

PREMARITAL SEX AND LOVE

**In the Light of Human Experience
and Following Jesus**

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Prayer

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage he offers among his holy people, and how extraordinarily great is the power that he has exercised for us believers; this accords with the strength of his power at work in Christ, the power which he exercised in raising him from the dead and enthroning him at his right hand, in heaven, far above every principality, ruling force, power or sovereignty, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age but also in the age to come....

We too were ... living only by our natural inclinations, obeying the demands of human self-indulgence and our own whim; our nature made us no less liable to God's retribution than the rest of the world. But God being rich in faithful love, through the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, brought us to life with Christ - it is through grace that you have been saved....

This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every fatherhood, in heaven or on earth, takes its name. In the abundance of his glory may he, through his Spirit, enable you to grow firm in power with regard to your inner self, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, with all God's holy people you will have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; so that, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond knowledge, you may be filled with the utter fullness of God.

Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever.

Amen. (Eph 1:17-21, 2:3-5 and 3:14-21 NJB)

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Abbreviations

- AA Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* of the Second Vatican Council (see Vat.II).
- AIDS Acquired ImmunoDeficiency Syndrome.
- C The *Confessions* of St. Augustine of Hippo, FOC (see below), Vol. 21.
- CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994) and “Vatican List of Catechism Changes”, *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*, 25 Sept. 1997, pp. 257-62.
- CCCB Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- CCE The Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education.
- CCEC *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1990). Canons 776-866 treat marriage and some related issues.
- CIC *Codex Iuris Canonici*, promulgated by the authority of Pope John Paul II (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983). The English translation used in this book is *The Code of Canon Law: In English Translation* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983).
- CDF The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.
- CG *City of God* by St. Augustine of Hippo, FOC (see below), Vols. 8, 14 and 24.
- CL Apostolic Exhortation *Cristifideles Laici* on The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World by Pope John Paul II (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988).
- CT Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* On Catechesis in Our Time, by Pope John Paul II (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979).
- DH Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* of the Second Vatican council (see Vat.II).
- DS *Henricus Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer, S.J., eds., Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum* (Rome: Herder, 36th ed. 1976).
- DV Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* of the Second Vatican Council (see Vat.II).
- EnVat *Enchiridion Vaticanum: 2. Documenti Ufficiali Della Santa Sede 1963-1967: Testo*

Ufficiale e Traduzione Italiana (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 10 ed. 1976).

- EV Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* The Gospel of Life, by Pope John Paul II (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995).
- FC Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, by Pope John Paul II (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1981).
- FEF *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, selected and trans. by William A. Jurgens (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1970-vol. 1, 1979-vols. 2 and 3).
- FOC *The Fathers of the Church*, a multi-volume work published by The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1961 ff.
- GE Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis* of the Second Vatican Council (see Vat.II).
- GS Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council (see Vat.II).
- HIV Human ImmunoDeficiency Virus, the virus that causes AIDS.
- HPV Human Papilloma Virus.
- HV Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* On the Transmission of Human Life, by Pope Paul VI (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1968), NC News Service Translation.
- IM Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication *Inter Mirifica* of the Second Vatican Council (see Vat.II).
- JB *The Jerusalem Bible*, General ed. Alexander Jones (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966).
- JBC *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., and Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968).
- LF *Letter to Families* by Pope John Paul II (Sherbrooke, QC: Editions Paulines, 1994).
- LG Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council (see Vat.II).
- LS *Official Catholic Teachings: Love and Sexuality*, ed. Odile M. Liebard (Wilmington, N.C : McGrath, 1978).

