital which are a moral disorder because they are outside the matrimonial context of authentic love.

Sex education will help adolescents to discover the profound values of love, and to understand the harm which such manifestations do to their affective maturation, inasmuch as they lead to an encounter which is not personal, but instinctive, often weakened by reservations and egoistic calculations, without therefore the character of true personal relationship and so much less definitive. An authentic education will lead the young towards maturity and self-control, the fruit of conscientious choice and personal effort.<sup>26</sup>

Regarding these issues, it should be noted that Catholic teaching, referring to Scripture and other classical Christian sources, speaks not only of the vocation to chastity and offenses against chastity such as lust, fornication and pornography. It also speaks of friendship (cf. Jesus who chose

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25. Cf. e.g., Quay (see note 8), who says, "...the unmarried may not embrace or caress each other for the sake of sexual arousal or pleasure. They may not consent to such stimulation, even if it should accidentally occur. To act otherwise would be a sort of fornication or masturbation in emotion and desire, even if not in act."(73)

26. CCE (see note 13), nn. 96-7.

us as his friends and calls us to follow him), whether "between persons of the same or opposite sex" as "a great good for all"(CCC, n. 2347); the need to be "pure in heart" to "perceive the human body - ours and our neighbour's - as a temple of the Holy Spirit"(CCC, n. 2519); and of the need for modesty in behavior, dress and speech.(See all of CCC, nn. 2331-59 and 2514-33; as well as Ch. IV above; and compare CCC, nn. 1762-75, regarding the passions - affections or feelings.)

Contemporary Catholic authors who attempt to be fully faithful to the best of Christian tradition and Catholic teaching in this area concur that any deliberate sexual arousal of oneself or another in the context of nonmarital relationships is objectively immoral and to be avoided, although culpability can vary depending on the person's moral awareness and freedom. Sexual arousal that is not deliberately sought, enjoyed or consented to in nonmarital relationships is not immoral per se. In the light of a realistic understanding of oneself and others, one should avoid any unnecessary occasions of sin. I agree with these judgments.<sup>27</sup>

With regard to the proper expression of love in premarital relationships (cf. also other nonmarital relationships as well as the relationship between spouses), one should always try to respect properly God's plan concerning sex and marriage, as well as relevant personal goods such as honesty, truth, justice, self-giving love, and the dignity and integrity of persons including oneself.

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27. See, e.g., Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 1), Ch. 8 including section III "Incomplete Acts of Lust"; Grisez (see note 2), 648-80; Quay (see the quotation in note 25 above); and Fox (see note 14), 70 and 79-81. It can also be noted here that some writers within the Catholic Church erroneously conclude that petting involving deliberate sexual arousal can be justified in some premarital circumstances. E.g., although Philip S. Keane, S.S., in *Sexual Morality: A Catholic Perspective* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), makes some good points regarding "premarital petting"(110-13), he also says in part that "...heavy petting before marriage should always be understood as involving ontic evil.... In the same sort of circumstances in which premarital intercourse might not be a moral evil, premarital petting might also not be a moral evil."(112) The responses given in Ch. VII.G and I above regarding his erroneous position (and others who hold similar views) on committed premarital intercourse and proportionalism can also be applied to such erroneous conclusions regarding premarital sexual petting.

This allows for a great deal of freedom and enhances personal freedom. There exist a great variety of moral ways to express love, care, affection, compassion, etc., in premarital and other nonmarital relationships: listening, appropriate words, gestures and hugs, acts of thoughtfulness, kindness and generosity, prayer, etc., which sensitively respond to the real needs of others and respect their legitimate wants and preferences. Gestures such as a kiss, for example, can express a variety of meanings ranging from dishonest manipulation and betrayal, to a common sign of affection between relatives and friends, to the deeply committed love of true spouses. Concerning those who are unmarried, dating and like each other very much, but are not yet engaged, Quay says prolonged or intimate kissing, embracing, and caressing, even if not done to get pleasure for themselves or for the sake of sexual arousal, "a sort of fornication or masturbation in emotion and desire", harm "the couple's ability to express true love..." Such unfulfilled use of these preliminary "symbols of love" involves "a wearing down of their meaning, a loss of sensitivity and expressiveness. When some day they wish to use these symbols to express the depths of the unique love to which they are then resolved to consecrate their whole lives, they find they don't know how...." It is hard to recapture their "fullness of meaning." With regard to couples who are engaged to be married, however, he says:

Those who are engaged, since they are committed to each other, even though not yet fully, have sufficient reason to manifest their love, even by prolonged kissing and embracing. Their love has led them to an initial gift of themselves, even if still partial, and may be quite rightly shown by these natural symbols, provided, of course, that this leads neither of them into sin, provided they do not get themselves violently overwrought, and provided the engagement does not go on forever. For, once a couple foresees that their engagement has to be prolonged, then intimate kissing and embracing and other warm signs of affection should be accordingly widely spaced out and rare, precisely to avoid

the dulling and growing stale of the signs of love.<sup>28</sup>

In closing this section on petting and the proper expression of love in premarital relationships, I would like to emphasize again that the virtue of chastity is very positive. It does not involve arbitrary restrictions. The self-control that is involved is simply what is required to love God and human persons including oneself in a properly ordered way. The focus should be on growing in an integral love of God, oneself and others, and on expressing this love in responsible upright ways. Whenever one fails to love as one should, one should not give up hope, but seek forgiveness and healing in appropriate ways, and begin to love again.(cf. Ch. VI.A and K)

Care, imagination, intelligence, and sensitivity are always necessary in teaching sexual ethics to the young. They need to realize that excluding deliberately lustful dimensions from the acts in which they show affection in no way means that they cannot be spontaneous and joyful in their expression of real affection. Intelligent teaching of all that the Church has learned of chaste and self-possessed love is liberating and bracing; it does not impoverish human life.<sup>29</sup>

### **C. Sexual Abuse and Violence**

According to some studies:

....21% to 65% of the college students and 12% of the high school students surveyed [in the United States] had experienced some form of violence [including physical, psychological or sexual abuse of one partner by the other] in both casual and committed dating relationships....

Studies done so far indicate that in some dating relationships, abuse is mutual, but that in the majority of cases where severe abuse takes place, the abusers are male. For example, some females

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28. Quay (see note 8), 73-5.

29. Lawler, Boyle and May (see note 1), 196.

say that they slap and throw things, but the males do not find this behavior terrorizing in the way that females do. Some abusive behavior is used in self-defense...

In 1983, over 2,000 Canadians were surveyed in a study conducted for the Badgley Commission studying child sexual abuse in Canada. The study found that 6 percent of the males and 15 percent of the females had been subjected to some kind of sexual assault, as defined by the Criminal Code, before the age of 15....

.... Three studies of American college students showed that a range of from 8 to 22 percent of the females and 5 to 9 percent of the males reported having been sexually abused as children....<sup>30</sup>

In a survey of 95 randomly chosen classes at 44 Canadian colleges and universities in the Fall of 1992, 29% of the women said they had been sexually abused or assaulted; 22% said they had been physically abused; 79% said they had been psychologically abused; and 81% of the women said "they had been psychologically, physically or sexually abused by men they dated in the preceding year." 11% of the men surveyed admitted being "sexually abusive"; 13% admitted being "physically abusive"; and 75% said they had been "psychologically abusive". According to one of the researchers, sociologist Walter DeKeseredy, these figures may actually underestimate the problem since some women, even in anonymous surveys, may not report abuse because of

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30. Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, *Dating Violence*, 1, and *Child Sexual Abuse*, 1-2, respectively (Edmonton: Alberta Social Services, 1989). Cf. e.g., also Debra J. Lewis, *Dating Violence: A Discussion Guide on Violence in Young People's Relationships* (Vancouver: Battered Women's Support Services, 1987), 2; The Alan Guttmacher Institute, *Sex and America's Teenagers* (New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994), "Some 74% of women who had intercourse before age 14 and 60% of those who had sex before age 15 report having had sex involuntarily." (28); and the "Sexual Assault Information Page", <http://www.cs.utk.edu/~bartley/saInfoPage.html> on the Internet. Regarding the use of statistics in my book see Ch. VI, note 25.

embarrassment or trauma, and some men may deny their abuse.<sup>31</sup>

Although there are various kinds of sexual abuse and violence, including in many "marriages" and in many nonmarital cohabitation relationships that do not lead to marriage, the focus in this section is especially on sexual abuse and violence in premarital relationships. Child abuse, including child sexual abuse, is also mentioned here since its negative effects are carried into later premarital and marital relationships. The approach here is primarily pastoral, intended to increase understanding and prevention of sexual abuse and violence, and to help facilitate change and healing for those who have been abused and/or have abused others.

A number of factors have been referred to with regard to abusive dating relationships including the following:

Many persons who are abusive experienced or observed abuse in their families....

...females who stay in abusive dating relationships: tend to have low self-esteem and high levels of emotional distress...; subscribe to the ... belief that "any boyfriend is better than no boyfriend"; are more likely to come from unhappy homes and become deeply involved in their dating relationships very quickly....

A combination of factors trap couples in abusive relationships: the seriousness of the relationship, the time invested, dependency on each other, societal norms about roles of men and women, differences in power..., learned acceptance of abuse, no acceptance of responsibility for the abuse on

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31. Peter Hum, "Date abuse common, say women students", *Edmonton Journal*, 8 Feb. 1993, A1. With regard to "sexual abuse and violence", we can also note here that there are 85-114 million women living today who have been genitally mutilated, according to Christine E. Gudorf, *Body, Sex and Pleasure* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1994), 144. She also points out that although "all research makes clear that male violence against females is much more likely to cause serious injury", men are sometimes the victims of sexual violence by other men or by female partners. "Male victims of rape, whether by males or females ... share the impaired sexual functioning, confusion, self-disgust, and emotional distress of women suffering from rape trauma syndrome."(182-3).

the part of the abuser and a belief on the part of the abused person that she can change her abuser's behavior.

Most instances of reported violence occur during the more serious and intimate stages of the relationships....

...violence has different purposes in different relationships. It is sometimes used to control or dominate and sometimes used to resolve conflicts.

Sometimes one or both persons sees the abuse as a sign of love. This can happen if they believe that possessiveness is the same as love. They may have adopted this belief because of observing or experiencing controlling kinds of relationships in their homes or in the media....<sup>32</sup>

Men who abuse women often "have low self-esteem and feel vulnerable and powerless." They often try to isolate their partners from family and friends. "Many abused women are isolated and alone with their pain." Although alcohol and drugs do not cause abuse and violence, they "lessen inhibitions and can heighten anger, impair judgment, desensitize and increase the amount of force being used."<sup>33</sup> "...a distorted view of sexuality and the objectification of the female body, to which pornography and commercial advertising contribute; ...the violence in popular entertainment"; and "the lack of emphasis and education on resolving problems non-violently"; have also been referred to as factors that contribute to violence against women.<sup>34</sup>

We can also note here that:

...most child sexual abuse is committed by someone known to the child and is likely to continue over

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32. Office for the Prevention of Family Violence (see note 30), *Dating Violence*, 1-2.

33. The United States Bishops' Committees on Women in Church and Society, and on Marriage and Family Life, "When I Call for Help: Domestic Violence Against Women," *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*, 5 Nov. 1992, 356. Cf. Lewis (see note 30), 2-6.

34. Canadian Church Leaders, "Violence Against Women," *Origins*, 30 Apr. 1992, 789.



long periods, sometimes several years....

Most child sexual abuse is committed by males....

...a significant number of abusers were molested as children....

Sexual abuse is an extremely complex phenomenon. It is committed by many different kinds of people who have a variety of motives....

Children are susceptible to abuse because they are trusting and are easily coerced into doing what an adult they love wants them to do or they are easily frightened into doing what a bigger and more powerful person tells them to do....

Some effects are devastating and long lasting....<sup>35</sup>

Relationships in which children or youth are sexually abused generally move gradually from an ordinary social relationship to a "special" relationship to a more and more invasive sexual relationship. To protect himself from getting caught the offender may distort reality by telling the victim that what they are doing is not wrong or natural or that no one would believe them, or by using threats.<sup>36</sup>

Although it is helpful to understand various factors that contribute to sexual abuse and violence, their tragedy should never be minimized.

...the forcible violation of the sexual intimacy of another person .... deeply wounds the respect, freedom and physical and moral integrity to which every person has a right. It causes grave damage that can mark the victim for life. It is always an intrinsically evil act...(CCC, n. 2356)

Sexual assault is not only gravely immoral. It is also a crime. Besides psychological harm to the

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35. Office for the Prevention of Family Violence (see note 30), *Child Sexual Abuse*, 1-3.

