

# *The Marital Sexual Act*

Chapter 7 from the book:  
**Roman Catholic Marital Sexual Ethics**

"May marriage be honorable in every way,  
and may the marriage bed be immaculate.  
For God will judge fornicators and adulterers."  
(Hebrews 13:4)

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# Introduction

In order to understand Roman Catholic teaching on marital sexual ethics, it is absolutely essential that you first understand the general principles upon which all of the ethical teachings of the Church are based. I realize that many other writings on this topic completely ignore these basic ethical principles, instead speaking as if marital sexual ethics were exempt from the general ethical teachings of the Church. Some authors and commentators are merely cheerleaders for sex within marriage, offering no ethical guidance, even claiming that there are no moral issues concerning sex within marriage. But this type of approach ignores, and at times contradicts, the teaching of the Catholic Christian Faith on morality.

The eternal moral law applies to all created persons equally. Married persons are not under a different set of Divine moral laws. And although many persons suggest otherwise, you know in your heart of hearts that the marital bedroom is not exempt from the moral law. The marital bed is not a morality-free zone. The same basic principles of right and wrong apply to married couples and marital sexual relations, as to the knowingly chosen acts of other areas of life.

This booklet, *The Marital Sexual Act*, is an excerpt from my book: **Roman Catholic Marital Sexual Ethics**. It is chapter 7, in its entirety, from that book. But I am making the text available free online in order to counter the many anonymous false teachers online who promote grave sexual sins within the Catholic Sacrament of Marriage, as if these sins were good and holy. Please note that the entire text of the book and the chapter excerpt remain under copyright.

There are many false teachers in the world today. These teachers will tell you that various sexual sins are not sins at all. They will claim that contraception is not always immoral, or that it is not gravely immoral. They will explain to you that abortion is justifiable in one circumstance or another. They will claim that there are no sexual sins within the marital bedroom. Why do they speak this way? It is because the sexual sins of humanity are among the most popular sins in the present age. So there is no shortage of teachers who quickly gain a large audience by claiming that these grave sins are not evil, but good. Here is what the Holy Spirit says, in Sacred Scripture, about such persons:

[Isaiah]

{5:20} Woe to you who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light, and light for darkness; who exchange bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

[James 3]

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

But these false teachers are not found only in sinful secular society; they are also found within the Church. There are some priests and some lay theologians who have attempted to justify the evil of direct abortion, by means of various clever and not-so-clever explanations. There are some priests and theologians who have attempted to justify contraception by claiming that it is moral outside of marriage, or with a 'non-contraceptive intention', or in difficult circumstances. Yet the Magisterium has always condemned all direct abortion as a type of murder, and all use of contraception, i.e. every type of act which, as a means or as an end, is inherently directed at depriving the sexual act of its procreative meaning.

[1 Timothy]

{1:5} Now the goal of instruction is charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith.

{1:6} Certain persons, wandering away from these things, have been turned aside to empty babbling,

{1:7} desiring to be teachers of the law, but understanding neither the things that they themselves are saying, nor what they are affirming about these things.

Concerning marital sexual ethics, there is also no shortage of teachers who will tell you that a married couple may commit any type of sexual act in the marital bedroom. Many of these false teachers will specifically claim that the Church has approved, or that the Church allows, all manner of unnatural sexual acts, such as are committed by the most sinful of unbelievers. But when asked to provide a magisterial document or any source within the teaching of the Church to support such a claim, they are unable to do so. These false teachers tell their audience that "the Church permits" all manner of sinful behavior and unnatural acts in the marital bedroom, and their listeners accept this answer without question, because sexual sins are very popular in the world today. But such is not the truth.

In fact, the Magisterium has never approved or allowed or permitted or justified any type of unnatural sexual act in the marital bedroom. Only natural marital relations open to life is worthy of the Sacrament of holy Matrimony. This type of sexual act alone is unitive and procreative and marital. This type of sexual act alone is moral. Inherently immoral types of sexual acts are not justified by being used as a type of foreplay, nor by being done in the context of a moral act of natural marital relations open to life.

USCCB Catechism: "Each and every sexual act in a marriage needs to be open to the possibility of conceiving a child." [1]

The Magisterium has specifically, definitively, and repeatedly taught that, to be moral, as *Humanae Vitae* phrased it, "each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life." [2] The Catechism of the Catholic Church and many other magisterial documents have taught that the morality of human acts cannot be judged only by intentions and the circumstances that supply their context. Certain kinds of acts, including certain kinds of sexual acts, are always gravely illicit, regardless of intention or circumstances. [3] This less popular answer is supported by many magisterial documents, as well as by the basic principles of ethics taught by the Church.

The basic principles of ethics taught and applied in this book are not the author's own opinion. Pope John Paul II taught the basic principles of ethics in his landmark encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*. His teaching in that magisterial document is the teaching of the Church, not mere opinion. There are many ethicists today, even many within the Church, who have developed alternate approaches to ethics, in order to justify the popular sins of the present time. The faithful Catholic should ignore such sources. To the contrary, the Magisterium has definitively taught that morality has three fonts (sources), which must be used to determine whether or not any knowingly chosen act is moral or immoral. These three fonts of morality are the basis for the ethical teachings in this book, because they are the basis for the ethical teachings of the Church.

# The Marital Sexual Act

[Hebrews 13]

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

The eternal moral law is universal, applying to all persons, at all times, in all places. There is no exemption from the moral law for sexuality, or for the marital bedroom. Every knowingly chosen act must be good in all three fonts in order to be moral. The same basic principles of morality apply to sexual ethics as to all other areas of human life.

As is true for all knowingly chosen acts, a sexual act is immoral if any one or more of the three fonts of morality is bad. If anyone tells you otherwise, no matter how clever their explanation, they are leading you astray. The teaching of the Magisterium on the three fonts of morality is clear. This teaching on the basic principles of ethics is found in Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and in the *Compendium of the Catechism*, and in the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Catechism, and in many magisterial documents on particular moral issues. It is not an open question.

Now certainly, when considering any particular act, the particular intention (first font), the particular act with its inherent moral meaning determined by its moral object (second font), and the particular circumstances (third font), must be correctly evaluated in order to determine the morality of the overall act. These particulars will vary from one act to another, and from one type of act to another. But the basic principles are always the same, without any exception, for each and every knowingly chosen act.

If anyone states or implies that the basic principles of morality do not apply to sexuality, or that there are exceptions to the basic principles of morality for sexuality, or that a different set of basic principles of morality apply to sexuality, then he has gone astray from the true Catholic Faith. Marital sexual acts are not exempt from the eternal moral law. They are subject to the same basic principles of morality as all other knowingly chosen acts.