- M "The Good of Marriage" by St. Augustine of Hippo, FOC (see above), Vol. 27, 9-51.
- MC "On Marriage and Concupiscence" by St. Augustine of Hippo, NPNF (see below), Vol. 5, 263-308.
- NCCB National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States.
- NCE *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 17 vols., prepared by an editorial staff at The Catholic University of America (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967, 1974-vol. 16, and 1979-vol. 17).
- NFP Natural Family Planning.
- NJB *The New Jerusalem Bible*, General ed. Henry Wansbrough (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985).
- NJBC *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., and Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1990).
- NPNF *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, First Series, a multi-volume work, ed. by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956).
- NRSV *New Revised Standard Version Bible* (New York: Collins, 1989).
- PCF The Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Family.
- PH Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics *Persona Humana* by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1975).
- PTP *The Problem of Teen-age Purity: The Teachings of Pope Pius XII*, compiled by Nazareno Camilleri, S.D.B.; trans. by Marion Barrows (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Salesiana Publishers and Distributors, 1961).
- RSV *The Revised Standard Version Common Bible* (New York: Collins, expanded ecumenical edition 1973).
- SCG *Summa Contra Gentiles*, by St. Thomas Aquinas (Rome: Marietti Editori Ltd., 1961-vols. II and III, 1967-vol. I).
- ST *Summa Theologiae*, by St. Thomas Aquinas (London: Blackfriars in conjunction with Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964, 60 vols.).

- ST Supp. Supplement of the *Summa Theologiae* (ST) of St. Thomas Aquinas. For an English translation see the *Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Vol. 5 (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981).
- STD Sexually Transmitted Disease.
- TCT *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation*, trans. and prepared by John F. Clarkson, S.J., John H. Edwards, S.J. William J. Kelly, S.J., and John J. Welch, S.J. (Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1973).
- UR Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* of the Second Vatican Council (see Vat.II).
- USCC United States Catholic Conference.
- Vat.II *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery, O.P. (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1975); or *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. by Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1966). The edition used for quotations will be indicated with specific references.
- VS Encyclical Regarding Certain Fundamental Questions of the Church's Moral Teaching *Veritatis Splendor* by Pope John Paul II (Ottawa: CCCB, 1993).

INTRODUCTION

It is certainly not an overstatement to say that the topics of premarital sex and love are of great importance today. Millions of young and not so young people today are seeking "true" love. Many engage in premarital sexual relations. Discussions of premarital sex today often focus on serious and widespread problems such as sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancies in difficult circumstances, and issues such as prevention, abortion, and sex education.¹ Although these are treated in this book (see parts of Chapters 6 and 9), they are not the only topics covered. Among the various issues related to premarital sex and love which this book addresses, a fundamental question is whether premarital sexual relations foster or hinder the integral development of persons and growth in authentic love. This brings up a number of moral issues including whether or not engaging in premarital sexual relations is or ever can be responsible.

An Explanation of the Title of This Book

For the purposes of this book, "premarital sex" refers first of all to sexual relations or activity (sexual intercourse, sexual petting and deliberate sexual arousal of others and/or oneself) preceding marriage. Some attention will be given to sexual thinking as well. The English word "sex" can also refer to sexuality and male/female identity. A treatment of these issues will be integrated into this study. "Marriage", as used in this book, refers to a partnership for the whole of life established between a man and a woman by their free and irrevocable consent to give themselves to each other and to accept the other without reservation, expressed according to the proper form required for them. The form of celebration that is required for a couple to marry validly can vary according to

1. See, e.g., The Alan Guttmacher Institute's *Sex and America's Teenagers* (New York and Washington, D.C.: The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994).

certain circumstances, including the religion of the parties.²

The term "fornication" is used rather than or in conjunction with "premarital sex" in some writings, for example, in some English translations of the Bible and some theological writings. Fornication means voluntary sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman or between two persons not married to each other. Fornication thus includes premarital sexual intercourse as well as other kinds of nonmarital heterosexual intercourse. Although this book does not focus on adultery (voluntary sexual intercourse of a married person with someone other than his or her lawful spouse), a number of the issues treated here with respect to premarital sex could also be considered regarding adultery, since it, too, involves two people who are not married to each other. The same can be said with respect to nonmarital sexual relations that are not later followed by marriage and so are not technically "premarital". Some cases of unmarried cohabitation involving sexual relations, for example, do not lead to marriage.

The word "love" in English has various meanings. It is incorporated into the title of this book because I believe that growing in a properly ordered love of oneself and others including God is of the utmost importance for us. Such love, I think, helps one to keep a proper perspective with regard to sexual issues, including all of the various issues related to premarital sex.