36. Cf. Heather Jamieson, "From Enticement to Entrapment: The Stages of Sexual Abuse," National Office of Religious Education of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Dreams, Dilemmas, Decisions: Deciding to Be Church in Today's World* (Ottawa: CCCB, 1994), 125-9.

victims, it may also involve bodily harm, the transmission of STDs, and/or involuntary pregnancy (in heterosexual rape).<sup>37</sup>

With regard to violence against women, two committees of the United States Bishops say in part, "Violence in any form - physical, sexual, psychological or verbal - is sinful; many times it is a crime as well."<sup>38</sup> A number of Canadian Church leaders representing a range of different Church groups also say in part, "Basically, we see violence against women as a result of the sin and brokenness which permeate human life, shattering the intended mutuality and equality between men and women and distorting personal relationships."<sup>39</sup>(cf. Ch. V.A.3 above) These statements can also be applied to violence against children, youth and men in interpersonal relationships, since all human beings have a great and equal fundamental dignity. With regard to violence Pope John Paul II on a visit to Canada said:

Human beings live by wisdom, by culture and by morality. Violence is in complete contradiction to such a life. Violence creates the justifiable need for defense. And at the same time, violence threatens to destroy the sources of human life. Not only does it threaten to kill human beings, millions of men and women, but it threatens to destroy all that is human.<sup>40</sup>

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37. For an analysis of the immorality of sexual assault, as well as the immorality of sadomasochism, sexual seduction, sexual harassment, and sexual manipulation and aggression, see, e.g., Grisez (see note 2), 545-9, 655, and 679-80.

38. The United States Bishops' Committees... (see note 33), 353.

39. Canadian Church Leaders (see note 34), 789.

40. As cited in "To Live Without Fear: A Statement on Violence Against Women," by the Permanent Council of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 13 June 1991, in *Dreams, Dilemmas, Decisions* (see note 36), 123-4. The approval of "legitimate defense" by Catholic teaching does not contradict its strong defense of the sacredness of human life and the dignity of human persons (see e.g., CCC, nn. 2258-2330; and cf. Ch. V.B.1 Following Jesus, in particular the last three paragraphs). Regarding "genital mutilations", etc. (see note 31), we can note that Catholic teaching holds: "Except when performed for strictly therapeutic medical reasons, directly intended

Without minimizing in any way the real harm of sexual abuse and violence, we can note here that the offender's culpability may vary depending on his (or her) freedom and awareness of the evil involved.(cf. Ch. V.A.3, 4th and 3rd last paragraphs) In any case, rather than "blaming" it is no doubt more productive to focus on what can be done to help overcome and prevent the tragedies of sexual abuse and violence.

For those who have been abused it is important to begin to believe that they are not alone. Many other victims have reached for help and found a new way of life. For those who have abused others it is important to have the courage to look honestly at their actions without looking for excuses. They, too, need to realize that they are not alone and begin to believe that they can change with the help of God and others. It is recommended that both those who have been abused as well as those who have abused others talk in confidence with someone they can trust such as a good friend, teacher, pastor, doctor or counselor. This can provide support and help protect against further abuse. Even if the abuse has stopped, it can help break the secret's power over one's life and help the healing process. It is also recommended to check out the resources in one's area that one may require or benefit from such as shelters, support groups, and counselors. Various social and religious organizations, including diocesan Catholic Charities or family life or social services offices, often have qualified counselors on staff who can provide various kinds of help. In cases of immanent danger one should not forget that 911 is the universal emergency number to call. It can also be most helpful for both those who have been abused as well as those who have abused others

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*amputations, mutilations and sterilizations* performed on innocent persons are against the moral law."(CCC, n. 2297) This teaching promotes human health and respect for the great dignity of human beings and their bodies. The Pontifical Council for the Family (see note 2), n. 144, speaks of "the genital mutilation of girls" as "contrary to the dignity and rights of the person".

to talk to people who have overcome similar problems to find out how they did it.<sup>41</sup>

Victims of sexual abuse and violence should be provided very sensitive and empathetic care and support. This includes any ethical medical care, counseling, therapy and prayer that they require for their healing.<sup>42</sup> Among other things, those who have abused others need to repent, express true sorrow for their sins, and receive God's forgiveness and healing. It is essential that they realize that, "There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit...."(CCC, n. 1864) There is hope for healing for both victims and abusers. Patience is needed since the journey to wholeness takes time. Regarding sexual abuse of a daughter by a father, for example, and its destruction to her womanhood and his manhood, the Sandfords speak of the need to talk out the "entire history of confusion" with a counselor. Based on their own experience in counseling for nearly twenty years, they also speak of the power of God's grace to forgive, to heal, to recreate and

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41. Cf. e.g., The United States Bishops' Committees... (see note 33), 357; and Jamieson (see note 36), 128-9.

42. For a good treatment of some ethical issues concerning sexual therapy and the care of the victims of sexual violence see, e.g., Benedict Ashley and Kevin O'Rourke, *Ethics of Health Care* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2nd ed. 1994), Ch. 8.2 and 7. They say in part that "sexual therapy should aim to strengthen family unity, not merely sexual pleasure. ...confidentiality must be observed. ....activities directly intended to lead to orgasm in ways other than the normal marital act must be rejected. ...therapists must never engage in sexual activity with patients."(131); and while a person who consents to the sexual act has a responsibility to use it "in keeping with its intrinsic significance of love and procreation, a woman who has been raped "...has assumed no responsibility to give proper meaning to the sexual act that has been unjustly forced on her. Thus she or the people caring for her may use any available medical procedure to prevent conception before it has occurred.... If, however, a woman has already conceived she cannot take any action to abort or destroy the fertilized ovum directly or request others to do so, nor may they cooperate with her in doing so. While she has the right to protect herself from the effects of the aggression, she does not have the right to do so at the expense of the life of an innocent child."(155-6) Regarding contraception and abortion see also Ch. VI.E above under "Premarital Pregnancy". Direct abortion, also in the case of rape, is an immoral "violent" destructive means to try to solve a problem rather than a creative loving means.

to restore.<sup>43</sup> See also Ch. V.A.5 and B.2 regarding redemption and transformation in Christ, as well as Ch. VI.K regarding forgiveness, healing, restoration and hope.

As individuals and together we can all contribute in various ways to overcoming and preventing sexual abuse and violence. Being well-informed can help one to recognize signs of abuse, to respond appropriately to those involved in abusive or potentially abusive relationships, and to educate others. If we listen respectfully to others including friends and vulnerable people including children, and encourage them to talk about things that are bothering them, it will be easier for someone who is or has been involved to share and receive the help they need. Children should be taught what kinds of touching are appropriate and inappropriate, and encouraged to tell a trustworthy person if someone is touching them inappropriately. Young people (as well as adults) should be taught:

...to resolve conflicts without violence by talking with and listening respectfully to the person with whom there is a disagreement.

...that force and insults should not be allowed in caring relationships.

...that no person has the right to possess and control another person.

...that excessive jealousy is not a sign of love. It is a sign of insecurity...

...that forcing intimacy is not a sign of caring. It is the opposite. It shows disregard for the feelings of the person being forced.<sup>44</sup>

We should also support and encourage the development of good programs for the abused and

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43. Sandford (see note 10), 282-4. Cf. Jamieson (see note 36), 129.

44. Office for the Prevention of Family Violence (see note 30), *Dating Violence*, 3. Cf. also their *Child Sexual Abuse*, 4. The Pontifical Council for the Family (see note 2) says parents must protect their children from sexual violence "by teaching them a form of modesty and reserve with regard to strangers as well as by giving suitable sexual information, but without going into details and particulars that might upset or frighten them."(n. 85)

abusers, and for the prevention of abuse and violence. Although many positive initiatives have already been undertaken in recent years, much more needs to be done. More and/or more effective education concerning sexual abuse and violence, and how to respect each other and resolve conflicts and frustrations in non-abusive non-violent ways, needs to take place at all levels: homes, schools, churches and parishes, marriage preparation courses, higher education, health care, community agencies, governments, the various media, and so forth. We need to speak out against and protest to appropriate representatives the production and distribution of pornography, and the portrayal of exploitive relationships and violence, as acceptable in various media. Among other things, we need to work, too, to have appropriate laws or regulations enacted and enforced in these areas. Together, let us "...hope, work and pray for a society in which mutuality, justice, kindness, gentleness and peace can be richly enjoyed by all and where no one need be afraid."<sup>45</sup>

#### **D. Friendship and Dating**

Authentic friendships with some other persons of both sexes, and with God as our best Friend (see Ch. V.A.4), are most valuable with regard to our full development and maturation as human persons. Wholesome dating and/or other forms of association between unmarried male and female persons can provide opportunities for them to develop friendships and to grow as persons. If one of these friendships eventually leads to marriage, this can provide a good foundation since ideally a husband and wife are best friends.

#### Friendship

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45. Canadian Church Leaders (see note 34), 780. Cf. the United States Bishops' Committees (see note 33), 357-8; and the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence (see note 30), *Dating Violence*, 3, and *Child Sexual Abuse*, 4-5.

Researchers Bibby and Posterski report that of the Canadian teenagers they surveyed in 1992, 84% view friendship and 80% view being loved as very important. Most of them say they receive a high level of enjoyment from friendships (93%), dating (73%), and from their "boyfriend or girlfriend"(69%).

...many of today's young people are experiencing quality friendships with members of the opposite sex *without* the ingredients of romance or sex....

....they are building more friendship into romance. Consequently, when those romances crash, they often want to retain something from the relationship and continue as friends....<sup>46</sup>

Bibby and Posterski note that teenage friends can have a significant influence on each other, both positive and negative.(cf. Ch. VII.J) Among other things, they recommend that parents welcome their teenagers' friends into their home, encourage their children to exercise good judgment when choosing their friends, and that they continue to relate to their children as they journey from dependence to independence, doing whatever is necessary not to breach the relationship.

In her book, *How Can a Man and Woman Be Friends?*, Mary Rosera Joyce presents a number of good insights. She speaks of equality, esteem, affection and value-sharing as the qualities of friendship. A well-developed sexuality means many things including being able to touch a person of the other sex physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually without grasping, manipulating, domineering, seducing, using, competing, possessing or being possessed. "In genuine friendship we touch the other person profoundly..."

Sexually free persons spontaneously appreciate their genital and emotional feelings as good in themselves.... [but they] are free enough to enjoy their mutual attraction for each other without having

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46. Reginald Bibby and Donald Posterski, *Teen Trends: A Nation in Motion* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 1992), 15, 23, 202-2 and 202-6. Cf. note 17.

to express it in an erotic or genital way.

And if, after developing their friendship, they choose to marry, they are free enough to enjoy coital union fully. They find that the profound commitment to each other as persons and to the human community - a twofold commitment involved in an authentic marriage - is made secure and wonderful by the power of their friendship....

Joyce also speaks of our ability to become friends with God. She notes that Jesus (God become man) told his companions in one of their most intimate times of sharing that he regarded them "as his friends" (see Jn 15:9-15).

The greatest and most lasting value friends can share is their friendship with God....

When the sharing of friends does not include a relation with God, a special kind of intimacy is lacking in their bond. Love for God intensifies human intimacy as well as the other qualities of friendship....

Union with God in prayer is a very effective source of energy for the process of sexual liberation that makes man-woman friendship possible....<sup>47</sup>

Germain Grisez speaks of friendship as a basic human good, as a gift of God, as necessary for the full development of humans who are created for communion, and as valuable for Christian life. Friendship is reciprocal. Each looks to the other's well-being. Friends have some common interests and honestly reveal their true selves to each other by sharing including their feelings, values and hopes. All of us should seek and accept genuine friendship which overcomes loneliness, but not trust new acquaintances too hastily (cf. Sir 6:7). Friends should confide to each other their deep convictions and commitments as well as their doubts and weaknesses. They should not wrongly reveal a friend's confidences. Friends have a responsibility to promote each other's moral and

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47. Mary Rosera Joyce, *How Can a Man and Woman Be Friends?* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1977), 11, 13, 38-9, 47, 49-51, and 61 respectively.



spiritual development, their growth toward holiness. They have special power to do this due to the stability of their relationship and their mutual affection which motivates them to please each other. Among other things, they should give each other good advice including any necessary admonitions in as painless a way as possible, and confirm, endorse, nurture and rejoice in the good in each other.

Moreover, when one friend falls into sin, and is shamed and dishonored, the other can and should support recovery by acknowledging the truth without pretense, yet loyally remaining a firm friend, showing that no such wound is beyond healing, and so serving as an image and medium of God's forgiving and healing grace.

Finally, friends should support each other both by praying together and by praying individually for each other and for the grace to be good friends.<sup>48</sup>

With regard to young unmarried people in particular, Grisez says:

....genuine friendships with people of both sexes bring specific benefits for adolescents and young people...: growth in self-awareness, knowledge of others' traits, including their masculinity and femininity, and practice in open and cooperative relationships with peers....

...a friendship between an adolescent boy and girl or a young man and woman normally differs from a relationship in which sexual attraction is entirely absent. Still, normal adolescents and young people can develop chaste friendships with persons of the opposite sex....

.... To maintain and develop a genuine friendship, they must avoid acting on erotic feelings, and since sharing erotic feelings with those who excite them usually leads to acting on them, even such communication usually must be avoided. Young couples also will need to be careful about the time, place, and frequency of their meetings. To enjoy each other's company without running risks, they do well to share most of their activities with one of their families or a suitable group of friends.

.... In affluent Western nations, people generally take it for granted that boys and girls will carry on

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48. Grisez (see note 2), 424-31.

a series of romantic relationships beginning in early adolescence. Television and other media consistently communicate cultural standards which approve such relationships....

