

# May the Marriage Bed be Immaculate

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*Note to readers: Be advised that this article contains an explicit discussion of aberrant sexual acts.*

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[Hebrews]

{13:4} Honorabile connubium in omnibus, et thorus immaculatus. Fornicatores enim, et adulteros iudicabit Deus.

{13:4} May marriage be honorable in every way, and may the marriage bed be immaculate. For God will judge fornicators and adulterers.

1. Serious Errors in Marital Sexual Ethics

A number Catholic priests and theologians have been teaching certain ideas on sexual ethics within marriage which are irreconcilable with Catholic moral doctrine. This set of errors can be divided into four erroneous concepts:

A. They teach that unnatural sexual acts are moral when used as ‘foreplay’ or ‘stimulation’ prior to a completed act of natural marital relations. The very same sexual acts which they admit are intrinsically evil are then said to be moral, if done partially, and if followed by natural marital relations.

B. They define the sexual act in terms of its completion, so that any means to that end becomes justified. As long as the completion of the act occurs in natural marital relations, they claim that even an unnatural sexual act is justified by that end. The unnatural means is then renamed as 'foreplay' or 'stimulation,' so that the end not only justifies the means, but also seemingly redefines it.

C. They teach that a set of sexual acts, partial or completed, natural or unnatural, can be considered together, as if these constituted one act, thus nullifying the doctrine that "each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life." (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 11).

D. They claim that the woman's experience of sexual climax is not related to procreation, and so it can be sought and achieved by means other than natural marital relations, as long as it is 'within the context of a completed act of intercourse.'

This set of errors is being taught very widely, and seems to be the majority opinion among moral theologians. Even some priests are teaching that married persons can commit unnatural sexual acts without sin. Among those theologians, priests, and lay teachers who assert such errors, the many present these ideas as if they were patently true assertions, or as if they were the teaching of the Church, with no accompanying theological argument, and with no indication that any other conclusion is possible. These errors represent a danger to the sanctity of the Sacrament of Marriage because they encourage married persons to commit objective mortal sexual sins alongside the act of natural marital relations, which is an essential part of the Sacrament.

## 2. Analysis of These Errors

A. They teach that unnatural sexual acts are moral when used as 'foreplay' or 'stimulation' prior to a completed act of natural marital relations. The very same sexual acts which they admit are intrinsically evil are then said to be moral, if done partially, and if followed by natural marital relations.

This claim is based on the idea that an intrinsically evil sexual act is defined by its completion. So an intrinsically evil sexual act, when incomplete (lacking in ejaculation and/or orgasm), is treated as if it were a substantially different kind of act, one which is no longer intrinsically evil. In this way, an unnatural sexual act, which most moral theologians will admit is intrinsically evil, is redefined as 'foreplay' or 'stimulation' when incomplete, and is then claimed to be moral. As will be shown below, intrinsically evil acts are still intrinsically evil when incomplete, and an incomplete sexual act is still a sexual act. Thus, unnatural sexual acts remain unnatural sexual acts, even when incomplete, and so these acts cannot be justified by a subsequent of natural marital relations.

The use of the term 'foreplay' or 'stimulation' to describe unnatural sexual acts has the effect of defining an act by its intention or purpose, so that an intrinsically evil act done with a different intention or purpose is claimed to be a substantially different kind of act, one which is supposedly

no longer intrinsically evil. But since intrinsically evil sexual acts, like all intrinsically evil acts, are immoral in and of themselves, regardless of intention, then such acts are not defined by their intention. Thus, the intended use of unnatural sexual acts as ‘foreplay’ or ‘stimulation’ prior to natural marital relations cannot redefine these acts. The acts remain unnatural sexual acts and so they remain intrinsically evil. If an intrinsically evil act were defined by its intention, then the teaching of the Church that intrinsically evil acts are always immoral, regardless of intention, would be false or meaningless, which is impossible.

B. They define the sexual act in terms of its completion, so that any means to that end becomes justified. As long as the completion of the act occurs in natural marital relations, they claim that even an unnatural sexual act is justified by that end. The unnatural means is then renamed as ‘foreplay’ or ‘stimulation,’ so that the end not only justifies the means, but also seemingly redefines it.

It is commonly said, by persons who accept this set of errors, that as long as a set of sexual acts ends with the male ejaculating into the female’s vagina, then everything else is moral. Thus the marital act is reduced to the mere release of semen into the correct location. Such a reduction allows them to claim that any set of sexual acts is justified as long as the end result is the same. All other sexual acts, as long as they lack ejaculation, are not called sexual acts at all, and are treated as if the moral law does not apply to such acts. This is a sophisticated version of the false argument that the end justifies the means. The end is seen as defining the morality of the means, and the means is seen as having no morality in and of itself. Thus, any means is in effect justified by the end. This approach nullifies the teaching of the Church that the end does not justify the means, and that both the means and the end must be moral.

Furthermore, such an approach reduces the marital act to one aspect of the act, and thereby deprives the marital act of its full unitive and procreative meanings. In truth, the procreative meaning is more than merely ejaculation with the possibility of conception. Even an immoral means of artificial conception, such as in vitro fertilization, is a type of procreation. In truth, the unitive meaning is more than a mere union of body parts. Even unnatural sexual acts have some type of physical union. The true unitive and procreative meanings are found only in the human act of natural sexual intercourse, within marriage, open to life. For only then are the husband and wife united, as two whole human persons, body and soul, in one holy Sacrament before God. The unitive and procreative meanings must be present in the union of husband and wife throughout the entire marital act, not merely at the time of ejaculation. The entirety of the marital act must be of the type inherently capable of procreation. The entirety of the marital act is intended by God to be open to life throughout the act. Therefore, unnatural sexual acts, since these are lacking in the true unitive and procreative meanings, cannot be considered to be a part of the marital act, even if these unnatural sexual acts are incomplete, even if these unnatural sexual acts occur before, during, or after an act of natural marital relations.

C. They teach that a set of sexual acts, partial or completed, natural or unnatural, can be considered together, as if these constituted one act, thus nullifying the doctrine that “each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.” (Humanae Vitae, n. 11).

This error is very common. Yet *Humanae Vitae* clearly and definitively taught that each sexual act must be evaluated as to its morality on its own. In fact, in every area of human endeavor, the moral teaching of the Church requires that each and every act be evaluated as to its morality on its own. It is manifest to reason alone that an evil act does not become moral by being combined in some way with a moral act, nor by being proximate in place or time to a moral act. As will be shown below, the idea that the morality of a set of sexual acts within marriage can be considered together was considered by Pope Paul VI and was specifically rejected, in the text of *Humanae Vitae*.

This error is partly based on the idea that an unnatural sexual act which lacks completion (i.e. lacks ejaculation and/or orgasm) is not a sexual act at all, and also on the idea that such partial acts can be combined with the marital act, so that the set of acts is treated as one act. They claim that the act of ejaculation during natural marital relations is the completion of an act begun as an unnatural sexual act. Thus the unnatural sexual act becomes, supposedly, an integral part of the marital act. Such an idea offends gravely against the Sacrament of holy Matrimony, by treating intrinsically evil sexual acts as if these could ever become part of the marital act, which itself is an essential part of the Sacrament of Marriage.

D. They claim that the woman's experience of sexual climax is not related to procreation, and so it can be sought and achieved by means other than natural marital relations, as long as it is 'within the context of a completed act of intercourse.'

Most moral theologians correctly assert that unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil outside of marriage. They will even admit that completed unnatural sexual acts, by themselves, are intrinsically evil within marriage. But then they make the indefensible claim that these same intrinsically evil acts are moral when combined in some manner with an act of natural marital relations.

On the one hand, they say that unnatural sexual acts are justified when they are incomplete and followed by natural marital relations. But then they go on to make the contradictory claim that after natural marital relations the husband can perform an unnatural sexual act on his wife, or she can perform such an act on herself, even though this is done to completion and is not followed by natural marital relations. And they offer no explanation whatsoever for this contradiction. Most of these theologians who encourage married couples to commit such sins do not even attempt to offer any kind of theological argument. They merely make a set of baseless assertions, including the false claim that intrinsically evil sexual acts are without sin within marriage, given certain circumstances or intentions.

To the contrary, the unitive meaning cannot morally be separated from the procreative meaning. The woman's experience of sexual climax is a natural part of the marital act, and the whole of the marital act is unitive and procreative. Even though it is physically possible to separate the woman's completion of the act from procreation, it is not moral to do so, just as it is not moral to separate the unitive from the procreative in other ways. Again, this erroneous idea is based on a reduction of the marital act to mere ejaculation in the correct location, as if all other sexual acts were above the moral law, or as if any sexual act at all becomes moral when combined with this reduction of the

marital act. Therefore, the woman's experience of sexual climax cannot be sought and achieved separately from natural marital relations open to life.

It is interesting to note that obstetricians often state that the female orgasm is helpful to conception, such that the marital act with her orgasm is more likely to result in conception than without it. So the wife's sexual climax is not completely unrelated to procreation. But even if this were not so, as a biological fact, morally, the wife's experience of sexual climax is intended by God to be an integral part of the marital act, and so it cannot be sought and achieved outside of natural marital relations open to life.

Furthermore, in any area of human activity, proximity in time does not make two distinct acts into one act under the moral law. Two acts are still morally distinct, even if they occur in close proximity of time, one after the other, or even at the same time. If someone commits an act of blasphemy while attending holy Mass, the two acts are morally separate, even though they might occur at the same time. If someone robs a bank and then donates the money to charity, the fact that the two acts occur one after the other, involving the same persons and the same money, does not make the two acts into one act under the moral law. The act of bank robbery is still immoral, regardless of the morality or immorality of any related acts before, during, or after the robbery.

The claim that unnatural sexual acts are justified by a prior, or concomitant, or subsequent act of natural marital relations has the effect of defining an act by the circumstances surrounding the act, so that an intrinsically evil act with different circumstances is treated as if it were a substantially different kind of act, one which is supposedly no longer intrinsically evil. This contradicts the teaching of the Church that intrinsically evil acts are always immoral, regardless of circumstance or intention. It also contradicts the teaching of the Church that each and every individual sexual act within marriage must have both the unitive and procreative meanings.

### 3. Natural versus Unnatural

A sexual act is natural if it is the type of intercourse between a man and a woman that is inherently capable of procreation. If the man or woman is infertile, the act is still natural if that act would be capable of procreation in fertile individuals. If the man or woman use artificial contraception (which is immoral), the sexual act itself is still of the natural type (though substantially impaired) if that act, absent the contraception, would be capable of procreation in fertile individuals. Natural sexual intercourse is the type of sexual act which has served to propagate the human race since after its inception, and which has served as an essential part of the Sacrament of Marriage since its inception.

Any sexual act is unnatural if it is a type of sexual act not inherently capable of procreation. Thus masturbation, oral sex, anal sex, manual sex, sexual acts involving devices, and sexual acts involving persons of the same gender (homosexual acts) are all unnatural sexual acts. Any sexual act other than one man and one woman engaging in the type of intercourse inherently capable of procreation is an unnatural sexual act. Sexual acts involving three or more persons are unnatural sexual acts, even if there is at least one man and at least one woman, because only one man and

one woman is necessary (and ordained by God) for procreation, and because having more than two persons harms the unitive meaning. If unnatural sexual acts are combined in some way with the natural sexual act, this combination is immoral, but each act remains either natural or unnatural.

It is not sufficient to define the natural sexual act as mere genital-to-genital contact, because stimulation of the external female genitalia with the male genitalia is a sexual act, but one which is not inherently capable of procreation. Natural marital relations is not merely the correct body parts touching one another; rather, it is an act which is good and moral because it has both the procreative and the unitive meanings

#### 4. The Sacrament of Marriage

Jesus Christ himself has elevated marriage from a natural good to a supernatural source of grace in the Sacrament of holy Matrimony. Unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil and therefore they are intrinsically contrary to the holy Sacrament itself. When spouses who are united in the Sacrament of Marriage commit unnatural sexual acts within that marriage, their sin is more serious than if they had merely a natural marriage, and more serious than if they were not married, because it is a sin against the Sacrament instituted by Christ.

Natural marital relations is an essential part of the Sacrament of holy Matrimony. In fact, a man and a woman are not validly married in this Sacrament unless they consummate the marriage by natural marital relations. Unnatural sexual acts do not constitute a valid consummation, according to Canon Law.

Can. 1061 §1. A valid marriage between the baptized is called *ratum tantum* if it has not been consummated; it is called *ratum et consummatum* if the spouses have performed between themselves in a human fashion a conjugal act which is suitable in itself for the procreation of offspring, to which marriage is ordered by its nature and by which the spouses become one flesh.

The phrase ‘*ratum tantum*’ means ‘ratified to an extent’ and the phrase ‘*ratum et consummatum*’ means ‘ratified and consummated.’ The former term means that the marriage is not yet valid, because only one condition, that of consent, has been satisfied. The second condition, that of consummation, is also necessary to the Sacrament. Without both, the Sacramental bond of holy Matrimony does not exist.

Notice that Canon Law specifically requires that the sexual act of consummation be natural marital relations, and not any other type of sexual act. It must be a conjugal act between the spouses which is “suitable in itself” for procreation. This is merely a different wording for the very same idea which is given above as the definition of natural sexual relations, i.e.: “the type of intercourse between a man and a woman that is inherently capable of procreation.” Canon Law verifies that this is the correct understanding of natural marital relations, and that natural marital relations is essential to the Sacrament of holy Matrimony.