Second Vatican Council: "...there is no human activity which can be withdrawn from God's dominion." [153]

## THE FIRST AND THIRD FONTS

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "Now according to Christian tradition and the Church's teaching, and as right reason also recognizes, the moral order of sexuality involves such high values of human life that every direct violation of this order is objectively serious." [154]

Sexual acts are always a grave matter. Therefore, whenever a sexual act is immoral under the second font, the act itself is not only intrinsically evil and always immoral, but also always objectively gravely immoral. Every intrinsically evil sexual act is always an objective mortal sin.

However, if a sexual act is inherently good, having all three meanings (marital, unitive, procreative), the act may still be a sin under the first or third fonts. And if it is a sin under the first or the third fonts, but not

under the second font, then the sin may be venial or mortal, depending on the gravity of the intention and the circumstances.

A sexual act might possibly be done with good or bad intention, or in good or bad circumstances. Even if a sexual act is moral under the second font, the person nevertheless sins if the first or third fonts are bad. A husband and wife are not exempt from the requirement of the eternal moral law that every intention (both the intended end and the intended means) must be good in order to avoid sin. If a husband and wife have natural marital relations open to life, which is moral under the second font, but with bad intention, or in circumstances when the bad consequences outweigh the good, then they sin.

Sexual ethics often focuses on intrinsically evil acts, i.e. acts that are immoral under the second font. But as is true for all knowingly chosen acts, even when an act is not intrinsically evil, the first and third fonts must also be good for the overall act to be moral. It is false to say that, if a husband and wife are having natural marital relations open to life, they are certainly not sinning. The act itself of natural marital relations open to life is not intrinsically evil. But, as is always the case, the first font (intention) and the third font (circumstances) must also be good in order to avoid sin.

## THE SECOND FONT

As is true for all knowingly chosen acts, a sexual act is intrinsically evil whenever its moral object is bad. A moral object is bad whenever the act itself is inherently ordered toward the direct and voluntary deprivation of a good required to be present by true love of God, neighbor, self. Every good moral object is a particular fulfillment of true love of God and of your neighbor as yourself. Every bad moral object is a direct and voluntary deprivation that is in some particular way contrary to true love of God, neighbor, self. And this one threefold love is the basis for all morality. Any act that is contrary to love of God, or love of neighbor, or a true ordered love of self, is contrary to all three.

### A. Marital

All sexual acts outside of marriage are intrinsically evil. The deprivation of the marital meaning in any sexual act is sufficient to cause that act to be intrinsically evil. All non-marital sexual acts are intrinsically evil. To be moral, a sexual act must be marital.

Pope Leo XIII: "Marriage has God for its Author, and was from the very beginning a kind of foreshadowing of the Incarnation of His Son; and therefore there abides in it something holy and religious; not extraneous, but innate; not derived from men, but implanted by nature." [155]

Pope Pius XI: "Nor must We omit to remark, in fine, that since the duty entrusted to parents for the good of their children is of such high dignity and of such great importance, every use of the faculty given by God for the procreation of new life is the right and the privilege of the married state alone, by the law of God and of nature, and must be confined absolutely within the sacred limits of that state." [156]

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "This same principle, which the Church holds from Divine Revelation and from her authentic interpretation of the natural law, is also the basis of her traditional doctrine, which states that the use of the sexual function has its true meaning and moral rectitude only in true marriage." [157]

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "Through marriage, in fact, the love of married people is taken up into that love which Christ irrevocably has for the Church, while dissolute sexual union (16) defiles the temple of the Holy Spirit which the Christian has become. Sexual union therefore is only legitimate if a definitive community of life has been established between the man and the woman. This is what the Church has always understood and taught, and she finds a profound agreement with her doctrine in men's reflection and in the lessons of history. Experience teaches us that love must find its safeguard in the stability of marriage, if sexual intercourse is truly to respond to the requirements of its own finality and to those of human dignity."

Footnote 16 states: "Sexual intercourse outside marriage is formally condemned I Cor 5:1; 6:9; 7:2; 10:8 Eph. 5:5; I Tim 1:10; Heb 13:4; and with explicit reasons I Cor 6:12-20." [158] The term 'dissolute sexual union' refers to sexual acts without the marital bond.

Numerous other texts could be cited, from Tradition, Scripture, Magisterium, all of which teach that any type of sexual act outside of marriage is always inherently gravely immoral. But the faithful already know and live by this truth, that sexual relations is only moral within marriage.

The marital meaning is not the physical sexual act itself. The marital meaning is one part of the threefold moral object that determines the essential moral nature of the sexual act. The full moral meaning of the sexual act is found only within a marriage relationship. The act of natural intercourse is inherently directed at expressing and strengthening the marriage relationship. For the act of natural intercourse is inherently ordered toward the marriage itself, as ordained by God. The physical sexual act is the concrete act (the act itself), but every concrete act has an inherent moral meaning as determined by its moral object. Thus the marital meaning of the sexual act is based upon the physical act, but is itself of the moral order. The marital meaning of the sexual act is based upon, but also transcends, the mere physical act.

## B. Unitive

All non-unitive sexual acts are intrinsically evil. The deprivation of the unitive meaning in any sexual act is sufficient to cause that act to be intrinsically evil. To be moral, a sexual act must be unitive.

Pope Paul VI: "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. And if each of these essential qualities, the unitive and the procreative, is preserved, the use of marriage fully retains its sense of true mutual love and its ordination to the supreme responsibility of parenthood to which man is called." [159]

The unitive significance (or meaning) of the marital act is found in that type of intimate physical union, between husband and wife, which is inherently capable of procreation (genital-to-genital intercourse, i.e. natural intercourse). The marital act is intended by God to unite two whole persons, and to express and strengthen their union in love. The unitive significance is "the expression and strengthening of the union of husband and wife." [160] The unitive meaning achieves its fullest realization only when united with the procreative and marital meanings. An act of natural intercourse apart from marriage, or with the use of contraception, or both, is not fully unitive, as God intends. For this unitive meaning is more than the mere natural physical union that occurs during the act; it also implies the continuous union of the man and

woman in marriage, with openness to the procreation of children. The unitive meaning is not sexual climax, nor sexual pleasure, nor mere physical unity.