But a romantic relationship is appropriate only when it can lead to engagement and marriage. Otherwise, it provides no real benefits, but only certain satisfactions proper to engagement and marriage, while at the same time displacing the activities characteristic of friendship, which the partners might be able to develop and enjoy. In carrying on a romantic relationship for its illusory intimacy, people act for an apparent good which blocks true benefits of a real human good. To carry on a romantic relationship when marriage is not in prospect is therefore wrong....

Consequently, those ... not yet ready to seek a potential marriage partner should try to develop and carry on many chaste friendships while entirely avoiding romantic relationships, which are an obstacle to real friendship and a grave and unnecessary threat to chastity.<sup>49</sup>

With regard to couples "who experience appropriate, mutual erotic inclination", however, whether they are married or unmarried but able and free to marry each other, Grisez says:

[They] ...should realize that erotic love, while good and splendid, is insufficient as a basis for a lifelong relationship. Hence, while nurturing romance, they should recognize the distinct value and conditions of friendship, and do what they can to cultivate it too.<sup>50</sup>

It can be very helpful to consider friendship in the light of an integral vision and the Christian vocation (cf. Ch. V). Much of what is said in Ch. V concerning human relationships can be applied to friendship. The theme of friendship is mentioned or treated in several other places in this book (see the index). With regard to the importance of friendship, both for unmarried and married people, I would also like to recommend here two other books which treat friendship from a Christian perspective: *Friendship in the Lord* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1974) by Paul

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49. Ibid., 739-41.

50. Ibid., 430.

Hinnebusch, O.P.; and *Friendship As Sacrament* (New York: Alba House, 1988) by Carmen Caltagirone.<sup>51</sup>

### Dating

Dating, according to sociologist Eshleman, can be a form of recreation, a form of socialization, a means of status grading and status achievement within one's group, and/or a form of courtship. Among other things, he notes that differences in the interests and emotional involvement of the persons in a dating relationship are likely to result in conflict and distress.<sup>52</sup>

Although "dating" is not a universal practice and is discouraged in some cultures, Gary Chapman, a Christian pastor, thinks, in the American context, that keeping in mind certain objectives and common pitfalls can help make it a more fruitful experience. He proposes several purposes of dating: 1) to get to know persons of the opposite sex and to learn to relate to them as persons; 2) to aid in the development of one's personality; 3) as an opportunity for Christians to minister to others; 4) to give us a realistic idea of the kind of person we need as a marriage partner; and 5) eventually, to find the right mate. Regarding 1) Chapman relates a true story of a young man who initially only saw girls on the beach from his apartment window as "sex objects". Following the suggestion of a Christian friend, he went down to the beach, talked with some of the girls, and found that they were persons, "each with her own unique personality, history, and dreams; persons with whom he could communicate and discuss ideas and who in turn could relate to him as a

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51. See, e.g., also Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), in particular 88-95 regarding sympathy and friendship; and Fran Ferder and John Heagle, *Your Sexual Self: Pathway to Authentic Intimacy* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1992), Ch. 10 "I Call You Friends".

52. Eshleman (see note 16), 327-33.

person."<sup>53</sup> Regarding 2) Chapman notes that healthy dating can result in a more realistic understanding of oneself, one's strengths and weaknesses, which can facilitate personal growth. Concerning 3) one may be able to help, for example, an overly reserved person by drawing him (or her) out, or a braggart or someone who does not bath enough by humbly speaking the truth in love. Jesus, who ministered to both male and female persons, is our example. Regarding 4) Chapman speaks of the advantage of dating a variety of persons with different personalities. Concerning 5) see E below regarding choosing a marriage partner.

McDowell and Day also speak of the importance of young people having good objectives for their lives and dating relationships. With regard to this, they recommend that young people seek wise counsel from others including parents. Some dating goals they suggest are to honor the God-given dignity of one's date, build up the other person, support each other in being accountable to fulfilling their goals according to God's principles, and "In every situation, try to reflect Jesus Christ in your attitudes and actions."<sup>54</sup> These suggestions remind me of some advice my own father gave me concerning dating when I was a teenager: "Always treat girls the way you would like other guys to treat your sisters." And, I have five wonderful sisters!

Chapman and some others speak of certain dangers in dating including: becoming too physically involved; misreading the interests of others; limiting one's dating experience to one individual; "romantic color blindness", the "in love illusion" or infatuation; and Christians getting too involved with non-Christians.<sup>55</sup> Concerning becoming too physically involved, see B above

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53. Chapman (see note 20), 19. See all of Ch. 1 "The Purposes and Pitfalls of Dating".

54. McDowell and Day (see note 21), 356.

55. See, e.g., Chapman (see note 20), 23-31.

regarding petting and the proper expression of love in premarital relationships, as well as Chs. VI and VII regarding premarital sexual intercourse. McDowell and Day recommend careful and creative planning of dates, keeping in mind good objectives, "not only as a way to avoid sexual involvement, but also as a means of bringing about growth in the other person and in oneself." There are many enjoyable things to do together including making things, playing games and/or having discussions which can include other friends and family members, taking walks, and so forth. One should also avoid unnecessary occasions of sin such as very suggestive clothing, music and movies, and too much time alone with nothing planned. McDowell and Day recommend only dating persons with good convictions: "...if the person you date has lower moral standards than yours, you may easily find yourself compromising to their level rather than upholding your own convictions." They also recommend that parents help their teenagers "minimize compromising situations", for example, by not permitting them to date at home when they are not there and by setting reasonable boundaries and curfews. "By holding them accountable you also provide them with clear answers to pressures from their dating partners."<sup>56</sup> Certain drugs and alcohol can weaken or even eliminate one's self-control. Women in particular should be on their guard with regard to meeting and/or dating men whom they do not know well. For example, some men deliberately slip a drug into a woman's drink on a date or at a bar as a means to rape her with her not remembering enough to press charges.<sup>57</sup>(see also C above regarding sexual abuse and violence)

Some writers wisely recommend praying before a date for God's guidance and the strength to resist temptation. McDowell and Day also suggest beginning and ending dates with a brief time of

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56. McDowell and Day (see note 21), 358, 361 and 367. See all of Ch. 18 "Controlled Dates".

57. This terrible crime was treated on the 20/20 television program, aired in Edmonton, May 1996.

prayer that expresses one's gratitude and love for God and desire to please Him, that includes praying for the needs of other people, and that avoids a lot of physical contact and praying about one's sexual struggles. There is a risk of moving "from the spiritual intimacy of prayer to physical intimacy." It is better to pray about sexual struggles alone with God.<sup>58</sup> See also Ch. IX.E regarding the value of developing a good Christian spirituality which includes regular prayer.

Another danger in dating is to misread the interests of the other person(s). Chapman says this is best avoided from early on in the relationship by open communication which alone can reveal our thoughts and intentions since we can not read each other's minds. McDowell and Day also speak of the need for dating couples to communicate openly regarding their values, God's standards including those regarding sex, and any problems that they foresee or that arise. They should help each other to be completely committed to following God's principles. At various times they may need to reevaluate their relationship.<sup>59</sup> (Cf. also Ch. IX.A regarding effective communication.)

Limiting one's dating experience to one individual, especially at too young an age or prematurely, is another common pitfall. If this has been one's pattern Chapman recommends broadening one's base of friendships. Short thinks it unwise to rush into one-to-one dating. He recommends against such before a girl is 16 and a boy is 17. Many will not even want to pair off at that stage. Before then young people can have lots of fun in mixed groups. He also thinks it is probably not a good idea to go steady at all in high school. One can have more fun and learn more about oneself and others by dating a variety of persons at this age. If one's school has a "stupid

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58. McDowell and Day (see note 21), 365 (see all of 363-6). Cf., e.g., also Fox (see note 14) whose treatment of sex and the young woman and young man, 67-91, includes discussion of prayer and the sacraments, as well as a couple of suggested prayers before a date.

59. Chapman (see note 20), 24-25; and McDowell and Day (see note 21), 361-3; respectively.

system" where going steady is expected, he recommends getting together with other young people and putting a stop to it: "You can do it if you just stick together and hold the line."<sup>60</sup> Prematurely going steady also significantly increases the risks of engaging in immoral sexual activity. McDowell and Day recommend developing good close relationships with family members and friends in non-dating relationships to meet one's needs for affection and intimacy. They also recommend becoming involved in good support groups which help one to say no to premarital sexual involvement and to grow in a lifestyle pleasing to God. "In most cases it is best to avoid going steady at all until a person is mature enough to consider marriage."<sup>61</sup>

With regard to "romantic color blindness", the "in love illusion" or infatuation, it is important to grow in a realistic understanding of oneself and the other, including not only good qualities but also weaknesses and faults. Immature romantic infatuation tends to idealize the other, treating him or her more as an object to possess than as a real person. It tends to be self-centered and overly preoccupied with feelings, including "passionate" feelings that tend toward immoral sexual involvement. While feelings have their place, it is also necessary to measure love by actions and to make rational decisions. A properly ordered love includes caring for the true well-being and improvement of oneself and others. It is integrated with the love of God.(cf. Ch. V) Although it is possible for immature infatuation to grow into a more mature, deeper love, the "illusion" of "romantic color blindness" often results in disillusionment and pain.<sup>62</sup>

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60. Chapman (see note 20), 25-26; and Short (see note 18), 21-23; respectively.

61. McDowell and Day (see note 21), 347 (see all of Ch. 17 "Preventive Measures").

62. See Chapman (see note 20), 26-29; Wojtyla (see note 51), 101-18 and 130-35; and Short (see note 18), 44-54, whose discussion includes a number of good questions to help one distinguish whether one is experiencing infatuation or true love.

Many unmarried couples in romantic relationships break up. This is generally not easy for either party, especially if the parties were deeply involved. Any sexual involvement tends to increase the pain for one or both parties and make it more difficult to continue as "friends". If one finds it necessary to end such a relationship it is important to be fair and communicate honestly without manipulating or allowing oneself to be manipulated. One should not be brutal, but kind, gentle, and sensitive to the pain of a broken heart. If possible, try to keep the other person as a friend. With regard to getting over such a relationship Smith recommends: giving oneself time to mourn and not rushing into a new relationship; catching up with other people that one may have neglected; being honest but not exaggerating the pain; honestly evaluating what happened; pampering oneself (e.g. getting away for a long weekend or buying some new clothes); and seeing what one can learn from the experience about oneself or to help one in future relationships.<sup>63</sup> See also Ch. VI.K regarding forgiveness, healing and hope.

With regard to Christians getting too involved with non-Christians in dating relationships, Chapman, a Baptist pastor, refers to 2 Cor 6:14-15 and says in part:

....a Christian / non-Christian alliance cannot experience all that God intended in marriage....

The danger for the single Christian [dating a non-Christian] is to rationalize that the date is ministry-centered when in reality it is not. If Christ is not presented, and spiritual issues are not discussed on the first or second date, you are fooling yourself. If you express your faith in Christ, and there is no interest in further discussion of the matter, you are foolish to go on developing other aspects of the relationship.... For the Christian, the spiritual aspect of life is central and all pervasive. This truth must

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63. Harold Ivan Smith, *Singles Ask: Answers to Questions about Relationship and Sexual Issues* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 74-77. Cf. Short (see note 18), 39-40. These books both address some other questions regarding dating that are beyond my purposes to treat here, but which some readers may find interesting or helpful.



be faced realistically in dating relationships.<sup>64</sup>

Concerning dating to find a mate Smith also warns Christians to be on their guard when dating nonbelievers. He notes that some people will play along with the other's religious faith until the wedding. Fox, a Catholic priest, also recommends that couples should get to know their basic differences early in a dating relationship and refrain from developing a serious courtship until they are convinced that they are "compatible emotionally, mentally, culturally as well as religiously" and "have a common foundation of love and understanding upon which they can continue to build for life."<sup>65</sup> Among other things, the next section considers the question of marrying someone who holds different beliefs or values.

## **E. Choosing a Marriage Partner**

The decision to get married including choosing a particular person to marry is one of the most significant decisions or choices that anyone can make. Whom one chooses to marry has profound implications first of all with regard to the future life and happiness or unhappiness of oneself, one's partner, and any children that one may have. While the principles of making good choices in general (see Ch. I) apply to this decision as well, this particular choice warrants special consideration here because of its importance and relation to our topics. Although some people never marry and some experience God's call to a life of celibacy (see G below), the vast majority of people (90% or so) do get married.

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64. Chapman (see note 20), 30-1. For a good treatment of evangelization see, e.g., Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Vatican City: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1975), which includes sections on non-Christian religions (n. 53), non-believers (55), and young people (72).

65. Smith (see note 63), 67-8; and Fox (see note 14), 139-40; respectively.

In his book, *Finding the Love of Your Life*, Neil Clark Warren, a clinical psychologist, presents ten principles to help people choose the right marriage partner. Warren, who for more than twenty-five years has worked with a wide variety of couples wanting to have successful marriages, says these principles are "a distillation of the most recent scientific research and the most durable ancient teachings."<sup>66</sup> In this section, his ten principles serve as a framework to present a number of insights and points of Warren himself, of others, and myself.