Furthermore, this Canon states the two meanings of the marital act, procreative and unitive, when it says: “a conjugal act which is suitable in itself for the procreation of offspring, to which marriage is ordered by its nature and by which the spouses become one flesh.” When a sexual act is of the type which is inherently capable of the procreation of offspring, the procreative meaning is present (even if the couple are not fertile). And it is this same act and no other which also constitutes the unitive meaning, “by which the spouses become one flesh.”

Now the conjugal act, which is nothing other than natural marital relations, inherently contains both a unitive and a procreative meaning, and these two meanings are inextricably joined. A couple cannot morally choose the unitive without the procreative, as occurs in the use of artificial contraception. Nor can a couple morally choose the procreative without the unitive, as occurs in the use of artificial conception (such as in vitro fertilization).

On mere physical terms, it may seem that other types of sexual union, which are not capable of procreation, are in some sense unitive; there is a physical uniting of body parts. But this mere physical union does not provide the true unitive meaning found in the conjugal act. For it is only in “a conjugal act which is suitable in itself for the procreation of offspring” that “the spouses become one flesh.” The procreative meaning is part of what makes the unitive meaning unitive; in other words, openness to life is essential to the unitive meaning. Unnatural sexual acts are not unitive in moral terms, only in merely physical terms.

“This particular doctrine, often expounded by the magisterium of the Church, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act. The reason is that the fundamental nature of the marriage act, while uniting husband and wife in the closest intimacy, also renders them capable of generating new life—and this as a result of laws written into the actual nature of man and of woman.” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 12).

The unitive and procreative meanings are inextricably joined by God. To separate or negate them by artificial contraception, or by artificial means of conception, or by engaging in sexual acts that are unnatural, is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. Unnatural sexual acts are immoral because there is neither a unitive nor a procreative meaning in these acts. Unnatural sexual acts offend against both meanings, and so unnatural sexual acts are more gravely immoral than artificial contraception used in natural marital relations. The reason that unnatural sexual acts are immoral is that they lack the unitive and procreative meanings inherently found in natural marital relations. Since the absence of the unitive and procreative meanings is what makes sexual acts unnatural, such acts are intrinsically evil and can never be moral.

## 5. Completed versus Partial Sexual Acts

A sexual act is completed if it includes ejaculation or orgasm. A sexual act is partial if it is the type of act which ordinarily results in, or can reasonably be foreseen to result in, ejaculation or orgasm,

but is lacking in the same. An incomplete sexual act does not thereby cease to be a sexual act. This is true of all kinds of sexual acts, whether licit or illicit.

First example: Rape is a sexual act done without consent. If an act done without consent is rape, then the same act done with consent is still a sexual act. An act of rape which lacks completion is still a rape. Therefore, it is absurd to claim that a sexual act done only partially, i.e. not brought to completion, is not a sexual act. To assert such a position, one would also have to claim that a rape not brought to completion is not a sexual act, but is merely foreplay or stimulation, and is therefore not a rape: such claims are patently false. It is contrary to reason to claim that unnatural sexual acts, when these are not brought to completion, are therefore not sexual acts. It is false and absurd to claim that a sexual act which merely lacks ejaculation is not a sexual act.

Second example: When a husband and wife have natural marital relations, sometime the wife does not experience a completion of the act (i.e. orgasm). Yet conception can still occur. It would be contrary to reason to claim that the spouses have not had sexual relations in this case. On the one hand, the wife may become pregnant, proving that sexual relations did occur, despite the lack of completion. On the other hand, if by chance she does not become pregnant, it would be absurd to claim that whether or not sexual relations occurred depends on a subsequent event, that of conception.

Third example: It may be the case that the husband experiences ejaculation during natural marital relations without orgasm. Again, this act may still result in conception. So it would again be absurd to claim that no sexual act has occurred merely because orgasm is lacking.

Fourth example: A woman can conceive from the pre-ejaculate of the man, so that pregnancy can occur even if the man does not ejaculate, and even if neither the man nor the woman experiences sexual climax. In such a case, if the woman becomes pregnant, it would be absurd to claim that no sexual act occurred. Or if she happens not to become pregnant, it is contrary to reason to claim that whether or not sexual relations occurred depends on a subsequent event, that of conception.

From the above four examples, it is clear that a sexual act which lacks ejaculation, or which lacks orgasm in the woman or in the man, is still a sexual act. Although such acts lack completion, they remain sexual acts, and therefore the morality of each of these sexual acts must be evaluated as with any sexual act. Unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil because they lack both the unitive and procreative meanings. An incomplete act of the same type still lacks both meanings, and so it is still intrinsically evil.

Furthermore, in any area of morality, an immoral act cannot become moral by being incomplete. If the completed act lacks moral goodness, reducing the act to a lesser version or a subset of the completed act does not add moral goodness. Taking away the completion of the act, or reducing the act in some way may make it less sinful, but the act does not become good. This is particularly undeniable concerning any intrinsically evil act. If an act is intrinsically evil because of its inherent moral disorder, a lack of goodness which ought to be present in the act, then reducing the act in some way may reduce its immorality, but it does not add the goodness which the act lacks. If a sexual act lacks both the true unitive and the true procreative meanings, which must be present for

any sexual act to be moral, reducing the act does not add the unitive or procreative meanings, so the act remains intrinsically evil.

A bank robbery, interrupted prior to completion, is still an intrinsically evil act. No judge would accept the claim that half a bank robbery is actually a service to the community, instead of being still a bank robbery and a serious crime. An act of adultery, interrupted in the midst of the act, is still an intrinsically evil act. No spouse would accept the claim that an incomplete act of adultery is actually a benefit to the marriage, instead of being still an act of adultery and a grave offense against the marriage. The lack of completion in the act does not change the act into a substantially different kind of act. Since the kind of the act remains the same, it remains intrinsically evil.

An unnatural sexual act that is intrinsically evil does not become a moral form of foreplay by being incomplete. Foreplay refers to non-sexually explicit acts, such as kissing, hugging, caresses, speaking to one another in an intimate manner, et cetera. But any acts which would constitute sexual acts if brought to completion, such as oral sex, anal sex, or manipulative sex, are not foreplay; these acts are explicit sexual acts, which lack the unitive and procreative meanings, and so these acts are intrinsically evil, even if not brought to completion. The reduction of the intrinsically evil sexual act, so that lacks completion, does not add any moral goodness to the act, therefore, the act remains evil and cannot be considered to be a moral form of foreplay.

## 6. Intrinsically Evil Acts

Certain kinds of acts are intrinsically evil. Such acts are immoral regardless of circumstance or intention. Such acts cannot become moral by any means whatsoever because the acts are in and of themselves immoral. Intrinsically evil acts do not depend for their morality on intention or circumstance; they do not depend upon the internal state of the individual, nor upon the result of the act, nor upon events which precede, coincide with, or follow the act. Nothing whatsoever can make an act that is intrinsically evil into a good or a morally-acceptable act. That which is in itself evil is never good.

“Reason attests that there are objects of the human act which are by their nature ‘incapable of being ordered’ to God, because they radically contradict the good of the person made in his image. These are the acts which, in the Church’s moral tradition, have been termed ‘intrinsically evil’ (*intrinsic malum*): they are such always and per se, in other words, on account of their very object, and quite apart from the ulterior intentions of the one acting and the circumstances. Consequently, without in the least denying the influence on morality exercised by circumstances and especially by intentions, the Church teaches that ‘there exist acts which per se and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously wrong by reason of their object’.” (Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 80; inner quote is from *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, December 2, 1984, 17: AAS 77 (1985), 221)

The object of an act does not refer to the consequences or end result of the act, nor to the intended purpose of the act, but rather to the meaning inherent in the act itself. Some acts have an inherently evil meaning; such acts are never good and are always immoral.

If a surgeon operates to remove a tumor, and if the patient happens to die on the operating table, the surgeon's act (operating to remove a tumor) resulted in the death of the patient; but this death is not the moral object of the act. When a surgeon removes a harmful tumor, the meaning inherent in the act itself is the treatment of a disease; it is an inherently good act in that it implements a positive precept (you shall love your neighbor).

If a surgeon operates to directly kill a prenatal (a direct abortion) in order to save the life of the mother, the meaning inherent to the act is the direct killing of an innocent human being. This violates a negative precept (you shall not murder). The meaning inherent to the act of direct abortion is not the saving of the life of the mother; that is the result of the act, not the meaning inherent to the act itself. The moral object or inherent meaning of the act of direct abortion is to kill an innocent human being. Such an act is intrinsically evil and can never be moral, regardless of circumstance or intention. Even in the circumstance where a life is saved by means of the intrinsically evil act, the meaning inherent to the act of direct abortion remains evil and so the act is not justified. The end of saving a life does not justify the means of direct abortion.

Sexual acts of a kind which inherently lack either or both the unitive and procreative meanings are intrinsically evil because of the negation of a good which morally must be present. God has designed the human race so that the unitive and procreative meanings are inextricably joined and so that both meanings must be present for a sexual act to be moral. Only natural marital relations open to life has the fullness of both the unitive and procreative meanings. A natural sexual act open to life, but outside of marriage, lacks the fullness of the unitive meaning, since the man and woman are not united in the bond of marriage, and it lacks the fullness of the procreative meaning, since the procreative good of marriage is not merely to conceive children, but to raise them within the family.

“With regard to intrinsically evil acts, and in reference to contraceptive practices whereby the conjugal act is intentionally rendered infertile, Pope Paul VI teaches: ‘Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good, it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it (cf. Rom 3:8) — in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or of society in general.’” (Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 80; inner quote is from *Humanae Vitae*, n. 14).

An intrinsically evil act is any act “which of its very nature contradicts the moral order.” Notice that this concept of intrinsically evil acts is explicitly applied to marital relations by the Pope. Thus no one can claim that all sexual acts within marriage are moral, or that sexual acts within marriage are never intrinsically evil. The Pope gives the example of the intrinsically evil act of sexual relations within marriage using contraception. Such an act is intrinsically evil because it offends

against the procreative meaning by means of contraception. And since the unitive and procreative meanings are inseparably joined within natural marital relations by God, contraception also harms (but does not completely negate) the unitive meaning.

“This particular doctrine, often expounded by the magisterium of the Church, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act. The reason is that the fundamental nature of the marriage act, while uniting husband and wife in the closest intimacy, also renders them capable of generating new life—and this as a result of laws written into the actual nature of man and of woman.” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 12).

Now if the negation of the procreative meaning (by contraception) in natural marital relations is intrinsically evil, then certainly any sexual act which negates both the unitive and procreative meanings must also be intrinsically evil. Two wrongs do not make a right. Recall the definition of unnatural sexual acts, stated above as “any type of sexual act not inherently capable of procreation.” Recall that the validity of the Sacrament of Marriage requires not only consent, but also consummation, specifically in the form of “a conjugal act which is suitable in itself for the procreation of offspring.” The unavoidable conclusion, for any faithful and reasonable Catholic Christian, is that all unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil, even within marriage.

Unnatural sexual acts lack the true unitive meaning and the true procreative meaning, therefore they are intrinsically evil, even within marriage. Unnatural sexual acts by their very nature contradict the moral order and therefore must be judged unworthy of man, even if the intention is good.

“If acts are intrinsically evil, a good intention or particular circumstances can diminish their evil, but they cannot remove it. They remain ‘irremediably’ evil acts; per se and in themselves they are not capable of being ordered to God and to the good of the person.” (*Veritatis Splendor*, n. 81).

Any sexual act which offers neither the unitive nor the procreative meaning is intrinsically evil. Sexual acts are intended by God to have both the unitive and procreative meanings. Any sexual act which lacks either or both meanings must be intrinsically evil. Such acts cannot be made good by intention or circumstance. Such acts are irreformably evil, in and of themselves; nothing can make such evil acts good. Reducing an act, so that it is incomplete, cannot reform an intrinsically evil act, so as to make it good or morally acceptable. Such acts are incapable, in and of themselves, of being ordered toward the will of God, or toward what is truly good for the human person. Such acts are also a grievous offense against the Sacrament of holy Matrimony.

“When it is a matter of the moral norms prohibiting intrinsic evil, there are no privileges or exceptions for anyone. It makes no difference whether one is the master of the world or the ‘poorest of the poor’ on the face of the earth. Before the demands of morality we are all absolutely equal.” (*Veritatis Splendor*, n. 96).

There are no exceptions to the moral prohibition against intrinsically evil acts. Such acts are prohibited “always and without exception.” (Veritatis Splendor, n. 115). So how is it that so many moral theologians have developed terminology and approaches to ethics whose end result is to justify acts that are intrinsically evil? And as if that sin were not enough for them, they even encourage married couples to commit these sins within the Sacrament of Marriage. Some of these theologians explicitly state their agreement with the teaching that certain acts are intrinsically evil and always immoral, but then they go on to present a series of assertions and explanations, the end result of which is to nullify, in certain practical cases, this same teaching. Their condemnation is just.

## 7. Morality of Individual Acts

An actual sin occurs when a person knowingly chooses to do something that is immoral; sin is the act of a person making use of intellect and will in order to do evil. An objective sin is an act which cannot knowingly be chosen without actual sin. When a person knowingly chooses to do something that is immoral, they are committing a sinful act.