In introducing this book, I include here too a few brief notes concerning its subtitle, "In the Light of Human Experience and Following Jesus". "Human experience" here does not only refer to what can be empirically verified. It refers to all of human experience including our experience of ourselves as persons, interpersonal relationships, various kinds of love, human sexuality, marriage,

2. Cf., e.g., not only CIC, canons 1108-23, and CCEC, canons 828-42, regarding "The Form of the Celebration of Marriage" required for Catholics (Roman and Eastern rites, respectively), but also: Malcolm C. Kronby, *Canadian Family Law* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 4th revised ed. 1986), Ch. 2; and Graham Cotter, ed., *Marrying in the Church: A Pastoral Guide* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1983), pp. 39ff. regarding "The solemnization of Matrimony" in the Anglican Church of Canada.

beauty, mystery, God, prayer, values including morally relevant values or goods such as the dignity of persons, justice, friendship, fidelity, truth and so on. Our knowledge of human sexuality and marriage, for example, is not limited to what falls within the scope of the biological and social sciences. Although these sciences have certainly contributed to our understanding of such realities, good philosophy, too, has an important role to play. For instance, some of the better writings regarding the natural moral law and phenomenology provide us with many insights concerning human love, sexuality, marriage and ethics.³

In this book, premarital sex and love are also treated in the light of following Jesus. According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ calls or invites us to follow him, to become his disciples, to learn from him and grow in becoming the kind of persons God wants us to become. This basically means growing in a properly ordered love of God, oneself, other human beings, and the rest of creation. One of the main purposes of this book is to study the profound implications of the

3. For a few discussions of the natural moral law see, e.g., John Finnis, "The Natural Law, Objective Morality, and Vatican II," and William E. May, "The Natural Law and Objective Morality: A Thomistic Perspective," in *Principles of Catholic Moral Life*, ed. by William E. May (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981); and Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1993), nn. 46-53. Some Protestants including the Reformer John Calvin have also shown an appreciation of the natural moral law: see, e.g., James M. Gustafson, *Protestant and Roman Catholic Ethics: Prospects for Rapprochement* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978). Andrew C. Varga, in *The Main Issues in Bioethics (Revised)* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 153, points out that after World War II the Nurembourg court "accepted a natural-law mode of reasoning as a basis for judging" twenty-three German physicians who were accused of "war crimes and crimes against humanity." Benedict M. Ashley and Kevin D. O'Rourke, in *Ethics of Health Care: An Introductory Textbook* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994), Ch. 1, speak of common human needs and the United Nations' *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* (1948) as providing a basis for developing common values. With respect to phenomenological studies of human love, sexuality, marriage and ethics, see, e.g., Dietrich von Hildebrand's *Man and Woman* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966), *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 1984), and *Christian Ethics* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1953); and Karol Wojtyla's (now Pope John Paul II), *Love and Responsibility* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Girous, Inc., 1981), and *The Acting Person* (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979). For a good treatment of philosophical knowledge, including the role of both inductive and deductive approaches, and insight, see Dietrich von Hildebrand's *What is Philosophy* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1960).

Christian vocation with respect to premarital sex and love and related issues.

The Author's Perspective

As a former teenager and young unmarried person, I personally faced many of the questions and issues treated in this book. I now am married to a beautiful woman, Maggie. We are the parents of three special young people, Jesse, Christopher and Sara. By profession, I am a Catholic theologian who has been teaching since 1983 at St. Joseph's College, which is affiliated with the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Canada. My main area of teaching and research has been in the area of Christian ethics (Catholic moral theology), especially with respect to human sexuality, Christian marriage and family life, and bioethics.

This book is in part a development from Christian theology courses on human sexuality and marriage, of which I have taught many sections since September 1983. I have had discussions with hundreds of university students, in and out of class, concerning premarital sex, love and related issues. A number of my students have also written research papers on these topics. I am grateful for the many questions and insights of my students who have given much impetus to my own research and reflection in this area.