Warren's **first principle** regarding making a wise choice of a marriage partner is to eliminate the most prevalent causes of faulty mate selection: i) deciding too quickly; ii) deciding at too young an age; iii) being too eager to get married; iv) marrying to please someone else; v) having too narrow an experience base; vi) getting married with unrealistic expectations; and vii) one or both has significant unaddressed personality or behavior problems.<sup>67</sup> It takes time to evaluate the prospect of marriage properly, to get to know another person well and in a variety of situations, and to know whether both have the maturity and character to marry. Based on some research findings, Warren concludes that those who take two or more years to consider the quality of their partnership are significantly more likely to make a wise choice. Short recommends a long courtship and a shorter engagement since it is more difficult to break up after going public with one's plans to marry. A long engagement also makes it more difficult to avoid sexual involvement.<sup>68</sup> In any case, it is

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66. Neil Clark Warren, Ph.D., *Finding the Love of Your Life* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family Publishing, 1992), 5.

67. *Ibid.*, Ch. 1.

68. *Ibid.*, 8-11; and Short (see note 18), 33-4. Cf. James Tunstead Burtchaell, *For Better, For Worse: Sober Thoughts on Passionate Promises* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 46-8; Ch. VII.G regarding many seeing engagement as justifying premarital sex and a response; Aquinas regarding a promise to marry not making a marriage (see Ch. III.C.3 under "On Marital Consent"); and CIC, canon 1062,2: "No right of action to request the celebration of marriage arises from a promise of

better to postpone or call off getting married if both parties are not ready. It is best to wait to get married until both are old and mature enough, until both have formed their personal identities and life goals. Statistically,

Marriages in the late 20s fail less often than those in the mid-20s. The mid-20s are better than the early 20s. And any time in the 20s is better than the teens.

However, the rate of failure is not the only thing to think about. The safest age for a woman to have babies, for instance, is in her 20s....<sup>69</sup>

Being too eager to marry can obscure one's judgment regarding a prospective partner, the readiness for marriage of the other and oneself, and the responsibilities of marriage. One may be too eager to get married for a variety of reasons: to escape loneliness or a bad home environment, many of one's peers are already married, one has had premarital sex with the other and suffers from the "illusion" that one already belongs to the other, the girl or woman is pregnant, and so forth. Concerning the very high failure rates of "shotgun" marriages, Burtchaell notes in part that no one has to get married and "The state of mind of almost every party to a marriage-cum-pregnancy is deranged."<sup>70</sup> Today many pastors wisely resist celebrating "shotgun" marriages and recommend waiting, often until after the baby is born, to discern calmly whether the parties are suited for each other and ready for marriage. Regarding single people in general who are very anxious to get

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marriage, but there does arise an action for such reparation of damages as may be due." For a good commentary see *The Code of Canon Law: A text and Commentary* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), ed. by James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, and Donald E. Heintschel.

69. Short (see note 18), 25. Cf. Warren (see note 66), 11-3.

70. Burtchaell (see note 68), 64. Cf. Warren (see note 66), 14-16; and CIC, canon 1095,2 which states that "those who suffer from a grave lack of discretionary judgement concerning the essential matrimonial rights and obligations to be mutually given and accepted" are incapable of contracting marriage validly.

married, Smith observes that while there is nothing wrong with wanting to get married, there is also nothing wrong with being single. He gives some good advice including the following:

Your happiness should be based on who you are, not whether or not you are married. *Must*-centered relationships are destined for frustration and heartache. Instead, ask yourself how you can best use the gifts God has given you as a single person.

Concentrate on being the person God intends you to be. Don't let all your time and effort be sidetracked into looking for a mate. You will only stunt your own personal growth, make yourself a less interesting person, set yourself up for disappointment, and possibly scare off a prospective spouse....

.... Ask God to give you a positive, thankful attitude....

You may be concentrating too hard on getting married and expending too much energy on looking for the right one. Instead, concentrate on *becoming* the right one!<sup>71</sup>

Getting married or choosing to marry a particular person to please someone else such as a parent or not to hurt the other person can result in long-term resentment. While Warren recommends weighing carefully the input of others including parents, he emphasizes taking responsibility oneself regarding one's own marriage and choice of a lifetime partner. A good decision in this area is made in the light of one's own needs, dreams and life objectives, not someone else's.<sup>72</sup> The Second Vatican Council exhorts parents or guardians to provide prudent "guidance to

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71. Smith (see note 63), 79-80.

72. Warren (see note 66), 16-18. With regard to the custom of "arranged marriages" compare, e.g., Maureen Baker, Ph.D., General Ed., *Families: Changing Trends in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson Limited, 2nd ed. 1990): "...young people in many countries now expect more choice in marital partners. Where arranged marriages continue to be the custom, many young people want the right to veto parental decisions."(45) This should be a minimal requirement since a valid marriage requires the free and true consent to marry each other of the man and woman themselves. See Ch. IV.F regarding CIC, canons 1095-1107 on "Matrimonial Consent".

their young with respect to founding a family", but that "no pressure, direct or indirect, should be put on the young to make them enter marriage or choose a specific partner."(GS, 52)

Some people's experience base is too narrow to be able to make a properly informed decision regarding marriage. They may have limited their dating to one individual too soon (see D above) and/or only spent time with a prospective spouse in certain situations. For example, some people may present their best front on romantic dates, but reveal other sides of their personalities in their native habitats. Has one spent significant time observing the other interacting with his/her parents, family and friends? One can also learn important things about another by observing him/her with children, doing household chores, balancing a checkbook, in times of stress and relaxation, etc., and by doing a variety of things together such as preparing and serving a dinner to guests, baby-sitting, filling out a tax return, painting a porch, and taking part in various church and community activities. Does one know the other's views, likes and dislikes, in most areas of life, especially in areas relevant to marriage and family life? Has one discussed the substantial issues of the day to assess the other's reasoning abilities? Does the other handle disagreements maturely? It is very important not to avoid conflicts during courtship but to face them to see how each other resolves them? How does the other handle frustrations and anger? Has one experienced reciprocal reconciliation and forgiveness with the other, which are so much a part of a growing marriage since none of us is perfect? While it is important to get to know a prospective spouse and broaden one's experiences together as much as possible, this should only be done using moral means. For example, "living together" and engaging in premarital sexual relations are not helpful but counterproductive ways of testing compatibility for marriage (see Ch. VII.D and E).<sup>73</sup>

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73. Cf. Warren (see note 66), 18-20; and Burtchaell (see note 68), Ch. 2 "How to Decide on Marriage When You Felt It Was All Settled".

Many people enter marriage with unrealistic expectations and are later disillusioned. For example, if one's own parents avoided problems or always dealt with them behind closed doors, one may not realize the very real challenges and difficulties of developing the partnership for the whole of life which a real marriage involves. With regard to the tendency of many to see marriage as a solution to one's problems, Chapman astutely observes, "Marriage is not the answer to all one's inadequacies. God is!"<sup>74</sup> Some people also unrealistically expect that they can change their partners after marriage. It is essential that any significant personality or behavior problems in either such as always wanting to have one's own way, lying, cheating, infidelity, overspending, laziness, habitual irritability, escapism, serious mood swings, addictions (to alcohol, drugs, gambling, work, sex...), and so forth, be addressed and resolved satisfactorily before marriage. There may be less motivation to overcome such problems after marriage. The stresses of marriage and parenting also tend to aggravate many personality problems.<sup>75</sup>

Warren's **second principle** regarding choosing a marriage partner is to develop a clear, conscious and critical image of one's ideal spouse. What specifically does one want and not want in a marriage partner with regard to kind of personality, level of intelligence, appearance, level of ambition, romance, spirituality, character, creativity, parenting, authenticity? Since no human person is perfect, on which qualities is one willing to compromise? Which qualities are essential for one's lifetime marriage partner to have?<sup>76</sup> With regard to seeking a suitable marriage partner, Grisez says one should exclude from consideration those one could not validly marry such as those

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74. Chapman (see note 20), 56.

75. Cf., e.g., Warren (see note 66), 20-24.

76. Ibid., Ch. 2.

already married, vowed to celibacy, too closely related to oneself, or who are unable to marry. One should also exclude from consideration those of bad character or holding views who would make it very difficult or impossible for one to fulfill one's responsibilities, including moral and religious responsibilities, as a spouse and parent.<sup>77</sup> Concerning these it is important to be adequately informed of any relevant laws of one's country, as well as the relevant laws and teachings of one's church and God regarding marriage (cf. e.g., Chs. II and IV; and Ch. III.A.2 regarding Chrysostom "On Marrying Well" including seeking a virtuous spouse). Regarding seeking an "ideal" spouse, it is also helpful to have an integral understanding of marriage, sex and love (cf. Ch. V).

Warren's **third principle** regarding choosing a marriage partner is to find a person to love who is a lot like oneself. Research findings indicate that, "Stable and satisfying marriages usually involve two people who are very much alike." A man and a woman of quite similar backgrounds and cultures who marry will come with a whole set of "agreements", which will tend to make marital adjustment and unity easier to achieve. For a marriage to work well, every difference requires negotiation and adaptation which is not always easy. Warren considers similarities in intelligence, values, interests, and expectations about roles to be especially helpful. Differences in energy level, personal habits, the use of money, and in verbal skill and interests generally cause the most trouble in marriage. Since any two people who marry will always have some differences, flexibility is an important asset for both to have.<sup>78</sup>

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77. Grisez (see note 2), 742-3. For some proposed explanations of mate selection from a sociological perspective see, e.g., Eshleman (see note 16), Chs. 9 and 10; and Baker (see note 72), 43-8.

78. Warren (see note 66), Ch. 3. The quotation is from p. 60. On pp. 60-1 Warren presents a 50-item list of helpful marriage similarities. Cf. e.g., Chapman (see note 20), 40-2 regarding mutuality; and Jeanette Lauer and Robert Lauer, "Marriages Made to Last", *Psychology Today*, June 1985, who report that both husbands and wives in a study of 300 successful marriages gave, "We agree on aims

With regard to the religious similarities and differences of marriage partners, Eshleman, a sociologist, says in part:

Religious endogamy [marrying within a specific group] ... remains an important factor in mate selection.... There seems to be consensus that the religiously devout marry endogamously in greater frequency than the religiously less devout and that endogamous marriages have higher levels of happiness and slightly lower rates of divorce than the interfaith marriages. Those with no religion have lower rates of marital happiness or success.<sup>79</sup>

Regarding this compare, for example, the concern of some Christian pastors regarding Christians becoming too involved with non-Christians in dating relationships (see D above). Compare also the need for a Catholic to get express permission from the bishop through his/her pastor to marry a non-Catholic. Such a marriage often presents dangers to the Catholic's faith, and difficulties regarding the spiritual unity of marriage and the religious upbringing of any children. Among other things, the Catholic is required "to make a sincere promise to do all in his or her power in order that all the children be baptized and brought up in the catholic Church."(CIC, canon 1125,1) A Catholic who is well-informed and convinced of the wonderful gift of the Catholic Christian faith will want to do this. The non-Catholic party must be informed of this promise and the obligations of the Catholic party (CIC, canon 1125,2). Fox, a Catholic priest, agrees with this approach and encourages a couple to honestly discuss their differences, including religious differences, before marriage. Serious differences could also exist, for example, between two baptized Catholics - one accepts the fullness of Catholic faith and morals and the other does not. If a man and woman cannot reconcile their differences before marriage, Fox thinks they are not meant to marry each other.

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and goals", as one of the top reasons for their success (24).

79. Eshleman (see note 16), 306.



Sharing the same faith, however, does not necessarily mean two people are meant to marry each other. One must consider "the *total* person".<sup>80</sup>

"Since marriage should be a full communion of life suited to handing on that whole life to children", Grisez recommends that in seeking a suitable marriage partner, "one should consider only those who share one's faith". As a Catholic, he recommends that "a Catholic should marry a Catholic who completely shares his or her faith and moral commitment." If a suitable Catholic partner can not be found, however, Grisez recommends:

Then a Catholic's preference should be for baptized persons who firmly hold and faithfully practice Christian faith .... whose beliefs and commitments about marriage, its specific responsibilities, and raising children are compatible with the truth the Catholic Church teaches. Marriage even with such a person still will involve difficulties, and the Catholic party will have to make special efforts to keep and grow in his or her faith; but the couple will have the great benefit of the sacramentality of the marriage, and, if they overcome their special difficulties, their marriage can contribute to the ecumenical movement by manifesting unity in moral and spiritual values.

Lacking a suitable potential Christian partner, a Catholic with marriage in prospect should try to find an upright non-Christian suitable in other respects .... such a marriage will involve more serious difficulties, require greater efforts, and lack sacramentality. However, it can truly realize the essential good of marital communion...; it also provides a special apostolic opportunity for the Catholic who lives a faithful and exemplary life, since in this way his or her non-Christian spouse will receive a very effective communication of the gospel and a certain real link with Jesus and his Church.

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80. Fox (see note 14), 140 (cf. 134-41). Regarding "mixed marriages" including "disparity of cult" see, e.g., also Ch. IV.F above concerning CIC, canons 1108-29, which treat "The Form of the Celebration of Marriage" involving a Catholic and "Mixed Marriages"; CCC, nn. 1633-37; and Joseph and Lois Bird, *Marriage is for Grownups* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1971), Ch. 10 "We All Have Mixed Marriages".