The unitive meaning is not the physical sexual act itself. The unitive meaning is one part of the threefold moral object that determines the essential moral nature of the sexual act. This moral object determines the essential moral nature of the natural marital act, so that the act itself is inherently ordered toward the union of a man and a woman, in marriage, with openness to new life, as ordained by God. The physical union of the natural sexual act is the concrete act (the act itself), but every concrete act has an inherent moral meaning as determined by its moral object. Thus the unitive meaning is based upon a particular physical act, but is itself of the moral order. The unitive meaning of the sexual act is based upon, but also transcends, the mere physical act.

### C. Procreative

All non-procreative sexual acts are intrinsically evil. The deprivation of the procreative meaning in any sexual act is sufficient to cause that act to be intrinsically evil. Therefore, all non-procreative sexual acts are intrinsically evil. To be moral, a sexual act must be procreative.

Pope Paul VI: "The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life." [161]

Pope Paul VI: "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." [162]

Pope John Paul II: "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.'" [163]

USCCB Catechism: "Each and every sexual act in a marriage needs to be open to the possibility of conceiving a child." [164]

Even though each sexual act within marriage does not produce new life, only natural intercourse is that type of act inherently ordered toward the procreation of new life. And so, even if the couple is infertile, as long as each sexual act within marriage is the natural type (genital-to-genital intercourse), the sexual act remains inherently ordered toward procreation. For it is not the attainment of the moral object that makes the act moral, but rather the inherent ordering of the act itself toward that moral object. The act of natural marital relations open to life by a married couple who are infertile has the procreative meaning in its moral object, even if no child is conceived. A contracepted act of natural marital relations lacks the procreative meaning in its moral object, even if by chance a child is conceived. For the contracepted sexual act is not inherently ordered toward procreation. But the infertile natural sexual act is inherently ordered toward procreation.

The procreative meaning is not the physical sexual act itself. The procreative meaning is one part of the threefold moral object that determines the essential moral nature of the sexual act. For the act of natural intercourse is inherently ordered toward the procreation of children, within marriage, as ordained by God. The physical sexual act is the concrete act (the act itself), but every concrete act has an inherent moral meaning as determined by its moral object. Thus the procreative meaning is based upon the physical act, but is itself of the moral order. The procreative meaning of the sexual act is based upon, but also transcends, the mere physical act.

### The Threefold Moral Object

To be moral, each and every sexual act must be unitive and procreative and marital. The absence of any one or more of these meanings is a deprivation of a good required by true love of God, neighbor, self. The eternal moral law requires each and every sexual act to have all three meanings within the moral object. The deprivation of any one or more of these meanings results in an evil moral object. For evil is properly defined as a deprivation of good, and moral evil is properly defined as the deprivation of a good required by the moral law. True love of God, neighbor, self is the single threefold principle upon which the entire moral law rests.

When the moral object is deprived of a good required by the moral law, the act itself is intrinsically evil. Non-marital sexual acts are intrinsically evil, because the moral object is deprived of the marital meaning. Non-unitive sexual acts are intrinsically evil, because the moral object is deprived of the unitive meaning. Non-procreative sexual acts are intrinsically evil, because the moral object is deprived of the procreative meaning. Without any exception at all, the moral object of each and every sexual act must have all three meanings in order to be good. The deprivation of any one or more of these three meanings makes the act itself intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. A sexual act is never moral unless its moral object possesses all three meanings: unitive, procreative, marital. These three meanings are truly one threefold moral object. For God has ordained that these three distinct meanings be always united and never separated, in each and every sexual act.

### The Unitive Procreative Marital Act

The only sexual act that is unitive and procreative and marital is natural marital relations open to life. Only natural marital relations open to life possesses all three meanings by being inherently ordered toward this threefold moral object. Therefore, the only moral sexual act is natural marital relations open to life.

Natural marital relations is inherently ordered toward a threefold moral object that is unitive, procreative, and marital. Any knowingly chosen sexual act that is deprived of any one or more of these three meanings is an intrinsically evil sexual act. Every sexual act must be inherently ordered toward these three meanings, which are truly one threefold meaning (or significance). Every sexual act must have this same threefold moral object. Only natural marital relations open to life has the fullness of all three meanings.

This single statement by Pope Paul VI includes all three meanings of the moral sexual act [*with my notations*]:

Pope Paul VI: "The sexual activity, in which husband and wife [*marital*] are intimately and chastely united with one another [*unitive*], through which human life is transmitted [*procreative*], is, as the recent Council recalled, 'noble and worthy.'" [165]

This type of sexual act alone is noble, worthy, chaste, and moral. The concrete act of natural marital relations open to life is inherently good because it is inherently ordered toward its proper threefold moral



object. This moral object, like all good moral objects, is a particular fulfillment of true love of God, neighbor, self.

The marital act is no mere physical union, but involves an intimate union of the whole person; it is a chaste union in accord with the plan of God for man and woman. This union is not only an expression of the love of the husband and wife for each other, but also of their love for God. The expression of this love is good for both one's self and one's spouse. And so the union is a particular way of fulfilling the commandment to love God, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

The marital act is procreative, not merely in terms of biology, for a child is not conceived as a result of each sexual act, but in terms of morality. The human race continues to exist, in each successive generation, only because men and women are willing to commit themselves, not only to one another, but to their whole family, including to the procreation and raising of children.

The marital act is aptly named, for sexual intercourse outside of marriage is a lie, a false promise, in which the couple give their bodies to one another, but they refuse to give their whole selves and their lives to one another. Natural law is the promulgation of the eternal moral law within the very nature of created things, and within the proper relationship of created things, especially created persons, including their relationship with God. The plan of God is for men and women to unite in sexual intercourse only within marriage, through that particular sexual act in which both the unitive and the procreative meanings are inseparably combined, for the benefit of the marriage.

Canon Law 1061 n. 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."<sup>[166]</sup>

This paragraph of Canon Law also incorporates and expresses the three meanings of the moral sexual act. The act must be marital: "to which marriage is ordered by its nature." The act must be unitive: "a conjugal act...by which the spouses become one flesh." The act must be procreative, i.e. the type of act "which is suitable in itself for the procreation of offspring."

Second Vatican Council: "Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children.... Parents should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting human life and educating those to whom it has been transmitted.... Marriage to be sure is not instituted solely for procreation; rather, its very nature as an unbreakable compact between persons, and the welfare of the children, both demand that the mutual love of the spouses be embodied in a rightly ordered manner, that it grow and ripen.... But where the intimacy of married life is broken off, its faithfulness can sometimes be imperiled and its quality of fruitfulness ruined, for then the upbringing of the children and the courage to accept new ones are both endangered."<sup>[167]</sup>

The Second Vatican Council's teaching on marriage refers to the three meanings of the moral sexual act: (1) unitive: "conjugal love...the intimacy of married life," (2) procreative: "ordained toward the begetting and educating of children.... the task of transmitting human life," (3) marital: "its very nature as an unbreakable compact between persons."