In all areas of morality, each act must be evaluated on its own as to whether it is good or evil. It is manifest, by reason alone, that if a person knowingly chooses to do what is evil, such an act cannot become good, even if the act occurs before, during, or after another act that is good. Some examples follow, based on the fundamental ethical principle: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mt 22:39).

If a person bears false witness against his neighbor in a court of law, but in a previous court case, or in a subsequent court case, or even within the same court case in answer to other questions, he also tells several truths under oath, the act of bearing false witness against his neighbor is not thereby justified. No court of law would accept as reasonable the idea that an act of perjury is justified by previous or subsequent true statements under oath.

If a person murders his neighbor, but in a previous or subsequent situation, or even within the same situation, he also saves another neighbor’s life, the act of murder is still immoral. Even if he previously saved the same neighbor’s life, it is still immoral for him to murder that neighbor. It is absurd to claim that murder becomes justified, if it is followed by a good act, even the act of saving someone’s life. It does not matter how closely the two acts occur in time or place.

Neither is the sin of direct abortion justified by prior or subsequent live births. Even if a couple conceived more than one prenatal at the same time, so that the woman was pregnant with two or more unborn children, it would be immoral to directly abort any of those prenatal children for any reason whatsoever. Even the intended purpose of saving the life of more than one prenatal does not justify the abortion of even one prenatal human life.

If a person commits bank robbery, the act is not justified by a subsequent act of donating the money to charity. One cannot consider the act of bank robbery and the act of donating to charity as

if these were one act, or as if the donation to charity in some way justified or nullified the sin of bank robbery.

If a person deliberately tells a lie, the lie is not justified by other true assertions, regardless of when these occurred. If a person commits blasphemy against God, this sin is not justified by prior or subsequent sincere prayers. If a person is cruel to his neighbor, the cruelty is not justified by a prior or subsequent act of kindness.

Very many other examples could be given, but the result is always the same. Each act must be evaluated as to its morality separately from other acts, even if two or more acts are proximate in time or place, or occur at the same time or in the same place, or involve the same persons and situation. To assert otherwise is to assert that evil is justified by good:

[Romans]

{3:8} And should we not do evil, so that good may result? For so we have been slandered, and so some have claimed we said; their condemnation is just.

## 8. Morality of Individual Sexual Acts

It is contrary to the teaching of the Church, and contrary to reason, to claim that an intrinsically evil act is justified by the commission of a good act before, during, or after the intrinsically morally disordered act. This would be a false and absurd theological position to take, regardless of the terminology or approach used to support such an assertion. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is not expressing anything new in moral theology when it condemns the idea that good intentions, or particulars of circumstance, or other acts, can make an evil act into a good act.

“A good intention (for example, that of helping one’s neighbor) does not make behavior that is intrinsically disordered, such as lying and calumny, good or just. The end does not justify the means. Thus the condemnation of an innocent person cannot be justified as a legitimate means of saving the nation....

“The circumstances, including the consequences, are secondary elements of a moral act. They contribute to increasing or diminishing the moral goodness or evil of human acts (for example, the amount of a theft). They can also diminish or increase the agent’s responsibility (such as acting out of a fear of death). Circumstances of themselves cannot change the moral quality of acts themselves; they can make neither good nor right an action that is in itself evil....

“There are some concrete acts - such as fornication - that it is always wrong to choose, because choosing them entails a disorder of the will, that is, a moral evil.

“It is therefore an error to judge the morality of human acts by considering only the intention that inspires them or the circumstances (environment, social pressure, duress or emergency, etc.) which supply their context. There are acts which, in and of themselves, independently of circumstances and intentions, are always gravely illicit by reason of their

object; such as blasphemy and perjury, murder and adultery. One may not do evil so that good may result from it.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1753-1756).

Notice that neither intention, nor circumstance (or context) can justify an act that is in itself evil. And consider the example given in the Catechism of the intrinsically evil act of theft versus the amount of the theft; the latter is a secondary element, i.e. a circumstance, even though it is closely related to the sinful act. Therefore, even a closely related circumstance cannot justify an intrinsically evil act.

Now the Catechism makes it clear that such intrinsically evil acts include sexual sins, such as fornication and adultery. If the act itself is evil, nothing can justify it. So no one can correctly say that an unnatural sexual act is justified by the intention (such as the intention to have natural marital relations subsequently, or the intention to reassure or comfort one’s spouse), or by the circumstances which supply their context (such as the context of a prior, or concomitant, or subsequent act of natural marital relations). The claim that anything, whether an intention, or a circumstance, or a context (i.e. a set of circumstances), can justify an intrinsically evil act is patently contrary to the clear, definitive, and constant teaching of the Church. No theological system, approach, distinction, terminology, or nuance can nullify the teaching that an intrinsically evil act is always immoral. Such theological assertions are sinful.

If a person commits adultery, the act is not justified by prior or subsequent acts of natural marital relations. No husband or wife would accept the claim that an act of adultery by their spouse is justified by the larger number of acts of natural marital relations. And if an act of adultery occurs in close proximity, in time or in place, to an act of natural marital relations, such proximity would neither justify nor diminish the sinfulness of the adultery. Likewise, unnatural sexual acts remain objective mortal sins, regardless of whether or not they occur in close proximity to an act of natural marital relations.

If a married couple has natural marital relations while using contraception, and at another time has natural marital relations open to life, the latter does not justify the former. A married couple cannot consider a set of sexual acts together, so that a sexual act not open to life would be justified by a sexual act open to life. Just as in any other area of morality, an immoral sexual act is not justified by a moral sexual act, even if the moral sexual act occurs before, during, or after the immoral sexual act. Since unnatural sexual acts are by definition neither procreative nor truly unitive, unnatural sexual acts are not justified by an act of natural marital relations open to life, regardless of when these acts occur relative to the act that is open to life.

## 9. Humanae Vitae versus the Principle of Totality

A commission was charged with the responsibility of making recommendations to the Pope on the subject of contraception. That commission recommended that a set of sexual acts within marriage be considered together, such that sexual acts not open to life (i.e. using contraception) would be justified by other sexual acts open to life. The claim was that the sexual act “attains its essential moral character from the ‘totality’ constituted of itself, the series of contracepted acts of which it

forms a part, and the non-contracepted sexual acts which there have been or may be in the course of a married lifetime.” (John Finnis, *Moral Absolutes*, p. 89). The commission even claimed that “intervention” (i.e. contraception) was “well explained within the limits of the classic doctrine.” (*Moral Absolutes*, p. 89, footnote 6).

In *Humanae Vitae*, the Pope discussed the majority opinion of the commission. He first summarized this idea:

“Moreover, if one were to apply here the so called principle of totality, could it not be accepted that the intention to have a less prolific but more rationally planned family might transform an action which renders natural processes infertile into a licit and provident control of birth? Could it not be admitted, in other words, that procreative finality applies to the totality of married life rather than to each single act?” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 3).

Then the Pope stated that the conclusions reached by the commission were based on approaches and criteria that are not in accord with the moral doctrine of the Church:

“However, the conclusions arrived at by the commission could not be considered by Us as definitive and absolutely certain, dispensing Us from the duty of examining personally this serious question. This was all the more necessary because, within the commission itself, there was not complete agreement concerning the moral norms to be proposed, and especially because certain approaches and criteria for a solution to this question had emerged which were at variance with the moral doctrine on marriage constantly taught by the magisterium of the Church.” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 6)

Finally, the Pope definitively rejected the approach of considering a set of sexual acts to be one act or one context in evaluating their morality. He unequivocally stated that “each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 11). He also specifically refuted the idea that a set of sexual acts could be considered together, so that one or more acts of natural marital relations open to life would justify one or more sexual acts not open to life:

“Neither is it valid to argue, as a justification for sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive, that a lesser evil is to be preferred to a greater one, or that such intercourse would merge with procreative acts of past and future to form a single entity, and so be qualified by exactly the same moral goodness as these. Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good, it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it—in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or of society in general. Consequently, it is a serious error to think that a whole married life of otherwise normal relations can justify sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive and so intrinsically wrong.” (Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 14).

Notice that natural marital relations open to life is referred to by the Pope as ‘normal relations.’ He also calls sexual acts which lack the procreative meaning, such as contracepted acts, by the term ‘intrinsically wrong,’ which is equivalent to the terms intrinsically evil, intrinsically immoral, and intrinsically disordered. Unnatural sexual acts lack both the true unitive and the procreative meaning, therefore such acts are intrinsically evil.

A married couple cannot consider a set of sexual acts as if they form a single entity, so that acts which lack the unitive and procreative meanings would be justified by an act of natural marital relations which retains both meanings. Furthermore, unnatural sexual acts are more immoral than natural marital relations with contraception, because the former lacks both the procreative and the unitive meanings. In natural marital relations with contraception (which is immoral), the unitive meaning is harmed by contraception, but it is not entirely absent. Since unnatural sexual acts have neither the procreative nor the unitive meaning, unnatural sexual acts are a greater evil.

Now the commission’s idea of grouping a set of sexual acts together, such that only some of the acts need retain both the unitive and procreative meanings, was explicitly rejected by the Pope in *Humanae Vitae*. Yet the commission’s idea is in essence the same as a currently popular idea, widely accepted and promoted by many moral theologians: that a set of partial and complete sexual acts can be considered together, such that only one sexual act (that of natural marital relations) need retain both the unitive and procreative meanings in order to justify the entire set of sexual acts. It does not matter if the current idea uses the term ‘principle of totality,’ or some other terminology, or some other rhetorical phrasing; the idea is in essence the same as the commission’s idea, which was explicitly rejected by the Pope in *Humanae Vitae*. There are no new heresies, only old heresies in new disguises.

Therefore, a set of sexual acts, some of which are intrinsically evil, cannot be justified by the inclusion of at least one morally good sexual act (i.e. natural marital relations open to life). Neither can a set of sexual acts be considered together, such that the acts are treated as one act or one context. Nothing whatsoever can make a partial or completed unnatural sexual act good or moral; unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil and so such acts cannot become good by any means, intention, circumstance, context, excuse, rhetorical redefinition, or theological system or approach at all.

If anyone attempts to justify unnatural sexual acts within marriage as moral, no matter what the explanation, he departs from the true moral doctrine of the Church, and he sins against the holy Sacrament of Marriage and against Christ, who founded the Church and all the Sacraments.

There are two meanings to the marital act: unitive and procreative. Therefore, these two meanings can occur in four combinations:

1. unitive and procreative meanings together, as occurs only in natural marital relations open to life
2. procreation without union, as occurs in artificial conception (e.g. in vitro fertilization)
3. union without procreation, as occurs in natural marital relations with artificial contraception

#### 4. neither the true unitive nor the procreative meanings, as occurs in unnatural sexual acts

Only the first choice is moral: natural marital relations open to life. The other acts each lack the unitive meaning or the procreative meaning, or both, and so such acts are intrinsically evil and always objectively gravely immoral. It is not moral to combine acts lacking in either or both meanings, with an act that has the fullness of both meanings, nor does such a combination in any way justify these acts which lack either or both meanings.

#### 10. Refutation of Examples of These Errors

There are numerous moral theologians who teach this same set of errors. In most cases, they are merely repeating what they learned from other theologians; it is not their own original work. This set of errors has gradually arisen over the course of many years.

##### a. Christopher West

“...if the wife, despite their sincere efforts, was unable to climax during penetration, it may well be the loving thing for the husband to stimulate her to climax thereafter (if she so desired). In this case, such stimulation is not inherently masturbatory since it is within the context of a completed act of intercourse.” (Christopher West, *Good News About Sex and Marriage*, p. 91).

There are several errors in the above quote. First, an appeal to intention is made, as if good intentions could justify an act that is intrinsically evil. The claim is made that ‘sincere efforts,’ and a ‘loving’ intention, and her own desires contribute to the justification of an unnatural sexual act. But this claim, that good intention makes the act moral, is contradicted by the definitive teaching of the Church:

“If acts are intrinsically evil, a good intention or particular circumstances can diminish their evil, but they cannot remove it. They remain ‘irremediably’ evil acts; per se and in themselves they are not capable of being ordered to God and to the good of the person.” (Veritatis Splendor, n. 81).

Next, West rhetorically redefines the unnatural sexual act of a husband masturbating his wife as being merely stimulation to climax. But manual stimulation to climax is the definition of masturbation, an act that is intrinsically evil and always immoral, regardless of circumstance, or context, or intention. Intrinsically evil acts are evil in and of themselves, regardless of anything and everything else; nothing at all can make an inherently immoral act moral. The only moral choice is to refrain from doing the intrinsically evil act.

He then goes on to claim that such an act is not “inherently masturbatory since it is within the context of a completed act of intercourse.” Elsewhere in his writings, West himself rejects the idea that a married couple can commit completed unnatural sexual acts on each other. But in this case,

the act itself has not changed. The entire unnatural sexual act is present, from stimulation to climax. So, in fact, the act is inherently masturbatory.

His main justification for the claim that the husband can commit such an act on his wife is that this act occurs “within the context” of an act of natural marital relations. Yet the Pope definitively rejected the idea that a number of sexual acts, some open to life and some not open to life, can be justified as a set: “each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 11). And the Catechism specifically states that circumstances or context cannot justify intrinsically evil acts:

“There are some concrete acts - such as fornication - that it is always wrong to choose, because choosing them entails a disorder of the will, that is, a moral evil.