(Regarding Christian marriage being a sacrament see Ch. V.A.5 above.) In seeking a suitable marriage partner, Grisez advises that one should prefer someone "with whom more perfect unity is likely." He notes that some differences, like male/female sexual differences, are fruitful and complementary: "...they contribute to the unity of a functioning whole." Other differences, however, although they may lead to superficial attraction, impede unity and "will not help build a happy marriage..."<sup>81</sup>

If a suitable marriage partner is not available among one's acquaintances, a single person may seek to meet one in various ways. Some ways are likely to be more productive than other ways. For example, one is more likely to meet a serious candidate for Christian marriage at church, a parish social, a Christian "mixed" retreat or conference, etc., than at a singles' bar. One is also likely to meet people with some similar interests at certain types of conferences or workshops, an educational institute or library, and so forth. Friends, parents and pastors can also provide opportunities for single people to meet other single people of similar faith, values, and interests in various ways ranging from arranging a blind date, to hosting a party, to forming a singles' group in one's church. Some people who have not found a suitable marriage partner may move, or turn to other means such as advertisements, marriage agencies, and computer dating services. Anyone using the latter means is wise to exercise some caution, since some marriage brokers are swindlers and the information in some advertisements is misleading. Since some very disturbed people may also use these means it is prudent to initially meet someone in a safe public place and not give one's address until one can really trust the other. To help single people meet suitable marriage prospects, Miles, a Christian writer, recommends the establishment of marriage agencies, including the use of computers, by

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81. Grisez (see note 2), 743-4.

responsible Christians.<sup>82</sup>

Another means that one should not overlook with regard to finding a good marriage partner is to pray humbly and diligently for God's help and guidance. This may result in an unexpected surprise, perhaps even an invitation to a single person to a life of celibacy (see G below). In any case, while using various natural means, one should put one's complete trust in God's providence. God desires our complete happiness and knows what is really best for us. Smith correctly observes that God always answers prayer, but sometimes his answer is "No" or "Not Yet". For those impatient in this area, Smith says in part:

Prayer is not first and foremost a way to "get" things. It is a way to get to know the giver, God. In fact, by working at open and regular communication with God, you will prepare yourself for the kind of communication that is so important to the success of a marriage.<sup>83</sup>

Warren's **fourth principle** regarding finding and choosing a marriage partner is to get healthy before one gets married. Emotional, mental and spiritual health contribute significantly to marital stability and happiness. As noted under principle one above, it is unrealistic to expect marriage to cure serious personality and behavior problems. Many people suffer from various psychological and/or character disorders which can harm a marital relationship in various degrees. Moreover, if a psychological problem is serious to the point that the person is "unable to assume the essential obligations of marriage", the person is "incapable of contracting marriage" validly.(CIC, canon

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82. Herbert Miles, *Singles, Sex & Marriage* (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 122-4. He presents a number of suggestions for "Taking the Initiative in Finding a Marriage Partner" in Ch. 14. Cf. e.g., also Smith (see note 63), 85-6; Chapman (see note 20), 51-7; and Baker (see note 72), 43-8.

83. Smith (see note 63), 81 (cf. 80-4). Cf. e.g., also Pope Pius XI (see the quotation from *Casti Conubii*, n. 62, in Ch. IV.A above); Miles (see note 82), 117-18; and Chapman (see note 20), Ch. 2. For a good overview of Christian prayer in general see, e.g., CCC, Part IV.

1095).<sup>84</sup> Warren recommends being on the look out for common problems in a potential marriage partner and oneself: having poor self-esteem, avoiding problems rather than working through them, lacking a conscience and genuine remorse for wrongdoing, impulsive behavior, lying, cheating, taking advantage of others, blaming someone else for one's wrongdoing, inability to handle anger effectively (cf. spousal and child abuse), having excessive admiration of oneself, having dramatic mood swings, having an addiction, and not having satisfactorily worked through and clarified one's relationships with one's parents. With regard to these Warren says in part:

If you struggle with some of these problems yourself, seek professional counseling. And if your partner exhibits these behaviors, require him or her to get help. Whatever you do, don't even think about settling down with someone like this until these issues have been addressed and remedied at the deepest level.<sup>85</sup>

Characteristics of a healthy person include: inner security, respect for the truth, a careful listener who wants to know what the other person really thinks, having a well-established moral code and value system which enables one to weigh information carefully, and being authentic, honest, courageous, committed and humble. With regard to becoming a healthier person Warren suggests: finding a source of unconditional love (cf. a good parent, therapist, church, and above all, God);

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84. For a commentary on this canon see, e.g., Francis G. Morrisey, OMI, "Marriage Breakdown and Church Law: Changing Jurisprudence", in *Christian Marriage Today: Growth or Breakdown?* (Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), ed. by Joseph A. Buijs, 78-83. We can also note here that a person having a serious homosexual orientation should not try to enter marriage unless he/she has become capable of a healthy heterosexual relationship. For a good treatment of homosexuality see, e.g., John Harvey, *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987).

85. Warren (see note 66), 71 (see all of Ch. 4). Careful discernment needs to be exercised in finding a good and appropriate counselor since there are many kinds who use various approaches. E.g. a Catholic who needs counseling should try to find a counselor who will support one's faith. If a priest is not able to help one with all one's problems, he will likely be able to put one in touch with someone who can.

learning to love oneself; finding someone who will regularly encourage, inspire, listen to and challenge one; and cultivating relationships with people who will help one take a stand, be authentic and feel secure in one's positions. With regard to becoming healthy before marriage compare, for example, Chapman: "...most of us need to concentrate upon becoming the right person, rather than upon finding the right person..."<sup>86</sup>

Warren's **fifth and sixth principles** with regard to choosing a marriage partner are to find a love one can feel deep in one's heart and express it carefully, and let passionate love mature before one decides to marry. Although an enduring and happy marriage requires more than passion, mutual passion including mutual physical attraction is important for a fully satisfying marriage. Chapman says that the person one marries does not need to be a "beauty queen or a prince in shining armor", but it is important that one find him or her attractive and a beautiful person.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, Warren thinks any wedding plans are premature before passionate love develops into a richer and more permanent "companionate love". Among other things, this love: involves communication, caring, affection and support for one another, and an unselfish commitment to the happiness of one's lover; moves one to enjoy what one's partner enjoys; recognizes the value of having both common interests and individual interests, of spending lots of time together but also time apart; recognizes the importance of finding individual wholeness, usually in periods of quietness and solitude; provides the freedom to share one's real self with one's partner; requires trust which requires trustworthiness; and involves sharing dreams and plans for reaching them, and honoring and cherishing each other.

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86. Chapman (see note 20), 56. Cf. e.g., also Burtchaell (see note 68), Ch. 2; Sandford (see note 10), the whole book; and Chs. V.A.5 and VI.K above.

87. Chapman (see note 20), 43-4.

To develop companionate love requires work. It can be learned from the masters of love.<sup>88</sup>

(Compare also D above regarding infatuation and mature love.)

The great Christian philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand writes that since marriage exists for the fulfillment of conjugal love, the only adequate motive for marriage is "*mutual love and the conviction that this union will lead to the eternal welfare of both spouses.*" It is unreasonable and unworthy to decide on marriage after cold calculations regarding financial or professional improvement, motives not concerned with the other person as such. Mere sensual desire without any authentic love is also a completely inadmissible motive for concluding marriage.<sup>89</sup>

With regard to the weighty and very complex choice of a person for this "closest possible partnership" of reciprocal self-giving love, Karol Wojtyla (now Pope John Paul II), says "the primary reason for choice" must be "the value of the person". Since this choice involves "the choice of a person of the other sex", the "sexual values which a man finds in a woman, or a woman in a man, must certainly help to determine the choice, but the person making it must in doing so be fully aware that what he or she is choosing is a person." Sexual values may change or disappear, but the fundamental value of the person "will remain". A true complete love chooses "the person for the

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88. See Warren (see note 66), Chs. 5 and 6. Cf. Lauer (see note 78), 24: both husbands and wives in a study of 300 successful marriages gave, "My spouse is my best friend", "I like my spouse as a person", and "My spouse has grown more interesting", as top reasons for their success.

89. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love* (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 1984), 52-7 (the quotation is from 52). Cf. e.g., Pope Pius XI who, with regard to those choosing marriage partners, says in part that they should not be "led by the blind and unrestrained impulse of lust, nor by any desire of riches or other base influence, but by a true and noble love and by a sincere affection for the future partner...": Encyclical *Casti Connubii* on Christian Marriage (1930), 61-2 (official Vatican English text printed by the Daughters of St. Paul, Boston).

sake of the person", it loves the real person "complete with all his or her virtues and faults...."<sup>90</sup>

Warren's **seventh principle** for choosing a marriage partner is to master the art of intimacy, which involves "the sharing of that which is *innermost* for two people, their deepest thoughts, feelings, dreams, fears and joys." Such intimacy is "the most important quality in a great marriage.... Conversely, the number one enemy of any marriage is a lack of intimacy." Intimacy does not just happen. It requires self-discovery, a desire to know others, and the building of trust which may take some time. It involves shared emotions and experiences. Intimacy is most likely to occur when two people spend a lot of unhurried time together, away from the routine, in times of crisis or pain, and when couples are regularly involved in reflection and introspection. Sharing deeply about themselves with each other can also help a premarried couple realize how alike and unlike they are. It can help them "to evaluate seriously whether their relationship can last a lifetime .... whether or not they will be able to live their lives in harmony and peace."<sup>91</sup>

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90. Wojtyla (see note 51), 130-5. The topic of love, including various kinds of love, is treated in many places in my book (see the index). We can also note here that a complete conjugal love is not only important for the married couple, but also for the healthy development of any children they may have.

91. Warren (see note 66), Ch. 7 (the quotes are from 104, 103 and 113, respectively). Cf. Ch. IX.A regarding effective communication, and part of Ch. VII.A as well as Ferder and Heagle (see note 51), Ch. 10, regarding intimacy (in the sense used here) not being equated with genital sex which should be avoided in premarital relationships. Those seriously considering marriage would do well to learn more about effective communication including taking part in a premarriage program such as Engaged Encounter or Evenings for the Engaged which is offered by many churches. Although generally couples who are already engaged to be married take part in such programs, some of them are open to couples seriously considering getting married as well. The deeper communication such programs promote could help a couple evaluate whether or not they are suited for marriage. For some good reading regarding communication and marriage see, e.g.: Chapman (see note 20), Ch. 6; and Ralph Martin, *Husbands, Wives, Parents, Children: Foundations for the Christian Family* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1978), Ch. 4. See also Paul Flaman, *Family Unity: A Christian Perspective* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 2nd ed. 1986), Ch. IV.2.e. Regarding intimacy it is also essential to develop an intimate relationship with God (see Ch. IX.E below).

Warren's **eighth principle** with regard to choosing a marriage partner is to learn how to clear conflict from the road of love. Disagreements and conflict are inevitable in any close human relationship in this life. If a couple can resolve them well their relationship can grow, mature and deepen. Unresolved conflicts can be very destructive. Today there is much written that is helpful with regard to dealing with conflict constructively. It is best to learn the basics before marriage. It is also very risky to enter marriage with someone before knowing through experience that the two of you can resolve conflicts constructively. Based on years of reading and counseling many couples, both married and unmarried, Warren compares the characteristics typical of couples who handle conflict destructively with the characteristics typical of couples who handle conflict well. These profiles summarize many of his points as well as many of the points regarding conflict management that one finds in the literature:

Couples who handle conflict destructively usually exhibit the following pattern:

1. One or both persons grew up in a home in which conflict was handled poorly or never handled at all.
2. They now believe that conflict is dangerous, that it is better left unacknowledged. Or when they try to deal with it, they are awkward or harsh, and always ineffective.
3. Then there develops a commitment to keeping the peace by denying individual differences.
4. There is a sense on both their parts that the relationship should be kept superficial. There is a fear that they should not "venture into the deep."
5. When these people do have to confront conflict, they both feel ill at ease. They simply do not feel safe in the relationship when they are different from each other.
6. Because they each feel insecure, they tend to talk far too much and listen far too little.
7. Without even knowing it, they become committed to "winning" rather than "resolving" a



conflict.

8. They each regularly feel misunderstood, stifled and disrespected. This reinforces the belief that conflict is bad for their relationship.

9. They tend to keep more things inside, to hide themselves from their partner.

10. As differences build between them, their first response is denial. If that succeeds, their relationship becomes more superficial. But if that fails, they become engaged in a manipulation battle with one another. When that fails, they either get outside help or their marriage flounders - or ends.

.... Some couples do handle conflict well. Here's how they typically go about it:

1. There is a strong commitment to harmony, but only if it involves openness and authenticity on the part of both individuals.

2. Both persons have a deep respect for themselves and for their partner.

3. Both persons expect there to be differences between them, and they welcome them.

4. There is a high appreciation for the uniqueness of the other person and an understanding of the importance of listening and hearing accurately.

5. Each person has a strong sense of comfort in the relationship.

6. There is a determination to *deal* with conflict, not ignore it.

7. Both people are able to admit when they are wrong.

8. There is a lack of defensiveness - an absence of competition and the desire to win.

9. There is an eagerness on both their parts to congratulate each other when differences are resolved happily.

10. There is a recognition that the road to love needs to be kept clear of conflict and resentment, and there is a willingness to spend the time required to get this done.<sup>92</sup>

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92. Warren (see note 66), 126-8 (his whole Ch. 8 is excellent regarding conflict management). For additional reading see, e.g., Bird (see note 80); Chapman (see note 20), Chs. 7 and 8; Martin (see note 91), Ch. 5; Flaman (see note 91), Ch. IV.1.f.iii and 2.f; and Ramon Gonzalez, "Marital

With regard to the above, it is important to realize that there is good professional help available in many places. This includes good premarital and marital counseling and therapy. Many Church pastors have some training and experience in this area and/or they can refer individuals or couples in need of such help to more qualified resources. Such help can benefit not only those who have serious problems with regard to conflict management, but also anyone wanting to learn how to communicate and resolve conflicts more effectively.