The three meanings required for any sexual act to be moral is the definitive teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, and is required belief for all the faithful.

### Secondary Ends of Natural Marital Relations

Pope Pius XI: "For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider so long as they are subordinated to the primary end and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved." [168]

The moral object of natural marital relations determines the intrinsic moral nature of the act; the proper moral object is procreative, unitive, and marital. This intrinsic nature of the act is its inherent moral meaning, i.e. its essential moral nature, which is in the second font. But there exist good ends of natural marital relations that are found in the third font. No matter how good the consequences (i.e. the effects) of an act may be, in the third font, these can never justify an act that is intrinsically evil, in the second font. So in the quote above, the Pope cautions that the intrinsic nature of the act must be preserved in order for it to be moral; the act must be unitive, procreative, and marital. But given a good act of natural marital relations open to life, there exist licit secondary ends, i.e. good consequences, which may also be sought by the husband and wife within natural marital relations. These good ends include comforting one another, assisting one another in avoiding sexual sins (1 Cor 7:1-5), expressing affection, and enjoying the companionship of one another in body and soul.

The quieting of concupiscence refers to the effect that natural marital relations has in quenching sexual desire, so that neither the husband nor the wife is tempted to commit a sexual sin (such as masturbation, adultery, or unnatural sexual acts with a spouse). This secondary end of natural marital relations is mentioned in Sacred Scripture:

[1 Corinthians]

- {7:1} Now concerning the things about which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.
- {7:2} But, because of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.
- {7:3} A husband should fulfill his obligation to his wife, and a wife should also act similarly toward her husband.
- {7:4} It is not the wife, but the husband, who has power over her body. But, similarly also, it is not the husband, but the wife, who has power over his body.
- {7:5} So, do not fail in your obligations to one another, except perhaps by consent, for a limited time, so that you may empty yourselves for prayer. And then, return together again, lest Satan tempt you by means of your abstinence.
- {7:6} But I am saying this, neither as an indulgence, nor as a commandment.
- {7:7} For I would prefer it if you were all like myself. But each person has his proper gift from God: one in this way, yet another in that way.
- {7:8} But I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them, if they would remain as they are, just as I also am.
- {7:9} But if they cannot restrain themselves, they should marry. For it is better to marry, than to be burned.

Virginity and celibacy are better than marriage.[169] But many persons would frequently fall into mortal sexual sins (fornication) if they remained unmarried. Therefore, Sacred Scripture states that one of the purposes of natural marital relations is to avoid sins of fornication. The husband and wife each have an obligation toward the other to engage in natural marital relations, so as to assist one another in avoiding

sexual sins. But this good consequence of natural marital relations is found in the third font, not the second font; it does not determine the morality of the act itself. Therefore, no one can justify an intrinsically evil sexual act (such as masturbation or unnatural sexual acts) on the basis of a claim that it quiets concupiscence. Intrinsically evil acts are never justified by any good consequence, nor by any good intention.

Another good consequence of natural marital relations, again in the third font, is that in this way the husband and wife comfort one another after all of the difficulties of the day. Throughout most of human history, most married couples struggled merely to survive in this world. They comforted one another in body, spirit, and soul by natural marital relations open to life. Only in recent times have persons, even married couples, begun to sinfully place the search for self-indulgence first in their lives. And this exaltation of selfishness and pleasure has led many persons to claim that sexual relations within marriage is primarily for pleasure, as if the good consequences (in the third font) of the pleasure found in sexual acts would somehow justify acts that are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral.

Still another good consequence of natural marital relations is the cultivating of mutual love, in that the husband and wife express and increase their loving affection, in heart and mind, for one another, by the physical act of natural marital relations. The husband and wife may seek this good end, as long as the act itself is unitive, procreative, and marital. For the primary purpose of natural marital relations is found in the inherent moral meaning of the act itself. All the good consequences in the third font are of lesser importance, even the expression of loving affection. However, the expression of true spiritual love by the couple in natural marital relations is found in the second font, under the unitive moral object. Certainly, the moral object of every good act includes true spiritual love of God, neighbor, and self; for the entire moral law is based on that threefold commandment. But true spiritual love is of the soul, whereas affective love (emotional love; loving affection) is of the spirit (i.e. the mind and heart). The expression of affective love is a good consequence of natural marital relations in the third font. But the expression of true spiritual love is in the moral object of the second font. Yet both are expressed by the same physical act of natural marital relations, which is of the body. Thus, body, spirit, and soul together cooperate in the act of natural marital relations open to life.

Now there is nothing to prevent many other good consequences from resulting, in the third font, from an act of natural marital relations open to life. But perhaps the most commonly-sought good consequence is pleasure. Though the pleasure of sexual relations is a physical pleasure, in a good marriage the enjoyment of natural marital relations will be not merely physical (of the body), but also of the heart and mind. So this secondary end is best referred to as enjoyment. The husband and wife enjoy companionship, emotion, intimacy, as well as physical pleasure. And the physical pleasure is not limited to sexual climax, but is the full range of feelings and sensations that accompany moral acts of natural marital relations open to life. The married couple may seek this secondary end of enjoyment, as long as it is subordinate to the primary end of the threefold meaning ordained by God, which is unitive, procreative, and marital.

The couple that seeks mere physical pleasure, as if this were the greatest purpose of sexuality, has been deluded by the false teachings of sinful secular society. And anyone who claims that the primary purpose of marital relations is pleasure has gone astray from the clear and definitive teachings of the Church on sexuality. But worse still is the claim that this secondary end of pleasure somehow justifies all manner of sexual acts, without regard to the intrinsic nature of the act itself. Such a claim abandons the most basic principles of morality in Catholic teaching, not only on sexuality, but on ethics in general. For the end never justifies the means. And the human person was not created to seek and find physical pleasure. The pleasure that God intends for natural marital relations is not the primary purpose of sexuality, and is not in the threefold moral object, and so it does not determine the inherent moral meaning of any sexual act. This

pleasure is only a secondary end in the third font. Therefore, pleasure in marital relations should never be exalted as if it were the primary purpose, nor as if this secondary purpose justified any and all acts.