In this introduction, I think it is appropriate to say something too about my perspective as a believing Christian and Catholic theologian. "Theology", which comes from the Greek words *theos*, meaning "God", and *logos*, meaning "word, reason", basically means "science of God". A theologian, whether a believing Christian or having some other belief or world view, studies and reflects on human issues, "premarital sex and love" in the case of this book, in relation to God as he or she understands God.

Christians generally believe that Jesus Christ is the definitive revelation or self-communication of God to us (cf., e.g., Jn 1:1-18; Heb 1:1-2; and CCC, 51-73). A Christian in the New Testament

sense is a follower or disciple of Jesus (cf. Ac 11:26). The Gospel according to Matthew reports Jesus as saying, "...every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as old" (13:52 NJB). The scribe in New Testament times was the Jewish teacher, scholar, intellectual, transmitter of learning.⁴ Relating this text to myself, as a Christian theologian, I have attempted to draw on some of the most significant "old" and "new" sources, in reflecting on the topics of premarital sex and love. A Christian perspective that holds that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8 and 16 RSV), also sees love - God's love for us, and our love for God and each other - as vital to all human relationships, not excluding premarital ones.

A "Catholic" Christian theological perspective, whether Roman or Eastern, attempts to understand better and be faithful to God's revelation as transmitted to us by Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition (what is true and of lasting value within the various Christian traditions), and as authentically interpreted by the magisterium (teaching office of the pope and bishops in union with him) of the Catholic Church. A truly Catholic perspective is also ecumenical. It is my hope and prayer that this book will facilitate a better understanding of "premarital sex and love" and related issues in a mature "Catholic" way.

The word "catholic", coming from the Greek *kata* meaning "according to" and *holos* meaning "whole", also means holistic, universal, comprehensive. A Catholic perspective affirms the unity of all truth, whether revealed by God and accepted by us in faith or discovered by the human mind - compare the various human sciences and ways of knowing (see, e.g., CCC, 153-60). What God, who is "truth" in an absolute sense, reveals to us does not contradict human experience. It instead

4. Cf. John L. McKenzie, S.J., *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965).

helps us to understand our experience better, from an eternal perspective. Although a Catholic study of premarital sex and love may analyze various issues and problems related to these, if it is truly "catholic" it will not take a narrow or reductionist approach. Rather, it will attempt to offer an integral, synthetic, holistic perspective. Such a perspective fosters the growth in unity of the person within herself or himself and with others including God.

It is my hope that this book will provide a valuable resource for many people. Drawing from many sources which are referred to in the text and notes, and incorporating many insights and reflections of my own, I attempt to treat "Premarital Sex and Love" and related issues quite comprehensively. Although I am a Catholic theologian, I hope that not only Catholic and other theologians will find this book to be a valuable resource, but also many others who are involved with people in the premarital stage of their lives such as many teachers, counselors, pastors, priests, youth ministers, campus ministers, professors, health care professionals, social workers, parents, others involved in sex and chastity education, those providing marriage preparation, friends, etc. I also hope that many people who are in the premarital stage of their lives, such as many university and college students, will find this book to be a valuable resource and helpful guide. Because the issues treated here are of profound significance in the lives of numerous people (many of whom are not academics or Catholics or Christians), I have attempted to combine sound scholarship with a pastoral approach. Concerning the latter in particular, Chapter 1 treats "Making Good Choices" and Chapter 9 treats "Counseling, Pastoral Action, Sex Education and Spirituality".

The material in this book is arranged so that later material builds on what has been treated earlier. Making good decisions and forming one's conscience is treated first (Ch. 1), since the rest of the book provides much material relevant to this including many morally relevant facts, values and norms. Chapters 2-4 generally follow an historical order and provide a foundation for the

following discussions of specific contemporary questions and issues regarding or related to premarital sex and love. I realize that some readers may wish to jump ahead to later chapters or sections which focus more specifically on certain contemporary issues that are of particular interest to them such as various arguments raised for and against engaging in premarital sexual intercourse, the proper expression of affection in premarital relationships, dating, living together before marriage, choosing a marriage partner, marriage preparation and sex education. Because of this I have provided a number of cross-references, especially to material presented earlier which provides a foundation for a deeper understanding of specific contemporary issues, as well as an index.