“It is therefore an error to judge the morality of human acts by considering only the intention that inspires them or the circumstances (environment, social pressure, duress or emergency, etc.) which supply their context. There are acts which, in and of themselves, independently of circumstances and intentions, are always gravely illicit by reason of their object; such as blasphemy and perjury, murder and adultery. One may not do evil so that good may result from it.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1755-1756).

Therefore, the position taken by Christopher West on this point of marital sexual ethics is in clear and direct contradiction to definitive Church teaching. In the same section of his book, after approving of the unnatural sexual act of a husband masturbating his wife, West gives his approval to oral and anal sexual acts, before or after natural marital relations.

“...but it’s not inherently wrong if the wife climaxes as a result of oral stimulation, so long as it’s within the context of a completed act of intercourse.... Furthermore, while there’s nothing wrong *per se* with oral-genital contact as foreplay to intercourse, such expressions require the greatest degree of purity and reverence....” (West, *Good News About Sex and Marriage*, p. 93).

West goes on to say that anal-genital contact “as a form of foreplay” is to be avoided, but it is not “absolutely and in every case immoral.” (West, *Good News About Sex and Marriage*, p. 94). This rhetorical redefinition of unnatural sexual acts as ‘foreplay’ or ‘stimulation’ is like a criminal who changes his name and identity in order to escape from justice.

Again, West makes an appeal to intention as a partial justification for intrinsically evil sexual acts, as if the alleged “purity and reverence” of the spouses during such acts somehow justifies intrinsically evil acts. Here West ignores, and even openly contradicts, the teaching of the Church that intention cannot justify intrinsically evil acts. West states that one unnatural sexual act or another is not ‘inherently wrong’ or not ‘wrong *per se*’ or not ‘absolutely and in every case immoral’. Such phrasings are an oblique reference to a theological term he generally avoids: “intrinsically evil.” The use of such terminology might call to the reader’s mind the teachings of the Catechism, and *Humanae Vitae*, and *Veritatis Splendor*, which directly contradict what West asserts.

In addition to rhetorical arguments, West's main justification for the claim that unnatural sexual acts can morally be performed within marriage is two-fold. On the one hand, he states that an incomplete unnatural sexual act prior to natural marital relations is merely foreplay. This baseless claim is refuted by the understanding (explained above) that an incomplete sexual act is still a sexual act, and that an incomplete intrinsically evil act is still an intrinsically evil act, and that each sexual act must be evaluated as to its morality on its own. A partial sexual act, one that lacks both the unitive and procreative meanings, cannot be justified by combination with a completed act of natural marital relations open to life. No immoral act can be justified by combining it with a moral act.

On the other hand, West also states that a completed act of unnatural sexual relations is justified by the context of the act. So an intrinsically evil sexual act by itself is immoral, as West elsewhere admits, but if it occurs before or after an act of natural marital relations, it is said to be justified. Such a theological position contradicts the teaching of the Church that "each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life." (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 11). It also contradicts the teaching of the Catechism, which in this case is merely a statement of the constant teaching of the Church, that intrinsically evil acts are not justified by circumstance or intention. The Church teaches that sexual acts lacking in either or both the unitive and procreative meanings are intrinsically evil, and also that the context of an intrinsically evil act cannot justify that act. West's position is indefensible, as it is in essence a rejection of moral absolutes in the area of marital sexual ethics.

"An attitude of this sort corrupts the morality of society as a whole, since it encourages doubt about the objectivity of the moral law in general and a rejection of the absoluteness of moral prohibitions regarding specific human acts, and it ends up by confusing all judgments about values." (*Veritatis Splendor*, n. 104).

It should be noted that, on numerous other points of sexual ethics, West takes the correct position and defends Church teaching with some eloquence. His failure to take the correct position on this point is an indication of how much he is influenced by the writings of other moral theologians, and of the weakness of his understanding of the fundamentals of moral theology.

#### b. Fr. Vincent Serpa

On the *Catholic Answers* website, at [forums.catholic.com](http://forums.catholic.com), on a section of the site where Catholics write in to receive answers from either a priest or an apologist, Fr. Vincent Serpa, O.P. gives the following answer: "Anal intercourse is allowed as foreplay—but it does differ from other such forms because it is so unsanitary." In another answer, Fr. Serpa asserts that oral sex "would be allowed as foreplay only". Other apologists on the same website have answered similarly.

To the contrary, intrinsically evil acts are never moral. The intention to use such an act as foreplay does not justify the act. The circumstance in which an intrinsically evil unnatural sexual act occurs before, during, or after an act of natural marital relations does not justify the intrinsically evil act. Intrinsically evil acts are not justified by circumstance or intention. Intrinsically evil acts are never

justifiable. Renaming an unnatural sexual act as ‘foreplay’ does not justify the act; such acts remain substantially the same type of act, regardless of their intended purpose as foreplay, and regardless of whether or not they are completed. The claim that an intrinsically evil sexual act is permitted because it has a particular intended purpose (foreplay, i.e. to prepare for an act of natural marital relations) cannot justify the act. Intrinsically evil acts are always immoral, regardless of anything else, and each sexual act must have both the true unitive and the true procreative meanings in full.

c. Fr. Vincent Genovesi, S.J.

“According to the Church’s traditional teaching, it is neither unnatural, perverted, nor immoral for couples to seek sexual stimulation and arousal by means of oral (...) intercourse, but such activity should not be continued to the point of orgasm... On another matter of marital sexuality, some wives may need reassurance. Should it happen that she fails to achieve sexual fulfillment in the act of sexual intercourse, a woman is morally permitted, according to the Church’s teaching, to seek and achieve orgasm by other means.” (Fr. Vincent Genovesi, S.J., *In Pursuit of Love: Catholic Morality and Human Sexuality*, p. 242-43).

The claim that this error is “the Church’s traditional teaching” is unsupportable, especially given the quotes presented above from *Veritatis Splendor*, *Humanae Vitae*, and the Catechism. Notice that this priest-theologian makes a series of claims with no theological argument, nor any quotes from magisterial documents, to support the claims. He states that these ideas are “according to the Church’s teaching,” but actually these are merely the opinions of some moral theologians.

As with other theologians, Fr. Genovesi promotes the erroneous view that an unnatural sexual act which lacks orgasm is therefore not a sexual act at all. He speaks as if such incomplete unnatural sexual acts have no morality of their own, as if these acts were above or outside of the moral law. In the first case that he presents, the supposed justification for the act is that the unnatural sexual act is not continued to completion. But in the second case, he even justifies an unnatural sexual act with completion, on the grounds that “some wives need reassurance.” Such rhetorical arguments are common in theological tracts on this subject.

But the teaching of the Church is absolutely clear on this point. A husband cannot morally perform an unnatural sexual act on his wife, even in the circumstance of an immediately prior act of natural marital relations, in which the husband reached sexual climax and the wife did not. He cannot perform an unnatural sexual act on his wife, nor can she perform an unnatural sexual act on herself, even immediately after natural marital relations. The prior circumstance of an act of natural marital relations, in which he climaxes and she does not, is unable to justify the subsequent unnatural sexual act. No circumstance whatsoever can justify an intrinsically evil act. That which is inherently evil cannot become good by means of intention or circumstance.

Sexual acts are only moral if they contain both the unitive and procreative meanings; all other sexual acts are intrinsically evil. And intrinsically evil acts cannot be justified based on circumstance or context, such as the circumstance whereby an unnatural sexual act follows an act of natural marital relations, nor can intrinsically evil acts be justified by any intention, such as the

intention to reassure the wife. Thus, seeking and achieving orgasm by any means other than natural marital relations is intrinsically evil and always objectively gravely immoral.

d. Fr. Joe Jenkins

“Oral sex is frowned upon, however, if it is a component of foreplay that makes possible sexual intercourse, and the semen are not misdirected, moralists would make an allowance for it. Similarly, while masturbation is usually deemed sinful; even authorities from the old manual tradition contended that a man could sexually manipulate his wife immediately at the end of sexual intercourse so that she could achieve orgasm—completing an element of the initial act. Of course, in both these cases there still exists an openness to life and a possibility of conception.” (Fr. Joe Jenkins, Church of the Holy Spirit, Washington D.C., <http://fatherjoe.wordpress.com>)

There are twelve theological errors in the above three sentences. First, oral sex, as well as any type of sexual act not inherently capable of procreation and of true union, is intrinsically evil and always objectively gravely immoral. Calling an intrinsically evil act ‘frowned upon’ implies that it is not always immoral and not gravely immoral.

Second, unnatural sexual acts are not properly referred to as foreplay. Natural marital relations is a part of the Sacrament of holy Matrimony; it consummates the Sacrament in a way that no other act can do. Thus, it is not possible for licit foreplay prior to natural marital relations to include unnatural sexual acts. Such acts lack the unitive and procreative meanings and are therefore opposed to all that is good within marriage and the marital act. The marital act symbolizes, expresses, and summarizes the entire Marriage, which is blessed as a Sacrament of grace by God. Marriage is good because it is unitive and procreative and a source of grace. Unnatural sexual acts cannot be a licit means to the end of natural marital relations, because the former is intrinsically evil and the latter is part of a Sacrament. Unnatural sexual acts cannot be a source of grace.

Third, oral sex does not make natural marital relations possible. Fourth, in any area of morality, each act must be evaluated as to its morality on its own. No one can justify an act, which by itself is gravely immoral, by combining that act with other acts. The marital sexual ethics is not an exception to the moral law.

Fifth, natural marital relations is not properly understood as the mere proper direction of semen. Such a reduction of the marital act detracts from the true and full meaning of this unitive and procreative act. The unitive meaning is not merely a physical union of body parts, but a union of two whole persons within marriage; the procreative meaning is not merely the conception of new life, but the union of a man and woman as husband and wife, and as father and mother, for the sake of the procreation and nurturing of children, within the family. The whole of the marital act, not merely its conclusion, symbolizes and expresses this great union.

Sixth, no one can licitly make an allowance for an intrinsically evil act. Such acts are always immoral, regardless of circumstance or intention. Seventh, masturbation is intrinsically evil and

always objectively gravely immoral; its morality is not correctly described as ‘usually deemed sinful.’

Eighth, the term ‘authorities from the old manual tradition’ is essentially meaningless; it is the teaching of Tradition, Scripture, Magisterium that is the basis for the Catholic faith, not the opinions of theologians from a particular school of thought. Ninth, the act described as a husband sexually manipulating his wife is masturbation (manipulative sex), which is an intrinsically evil sexual act. This kind of sexual act offers neither the unitive nor the procreative meanings, and so it is intrinsically evil and always immoral.

Tenth, when an act of natural marital relations occurs prior to an unnatural sexual act, the latter cannot be justified by the former. For each and every marital act must be open to life. And the intrinsically evil act of unnatural sexual relations cannot be justified by any circumstance or intention, not even the circumstance of a prior act of natural marital relations. There is no area of morality in which an evil act becomes good by being preceded by a good act.

Eleventh, an act of manipulative sex after natural marital relations does not offer the completion of “an element of the initial act.” The so-called initial act is natural marital relations, which is an essential element of the Sacrament of Marriage; the Sacrament of Marriage is not consummated and does not exist without natural marital relations. Unnatural sexual acts cannot be considered to be an element of natural marital relations, because then unnatural sexual acts would be a part of the Sacrament of Marriage. Even the theologians who promote these errors will at least admit that unnatural sexual acts are, by themselves, intrinsically evil. So how can an act, which by itself is a grave offense against God, become a part of the holy Sacrament of Marriage merely by being done in closer proximity of time and place to an act of natural marital relations? It cannot. Unnatural sexual acts lack both the unitive and the procreative meanings, which are essential to make sexual relations a part of this Sacrament of grace, rather than an act that is offensive to God. Proximity of time and place between an intrinsically evil act and a moral act does not give the former the moral value of the latter.

Twelfth, it is not true that “in both these cases there still exists an openness to life and a possibility of conception.” The unnatural sexual acts are unnatural precisely because they are neither truly unitive nor procreative. And the fact that an act of natural marital relations open to life occurs before or after such acts does not justify them, nor does it make them open to life in and of themselves. For *Humanae Vitae* clearly teaches that “each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 11). And in all areas of morality, each act must be judged as to its morality on its own. Unnatural sexual acts cannot borrow openness to life from a prior or subsequent act of natural marital relations, nor can they borrow the true union that only occurs in natural marital relations open to life. The idea that, within a set of sexual acts, it is only the totality of the set of acts which must be open to life was an idea decisively rejected by *Humanae Vitae*. This more recent version of the principle of totality narrows the scope of the acts encompassed by totality, but the fundamental idea remains the same.

e. Rev. Nicholas Halligan, O.P.

“Merely to touch or to penetrate the rectum (mouth or other part) without danger of pollution, or to begin intercourse in such manner with the intention of consummating or completing it in the vagina, is probably not more than a slight sin; it is no sin at all if it is a necessary means in the individual case.... Although a woman is not obliged to do so, she may immediately after her husband’s ejaculation in the vagina or immediately after his withdrawal upon ejaculation obtain her own complete satisfaction through her own or her spouse’s efforts performed by means of touches or in some other manner.... there is no serious sin if a woman seeks her own complete satisfaction before the ejaculation of the husband but at least after the latter’s penetration of the vagina. There would be no sin at all if there were good reason for doing so.” (Rev. Nicholas Halligan, O.P., *The Ministry of the Celebration of the Sacraments*, Volume 3, Sacraments of Community and Renewal, p. 199).