Warren's **ninth principle** regarding choosing a marriage partner is to refuse to proceed until both can genuinely pledge their lifelong commitment to each other. A true marriage is not a "business arrangement" or a conditional agreement. It involves an unconditional commitment of a man to a woman and a woman to a man. It is a commitment to love, honor and cherish one's spouse; to not be involved with any other "substitute mate"; to fulfill all one's duties as a spouse; and to be faithful through every kind of circumstance; until one of them dies. Such a commitment has many advantages. It makes trust possible, which facilitates people sharing the deepest parts of themselves with each other, including their innermost thoughts and feelings.(cf. Ch. VII.D) A truly loving and committed marriage also provides the best environment for children to flourish.(cf. Ch. VI.F) The best time to consider whether or not one should make such a commitment is before marriage, before one makes it.<sup>93</sup> We can also note here that according to the Catholic Church, crises can pave way to happiness", *Western Catholic Reporter*, 15 July 1991, 12.

93. Warren (see note 66), Ch. 9. Cf., e.g., John Gallagher, CSB, "Fidelity, Permanence, and Growth in Marriage: Theological Reflections", in Buijs (see note 84), 111-25. He says in part that Christian fidelity is based on Christian love and is faithful not merely to rules but to people. Spousal fidelity is the source of growth and permanence in marriage. Although spousal fidelity can be difficult, with God's grace it is not only possible but normal. Cf. also Lauer (see note 78), 24 - both husbands and wives in 300 successful marriages reported as some of the top reasons for their success: "Marriage is a long-term commitment", "Marriage is sacred", and "I want the relationship to succeed".

"those who suffer from a grave lack of discretionary judgment concerning the essential matrimonial rights and obligations to be mutually given and accepted" are "incapable of contracting marriage" (CIC, canon 1095,2). Exercising due discretion is, therefore, not only wise when considering marriage but also necessary to enter a true or valid marriage.

With regard to choosing a marriage partner and the great commitment of marriage, some writers also speak of God's will and/or praying for God's guidance. Dietrich von Hildebrand says that "the conviction that this is the person whom God destined for me, and that I am the person destined for the other, and that God has joined us both in conjugal love" makes the community of marriage desirable and gives it meaning. Chapman says, "The Christian should get married because he/she is deeply convinced that this marriage is the work of God, that God in His infinite wisdom has brought the couple together and intends that they live their lives in union with each other and with Him." While Smith approves of asking God for guidance in this area, he warns that sometimes people confuse this with their hormones... God may also guide one to wait or not to marry someone. With regard to taking care in choosing a marriage partner, among other things, Pope Pius XI says, "Let them diligently pray for divine help, so that they may make their choice in accordance with Christian prudence...." St. Ignatius of Loyola also gives some good advice regarding making a choice of a way of life, including the choice of marriage. While he speaks of praying for God's guidance, among other things, he also speaks of using one's understanding to weigh the matter carefully, to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives, to consider one's real motives and the choice in the light of why God created one and God's plan of salvation, and to seek the service and praise of God.<sup>94</sup>

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94. The references in this paragraph are: von Hildebrand (see note 89), 52; Chapman (see note 20), 50-1; Smith (see note 63), 82-3; and Pius XI (see note 89), 61; and *The Spiritual Exercises of*

Before getting engaged to be married, Grisez says a couple, who believes marriage to each other may be their vocation, should exercise careful discernment. Among other things, this includes prayer, reflection, consultation (cf. the tenth principle below), and sharing deeply "their hopes and dreams, their concerns and expectations about marriage and family life, until confident that they can share the rest of their lives together and wish to do so." Regarding this discernment Grisez also says in part:

If either has any specific doubts, the couple should try to resolve them.... If either has any specific, persisting reason to doubt that the marriage will be a good one, the couple should take that as a sign that they are not called to marry and should terminate their romantic relationship.

Of course, many couples will come to the firm conviction that they should marry....<sup>95</sup>

With regard to making this decision see also Ch. I regarding "Making Good Decisions", noting among other things, one's responsibility to seek the truth, the distinctions between having "absolute certainty", "moral certainty" and "doubt" in forming one's conscience (B), and the role of prayer (D, last paragraph).

Warren's **tenth principle** is to celebrate with parents, relatives and close friends if they support one's choice of a marriage partner and contemplated marriage. If they do not, one should listen carefully to them before making one's final decision. In general, parents, close friends and certain relatives know one well and want one's happiness. It is wise to ask their views regarding a relationship and contemplated marriage. They may see strengths and weaknesses in oneself, a prospective partner, and the relationship, that one does not. Although they may not wish to intrude

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*St. Ignatius: A New Translation* by Louis Puhl, SJ (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1954), nn. 169-89; respectively.

95. Grisez (see note 2), 747-8.

without being asked, they should share their observations humbly, honestly and fully, especially if these observations may be of critical importance. While they may be right, they may also be biased, too demanding or wrong. Children of age do not need their parent's permission to marry. They also should not marry simply to please someone else (see the first principle above). The decision and responsibility for it is theirs. In any case, it is desirable that a couple who gets married do so with the blessing of both sets of parents, as well as the support of close friends and relatives. Such support is a great asset to a marriage.<sup>96</sup>

## **F. Preparation for Marriage**

Good preparation for marriage is fundamental to the growth of responsible premarital love. Such preparation in a broad sense ought to begin in early childhood. It later includes a more specific education regarding marriage and family life and culminates in the more intensive preparation of an engaged couple for their wedding and life together. A good and complete preparation for marriage involves a number of people including parents, teachers, pastors, and the individuals themselves as they become more capable, fulfilling their respective responsibilities in this area (cf. Ch. IX.C). With regard to marriage preparation in modern societies, Pope John Paul II says in part:

....not only the family but also society and the Church should be involved in the effort of properly preparing young people for their future responsibilities. Many negative phenomena which are today noted with regret in family life derive from the fact that, in the new situations, young people not only

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96. Cf. Warren (see note 66), Ch. 10; Pope Pius XI (see note 89), 62; Thomas Aquinas (see Ch. III.C.3 under "On Marital Consent"); Chapman (see note 20), 46-8; and Burtchaell (see note 68), 49-51. The support of a good religious community is also a great asset for married couples. With regard to this consider, e.g., that according to the 1980 census figures in the United States, only one in fifty couples divorce who were "Married in the Church and both regularly attend services": from *Horizons*, July/August 1992, 10.

lose sight of the correct hierarchy of values but, since they no longer have certain criteria of behavior, they do not know how to face and deal with the new difficulties. But experience teaches that young people who have been well prepared for family life generally succeed better than others.

This is even more applicable to Christian marriage, which influences the holiness of large numbers of men and women. The Church must therefore promote better and more intensive programmes of marriage preparation, in order to eliminate as far as possible the difficulties that many married couples find themselves in, and even more in order to favour positively the establishing and maturing of successful marriages.

Marriage preparation has to be seen and put into practise as a gradual and continuous process. It includes three main stages: remote, proximate and immediate preparation....(FC, n. 66)

Good "remote" marriage preparation includes the healthy psychological, moral and spiritual development of children and adolescents. This development does not stop but continues when one becomes an adult. With regard to the socialization of the young and not so young, there are a number of negative and positive factors today. Negative developments include:

An excessive individualism and preoccupation with self-fulfillment [which] can erode the type of permanent commitment required for stable and satisfying marriage and family life. The consumerism of our age, with its attendant practice of built-in obsolescence and disposable goods, has similar - even if more subtle - negative effects.<sup>97</sup>

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97. Bishops' Committee for Pastoral Research and Practices (NCCB), *Faithful to Each Other Forever: A Catholic Handbook of Pastoral Help for Marriage Preparation* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1989), 14 (see all of 9-20 regarding remote marriage preparation). This is quite a comprehensive resource on marriage preparation, which no doubt many non-Catholics would also find valuable. See also, the Pontifical Council for the Family [PCF], "Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage," released 27 May 1996 (published in *Origins*, 4 July 1996, 99-109; and available on the Internet at <http://www.ewtn.com/prepmarr.htm>), "which is offered as a basis for the pastoral work related to preparation for the sacrament of marriage" (n. 3). Regarding various negative and positive factors today with regard to marriage and family life see, e.g., also *Family Unity* by Flaman (see note 91), Parts 1 and 2. For a sociological perspective on

Positive factors include the development of various forms of education, counseling, therapy and ministry, as well as certain movements, that can benefit marriage and family life. Today there are many means available regarding improving communication, parenting skills, prayer, and so forth, which can enable families to become healthier and better agents of socialization. Making use of these, with due discretion and according to the needs of oneself and one's family, can foster the remote preparation for marriage of the next generation in significant ways.

Remote marriage preparation includes good character formation. This involves growing in appreciating and respecting authentic human values such as the dignity of persons, truth and fidelity; growing in the virtues including humility, prudence, justice, self-giving love and chastity; and overcoming vices. With regard to this compare Pope Pius XI who says that there is a danger that those who are selfishly indulgent before marriage will be the same in marriage and that "within the home there will be sadness, lamentation, mutual contempt, strifes, estrangements, weariness of common life...."<sup>98</sup> Grisez also explains how helping and working with others including one's parents, the elderly and younger children, for example, can not only be intrinsically valuable and fulfilling, but can also help develop capacities in oneself that are so important in marriage.<sup>99</sup> Remote marriage preparation also involves learning how to relate properly with others including those of the opposite sex, developing some wholesome friendships (cf. D above), and, as Pope John Paul II says:

Also necessary, especially for Christians, is solid spiritual and catechetical formation that will show  


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socialization see, e.g., Eshleman (see note 16), Ch. 15.

98. Pius XI (see note 89), 59-60.

99. Grisez (see note 2), 738-9. Regarding various values and virtues relevant to both premarital relationships and marriage compare many parts of this book (see the index).

that marriage is a true vocation and mission, without excluding the possibility for the total gift of self to God in the vocation to the priestly or religious life.(FC, n. 66)

Concerning all of this, although the "example and teaching given by parents and families remain the special form" of marriage preparation, the "role of pastors and of the Christian community" is also indispensable, especially "in our era when many young people experience broken homes which no longer sufficiently assure this initiation...."(CCC, n. 1632. Cf. GS, n. 49; and CIC, canon 1063,1)

"Proximate" preparation for marriage, building on the above, involves a more specific preparation for marriage and its concrete responsibilities. A renewed catechesis and religious formation should also be integrated with this for Christians, to prepare them to live well Christian marriage as a sacrament (cf. e.g., the catechumenate or the years of human and religious formation required to become a good priest).

This preparation will present marriage as an interpersonal relationship of a man and a woman that has to be continually developed, and it will encourage those concerned to study the nature of conjugal sexuality and responsible parenthood, with the essential medical and biological knowledge connected with it. It will also acquaint those concerned with correct methods for the education of children, and will assist them in gaining the basic requisites for well-ordered family life, such as stable work, sufficient financial resources, sensible administration, notions of housekeeping.