When a good act, such as natural marital relations open to life, is done with good intention, many good consequences naturally result. But these good consequences must be subordinated to the primary purpose of marital relations, found in its single threefold moral object, which is unitive, procreative, marital. But if any married couple engage in natural marital relations solely or mainly for the purpose of pleasure, they sin by placing their own pleasure above the will and plan of God for marriage. Worse still is the sin of those married persons who commit intrinsically evil unnatural sexual acts, which are always gravely immoral under the second font of morality, on the excuse of seeking good consequences, such as pleasure or the quieting of concupiscence. They fail to preserve the intrinsic nature of the act, as Pope Pius XI taught they must, and they refuse to subordinate secondary ends, such as pleasure, to the primary end of the use of the sexual faculty. And that primary end must always be unitive and procreative and marital.

### Non-unitive, Non-procreative, Non-marital Acts

The three meanings of this one moral object are interrelated. Whenever any one meaning is absent, the other meanings are harmed, because all three meanings are closely connected, and because together they constitute one threefold moral object.

Each and every non-unitive sexual act is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. A sexual act is only moral when it is inherently unitive, because this particular physical sexual act, by its very nature, is ordered toward the expression and the strengthening of the union of the spouses in love. This unitive meaning is no mere physical union, but neither is it separate from the particular physical union of natural intercourse. The concrete physical act of natural intercourse is inherently ordered toward the union of the man and woman who engage in that particular act. Natural marital relations is good because it is the loving union of two whole persons, within the natural plan of God for men and women, and for humanity, and not merely the physical union of body parts. The unitive meaning of the act is an expression of the love that the couple have for one another and for God. The unitive meaning is the most fundamental meaning of the marital act. The unitive meaning is related to the theological virtue of love.

Each and every non-procreative sexual act is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. A sexual act is only moral when it is inherently procreative because the sexual act, by its very nature, is ordered toward the procreation of children. Without the procreative meaning of the sexual act, the human race would not survive. The procreation of children by means of the marital act also expresses and strengthens the faithfulness of the couple. The procreative meaning of the act is an expression of the faith the couple have in one another and in God. The procreative meaning proceeds from the unitive meaning, in that the expression of love in this unitive marital act results in procreation and strengthens faithfulness. The procreative meaning is related to the theological virtue of faith.

Each and every non-marital sexual act is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. A sexual act is only moral when it is inherently marital, because the sexual act, by its very nature, is ordered toward the continued union of the man and woman in marriage. From the love and faithfulness of the spouses proceeds hope for the future of the marriage relationship, and of the family, and of the human race. Marriage is not only a current state, but also a continuation of that state: "to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part." [170] Thus the marital meaning not only requires that the man and woman be married, but also that the marriage continue. Marriage is not merely a current relationship between a man and a woman, but also a continuing

commitment to that relationship. The marriage relationship is the foundation of the family and of society, and is necessary for the continuation and welfare of the entire human race.

The marital meaning proceeds primarily from the unitive meaning, and secondarily from the procreative meaning. The union of the spouses, first in vows and next in consummation, is the beginning of the marriage. The husband and wife express their love and faithfulness to one another in marriage by the marital act. Procreation follows after this union of consummation. Both this loving union of natural marital relations and the procreation of children result in a continued expression and strengthening of the marriage relationship. Thus, union and procreation naturally result in the continuation of the marriage, and in hope for the future of each family and of the whole human family. The marital meaning is related to the theological virtue of hope.

The procreative and marital meanings contribute to the unitive meaning. The ordering of the act toward procreation and toward the good of marriage give the unitive meaning its fullest sense. When a man and woman unite in natural intercourse, with love for one another, but outside of marriage and with contraception, the unitive meaning is harmed because this union is non-marital and non-procreative. The plan of God for humanity is such that sexual union should strengthen the marriage and contribute to the procreation of the human race. The absence of any one or more meanings has the effect of harming the other meanings that are present. Only with the procreative and marital meanings does the unitive meaning have the fullness intended by God for sexual acts.

The unitive and marital meanings contribute to the procreative meaning. God intends not only that men and women procreate children, but that the children be conceived, born, and raised within the marriage of one man and one woman. God intends that procreation occur as a result of that natural act which is unitive, and which is inherent to human nature as created by God. Only with the unitive and marital meanings does the procreative meaning have the fullness intended by God for sexual acts.

The unitive and procreative meanings contribute to the marital meaning. The marital act expresses and strengthens the union of the couple in love. And from this expression of love proceeds one of the greatest goods of marriage, the procreation of children. Only with the unitive and procreative meanings does the marital meaning have the fullness intended by God for sexual acts.

The direct and voluntary deprivation of the unitive meaning from any sexual act necessarily causes that act to be intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. The direct and voluntary deprivation of the procreative meaning from any sexual act necessarily causes that act to be intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. The direct and voluntary deprivation of the marital meaning from any sexual act necessarily causes that act to be intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral.

### Artificial Procreation

The procreation intended by God is not merely any act that can conceive a child. Unfortunately, science has provided the human race with the possibility of the procreation of new human life apart from the unitive act of natural relations. The gravely sinful acts of artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, in vivo fertilization, and human cloning, and any other types of artificial procreation, separate procreation from natural intercourse. Such acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral because they are deprived of the unitive meaning. Artificial procreation, by definition, takes place apart from the natural unitive sexual act.

But such acts of artificial procreation are not only non-unitive, they are also not truly and fully procreative. For procreation is not merely of the physical order, but also of the moral order. Only the procreation of new human life as intended by God, in the natural manner and within marriage, only this sexual act with its threefold moral object, truly fulfills the procreative meaning in accord with human nature and the will of God. Artificial procreation not only lacks the unitive meaning, it contradicts the manner of procreation intended by God for the human race. Even when both husband and wife contribute gametes to this type of procreation, artificial procreation harms the marriage because the new life that is created is not the result of the unitive procreative marital act. In this way, science intervenes and disrupts the marriage relationship, conceiving a child, not by the natural human act of husband and wife, but by an artificial act of science and technology.

Worse still is any method of procreation that makes use of gametes from persons other than husband and wife. Such an approach further harms and disrupts the marriage by the intervention of another man or woman as the father or mother of the procreated child. This sin is analogous to adultery, where another person enters into the intimacy of the marriage relationship. Even worse is any method, such as human cloning, that does not make use of the gametes from one man and one woman. Any and all such methods of procreation fundamentally contradict the plan of God for procreation, for the union of husband and wife in marriage, and for the propagation of the human race in accord with natural law.

### Contraception

The direct and voluntary deprivation of the procreative meaning from any sexual act necessarily causes that act to be intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral.