Notice that this priest-theologian give no theological argument or explanation for his assertions. He merely states that one act or another is a ‘slight sin’ or not a sin at all.

When the Pope teaches under papal infallibility, declaring, pronouncing, and defining a dogma of the Catholic Faith which is required belief for the Universal Church, he does not have to give a theological explanation to accompany the infallible definition. But it is generally the case that the Pope does give such an explanation, going on at some length about support for the dogma in Tradition, and in Scripture, and in previous teachings of the Magisterium. But some theologians today have placed themselves, in effect, above the Pope, above Tradition, Scripture, and the Magisterium. They no longer feel the need to offer any kind of theological argument to support their assertions. When they are alone with God at the particular judgment, they will have no excuses.

Some of the faithful, impressed by either the eloquent expression of these assertions or by the scholarly credentials of certain theologians, merely accept whatever the particular theologian that they favor says. Worse yet, some of the faithful (or unfaithful, as the case may be) seek out whichever theologians are asserting the opinions that they prefer, and then they claim their own opinions are thereby justified. Some theologians have become like politicians, bending their stated opinions to fit whatever is the most popular point of view. These theologians and their listeners deserve each other. But when each one stands before God at the particular judgment, they will not be able to excuse their own sins by referring to the opinions of others. Each and every act of their life will be judged on its own merits.

Now consider Halligan’s assertion that an incomplete unnatural sexual act, done with the intention of subsequent natural marital relations, “is probably not more than a slight sin; it is no sin at all if it is a necessary means.” To the contrary, the *Humanae Vitae* teaches that sexual acts which lack the unitive or procreative meanings are “intrinsically wrong” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 14). The Catechism teaches that intrinsically evil acts are not justified by intention or circumstance. And the Church has always taught that sinful sexual acts are objective mortal sins, because the matter is grave. Therefore, any sexual act that lacks either or both the procreative and unitive meanings is an intrinsically evil act and an objective mortal sin, which cannot be justified by intention or circumstance. A sinful sexual act cannot be “a slight sin,” nor can it become no sin at all if it is “a necessary means.”

Halligan next asserts that, after natural marital relations, the wife may “obtain her own complete satisfaction through her own or her spouse’s efforts performed by means of touches or in some other manner.” This phrasing is a euphemistic description of unnatural sexual acts. Again, any sexual act which lacks either or both the unitive and procreative meanings is intrinsically evil. Intrinsically evil acts are not justified by circumstance or context, such as by a prior or subsequent act of natural marital relations. Even God cannot make an intrinsically evil act into a moral act. The only moral choice is not to do the intrinsically evil act. The idea is false and absurd, in any area of morality, that an act, which by itself is an intrinsically evil mortal sin, becomes good if it is preceded or followed by a good act.

Notice also that, like other moral theologians, Halligan first asserts that unnatural sexual acts are moral when partial and when prior to natural marital relations. But then he justifies unnatural sexual acts when completed and when subsequent to natural marital relations. So it is clear to reason alone that the justification is not really based on the act being incomplete. The claimed justification is merely that the unnatural sexual act occurred about the same time as an act of natural marital relations. Yet *Humanae Vitae* teaches that “each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 11). And this is true in all areas of morality. Each and every act of the will and intellect must be good on its own; no act that is evil on its own becomes good when preceded or followed by a good act. If any theologian tried to make such a claim in any area of morality outside of sexuality, he would be ridiculed. But secular society and human sinfulness are particularly solicitous to protect and defend sexual sins, and so in this area of morality, the rule of the moral law is ignored or distorted.

Next, Halligan asserts (again, without any theological argument) that the wife may seek “her own complete satisfaction” during natural marital relations. He is not referring to the wife reaching sexual climax as a result of natural marital relations, which would be moral. Rather, he is referring to the wife performing on herself (or the husband performing on his wife) an unnatural sexual act during natural marital relations. For example, if the husband or wife were to perform an act of manipulative sex during natural marital relations, this is the type of act that he is trying to justify. To the contrary, in all areas of morality, each knowingly chosen act must be moral; one act cannot borrow the morality of another act, even if two acts occur at the same time or one after the other.

Finally, Halligan asserts the following: “There would be no sin at all if there were good reason for doing so.” To the contrary, the Catechism teaches the following:

“ ‘An evil action cannot be justified by reference to a good intention’ (cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Dec. Praec.* 6). The end does not justify the means.” (CCC, n. 1759).

Halligan is not the only moral theologian who claims that intention can justify unnatural sexual acts with marriage. It is a common premise within this popular set of errors. To the contrary, the Church teaches that sexual acts which lack the unitive or procreative meanings are intrinsically evil. Such acts cannot be justified by their end or purpose or intention or circumstances or context.

Kippley's position on this issue is self-contradictory. In one book, he asserts the usual rhetoric on unnatural sexual acts within marriage:

“Foreplay fellatio/cunnilingus is not condemned as foreplay to completed genital-genital marital relations, if it is esthetically acceptable to both spouses.” (John F. Kippley, *Sex And The Marriage Covenant: A Basis for Morality*, p. 45.)

He gives no theological argument here, unless one considers the absurd phrase “if it is esthetically acceptable” to be an argument. In another place, Kippley does give a theological argument, condemning the common idea that a set of sexual acts can be grouped together, so that some acts, which would be immoral on their own, become justified by being part of a larger set.

“Despite centuries of teaching that sexual acts are individually important, the revisionists taught that individual acts were only partial acts. To put the best possible face on this argument, we have to imagine that its proponents had so disciplined their minds and were so pure that it did not occur to them that their argument could be used as a rationalization for adultery as well as contraception. After all, if individual sexual acts are only partial acts that take their morality from the big picture of the marriage as a whole, what is to prevent the traveling spouse from rationalizing that an act of adultery is just a partial act that takes its morality from the most-of-the-time fidelity in the marriage? ...

“One has to wonder how even revisionist theoreticians could come up with such a rationalization. It shows that intelligent and well-educated people, encouraged by their think-alike peers, can sometimes get so caught up in their own ivory tower theories that they can come out with things that ordinary faithful people have to call simply stupid. It illustrates once again that, where sexuality is concerned, self-interest can cloud one's reasoning, and the revisionist theologians had considerable self-interest at stake. They wanted to be accepted by the contraceptionists both inside and outside the Church, and indeed they were—both before *Humanae Vitae* and in their years of dissent.” (John Kippley, *The Argument from Totality*, Catholic United for the Faith Blog, <http://www.cufblog.org/?p=95>)

This latter part of the quote is an excellent explanation as to how such a clearly erroneous view could have become the majority view among moral theologians. And notice that, in the initial part of the quote, Kippley correctly refutes the idea that more than one sexual act can be grouped together. What he apparently fails to realize is that the false argument of ‘totality’ is essentially the same as the current popular idea that partial or completed unnatural sexual acts are justified by being part of a set of sexual acts which include natural marital relations. The error in this new version of ‘the principle of totality’ is the essentially same; only the rhetoric has changed.

g. Fr. Ronald Lawler, S.J.

“...the goods of marriage cannot be properly pursued in masturbatory, oral, and anal activity on the part of married couples. The Church's teaching that natural intercourse

open to procreation is the only legitimate form of complete sexual expression, even between spouses, does not imply that mutual genital stimulation other than intercourse is forbidden for spouses as part of the preliminaries to marital intercourse.

“Marriage is a mutual commitment in which each side ceases to be autonomous, in various ways and also sexually: the sexual liberty in agreement together is great; here, so long as they are not immoderate so as to become slaves of sensuality, nothing is shameful, if the complete acts — the ones involving ejaculation of the man’s seed — that they engage in are true and real marriage acts.” (Fr. Ronald Lawler, S.J., et al., *Catholic Sexual Ethics*, p. 164)

Lawler, like most other moral theologians writing on this topic, makes the usual contradictory assertions. First, he correctly asserts that unnatural sexual acts are immoral even within marriage. But then he immediately claims that such acts are justified “as part of the preliminaries to marital intercourse”. To the contrary, all sexual acts lacking in the unitive or procreative meanings are intrinsically evil, and cannot be justified by circumstance or context. Unnatural sexual acts, which Lawler correctly condemns even within marriage, do not become good and just by being followed by, concurrent with, or preceded by an act of natural marital relations; unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil and always immoral.

Now consider the last part of the above quote. Moderation and the completion of the marital act are said to justify all other sexual acts, such that “nothing is shameful.” Again, in any area of morality, one act cannot justify another act; if a particular act is intrinsically evil, then no intention, circumstance, context, or other act, whether before, during, or after the particular evil act, can justify what is intrinsically evil. Furthermore, it is never true, in the area of sexuality, that “nothing is shameful.” That which is in itself shameful remains so, even if followed by an act of natural marital relations, or even if accompanied by good intentions.

## 11. Are These Errors Heretical?

Canon 751: “Heresy is the obstinate denial or obstinate doubt after the reception of baptism of some truth which is to be believed by divine and Catholic faith; apostasy is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; schism is the refusal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him.”

Canon 1364 §1: “an apostate from the faith, a heretic, or a schismatic incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication.”

An idea is heretical if it contradicts, or is fundamentally irreconcilable with, the definitive teaching of the Church on faith or morals. Such truths include everything essential to the Catholic Faith, including any basic principles of morality that are indispensable to Church teaching on good and evil acts. The number of theologians asserting a particular claim has no bearing on whether or not it is an heretical assertion, nor does the length of these theologians’ curriculum vitae. If the opinion of a majority of theologians on a particular point cannot be held without ignoring, or denying, or in

some way circumventing a definitive teaching of the Church on faith or morals, then that opinion is heretical, even if the Magisterium has no particular explicit statement condemning that specific opinion. There is no end to the number of different ways that various heretical claims can be framed or phrased. It is certainly not necessary for the Magisterium to issue a definitive statement condemning each one of the very many ways that one might undermine or circumvent or contradict a required belief.

Suppose that the Church definitively teaches that 'A' is a required belief of faith or morals. Now a theologian states his agreement that 'A' is true, but he also proposes theological assertion 'B.' If 'B' has the effect of nullifying 'A,' then 'B' is not only false, but also heretical. This is exactly the situation in the current state of marital sexual ethics. The Church teaches that certain kinds of acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, and that such acts cannot be justified by any circumstance or intention. But many theologians, while stating agreement with this doctrine, go on to claim that certain intrinsically evil sexual acts are, in effect, redefined by circumstance and intention, so that they become a different kind of act, one which is said to be moral. This has the effect of nullifying the teaching that intrinsically evil acts are always immoral regardless of circumstance or intention. If circumstance or intention can make an intrinsically evil act into another kind of act, one which is moral, then intrinsically evil acts would be, in effect, not independent of circumstance and intention, and not always immoral. Such a claim is irreconcilable with definitive Church teaching. A clever heresy is still a heresy.

The following moral teachings of the Church are required beliefs:

a. An evil act is not justified by a good act, nor does the end does not justify the means:

“And should we not do evil, so that good may result? For so we have been slandered, and so some have claimed we said; their condemnation is just.” (Romans 3:8).

“it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it” (Humanae Vitae, n. 14; also cited by Veritatis Splendor, n. 80).

“Hence human activity cannot be judged as morally good merely because it is a means for attaining one or another of its goals, or simply because the subject’s intention is good.” (Veritatis Splendor, n. 72).

“A good intention (for example, that of helping one’s neighbor) does not make behavior that is intrinsically disordered, such as lying and calumny, good or just. The end does not justify the means.” (Catechism, n. 1753).

“One may not do evil so that good may result from it.” (Catechism, n. 1756).

b. Intrinsically evil acts are always immoral, regardless of circumstance or intention:

“But the negative moral precepts, those prohibiting certain concrete actions or kinds of behaviour as intrinsically evil, do not allow for any legitimate exception. They do not leave

room, in any morally acceptable way, for the 'creativity' of any contrary determination whatsoever. Once the moral species of an action prohibited by a universal rule is concretely recognized, the only morally good act is that of obeying the moral law and of refraining from the action which it forbids." (Veritatis Splendor, n. 67).

"Reason attests that there are objects of the human act which are by their nature 'incapable of being ordered' to God, because they radically contradict the good of the person made in his image. These are the acts which, in the Church's moral tradition, have been termed 'intrinsically evil' (*intrinsece malum*): they are such *always and per se*, in other words, on account of their very object, and quite apart from the ulterior intentions of the one acting and the circumstances. Consequently, without in the least denying the influence on morality exercised by circumstances and especially by intentions, the Church teaches that 'there exist acts which *per se* and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously wrong by reason of their object.' " (Veritatis Splendor, n. 80).

"If acts are intrinsically evil, a good intention or particular circumstances can diminish their evil, but they cannot remove it. They remain 'irremediably' evil acts; *per se* and in themselves they are not capable of being ordered to God and to the good of the person." (Veritatis Splendor, n. 81).

"A good intention (for example, that of helping one's neighbor) does not make behavior that is intrinsically disordered, such as lying and calumny, good or just... Circumstances of themselves cannot change the moral quality of acts themselves; they can make neither good nor right an action that is in itself evil... There are some concrete acts - such as fornication - that it is always wrong to choose, because choosing them entails a disorder of the will, that is, a moral evil... It is therefore an error to judge the morality of human acts by considering only the intention that inspires them or the circumstances (environment, social pressure, duress or emergency, etc.) which supply their context. There are acts which, in and of themselves, independently of circumstances and intentions, are always gravely illicit by reason of their object; such as blasphemy and perjury, murder and adultery. One may not do evil so that good may result from it." (Catechism, n. 1753-1756).

c. The deliberate use of the sexual faculty, other than in natural marital relations open to life, is intrinsically evil because each and every sexual act must retain both the unitive and procreative meanings in order to be moral.