...one must not overlook preparation for the family apostolate, for fraternal solidarity and collaboration with other families, for active membership in groups, associations, movements and undertakings set up for the human and Christian benefit of the family.(FC, n. 66)

To prepare for marriage as an interpersonal relationship note, for example, the importance of learning how to communicate effectively and manage conflict constructively (cf. E, 7th and 8th principles, above; and Ch. IX.A). Regarding studying conjugal sexuality and responsible parenthood



compare the value of wholesome sex education and learning about the newer methods of natural family planning, which can not only be effective and moral within marriage, but can also help young unmarried people appreciate their fertility as a gift to be respected (see Ch. IX.D). With regard to preparing for the responsibilities of marriage, including those of parenting which normally accompany marriage, single people can not only acquire knowledge by reading, taking certain courses, and so forth. They can also gain some valuable experience by baby-sitting, instructing children, and other relevant jobs and/or volunteer activities. Grisez says, "Those preparing for possible marriage should make choices about their education with the requirements of marriage and family life in mind." This includes not only formal education but also, "Prayer, Scripture reading, personal study ... discussion with parents and others who have experience of marriage ... [and] thoughtful observation of real families, both happy and miserable, to see how to fulfill the vocation and avoid common pitfalls."<sup>100</sup>

"Immediate" preparation for marriage refers to that of an engaged couple during the months and weeks immediately preceding their wedding. This should involve preparing not only for the "big day", but for a whole life together. An engaged couple is wise to ensure that everything is possible before finalizing a wedding date, time and place. Christians should contact their pastor. Catholics should contact their parish priest. Besides certain civil requirements, churches also have

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100. Ibid., 739. Certain books provide material relevant to the preparation for marriage. See e.g., those by Chapman, Warren, Bird, Martin, Flaman (see notes 20, 66, 80 and 91, respectively), and Robert Fox, *The Gift of Sexuality: A Guide for Young People* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1989), in particular Ch. 10: Looking Toward Marriage. This book of mine is also meant in part as a theological resource in this area. I can also note here that a number of students choose to take Christian theology courses on human sexuality and marriage, which a number of my colleagues and I teach at the University of Alberta, not only to provide them with academic credits but also to help them acquire a better understanding of human sexuality and marriage. Regarding proximate preparation for marriage see, e.g., also Bishops' Committee (see note 97), Section II.

policies regarding the celebration of marriage. The Catholic Church, for example, is concerned that both parties are free, capable and willing to give true consent to enter a valid marriage. Interviews / questionnaires need to be completed, baptismal certificates are needed when one is not marrying in the parish where one is baptized, various affidavits may be needed, and a dispensation needs to be sought and obtained in the case of a Catholic marrying a non-Catholic. Anyone who knows about any impediments to the marriage is obliged to reveal this to the parish priest or the local bishop. The Church is also concerned that the couple is well prepared for a meaningful wedding celebration and for the various responsibilities of marriage and family life.<sup>101</sup>

Many parishes, dioceses or local Christian communities, as well as some Christian movements, provide marriage preparation courses, instruments or programs. Christian married couples typically contribute by sharing some of their experiences with marriage, etc. A few examples of these are: Engaged Encounter, "Pre-Cana" Conferences, "Couple-to-Couple" Programs, PREPARE (Premarital Personal and Relationship Enrichment), and FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study). FOCCUS, for example, includes sixteen categories: communication, extended family issues, financial issues, friends and interests, interfaith marriages, key problem

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101. Cf. CIC, canons 1063-72 regarding the "Pastoral Care and the Prerequisites for the Celebration of Marriage". A canon lawyer, Morrissey (see note 84), 77, says, "This entire programme could be carried out in minimal fashion, simply observing the prescriptions of the law. But .... with a bit of imagination and pastoral zeal, this programme could be but the beginning of a constructive plan to do much to help young couples as they embark on their married life." Regarding impediments, matrimonial consent, the form of the celebration of marriage, and mixed marriages see CIC, canons 1073-1133. For an overview see Ch. IV.F above. For a canon by canon commentary see Coriden et al. (see note 68). Cf., e.g., CCEC, canons 783-842 for Catholics of Eastern Churches; Graham Cotter, ed., *Marrying in the Church: A Pastoral Guide* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1983), Parts I and II regarding the "Prerequisites for Marriage" and "Solemnization of Matrimony" in the Anglican Church of Canada; Malcolm C. Kronby, *Canadian Family Law* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 4th ed. 1986), Ch. 2 (addresses such issues as age of consent, mental capacity to marry, consent of the parties, and consanguinity); Fox (see note 14), 144-6; Grisez (see note 2), 748-9; and Bishops' Committee (see note 97), Section III: Immediate Preparation.

indicators, life-style expectations, marriage covenant, parenting issues, personal issues, personality match, problem solving, readiness issues, religion and values, second marriage, and sexuality issues. FOCCUS now also includes some very good discussion questions for cohabiting couples and material on facilitating discussion with them. In response to the significant increase in unmarried cohabitation in recent years, and many of these couples coming for marriage preparation in the Catholic Church, the Marriage and Family Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States (NCCB) published a document on “Marriage Preparation and Cohabiting Couples”. Besides providing some very relevant information about cohabitation, this document also treats relevant pastoral questions such as: What are the specific objectives in marriage preparation with cohabiting couples? What distinctions are made among cohabiting couples? Should cohabiting couples be encouraged to separate prior to the wedding? If a couple is cohabiting, can marriage be denied or delayed? These and some other questions are discussed in the light of Gospel values such as love, understanding, acceptance, commitment, faithfulness and chastity. I recommend this document especially for those involved in marriage preparation and cohabitation.<sup>102</sup> (See also other parts of this book including Ch. VII.D above on “living together”.)

Although some engaged couples may consider marriage preparation programs unnecessary, even an already well-prepared couple can be greatly enriched by them. On a personal note, my wife and I took part in three marriage preparation programs (Evenings for the Engaged, Engaged

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102. Bishops' Committee (see note 97), 57-71 and 89-91; and NCCB Marriage and Family Committee, “Marriage Preparation and Cohabiting Couples: Information Report”, *Origins*, 16 Sept. 1999, 213-24. Cf. e.g., also the "Marriage and Family Preparation" program sponsored by The Office of Marriage and Family Formation of the Vancouver Archdiocese. A Creighton University Study found that, "Marriage preparation in the Catholic Church is rated as a valuable experience by a vast majority of those who participate in it.... Marriage preparation is most valuable when presented by a team, especially a team of clergy and lay leaders....": "Effective Marriage Preparation", *Origins*, 7 Dec. 1995, 430.

Encounter, and a program sponsored by the Focolare Movement). All three were very worthwhile. Such programs provide a privileged opportunity for engaged couples to learn from experts, to discuss relevant issues with experienced married couples, and to deepen their own communication and unity. A marriage preparation program may also bring to light certain unresolved issues or serious problems. Some couples or individuals who take part in such programs decide to postpone or cancel their wedding. This is certainly better than entering a marriage prematurely or one for which one or both of them are not suited.

Concerning marriage "Preparation Courses", Pope John Paul II says the Episcopal Conferences (e.g. the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops) should stipulate

...the minimum content, duration and method ... balancing the different aspects - doctrinal, pedagogical, legal and medical - concerning marriage, and structuring them in such a way that those preparing for marriage will not only receive an intellectual training but will also feel a desire to enter actively into the ecclesial community.(FC, n. 66)

Concerning the immediate preparation for Christian marriage as a sacrament, he also says in part:

Among the elements to be instilled in this journey of faith ... there must also be a deeper knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the Church, of the meaning of grace and of the responsibility of Christian marriage, as well as preparation for taking an active and conscious part in the rites of the marriage liturgy.(FC, n. 66)

Since Christian marriage is a sacrament, it normally requires a liturgical celebration. This celebration should be in harmony with Christian faith and morality, simple, dignified and according to the norms of the competent Church authorities. The wedding liturgy can be more meaningful for

a couple if they are actively involved in planning it with their pastor.<sup>103</sup>

Catholics who have not yet been confirmed should receive this sacrament, before getting married if possible, since this sacrament unites one more firmly to Christ and strengthens one to live the Christian life. It is also recommended that they make a good confession before getting married and receive the Eucharist, so that they may more fruitfully celebrate their marriage.(cf. CIC, canon 1065; and CCC, nn. 1285-1498)

Grisez presents some good insights regarding an engaged couple's responsibilities to prepare for their wedding and future marriage. Among other things, he says they should live their engagement not merely as a time of transition but as a valuable part of their Christian lives, "in such a way that it will be a worthwhile and beautiful part of their lives even if they never marry." Engaged couples should discuss openly and fully important matters concerning their future married and family life such as financial arrangements, setting up a common household, their relationships with in-laws, their views on number and spacing of children, what method of natural family planning they will use and how they will use it, how they will divide and share household and parenting responsibilities, and work outside the home. If they cannot settle such issues they "should accept that as a sign that they should not marry." In planning a wedding couples can become overly concerned with the "trappings" which "can distract them from essential elements of their preparation for marriage: prayer, study, coming to agreement on important issues, and so on." In making wedding arrangements engaged couples should try to strengthen their communion with their parents, families and friends. While a wedding rightly calls for a major celebration, "the conspicuous

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103. Cf. FC, n. 67; and Bishops' Committee (see note 97), 107-24, regarding the theology of and preparation for the wedding liturgy. In FC, n. 68, Pope John Paul II also presents some good balanced insights and guidelines concerning the "Celebration of marriage and evangelization of non-believing baptized persons".

consumption often involved in lavish weddings and honeymoons is a grave abuse of resources, which violates social justice and love of neighbor...." An engaged couple should prepare spiritually for marriage by praying for each other and together "for a good and happy marriage" (cf. Tb 8:7) and by taking steps (cf. the sacraments) to deepen their love of Christ (cf. Ch. IX.E regarding spirituality). Some other means can benefit them greatly, too, such as "studying and discussing together the liturgy for marriage" including the biblical readings and "prayerfully considering the relevance of these liturgical materials for their own future marriage." An engaged couple should also prepare themselves to be faithful to the serious commitment of marriage. If any real doubts arise for either of them during the process of marriage preparation, these should be resolved before getting married since marriage is for better or for worse until death parts them (cf. E above, 9th principle).<sup>104</sup>

In concluding this section, we can also note that whether or not a couple prepared for their marriage as well as they should have, the Church (the Christian "family") is there to support and help them after the wedding too. Many local churches or Christian communities have some excellent resources not only to help married couples in times of crisis or to help them to prepare for their children's baptisms, etc., but to help them to grow closer to each other and to God throughout their marriage. Christian engaged and married couples should also prayerfully consider how they can best exercise their Christian apostolate by sharing their love with others and by using their gifts to serve and minister to the needs of others. In doing this, they will also give glory to God.<sup>105</sup>

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104. Grisez (see note 2), Ch. 9.I.4 (the quotes are from 748, 750, and 751). Regarding preparation for marriage during the period of engagement and the celebration of marriage see also PCF (see note 97), nn. 32-72.

105. Regarding pastoral care after marriage see, e.g., FC, n. 69; and PCF (see note 97), n. 73. Regarding the apostolate of lay people see AA, in particular nn. 11-12 regarding the apostolate of

## G. Celibacy

All people are born virgins, most people remain virgins until their teens or later in life, and some people remain virgins all their lives. To love God and people including oneself properly we are all required to abstain from sexual relations, to live "celibately" before and outside marriage (cf. Ch. VI.A-VIII.B). Although most people get married (90% or so), a significant minority of people never marry for various reasons. Many of these people wanted to get married. Some may even have been engaged to be married or in a relationship they thought was premarital, or they had sexual relations which they thought were premarital. In treating the topics of "premarital sex and love", it is, therefore, important to consider as well the option of celibacy, including the choice not to marry for the sake of the kingdom of God.

A number of biblical and other perspectives on celibacy, virginity and sexual abstinence have already been presented in certain places in this book (see the index). While attempting to avoid unnecessary repetition, we will consider here several significant issues regarding celibacy.

Even if one has not personally experienced God's call to choose not to marry, to be celibate for life, for the sake of God's kingdom, one can grow in appreciating this great vocation by reading, by getting to know some people who are living this vocation, and by developing a personal intimate relationship with God who is the source of love and joy. Although I am married and have three children, I have also had the privilege of knowing a number of priests, religious brothers and sisters,

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married couples, families and young people; and Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Ottawa: CCCB, 1988). In *Embodied in Love: Sacramental Spirituality and Sexual Intimacy, A new Catholic Guide to Marriage* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), 142-9, Charles Gallagher, George Maloney, Mary Rousseau and Paul Wilczak give some practical suggestions for engaged couples to minister to others. This book is worthwhile reading not only for married couples but also for those preparing for marriage.

and some other people, who are living this vocation well, and who are very warm, loving, beautiful and joyful people.

Celibacy or virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 19:10-12), God's kingdom of infinite love and life, is both a gift of God and a personal choice. If one has an authentic vocation, it is not motivated by a disgust or fear of sex, or by seeking to avoid the responsibilities and difficulties of marriage and family life, but by the love of God which can not be separated from a genuine love of people. Compare, for example, the following by a Dominican priest, Fr. Paul Conner:

I have always been attracted to women, a reaction which did not cease when I vowed myself to religious life or was ordained a priest. I was simply more attracted to Christ, and so entered into the two consecrating events that have definitively shaped my life....<sup>106</sup>

The charism of celibacy and the sacrament of Christian marriage are not contradictory but specific complementary ways of living the general Christian vocation to love God and people (cf. FC, n. 16; and 1 Pet 4:10). As Grisez says, they are also complementary signs:

Marriage manifests that heaven will be an intimate, interpersonal, communion in which human bodily persons will find their fulfillment; virginity or celibacy manifests that heavenly communion will be inclusive, rather than exclusive, and will surpass the limitations of the most intimate communion men and women can experience in this life.<sup>107</sup>

Some celibate people speak of God/Jesus as their spouse. For example, Sharry Silvi, in a public talk I attended, shared that a prostitute she had helped told her that she should be married since she

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106. Paul Conner, *Celibate Love* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1980), 9. This book as a whole presents many good insights on the subject.

107. Grisez (see note 2), 609-10.



was such a warm loving person. Shari responded by saying that in a sense she was married - to Jesus. She tried to have a close relationship with Jesus. As intimate spouses affect one another, no doubt some of Jesus' warmth and love had rubbed off on her.<sup>108</sup>

With regard to being betrothed or wedded to God, Wojtyla (now Pope John Paul II) says in part:

Within man's relationship with God, understood as a relationship of love.... We see ... the possibility of betrothed and requited love between God and man... This total and exclusive gift of self to God is the result of a spiritual process which occurs within a person under the influence of Grace. This is the essence of mystical virginity - *conjugal love pledged to God Himself*. Its name indicates its close connection with physical virginity.... The person who chooses to give himself or herself wholly and exclusively to God combines this with physical virginity, which he or she decides to preserve.... Virginity emphasizes ... that the person belongs to God: what was a natural condition becomes an object of will, of conscious choice and decision....