Second Vatican Council: "Relying on these principles, sons of the Church may not undertake methods of birth control which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church in its unfolding of the divine law." [171]

Pope Pius XI: "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.

"Small wonder, therefore, if Holy Writ bears witness that the Divine Majesty regards with greatest detestation this horrible crime and at times has punished it with death. As St. Augustine notes, 'Intercourse even with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of the offspring is prevented. Onan, the son of Judah, did this and the Lord killed him for it.' [St. Augustine, *De Adulterinis Coniugiis*, Book II, n. 12; Genesis 38:8-10]

"Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition, some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: 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." [172]

Pope Paul VI: "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 (cf. Romans 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. 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." [173]

Pope John Paul II: "Paul VI affirmed that the teaching of the Church 'is founded upon the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning.' And he concluded by re-emphasizing that there must be excluded as intrinsically immoral 'every action which, either 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.' " [174]

Pope John Paul II: "When couples, by means of recourse to contraception, separate these two meanings that God the Creator has inscribed in the being of man and woman and in the dynamism of their sexual communion, they act as arbiters of the divine plan and they manipulate and degrade human sexuality -- and with it themselves and their married partner -- by altering its value of total self-giving. Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality." [175]

Notice that the above teaching of the Magisterium is clear and unequivocal. Each and every contracepted sexual act is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, because the act is deliberately deprived of the procreative meaning. No matter how good the intention, and no matter how dire the circumstances, every non-procreative sexual act is an objective mortal sin. This prohibition against non-procreative acts includes the contracepted natural sexual act as well as every type of unnatural sexual act, since these acts too are inherently incapable of procreation.

#### Natural Family Planning (NFP)

Natural family planning refers to any method of determining natural increases or decreases in fertility, in order to decide whether or not to engage in sexual relations. NFP can be used to determine when a woman is most fertile, so that the couple may have sexual relations at that time and increase the chances of conception. NFP can be used to determine when a woman is less fertile, so that the couple can limit sexual relations to that time and decrease the chances of conception. Natural Family Planning is sometimes used strictly, in order to attempt to avoid all conception. Natural Family Planning is sometimes used more loosely, in order to space out the births of the children.

The morality of NFP is based on the teaching that a husband and wife may cease from marital relations, for a determinate period of time, for a variety of different reasons. This principle was taught infallibly by an Ecumenical Council.

The Council of Trent: "If anyone says, that the Church errs, in that she declares that, for many causes, a separation may take place between husband and wife, in regard of bed, or in regard of cohabitation, for a determinate or for an indeterminate period; let him be anathema." [176]

This teaching of Trent includes periodic abstinence (separation in regard of bed for a determinate period) as well as other types of separation. Therefore, the rejection of natural family planning on the basis of a claim that the husband and wife may not periodically abstain from marital relations for a determinate period of time is a heresy against the Catholic Faith. Similarly, the claim that natural family planning may only be used morally for one reason, or for few reasons, or in rare circumstances, contradicts the teaching that there are "many causes" for such a separation in regard of bed. (The other types of separation possible under this Canon of Trent would include a spouse separating in regard of cohabitation because of infidelity, or abuse, or some other grave reason. The spouses may also abstain from marital relations for a period of time, if both spouses consent to abstinence for the sake of prayer and holiness. They may also abstain for a period of time, or even indefinitely, if a spouse is seriously ill.)

When a husband and wife have natural marital relations while using NFP, the sexual act is unitive, procreative, and marital. None of the methods of NFP are contraceptive; there is no barrier, chemical, or other interference with conception. NFP permits each and every marital act to be both unitive and procreative, as required by the natural law. Natural family planning makes use of natural increases and decreases in fertility to permit the husband and wife to have some influence, but not complete control, over the likelihood of conception. Natural family planning is not intrinsically evil.

Pope Paul VI: "God has wisely ordered laws of nature and the incidence of fertility in such a way that successive births are already naturally spaced through the inherent operation of these laws." [177]

Pope John Paul II: "When, instead, by means of recourse to periods of infertility, the couple respect the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexuality, they are acting as ministers of God's plan and they benefit from their sexuality according to the original dynamism of total self-giving, without manipulation or alteration."

"The choice of the natural rhythms involves accepting the cycle of the person, that is the woman, and thereby accepting dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility and self-control. To accept the cycle and to enter into dialogue means to recognize both the spiritual and corporal character of conjugal communion and to live personal love with its requirement of fidelity. In this context the couple comes to experience how conjugal communion is enriched with those values of tenderness and affection which constitute the inner soul of human sexuality, in its physical dimension also. In this way sexuality is respected and promoted in its truly and fully human dimension, and is never used as an object that, by breaking the personal unity of soul and body, strikes at God's creation itself at the level of the deepest interaction of nature and person." [178]

Pope Paul VI: "If therefore there are well-grounded reasons for spacing births, arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances, the Church teaches that married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse only during those times that are infertile,



thus controlling birth in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which We have just explained.

"Neither the Church nor her doctrine is inconsistent when she considers it lawful for married people to take advantage of the infertile period but condemns as always unlawful the use of means which directly prevent conception, even when the reasons given for the latter practice may appear to be upright and serious. In reality, these two cases are completely different. In the former the married couple rightly use a faculty provided them by nature. In the latter they obstruct the natural development of the generative process. It cannot be denied that in each case the married couple, for acceptable reasons, are both perfectly clear in their intention to avoid children and wish to make sure that none will result. But it is equally true that it is exclusively in the former case that husband and wife are ready to abstain from intercourse during the fertile period as often as for reasonable motives the birth of another child is not desirable. And when the infertile period recurs, they use their married intimacy to express their mutual love and safeguard their fidelity toward one another. In doing this they certainly give proof of a true and authentic love." [179]

Pope Paul VI: "The teaching of the Church regarding the proper regulation of birth is a promulgation of the law of God Himself." [180]

The Magisterium has clearly and definitively taught that married couples may use natural family planning either "for spacing births" or even when the couple has an "intention to avoid children and wish to make sure that none will result." However, the couple may use NFP to decrease the likelihood of conception only for "well-grounded reasons" or "reasonable motives." [181]

When a husband and wife have natural marital relations open to life, whether during the time when she is most fertile or during the time when she is least fertile, the act itself is inherently unitive, procreative, and marital. And so the use of NFP does not cause a deprivation in the moral object of natural marital relations open to life. Natural family planning is not intrinsically evil. Natural marital relations open to life is not intrinsically evil. Refraining from sexual relations is not intrinsically evil. Therefore, when a husband and wife use NFP, either refraining from, or engaging in, natural marital relations open to life, the second font of morality is good.