"But no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious." (Castei Connubii, n. 54)

" 'Intercourse even with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of the offspring is prevented.' " (Pope Pius XI in Castei Connubii, n. 55, quoting St. Augustine).

“...any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.” (*Casti Connubii*, n. 56)

“No difficulty can arise that justifies the putting aside of the law of God which forbids all acts intrinsically evil. There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted.” (*Casti Connubii*, n. 61)

“...each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 11).

“ ‘every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible’ is intrinsically evil” (Catechism, n. 2370; inner quote from *Humanae Vitae*, n. 14).

“Our Predecessor, Pius XI, of happy memory, in his Encyclical *Casti Connubii*, of December 31, 1930, once again solemnly proclaimed the fundamental law of the conjugal act and conjugal relations: that every attempt of either husband or wife in the performance of the conjugal act or in the development of its natural consequences which aims at depriving it of its inherent force and hinders the procreation of new life is immoral; and that no ‘indication’ or need can convert an act which is intrinsically immoral into a moral and lawful one. This precept is in full force today, as it was in the past, and so it will be in the future also, and always, because it is not a simple human whim, but the expression of a natural and divine law.” (Pope Pius XII, Address to Midwives, 1951; citing *Casti Connubii* by Pope Pius XI; cited by Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*).

“Whatever the force of certain arguments of a biological and philosophical nature, which have sometimes been used by theologians, in fact 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 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.’ All deliberate exercise of sexuality must be reserved to this regular relationship.” (*Persona Humana*, IX; inner quote from *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 51).

The last quote above begins by condemning masturbation as intrinsically evil, but then goes on to teach, based on the same constant Tradition, that any “deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside of normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty” because such a use “lacks the sexual relationship called for by the moral order, namely” a relationship with “the full

sense of mutual self-giving,” i.e. the unitive meaning, and the full sense of the procreative meaning, i.e. “human procreation in the context of true love”. The expressions ‘normal conjugal relations’ and ‘this regular relationship’ clearly refer to natural marital relations in which the unitive and procreative meanings are fully present. Unnatural sexual acts, by definition, lack both the true unitive and the procreative meanings. And the Sacrament of Marriage is only valid when consummated with “a conjugal act which is suitable in itself for the procreation of offspring, to which marriage is ordered by its nature and by which the spouses become one flesh.” (Canon Law, 1061 §1).

Notice that this document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, approved by Pope Paul VI, does not accept the erroneous view that a sexual act has only occurred if it is completed. Any deliberate exercise of sexuality outside of normal conjugal relations is regarded as fundamentally contrary to the moral order. Also absent from this document is the idea that sexual acts occurring in a proximity of time to natural marital relations would be justified. This declaration makes no such exception. All deliberate exercise of sexuality is reserved only to normal conjugal relations. Unnatural sexual acts are a deliberate exercise of sexuality. Unnatural sexual acts, whether partial or completed, whether they occur prior to, during, or after natural marital relations, constitute an undeniable “use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations” and are therefore intrinsically evil and always immoral.

Any member of the Catholic Church, theologians included, who substantially rejects, in any manner, the above definitive Catholic teachings on morality commits the objective sin of heresy. Even mere material heresy is objectively grave. If such rejection is done willingly and knowingly, then the sin is that of formal heresy. If such rejection is done with a full knowledge that these are the definitive teachings of the Church and with full deliberation, then the act of heresy is an actual mortal sin.

The above described definitive teachings of the Catholic Faith on morality are fundamentally irreconcilable with the erroneous set of opinions on marital sexual acts taught by many moral theologians. No one is able to reasonably hold the Church’s definitive teachings on sexual ethics while also holding any of the following errors:

- a. that unnatural sexual acts are not intrinsically evil and not always gravely immoral,
- b. that unnatural sexual acts, when incomplete, are not sexual acts,
- c. that unnatural sexual acts are moral when used as foreplay or for another good purpose,
- d. that unnatural sexual acts are moral when they occur before, during, or after natural marital relations,
- e. that each and every sexual act does not have to retain both the unitive and procreative meanings,
- f. that any and all sexual acts are justified if a completed act of natural marital relations also takes place,
- g. that the wife’s experience of sexual climax is not related to the unitive or procreative meanings, and so can be sought and achieved outside of natural marital relations open to life,
- h. that the morality of sexual acts within marriage derives solely or mainly from their purpose, intention, circumstance, or context.

These errors cannot be held without also contradicting definitive teaching of the Church on faith and morals, specifically, on the Sacrament of holy Matrimony and on sexual ethics. To hold this set of errors, or any fundamental element or subset of these errors, is to de facto reject definitive Church teaching on faith and morals. Therefore, these errors are heretical. Those who believe them are guilty of at least material heresy; those who teach them are guilty of leading the faithful away from Christ. Teachers shall receive a stricter judgment (cf. Jude 3:1).

Since the earliest days of the Church, there have been heresies continually among the members of the Catholic Church. In the early Church, these heresies contradicted fundamental teachings of Tradition and Scripture, but they often did not contradict any explicit statement by the Magisterium. For the Magisterium, at that time, had relatively few doctrinal decisions. Yet the Fathers of the Church were nevertheless unanimous in definitively and unequivocally rejecting these various heresies. Some heresies will contradict explicit doctrinal statements by the Magisterium, but other heresies will contradict definitive teachings of Sacred Tradition or Sacred Scripture. The lack of a specific doctrinal statement by the Magisterium against a particular phrasing of a particular heresy does not prevent the faithful from condemning any heresy that is fundamentally irreconcilable with the definitive teaching of Tradition, Scripture, and the Magisterium on faith and morals.

In recent times, some heresies have become more subtle and clever. Instead of directly contradicting an explicit teaching of the Magisterium, they present a series of assertions which have the cumulative effect of undermining, circumventing, or nullifying a teaching of Tradition, Scripture, or the Magisterium. They avoid directly and explicitly contradicting a clear doctrinal statement by the Magisterium. They take advantage of the fact that the Magisterium has not, and probably never will, write out one clear doctrinal statement for each and every teaching, and for every practical application of every teaching, found explicitly or implicitly in Tradition or Scripture. Where the Magisterium has no direct statement, they make their assertions. The Magisterium is not able to write down a refutation of each and every possible heresy, for the number of possible ways to distort, reject, or contradict Church teachings is nearly unlimited. But it is heresy all the same.

If any theological assertion, or set of assertions, implies a contradiction to, or a nullification of, any essential teaching of Tradition, Scripture, or the Magisterium, such that no one could reasonably hold to both the assertion and the teaching, then the assertion is both false and heretical. Such an assertion constitutes heresy because a rejection of essential Church teaching on faith or morals is necessarily implied. An implied or indirect heresy is no less sinful and no less harmful than direct heresy. The above discussed errors on marital sexual ethics constitute indirect heresy because no one could reasonably hold both to those errors and to the clear and definitive teaching of the Church on ethics, marriage, and sexuality.

Sometimes a theologian might make an assertion on faith or morals without realizing that the assertion implies a rejection of one or more definitive teachings of the Catholic Faith. In such cases, the assertion is material heresy, but not formal heresy. However, in the case of a moral theologian whose heretical assertion is on the same topic as his own area of study, he could not be without some culpability, since he ought to be capable enough, in his own area of study and teaching, to

recognize the heresy. If he is not so capable, then he should not be teaching or writing on the subject. The culpability is greater for those who not only believe, but also teach, any error that constitutes either an indirect or a direct heresy.

It is impossible for any moral theologian to adhere to the clear and definitive teaching of the Catholic Faith on morality, marriage, and sexuality, while at the same time asserting the set of errors refuted above. Such errors are in essential and irreconcilable conflict with definitive Church teaching. Therefore, anyone who holds to such errors is guilty of at least material heresy. These errors cannot be held without denying several different definitive teachings of the Church (found in the Catechism, *Veritatis Splendor*, *Humanae Vitae*, and other documents).

Here is another example of an implied heresy on another topic. A theologian states that the ordinary papal Magisterium is infallible, or that God would never allow the Pope to err whenever he teaches. The claim here is that the teachings of the Pope are infallible even when the conditions for papal infallibility taught by the First Vatican Council are not met. Now such a theologian may explicitly state his agreement with the teaching of Vatican I on papal infallibility. But he also will assert that the Pope can never err, even when all of the conditions taught by Vatican I are not met. This assertion has the effect of nullifying the dogma of the First Vatican Council on the conditions under which the Pope teaches infallibly. If anyone holds to such an assertion, that the Pope is always infallible, or that the Ordinary Magisterium is always infallible, or that the Pope is infallible under a lesser set of conditions than those taught by Vatican I, then the set of conditions under which the Pope teaches infallibly as solemnly defined by Vatican I become null and void. But the teaching of the First Vatican Council on Papal Infallibility is the infallible dogma of an Ecumenical Council. Therefore, such an assertion is an implied heresy.

## 12. Pope John Paul II and the Theology of the Body

None of the theologians who teach this set of errors makes specific reference to any magisterial document, nor to any source in Tradition or Scripture, to attempt to support their assertions. They offer very little in the way of a theological argument on this subject. However, many laypersons are under the impression that this set of errors is in some way based on, or justified by, statements made by Pope John Paul II in his writings as a private theologian and in his set of talks called *Theology of the Body*. This impression is incorrect.

Neither before nor during His pontificate, neither in his writings as a private theologian nor in his magisterial teachings, has Pope John Paul II ever made any statements that repeat, accord with, or even indirectly support this set of errors. Though he wrote extensively on the topic of sexuality, mainly as a private theologian, he never stated or implied that unnatural sexual acts could ever be justified, even within marriage, even before, during, or after an act of natural marital relations, even if such acts are incomplete. Not a single theologian who promotes this set of errors cites any such statement by the Pope.

Pope John Paul II reigned for longer than almost any other Pope. He wrote extensively as a theologian prior to becoming Pope. He continued to write as a private theologian even after

becoming Pope. He wrote extensively on the good of natural marital relations open to life. He has written more extensively on the subject of sexuality than perhaps any other Pope in the history of the Church. And yet he never asserts anything even remotely like the set of errors that these theologians assert on marital sexual ethics. Is the argument from silence a weak argument? It is not so weak in this case.

The Second Vatican Council is often used as an excuse for various liberal theological errors. It is sometimes even claimed that teachings of the Church prior to Vatican II are no longer in effect, having been revised in some way by Vatican II. Numerous erroneous views have been attributed to the teaching of that Council. Yet the errors supposedly taught by the Council are nowhere to be found in its documents. Then there is the claim that these liberal errors represent the so-called spirit of the Council. In truth, such persons are believing and teaching whatever their own spirit tells them, and merely using Vatican II as an excuse.

Similarly, the heretical and schismatic group SSPX (Society of Saint Pius X) uses the good name and teaching of Saint Pope Pius X as the alleged basis for their beliefs. But he neither founded, nor belonged to their group, and he certainly would be appalled by their utter rejection of the office and teaching authority of the Pope. They merely use his good name and teachings as a claimed but false justification for their own errors.

In the early Church, the heretical and schismatic group called the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:6) claimed that their teachings were based on the life and teachings of Nicholas, one of the first Seven Deacons (Acts 6:5). This group believed, taught, and practiced utter sexual immorality and promiscuity. Nicholas never believed, taught, or practiced such evils. But they used his stature in the early Church as a way to promote their own errors.

It is the same with this set of errors on marital sexual ethics. Many persons attempt to justify these errors by means of a vague reference to Pope John Paul II's writings and his Theology of the Body talks. But this set of errors is entirely incompatible with the same Pope's teaching on the necessity of the procreative and unitive meanings in the marital act, and on the irreformable and intrinsic evil of any sexual act lacking in either or both meaning. They claim that the Theology of the Body supports these errors, while ignoring the same Pope's definitive magisterial teachings on the subject of morality and sexuality.

### 13. Can the Majority Opinion Be Wrong?

There is nothing in either Sacred Tradition or Sacred Scripture which justifies this set of errors on marital sexual ethics. None of the theologians who teach these errors claim that such ideas are even implicitly found within, or derived in some way from, Tradition or Scripture. Neither has the Magisterium taught anything remotely like this set of errors. Not a single sentence in any magisterial document is ever cited as even being capable of some remote interpretation that would justify unnatural sexual acts within marriage.

When theologians teach apart from Tradition, Scripture, Magisterium, they inevitably go quickly astray. Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are each entirely infallible. The Sacred Magisterium teaches infallibly through Papal Infallibility, solemn definitions of Ecumenical Councils, and through the Universal Magisterium. At all other times, the Ordinary Magisterium teaches non-infallibly, meaning that some errors are possible, but only to a limited extent.