...the spiritual attitude which is the innermost essence of spiritual virginity, the will to give oneself entirely and without reservation to God - may develop late, that is to say in a person no longer physically virgin....

.... Marriage and the betrothed love for a human being which goes with it, the dedication of oneself to another person, solves the problem of the union of persons only on the terrestrial and temporal scale. The union of person with person here takes place in the physical and sexual sense, in accordance with man's physical nature.... But the need for betrothed love, the need to give oneself to and unite with another person, is deeper and connected with the spiritual existence of the person. It is not finally and completely satisfied simply by union with another human being. Considered in the perspective of the person's eternal existence, marriage is only a tentative solution of the problem of a union of persons through love....

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108. Shari Silvi, a celibate focalarina, shared this experience, which I have summarized here, at a Summer Mariapolis of the Focolare Movement, which I attended several years ago.

Spiritual virginity, in the perspective of eternal life, is another attempt to solve the problem. The movement towards final union through love with a personal God is here more explicit than in marriage....

.... The value of virginity, and indeed its superiority to marriage, which is expressly emphasized in the Bible (1 Corinthians 7), and has always been maintained in the teaching of the Church, is to be found in the exceptionally important part which virginity plays in realizing the kingdom of God on earth. The kingdom of God on earth is realized in that particular people gradually prepare and perfect themselves for eternal union with God. In this union the objective development of the human person reaches its highest point. Spiritual virginity, the self-giving of a human person wedded to God Himself, expressly anticipates this eternal union with God and points the way towards it.<sup>109</sup>

With regard to the fullness of "eternal life" and "the new world of the future resurrection" being "the eschatological marriage of Christ with the Church" (FC, n. 16), we can also note that in a certain sense all of our relationships in this life on earth are "premarital".

In *Celibacy put to the Gospel Test*, Fr. Pascal Foresi examines "how celibacy is in keeping with the evangelical requirements for discipleship, understood as a call to follow Christ for the purpose of continuing the mission that was his of announcing and establishing the kingdom of God."<sup>110</sup> Jesus himself was celibate, a virgin for the sake of God's kingdom. He invites "certain persons to follow him in this way of life, of which he remains the model...."(CCC, n. 1618) Although married people, too, are called to follow Jesus, to relate to Jesus as their best friend and beloved, and to be fully transformed in Christ (see Ch. V.A.4-B.2), celibacy can involve certain advantages with regard

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109. Wojtyla (see note 51), 251-5.

110. Pascal Foresi, *Celibacy put to the Gospel Test* (New York: New City Press, 1969), 23. Foresi is a Catholic priest. For an evangelical Christian perspective on celibacy see, e.g., *Sex and the Single Christian* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987) by Audrey Beslow.

to these. Without the responsibilities of marriage (which usually includes the responsibilities of parenthood), and the time and energy needed to fulfill these properly, the celibate person, in a certain sense can be freer and have more time and energy to devote himself or herself to prayer and a universal service to others and their needs. Consider, for example, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Jean Vanier, Chiara Lubich, the Pope or someone else who is living (or has lived) well celibacy for the sake of God's kingdom, as well as the lives of many of the saints who were celibate.

The person who commits himself or herself to virginity or celibacy for God's kingdom can also be a spiritual parent to many people. The Apostle Paul who was celibate (cf. 1 Cor 7:8), for example, refers to the Galatian Christians as "My little children" (Gal 4:19 RSV). In union with Jesus, whether one is married or not, one can bear much fruit that will last (see Jn 15:1-17). Wojtyla points out that:

.... Spiritual kinship ... is often stronger than the kinship created by the blood tie. Spiritual paternity and maternity involve a certain transmission of personality.

Spiritual parenthood as a sign of the inner maturity of the person is the goal which in diverse ways all human beings, men and women alike, are called to seek, within or outside matrimony. This call fits into the Gospel's summons to perfection of which the 'Father' is the supreme model. So then, human beings will come particularly close to God when the *spiritual parenthood of which God is the prototype* takes shape in them....<sup>111</sup>

Those who faithfully live the vocation to be celibate for the sake of God's kingdom, in spite of the sacrifices and difficulties that this way of life involves, can be powerful examples of fidelity and chastity to others. This includes married people as well as the many people who are not celibate by choice or preference but due to their circumstances.(cf. FC, n. 16) Some people are incapable of

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111. Wojtyla (see note 51), 261.

fulfilling the responsibilities of marriage and so are unable to marry due to certain serious physical, mental and/or psychological problems (cf. e.g., CIC, canons 1084 and 1095). Others would be capable of marriage but they have not found a suitable partner or it is better for them to remain single for some other reason. In order to love God and people properly these people, too, are called to complete sexual abstinence (cf. Ch. VI.A-VIII.B). With regard to those who are not celibate by choice, Jean Vanier, who lives and works with mentally handicapped people, says that he believes that Jesus wishes to come to them in a special way: "He wants to touch them in the depths of their hearts, bringing them the peace of a new love." Although some people with a mild mental handicap are able to marry with the support of others, concerning those who are unable to marry Vanier also says in part, "It is important that someone with a mental handicap comes to know that celibacy can be welcomed as a gift of God through which the heart will be fulfilled."<sup>112</sup>

We can also note here that in order to love properly some married people are required to abstain from genital sexual relations for long periods or even for the rest of their lives. Compare, for example, certain illnesses or accidents or when a spouse in an indissoluble marriage is deserted by the other. Unfortunately, some jobs or circumstances such as a war may also require spouses to be separated and to abstain from sex for a long period or periods of time. In any case, every married person is called to be "celibate" in all his or her other relationships.

For all these people, whether single or married, those who live well the vocation to be celibate for the sake of God's kingdom can be an inspiring example. They can be a sign that human happiness and fulfillment does not require genital sex. Rather one finds oneself and true joy by giving oneself to God and others in true love. One can find love, friendship, affection and intimacy

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112. Vanier (see note 12), 115.

without being married to a human spouse and having sex. Lawler, Boyle and May point out that "Christ's kingdom" is the basis for judging everything in this world including marriage. Concerning this they say in part:

.... only in Christ's kingdom can each of us and all of us together realize full human perfection, and full sharing of goods with other human beings and God himself in loving communion....

Those who answer the call to the life of consecrated virginity in no way repudiate the goods of married life. Such goods are perfectly realized in the kingdom of Christ to which their lives attest. Moreover, such persons stand as a constant reminder that we can come into full possession of our sexuality without engaging in genital activity....<sup>113</sup>

A question that many single Christians, who may also be open to the possibility of marriage, can have is, "How can I know if I have the vocation to a life of celibacy?" Although the general principles of making good choices (see Ch. I) apply to this issue as well, a few additional points will be noted here. As in the case of marriage, it is advisable to talk with several people who have this vocation and who are living it, to understand better not only its advantages and joys, but also its typical trials and sufferings, and how to respond constructively to these. Other means of becoming adequately educated on this vocation include good relevant reading: the New Testament (to better know Jesus, the supreme model of this vocation), balanced accounts of the lives of some people who lived or are living this vocation, and other good literature on celibacy including Catholic teaching

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113. Lawler et al. (see note 1), 144. Cf. their Chs. 7 and 8 regarding the requirements of chastity both within and outside marriage. We can also note here that celibacy is not the cause of pedophilia. In a sensitive and balanced article, "Pedophilia Raises Hard Questions", *Western Catholic Reporter*, 28 August 1989, Fr. Ron Rolheiser says in part: "For whatever reasons [the media] ... have been reluctant to state that pedophilia is not proportionately higher among Roman Catholic priests than it is among other professions. In fact, statistically, it is slightly lower among Roman catholic clergy than among the male population at large. Moreover, it is not higher among celibates than among married men.... Pedophilia is a disease, and a very complex one at that...."(4)

can be most helpful.<sup>114</sup> As the proper motive for marriage is mutual love, the proper motive for the vocation of celibacy is also mutual love - God's love for the person and the person's love for God and other people in God. As the situation of each couple who decides to get married is unique, so too is the situation of each person who commits himself or herself to a life of celibacy in response to God's invitation. Speaking of both virginity and marriage as vocations from a personalistic perspective, Wojtyla says in part:

.... [Besides its] external, social and institutional meaning the term [vocation] has another, personal and psychological meaning .... that *there is a proper course for every person's development to follow*, a specific way in which he commits his whole life to the service of certain values....

In the vision of human existence put forward by the New Testament the interior life of the person is not the sole source of a vocation. An inner need to determine the main direction of one's development by love encounters an objective call from God. This is the fundamental appeal of the New Testament, embodied in the commandment to love and in the saying 'Be ye perfect', *a call to self-perfection through love*. This summons is addressed to everyone. It behooves every 'man of good will' to give it concrete meaning, in application to himself, by deciding what is the main direction of his life. 'What is my vocation' means 'in what direction should my personality develop, considering

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114. Besides the sources regarding celibacy referred to in these notes and elsewhere in this book (see the index), I would also recommend, e.g.: Dietrich von Hildebrand, *In Defense of Purity* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), Book II; Christopher Kiesling, *Celibacy, Prayer and Friendship* (New York: Alba House, 1978); Quay (see note 8), Chs. 7 and 8; Jordan Aumann, O.P., and Dr. Conrad Baars, *The Unquiet Heart: Reflections on Love and Sexuality* (New York: Alba House, 1991), Chs. 4 and 7 (this book also presents a good theological and psychological treatment of human love and sexuality in general); USCC (see note 5), 51-8, regarding sexuality and the single person, persons with a homosexual orientation, and vowed or professed celibacy; and CCC, nn. 914-33 and 1618-20 regarding the consecrated life and evangelical counsels, and virginity for the sake of the kingdom (this last source summarizes Catholic teaching and refers to several other relevant documents including a few of the Second Vatican Council. These and/or other good books, documents and articles on celibacy can be found, e.g., in a good Catholic library (cf. also the Internet).

what I have in me, what I have to offer, and what others - other people and God - expect of me.... In calling upon us to seek perfection, the Gospel also requires us to believe in divine Grace. The operations of Grace take man beyond the confines of his personal life and bring him within the orbit of God's activity and His love. As he seeks to determine the particular lines along which his personality must develop, the main direction of his love, every man must learn to integrate himself into the activity of God and respond to His love. A fully valid solution of the problem of vocation depends on this....<sup>115</sup>

Many people who are called to be celibate for God's kingdom are also called to join a particular spiritual family. A wide variety of such communities exist not only within the Catholic Church but also in some other Christian churches (cf. also some non-Christian religions). Being part of a community where one is welcomed, where one can be loved by others, love others, experience true friendships, and find mutual support can be of great value personally, in terms of having one's needs met. Being part of a healthy Christian community can also be of great value in terms of living the Gospel and serving others (cf. e.g., Jesus' commandments to his disciples to serve and love one another as he has served and loved them, and his promise to be in the midst where two or more meet in his name - see Jn 13 and 15; and Mt 18:20). Such communities generally provide means such as spiritual direction or counseling, retreats, live-in situations, novitiates, and temporary vows or promises before final ones, to help people discern their vocations.<sup>116</sup>

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115. Wojtyla (see note 51), 256-8.

116. Based on centuries of experience, the Catholic Church, for example, has developed some regulations for religious institutes, secular institutes, societies of apostolic life, and holy orders. Regarding Roman Catholic canon law see CIC, canons 573-746 and 1008-54. These are meant to promote the good of individuals and the Church. For a commentary see, e.g., Coriden et al. (see note 68). With regard to the value of community for people who are celibate, whether by choice or not, see, e.g., Vanier (see note 12), Ch. 6 "The Celibate Living in Community". We can also note here that many people have been helped to discern or confirm their vocations by reading *The Spiritual*

Before making a definitive commitment to a celibate vocation (cf. also the commitment to marriage) one should have reached an adequate level of human and spiritual maturity, including adequate emotional and sexual integration and self-control with the help of God.<sup>117</sup> It is also important to take the time to resolve any doubts and have moral certainty that this is what one should do (see Ch. I.B). Some people who are still spiritually immature and who have some disordered attachments may be reluctant to give themselves completely to God and trust in his guidance and providence (cf. e.g., St. Augustine at one stage of his life - see Ch. III.B.1). It is important that we all believe that God loves each of us immensely and personally, wanting only what is best for us. He also knows better than we do what is best for us. If one tries to be completely open to God, and to love God and people in God generously and in a properly ordered way, with the help of God, one's specific vocation and how it should develop will also become clear at appropriate times in one's life.

In concluding this section and chapter, I would like to note that what is especially important for each of us, whether we are single, whether committed to a life of celibacy or not, or whether we are married, is to try our best with the help of God to grow in holiness, in a properly ordered love of God, of people including oneself, and the rest of God's creation. In union with Jesus Christ we will bear much fruit that will last for eternity. Whatever one's state in life on earth, this will not be without one's share of difficulties, trials or "crosses", since we are not yet in paradise.<sup>118</sup> Taking Jesus as our model, however, we can be confident that God will work everything for our good if we love him (cf. Rm 8:28; and Ch. V.B above).

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*Exercises of St. Ignatius* (see note 94) and/or by making a retreat based on these.

117. Cf. Aumann and Baars (see note 114), Chs. 4 and 7.

118. Cf. Vanier (see note 12), 118.