However, all three fonts must be good for an act to be moral. The use of NFP is only moral when all three fonts are good. The husband and wife must not intend to use NFP with a contraceptive mentality, or with selfishness, or with disregard for the will of God concerning procreation. If a husband and wife use NFP in order to avoid all conception for selfish reasons, then they sin seriously against God. For the procreation of children is one of the highest goods of marriage. The use of NFP is not inherently immoral, but the intention for its use might be good or evil.

Similarly, a husband and wife must not use NFP to avoid conception if the bad consequences outweigh the good consequences. If using NFP strictly for many years will result in few, if any, children in the marriage, then this deprivation of children from the family is a bad consequence. On the other hand, if the husband and wife procreate more children than they are able to care for, resulting in harm to the children and the family, then this is also a bad consequence in the third font. As always, the good and bad consequences must be weighed, and whenever the bad consequences outweigh the good, the act is immoral. The husband and wife must sincerely consider whether it is better to have more children, or fewer children, in the eyes of God. And a mere calculation as to the selfish benefits and detriments does not result in a moral choice.

Marriage is ordained by God for the procreation of children, for the good of the family, the Church, and the human race. The procreation of children by a husband and wife is not optional; the couple cannot choose to be childless, unless they have a grave reason. If they are able to do so, a husband and wife fulfill a grave moral obligation when they procreate children for God, for their family, and for humanity.

The number of children that a family should have depends on the circumstances, which varies from one couple to another. A couple need only have a just reason (a reason of moderate moral weight) in order to limit their family to a few children. But a couple would need a grave reason to attempt to have no children at all. Similarly, a couple should have a just reason if they decide to have very many children in their family. They should not procreate children irresponsibly, without considering the will of God and the good of the whole family.

Pontifical Council For The Family: "However, profoundly different from any contraceptive practice is the behavior of married couples, who, always remaining fundamentally open to the gift of life, live their intimacy only in the unfruitful periods, when they are led to this course by serious motives of responsible parenthood. This is true both from the anthropological and moral points of view, because it is rooted in a different conception of the person and of sexuality. The witness of couples who for years have lived in harmony with the plan of the Creator, and who, for proportionately serious reasons, licitly use the methods rightly called 'natural,' confirms that it is possible for spouses to live the demands of chastity and of married life with common accord and full self-giving." [182]

The Holy See teaches that "serious motives," that is "proportionately serious reasons," are needed in order to use NFP to avoid, or to decrease the likelihood of, conception. The degree of moral weight for the reason depends on the degree of moral weight of the act being considered. Children are the primary good of marriage. A grave reason is needed to use NFP to attempt to have no children at all. A less grave but still serious reason is needed to choose to have only one child. Similarly, for a large or very large number of children, a proportionately serious reason is needed, because the family has limited resources for raising the children. But even when choosing to have an ordinary number of children, a couple must make this moral decision based on faith and reason, not on their own selfish desires, and not arbitrarily or irresponsibly. The use of NFP, whether to conceive or to avoid conception, must always have at least "well-grounded reasons" or "reasonable motives."

For the husband and wife do not create children, but rather they procreate children. The married couple participates with God in the creation of new human life. The body of the human person is created by natural reproduction. But God creates the soul of each and every human person directly. The husband and wife should understand that they are not acting on their own in creating new life. For they are participants with God, in the plan of God, to the benefit of the Church and the human race, when children are procreated by the husband and wife, and by God. Therefore, the husband and wife must always have at least a just reason for using NFP, whether to avoid or to seek conception.

Pope Pius XI: Thus amongst the blessings of marriage, the child holds the first place. And indeed the Creator of the human race Himself, Who in His goodness wishes to use men as His helpers in the propagation of life, taught this when, instituting marriage in Paradise, He said to our first parents, and through them to all future spouses: "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth." (Gen 1:28). As St. Augustine admirably deduces from the words of the holy Apostle Saint Paul to Timothy (1 Tim 5:14) when he says: "The Apostle himself is therefore a witness that marriage is for the sake of generation: 'I wish,' he says, 'young girls to marry.' And, as if someone said to him, 'Why?,' he immediately adds: 'To bear children, to be mothers of families'." [183]

[1 Timothy]

{5:14} Therefore, I want the younger women to marry, to procreate children, to be mothers of families, to provide no ready opportunity for the adversary to speak evil.

Pope John Paul II: "According to the plan of God, marriage is the foundation of the wider community of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in whom they find their crowning." [184]

As the first and highest blessing of marriage, the procreation and education of children cannot be cast aside for no reason, nor for a light reason, nor even for a reason with only moderate weight. The obligation of a husband and wife to procreate children is a grave obligation within the plan of God for the family, for the Church, and for humanity. Only a grave reason can entirely exempt a husband and wife, who are able to do so, from the grave obligation to bear children for God. Therefore, a husband and wife are not free to use NFP to attempt to avoid all conception, so that their marriage bears no children at all, except for a grave reason.

A husband and wife may use NFP to space out the births of their children, and to limit the size of their family in accord with reason and the particular circumstances of their lives (such as limited resources). They need only have a just reason ("well-grounded reasons," "reasonable motives") to use NFP in this way. For they are not using NFP to avoid all conception for the entire length of their marriage; they are not using NFP so that their marriage will never procreate children. The use of natural family planning to keep the total number of children within reasonable limits, given the particular circumstances, requires only a reason of moderate moral weight. Similarly, the use of NFP to allow for some length of time between one birth and another require only a just reason (i.e. a moderate reason), not a grave reason.

A husband and wife who are older, and who already have procreated children for God, may elect, for well-grounded reasons, to use NFP with the intention of avoiding the conception of more children. Although they intend to avoid all further procreation of children, they do not need a grave reason, since they have already met their grave obligation before God to procreate children. But as always, the husband and wife must be open to life, not only in the sexual act itself, but also in their hearts and minds, so as to accept any new life that God might choose to give to them, regardless of whether or not they had planned for additional children.

NFP is not used with moral intention, regardless of the circumstances, if it is used with the intention to exclude God from the decision to procreate children. There are three fonts of morality; all three fonts, including intention, must be good for the overall act to be moral. If any husband or wife uses NFP with the intention of gaining complete control over procreation, such that the will of God is deliberately thwarted, or is ignored, or is paid only lip service, such a person sins grievously by using NFP with a contraceptive intent. Although NFP is not a type of contraception under the second font, any type of contraceptive intent is a sin under the first font. Pope John Paul II has repeatedly spoken against the "contraceptive mentality" that is so prevalent in the world today. [185] This mentality sometimes influences Catholics, so that they use NFP as if it were a form of contraception, as if it were a way to gain selfish control over procreation apart from God.