The majority opinion of a group of theologians is neither infallible nor non-infallible; it is entirely fallible. This is clear in the example of the commission chosen by the Pope (first under Pope John XXIII and later under Pope Paul VI) to consider the matter of contraception within marriage. A majority of members of the commission, including most of the theologians, favored approval of contraception within marriage. The basis for this approval was said to a principle of totality, such that, within a set of sexual acts, only some acts would need to have the fullness of the unitive and procreative meanings; the total set of acts was thereby said to be justified. This position was definitively rejected by the Pope in *Humanae Vitae*. The current position on marital sexual relations taught by perhaps a majority of moral theologians is merely a modified version of this same principle of totality. Thus the majority view of theologians on this point has already been rejected, in effect, by the Magisterium.

Some of the laity will point, not to the number of theologians expressing this error, but to the eminence and the credentials of one theologian or another who accepts this error. This contention is merely a form of the *ad hominem* argument, which bases the surety of its assertions, not on Tradition, Scripture, Magisterium, and not on faith or reason, but on the character, reputation, and learnedness of a particular person. Sacred Scripture rejects the *ad hominem* argument, in the form of depending on a particular sinner's reputation and character:

[1 Corinthians]

{1:10} And so, I beg you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that every one of you speak in the same way, and that there be no schisms among you. So may you become perfect, with the same mind and with the same judgment.

{1:11} For it has been indicated to me, about you, my brothers, by those who are with Chloes, that there are contentions among you.

{1:12} Now I say this because each of you is saying: "Certainly, I am of Paul;" "But I am of Apollo;" "Truly, I am of Cephas;" as well as: "I am of Christ."

{1:13} Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

An argument based on Tradition, Scripture, Magisterium, or on faith and reason, should carry weight with all the faithful. But an argument based on the supposed eminence of a theologian who is also a sinner should not carry any weight of its own.

[Acts of the Apostles]

{10:34} Then, Peter opening his mouth, said: "I have concluded in truth that God is not a respecter of persons."

I have drawn the same conclusion. Even though I myself am a theologian, I am saying emphatically to every reader: Do not listen to any theologian merely because he is a theologian, or is learned, or has one credential or another, nor because something else that he wrote was useful to you. Be convinced by an argument based on faith and reason, an argument whose fundamental premises are from Tradition, Scripture, Magisterium and whose conclusions are in agreement with Church teaching.

But on the topic of morality, the Magisterium has noted the trend, present among many members of the Church, for some persons to attempt to justify acts which are intrinsically evil, particularly in the area of sexuality.

“Far be it from Christians to be led to embrace another opinion, as if the Council taught that nowadays some things are permitted which the Church had previously declared intrinsically evil. Who does not see in this the rise of a depraved moral relativism, one that clearly endangers the Church’s entire doctrinal heritage?” (Paul VI, Address to Members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, September 1967: AAS 59, 962)

“In the present period, the corruption of morals has increased, and one of the most serious indications of this corruption is the unbridled exaltation of sex. Moreover, through the means of social communication and through public entertainment this corruption has reached the point of invading the field of education and of infecting the general mentality.” (Persona Humana, I., issued by the CDF under Pope Paul VI).

Those Catholics who rely on Tradition, Scripture, and the Magisterium cannot go far from the truth. But those who rely on the baseless opinions of theologians, especially those of modern times, endanger their souls. And most moral theologians give no theological argument at all to support what they are saying on this topic. One should listen only to those theologians who give answers firmly based on Tradition, Scripture, Magisterium, which is the teaching of the Church. The truth is not arrived at by a democratic process of accepting whatever is the majority view.

Now, on this particular point of moral theology, the answer that I present above is not speculative. The Church has clear and definitive teachings on this subject; it is not a matter of opinion. It is an indictment of modern-day moral theology that this answer on the subject of marital sexual ethics is the minority view. But it is the teaching of the Church just the same. In this treatise, I present numerous quotes above from definitive Church teaching, as well as quotes below from Scripture and from Doctors of the Church. The lengthy explanations that I give ought not to be necessary. Merely by reading the quoted material in this article, any faithful Catholic should be able to understand that the set of errors being refuted is contrary to definitive Church teaching. It is only because so many Catholics are poorly instructed in the faith, and so many are willing to rationalize to achieve the conclusion that they seek, that this set of errors has persisted for so long.

Many of the claims of these theologians are patently absurd, have no support other than a rhetorical argument, and completely ignore definitive moral teachings of the Church on the same subject. They only make such assertions because it is the popular opinion among other theologians

and among the laity. If such ideas were unpopular with other theologians and with the laity, most would not even attempt to make such baseless and manifestly false claims.

[2 Timothy]

{4:1} I testify before God, and before Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead through his return and his kingdom:

{4:2} that you should preach the word urgently, in season and out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke, with all patience and doctrine.

{4:3} For there shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine, but instead, according to their own desires, they will gather to themselves teachers with itching ears.

{4:4} And certainly, they will turn their hearing away from the truth, and will be turned toward fables.

#### 14. Arguments from Sacred Scripture

[Hebrews]

{13:4} *Honorable connubium in omnibus, et thorus immaculatus. Fornicatores enim, et adulteros iudicabit Deus.*

{13:4} May marriage be honorable in every way, and may the marriage bed be immaculate. For God will judge fornicators and adulterers.

Adultery occurs when a married person has sexual relations with someone other than their spouse. “Fornication is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman.” (Catechism, n. 2353). So then why does this verse, on the subject of marriage, warn not only against adultery, but also against fornication? In this context, fornication is being used to refer to a broader range of immoral sexual acts, which would include sexual sins within the marriage. Such acts would include solitary sexual acts, as well as unnatural sexual acts between the couple.

If any and all sexual acts were moral within marriage, then Sacred Scripture would not need to exhort us to keep the marriage bed immaculate, nor to avoid fornication as well as adultery. Therefore, adultery is not the only sin that endangers the honorableness of marriage and the purity of the marriage bed. For Sacred Scripture does not merely state that God will judge fornicators and adulterers, but first teaches us that marriage must be honorable in every possible way, and that the marriage bed must be, not merely free from adultery, but immaculate. Therefore, some sexual acts between a man and a woman who are married to one another are nevertheless contrary to the moral law.

[1 Corinthians]

{6:15} Do you not know that your bodies are a part of Christ? So then, should I take a part of Christ and make it a part of a harlot? Let it not be so!

{6:16} And do you not know that whoever is joined to a harlot becomes one body? “For the two,” he said, “shall be as one flesh.”

{6:17} But whoever is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

{6:18} Flee from fornication. Every sin whatsoever that a man commits is outside of the body, but whoever fornicates, sins against his own body.

{6:19} Or do you not know that your bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

{6:20} For you have been bought at a great price. Glorify and carry God in your body.

Again, Sacred Scripture uses the term fornication in a more general sense that encompasses all sinful sexual acts. The argument is that God is holy and we are holy. The body of each and every Christian is a part of Christ, and is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. We are joined to the Lord with a unity of heart and mind that makes us one in spirit with our Savior, who is God Incarnate, who Himself has a human body and soul. Therefore our bodies, as well as our souls, should be treated as a holy means to glorify God. This understanding of the body is incompatible with the use of the body for mere sexual pleasure or mutual sexual gratification, in any situation, even within marriage.

Unnatural sexual acts within marriage are in fundamental conflict with this call from Scripture to avoid all sexual sins because the body is a part of the body of Christ and is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. Did Christ teach His disciples to commit such acts within marriage? If you think so, then you do not know Christ. Would the Holy Spirit guide a married couple to commit such acts within the Sacrament of holy Matrimony, which is bestowed on the couple by the Holy Spirit? If you think so, then you understand neither the Spirit nor the holiness of the Sacraments. You have been bought at the great price of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Do not sin against Christ and against the Sacrament of Marriage by committing unnatural sexual acts at all.

[Matthew]

{18:6} But whoever will have led astray one of these little ones, who trust in me, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck, and to be submerged in the depths of the sea.

{18:7} Woe to a world that leads people astray! Although it is necessary for temptations to arise, nevertheless: Woe to that man through whom temptation arises!

[James]

{3:1} My brothers, not many of you should choose to become teachers, knowing that you shall receive a stricter judgment.

One of the more disconcerting aspects of this problem, of the broad acceptance that this set of errors has garnered, is the lack of serious consideration that most theologians give to their own teaching on this point. They teach on this topic with no concern for the harm that will be done if they are wrong (and they are very wrong). They take it all very lightly, perhaps because few of their listeners object to these ideas. They are anxious to please their listeners, and their listeners live in a society where unnatural sexual acts are treated as morally equal to natural relations. But one would still expect any theologian telling a married couple that they can perform sexual acts other than natural marital relations open to life to have some trepidation or at least a measure of reluctance. After all, he is giving approval and even encouragement for what some consider to be objective mortal sin. But no fear of God is to be found within the opinions of these theologians, even on questions which they answer correctly. Many of them are afraid to offend against modern

sensibilities, but they are not afraid to offend God. Woe to any theologian who leads others into objective mortal sin; he will be judged more harshly by God than if he had committed the same sins himself.

[2 Timothy]

{4:3} For there shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine, but instead, according to their own desires, they will gather to themselves teachers with itching ears.

But some of those Catholics who adhere to this set of errors have not been misled by any theologian. They themselves, instead of seeking truth, seek rationalizations for the sins that they are going to commit regardless of what anyone tells them. They use the writings of particular theologians only in so far as it suits their liking. They gather to themselves the teachers who teach what they want to hear. Their sins are their own doing. They have not been led astray by anyone. If all the theologians that they use for their excuses were to repent and teach them the truth, they themselves might still not repent. They are only following their own desires.

[Hebrews]

{6:8} But whatever brings forth thorns and briers is rejected, and is closest to what is accursed; their consummation is in combustion.

Adam and Eve

If the theological arguments in favor of this set of errors are weak and erroneous, and if so many theologians do not even offer arguments to support this set of assertions, then why have these ideas become so widely accepted? The answer in Sacred Scripture as to why any false idea is accepted is seen in the example of Eve:

[Genesis 3]

{3:1} However, the serpent was more crafty than any of the creatures of the earth that the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Why has God instructed you, that you should not eat from every tree of Paradise?"

{3:2} The woman responded to him: "From the fruit of the trees which are in Paradise, we eat.

{3:3} Yet truly, from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of Paradise, God has instructed us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we may die."

{3:4} Then the serpent said to the woman: "By no means will you die a death.

{3:5} For God knows that, on whatever day you will eat from it, your eyes will be opened; and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil."

{3:6} And so the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and beautiful to the eyes, and delightful to consider. And she took from its fruit, and she ate. And she gave to her husband, who ate.

Eve knows that God has said not to eat the fruit of a particular tree, or she would die. She states this understanding, clearly and correctly, to the serpent. Then the serpent explains that God is lying, that Eve will not die if she eats the fruit, but instead she will be so blessed as to become like a god. Now the serpent's explanation, that God is lying, is absurd and clearly false. And Eve, prior to her first sin, had the clarity of mind and heart found only in those who lack all sin, both original sin

and personal sin. Adam and Eve, before the Fall from grace, could not be mistaken about anything that they knew.

“So that, as long as the state of innocence continued, it was impossible for the human intellect to assent to falsehood as if it were truth. For as some perfections, such as clarity, were lacking in the bodily members of the first man, though no evil could be therein; so there could be in his intellect the absence of some knowledge, but no false opinion.” (St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 94, 4).

God has instructed Adam and Eve concerning the fruit of this tree. Therefore Eve clearly understood that the serpent’s explanation was false. She knew that God cannot lie. But because she desired the fruit, because it was “beautiful to the eyes, and delightful to consider,” she accepted the false explanation offered to her, and she took the fruit and ate it. This was the first rationalization within the human race, and it has been a popular activity ever since.

## 15. The Moral Law and the Sacrifice of Christ

The entire moral law is found implicitly in the single act of Jesus Christ dying on the Cross for our salvation. Look at a crucifix and consider the self-sacrifice and selfless love with which Christ lived and died for you. Do you really think that, within the Sacrament of Marriage established by this same Savior, Christ would permit unnatural sexual acts of any kind, at any time, under any conditions whatsoever? Are unnatural sexual acts compatible with the pure, holy, selfless, self-sacrificing love, which encompasses the entire moral law as well as our salvation? Certainly not!

## 16. Saints and Doctors of the Church

### Saint John Chrysostom

“To this end every marriage should be set up so that it may work together with us for chastity. This will be the case if we marry such brides as are able to bring great piety, chastity, and goodness to us. The beauty of the body, if it is not joined with virtue of the soul, will be able to hold the husband for twenty or thirty days, but will go no farther before it shows its wickedness and destroys all its attractiveness. As for those who radiate the beauty of the soul, the longer time goes by and tests their proper nobility, the warmer they make their husband’s love and the more they strengthen their affection for him. Since this is so, and since a warm and genuine friendship holds between them, every kind of immorality is driven out. Not even any thought of wantonness ever enters the mind of the man who truly loves his own wife, but he continues always content with her. But his chastity he attracts the good will and protection of God for his whole household.” (Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press: 1986, trans. Roth and Anderson, p. 100.)

A married couple must still practice chastity. The virtue of chastity is sexual purity according to one's state of life. For married persons, this does not refer merely to refraining from adultery. Every kind of sexual immorality must be driven out of the holy matrimonial bond, so that not even any unchaste thoughts enter the mind of the husband or the wife. The chastity of husband and wife should extend to their entire selves, body and soul, even reaching to the inner thoughts of the heart and mind. There are no exceptions to chastity. No one is exempt from chastity according to their state of life. Even when a husband and wife have marital relations, the conjugal act cannot be lustful in heart or mind, nor can it be morally disordered in the particulars of the act itself.

The idea that unnatural sexual acts can be used in the service of natural marital relations open to life is fundamentally incompatible with the holiness and chastity required of all married couples. Unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil, and so they cannot be used as the servants of natural marital relations open to life. No good employer would knowingly choose to hire employees entirely lacking in what is good and necessary to the task at hand. No holy king and queen would choose advisors or assistants who were fundamentally opposed to every good upon which their kingdom depends. No married Christian couple can morally choose to use unnatural sexual acts, partial or completed, even if the intention is to use these acts in the service of natural marital relations open to life. Evil cannot be used in the service of good, because good and evil are fundamentally incompatible.

Saint Jerome, Doctor and Father of the Church

Illicit sexual acts within marriage are equivalent to fornication and adultery, as Saint Jerome taught:

“And it makes no difference how honorable may be the cause of a man's insanity. Hence Xystus in his Sentences tells us that ‘He who too ardently loves his own wife is an adulterer.’ It is disgraceful to love another man's wife at all, or one's own too much. A wise man ought to love his wife with judgment, not with passion. Let a man govern his voluptuous impulses, and not rush headlong into intercourse. There is nothing blacker than to love a wife as if she were an adulteress.” (St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, Bk 1, n. 49)

Notice that St. Jerome states that “it makes no difference how honorable may be the cause of a man's insanity.” In other words, the intention which motivates a man to sin is irrelevant to the morality of the act. If a sexual act is a sin, it does not matter how honorable the man's intentions are, it is still a serious moral disorder, comparable, as a figure of speech, to the serious mental disorder of insanity.

St. Jerome plainly taught that there are sexual sins within marriage. The idea that “nothing is shameful” as long as the marital act occurs at some point in time is plainly rejected by St. Jerome. It is contrary to wisdom and good judgment for a man to have sexual relations with his wife in an inordinate manner. Though St. Jerome does not, like modern-day moral theologians, give explicit descriptions of various sexual acts, it is clear that he rejects the idea that the mere deposit of semen in the correct location justifies all other acts.

St. Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church

Notice, in the quote below, that St. Thomas held sexual sins within marriage to be worse than adultery, because the act occurs within the good of marriage. He did not teach that all sexual acts within marriage are moral, nor did he teach that all sexual acts between a husband and wife are moral.

“And since the man who is too ardent a lover of his wife acts counter to the good of marriage if he use her indecently, although he be not unfaithful, he may in a sense be called an adulterer; and even more so than he that is too ardent a lover of another woman.” (Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, article 8).

The phrasing ‘if he use her indecently’ refers to unnatural sexual acts within marriage. This is clear because the good of marriage emphasized by St. Thomas is the procreation of children (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, article 2). St. Thomas could not be referring to natural marital relations when he says ‘if he use her indecently’ because even natural marital relations done with some disorder of desire still retains the unitive and procreative meanings. But unnatural sexual acts lack both meanings, and so they are contrary to the good of marriage. The use of unnatural sexual acts within marriage is therefore worse than adultery. St. Thomas again condemns this same type of act later in the same question.

“Lastly comes the sin of not observing the right manner of copulation, which is more grievous if the abuse regards the ‘vas’ than if it affects the manner of copulation in respect of other circumstances.” (Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, article 12).

First, the word ‘vas’ is Latin for vessel, referring to the use of other bodily orifices for sexual acts. If a husband treats his wife lustfully during natural marital relations, he sins. But he commits a more grievous offense, which is called by St. Thomas an abuse, if he sins by committing unnatural sexual acts (i.e. using an unnatural part of the body as a ‘vessel’ for sexual intercourse). Here St. Thomas explicitly (but in discrete language) condemns the sin of unnatural sexual acts within marriage.

Second, it is clear (in the quote from article 8 above) that St. Thomas taught that a married couple is not justified in committing any sexual acts whatsoever within marriage. Otherwise, he would not have taught that a man who is too ardent a lover of his wife commits a sin that is like adultery and yet worse than adultery. Therefore, those who claim that there are no sins for a husband and wife having sexual relations with each other are in error.

Third, neither does St. Thomas even consider the absurd argument that acts which are intrinsically evil and gravely immoral by themselves could become good and moral when combined in some way with natural marital relations open to life. If this were the case, then St. Thomas could not have compared a man who is too ardent a lover of his wife to an adulterer. For if he took the position of these modern-day moral theologians, then he would have to say that a husband’s ardent love would be entirely justified, as long as “the semen are not misdirected.” Notice that Saint

Thomas takes no such position; he does not sum up the marital act as merely the proper direction of semen. And his teaching is fundamentally contrary to the set of errors promoted by these theologians.

### Saints Joachim and Anna

Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary never had marital relations. So perhaps the holiest example of a marriage that includes natural marital relations is the marriage of the Virgin Mary's parents: Joachim and Anna. They were chosen by God to be the parents of our Lord's mother. They had two children: the Virgin Mary and her sister, mentioned in Sacred Scripture:

[John]

{19:25} And standing beside the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, and Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

Concerning their married life, Joachim and Anna certainly engaged in natural marital relations. But does any faithful Catholic believe that these two Saints would either make use of unnatural sexual acts or advise anyone in any situation whatsoever to do so? Certainly not! The very idea is incompatible not only with the holiness of Saints, but with the ordinary holiness required by Christ of every married couple. All married persons are required by God to refrain from every kind of mortal sin, including sexual sins, actual mortal sins as well as objective mortal sins. We are all called to imitate the Saints, even the least worthy among us.

### 17. Second Vatican Council

“Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children.” (Gaudium et Spes, n. 50).

“Hence the acts themselves which are proper to conjugal love and which are exercised in accord with genuine human dignity must be honored with great reverence. Hence when there is question of harmonizing conjugal love with the responsible transmission of life, the moral aspects of any procedure does not depend solely on sincere intentions or on an evaluation of motives, but must be determined by objective standards. These, based on the nature of the human person and his acts, preserve the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love. Such a goal cannot be achieved unless the virtue of conjugal chastity is sincerely practiced.” (Gaudium et Spes, n. 51).

Unnatural sexual acts lack both the procreative and unitive meanings; these meanings define not only the marital act, but the Sacrament of Marriage itself. For both marriage and the conjugal act are inherently ordered toward the procreation of children, and toward the unity of the husband and wife throughout the marriage (not merely in physical conjugal union). Unnatural sexual acts inherently lack the genuine human dignity and the great reverence for the family which can only be found in sexual acts having both the unitive and procreative meanings.

Notice that the Council also teaches that intentions and motives cannot be the sole determinants of marital sexual ethics. There are objective criteria for whether an act is moral or immoral. Sexual acts within marriage must be based on the nature of the human person and must preserve the full sense of the unitive (mutual self-giving) and the procreative meanings. Now when the Council exhorts married couples to practice “the virtue of conjugal chastity,” the Council is not suggesting celibacy for married couples, but rather conjugal chastity, which is sexual purity in accord with the married state of life. Such chastity is irreconcilable with the idea of using unnatural sexual acts as a type of so-called foreplay or stimulation, or as a means to achieve sexual climax after natural marital relations.

## 18. The Holy Sacraments and the Resurrection

Foreplay is any licit interaction between husband and wife, which prepares them to engage in natural marital relations, and which does not include sexually explicit acts. Sexually explicit acts are not foreplay, they are sexual acts, and, except for natural marital relations open to life, such sexual acts are intrinsically evil and always immoral. It is nothing other than a blatant lie to claim that various unnatural sexual acts are merely foreplay.

Natural marital relations is a source of grace because it is part of the Sacrament of holy Matrimony. It is evil to speak as if the proper preparation for natural marital relations is to commit a series of objectively grave sinful acts, under the guise of calling such acts foreplay. The end does not justify the means. It is a serious offense against God to prepare to receive grace from any Sacrament by deliberately committing a sin or a series of sins, most especially when those sins are objectively mortal.

It would be a serious offense against God and the Sacraments to prepare for Baptism by committing objective mortal sin. It would be a serious offense against God and the Sacraments to prepare for Confirmation by committing objective mortal sin. It would be a serious offense against God and the Sacraments to prepare to receive holy Orders by committing objective mortal sin. It would be a serious offense against God and the Sacraments to deliberately commit mortal sin because one is soon to receive the Sacrament of Confession. It would be a serious offense against God and the Sacraments to prepare for receiving holy Communion by committing objective mortal sin. It would be a serious offense against God and the Sacraments to prepare to receive the Sacrament of holy Matrimony by committing objective mortal sin. It is therefore also a serious offense against God and the Sacraments to prepare to engage in natural marital relations, which is an essential part of the Sacrament of Marriage, by deliberately committing objective mortal sin, on the excuse that such sins are foreplay.

“By virtue of the mystery of the death and Resurrection of Christ, of which the spouses are made part in a new way by marriage, conjugal love is purified and made holy” (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 56).

The unitive meaning, which is inherent to the marital act, is not the mere joining of bodies, but of two whole persons within the Sacrament of marriage.

“By matrimony, therefore, the souls of the contracting parties are joined and knit together more directly and more intimately than are their bodies, and that not by any passing affection of sense of spirit, but by a deliberate and firm act of the will; and from this union of souls by God's decree, a sacred and inviolable bond arises. Hence the nature of this contract, which is proper and peculiar to it alone, makes it entirely different both from the union of animals entered into by the blind instinct of nature alone in which neither reason nor free will plays a part, and also from the haphazard unions of men, which are far removed from all true and honorable unions of will and enjoy none of the rights of family life.” (Casti Connubii, n. 7).

Do you not know that all the holy Sacraments were established by Jesus Christ himself at the cost of His own suffering and death? Have you not been taught that all the Sacraments are intended by God to lead you to the kingdom of Heaven? Have you never read what Christ himself said about the Resurrection of the just, in which there is no marriage and no sexual relations at all? Then how can anyone claim that a married couple is justified in using unnatural sexual acts as a means or as an end?

[Matthew]

{22:29} But Jesus responded to them by saying: “You have gone astray by knowing neither the Scriptures, nor the power of God.

{22:30} For in the resurrection, they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage. Instead, they shall be like the Angels of God in heaven.”

The Sacraments are intended to give our souls grace, so that we may be led to Heaven. And God's plan for the blessed just in Heaven leads to a Resurrection in which they are given bodies that are entirely chaste. There is no marriage and no sexual relations at all for the resurrected just. So then, how is it that so many have so quickly believed those theologians who claim that unnatural sexual acts are moral within the Sacrament of Marriage? These erroneous ideas are incompatible with the plan of God for the human body and soul. Or do you think that the same Savior who grants to us a Resurrection in which there is no sexual relations, not even within marriage, would also approve of a husband and wife committing unnatural sexual acts within the Sacrament of Marriage?

## 19. Prayer and Marital Problems

A husband and wife should pray together. If they are having any difficulties in their marriage, including difficulties in the bedroom, they should pray together for assistance from God. For their entire marriage is under the grace and providence of God, and no part of their marriage is separate from the Sacrament of marriage. The Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet are two excellent forms of prayer used by many Catholics throughout the world. If a husband and wife are having difficulties in the bedroom, they should pray the Rosary, or the Chaplet, or some other form of prayer, prior to natural marital relations. This practice will assist them in obtaining the grace of God, so that their marriage remains holy and chaste and harmonious.

One of the often-cited justifications for the use of unnatural sexual acts alongside natural marital relations is to overcome various difficulties that the couple might have in their sexual relationship. It is as if those who recommend such a 'remedy' have never heard of prayer, or don't believe in its effectiveness. To the contrary, the Magisterium teaches that:

"No difficulty can arise that justifies the putting aside of the law of God which forbids all acts intrinsically evil. There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted." (Casti Connubii, n. 61)

"For if with the aid of reason and of free will they are to control their natural drives, there can be no doubt at all of the need for self-denial. Only then will the expression of love, essential to married life, conform to right order." (Humanae Vitae, n. 21).

When problems arise in a marriage, whether the problems concern marital relations or some other type of problem, the solution should be to seek the assistance of God. The use of prayer to address difficult circumstances is a fundamental and indispensable part of the Christian faith. Those who counsel couples to use unnatural sexual acts to solve marital sexual problems are ignoring the benefits of prayer and are leading the faithful away from God.

## 20. Conclusion

A sexual act is natural if it is the type of intercourse between a man and a woman that is inherently capable of procreation. The only moral sexual act is an act of natural marital relations open to life. If the husband or wife is infertile, the act is still natural if that act would be capable of procreation in fertile individuals. Other sexual acts, not inherently capable of procreation, are unnatural sexual acts. All unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil and always objectively gravely immoral. Such acts are always immoral, regardless of intention or circumstance, even if such acts are used as so-called 'foreplay' or 'stimulation' prior to natural marital relations, even if such acts are incomplete, even if such acts occur before, during, or after an act of natural marital relations. Also, each sexual act must be considered separately as to whether or not it is open to life. An act that is not open to life cannot be justified by its incompleteness, nor by the claim that it is completed with, or occurs in the context of, an act that is open to life, nor by the claim that the woman's experience of the act is unrelated to procreation. Intrinsically evil sexual acts are always objectively gravely immoral, even within marriage. The use of unnatural sexual acts, partial or complete, even as a means to the good end of natural marital relations, is not justified, because unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil, and because the end never justifies the means.