But even if a married couple uses NFP with good intention, in order to conceive many children, they nevertheless sin if they act with disregard for the will of God and the good of the family within the particular circumstances of their lives. There are three fonts of morality; all three fonts, including the circumstances, must be good for the overall act to be moral. It is not sufficient that NFP is good under the second font;

intention and circumstances must also be good. The procreation of children is the greatest good of marriage, yet this does not justify a selfish intention, nor a disregard for the moral weight of the consequences of one's actions. In some circumstances, a couple may be morally obligated to space the births of their children, or to limit the overall size of their family, or both. Each particular family, and the human family worldwide, has limited resources to be shared by all its members.

Examples: (1) A married couple are in difficult financial circumstances, either unemployed or under-employed, such that they cannot provide adequately for the basic needs of any new child. If they are able to use NFP, but refuse to do so, and they continue to procreate more children, they sin under the third font of morality, since the bad consequences outweigh the good.

(2) A married and childless couple uses NFP strictly, with the intention of avoiding all procreation, without a grave reason. They sin under both the first and third fonts: under the first font, because their intention is contraceptive in that they attempt to gain selfish control over procreation; and under the third font, because the bad consequence of a childless marriage is not outweighed by any good consequence. Bearing children for God is the highest good of marriage.

(3) A married couple wishes to avoid all conception because, due to medical problems, a pregnancy would endanger the life of the mother. For this grave reason, they may morally use NFP very strictly, so as to attempt to avoid all conception. Alternatively, they may refrain from all marital relations, if they are mutually willing and are able to do so without falling into serious sin.

(4) A married couple are in their early 40's, and have already procreated several children. They prayerfully decide that it would be best to dedicate their time, efforts, and resources to raising their existing children. They use NFP strictly, attempting to avoid all conception. But they are willing to accept a new child from the Providence of God. They have good intention (first font), and they judge that the good consequences of limiting the size of their family outweighs any bad consequences (third font). The use of NFP, even strictly, is good under the second font. And so they are not sinning by using NFP in this way.

## The Sexual Faculty

A sexual act is any deliberate use of the sexual faculty.

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "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.' "[186]

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "every genital act must be within the framework of marriage." [187]

The first quote above not only condemns any non-marital use of the sexual faculty, but also any use that is non-unitive ("the full sense of mutual self-giving") or non-procreative ("human procreation"). The second quote above, from the same document, uses a different wording, which has the effect of clarifying that the use of the sexual faculty refers to genital acts. Therefore, acts which are only peripherally-related to sexual acts, such as flirting, kissing, hugging, would not be sexual acts per se. These peripheral acts are not a use of the genital sexual faculty.

## Moral Use of the Sexual Faculty

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "Marriage is instituted by the Creator as a form of life in which a communion of persons is realized involving the use of the sexual faculty. 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh' (Gen 2:24)."[188]

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "It is only in the marital relationship that the use of the sexual faculty can be morally good."[189]

Pope Paul VI: "The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life. 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."[190]

The first two quotes above specifically condemn sexual acts outside of marriage, using the term 'sexual faculty' to refer to sexual acts per se. The third quote above addresses not only the marital meaning of the sexual faculty, but also the unitive and procreative meanings. For all sexual acts must be unitive and procreative and marital. This truth is taught by the Magisterium of the Church, not only from Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, but from the natural law, as Pope Paul VI points out in the quote above. Therefore, the only moral use of the sexual faculty is in that type of sexual act with a threefold moral object which is unitive, procreative, and marital. All other uses of the sexual faculty are contrary to the eternal moral law, contrary to natural law, and contrary to the teaching of the Church.

## Natural Intercourse

Natural intercourse refers to that type of sexual act which is genital-to-genital, between one man and one woman, and which is inherently capable of procreation. Natural intercourse includes both the unitive and procreative meanings of the sexual act. Even if the man or the woman is infertile, due to old age, or injury, or illness, the act of natural intercourse retains the procreative meaning as long as it is the type of act that is inherently directed at procreation.

For the act itself is moral or immoral based on the inherent ordering of the act toward its moral object, regardless of whether or not that moral object is attained. An act of attempted murder is intrinsically evil and always immoral, even though the attempt fails, because the chosen act is inherently ordered toward the killing of an innocent human being. An act of natural marital relations open to life is inherently moral, even if the couple is infertile, because the act itself is inherently ordered toward procreation, even if such procreation happens not to occur.

Natural intercourse within marriage is called natural marital relations. The term 'natural marital relations' implies that no contraception is used, for the use of contraception is contrary to the natural procreative meaning of sexual relations. However, to emphasize the necessity of the procreative meaning in all moral sexual acts, sometimes the explanatory term 'natural marital relations open to life' is used. Both terms have essentially the same meaning. Natural marital relations open to life is the only moral sexual act. 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.

This type of sexual act alone is properly called natural, as understood from natural law, i.e. from the expression of the eternal moral law inherent to human nature and to the proper order among human persons, as intended by God, the Creator. For, in terms of morality and natural law, the term 'natural' refers solely to nature as created and intended by God, and not to what might seem natural to the fallen sinner, or to any of the sciences (whether the physical sciences or the social sciences). The natural sexual act within marriage is unitive, procreative, and marital, as those terms are properly understood within the moral order. All other sexual acts are contrary to the eternal moral law, as it is expressed in natural law and in the teaching of the Church.

### Unnatural Sexual Acts

Any sexual act other than natural intercourse is an unnatural sexual act. Although some persons might claim that various non-procreative, non-unitive sexual acts are somehow natural, nothing contrary to the eternal moral law is truly natural. For the natural law is a direct expression of the eternal moral law, within creation, as intended by God. And God never intends anything contrary to the eternal moral law, which is the Justice inherent to His very Nature. The absence of the procreative meaning in a sexual act always necessarily makes that knowingly chosen act an intrinsically evil objective mortal sin.

Only natural marital relations open to life is fully unitive and fully procreative. Sexual acts other than natural (genital-to-genital) intercourse are not procreative, and also not truly unitive. For the unitive meaning is not merely of the physical order, but also of the moral order. The union of the natural marital act is that union ordained by God for the expression and strengthening of the love of husband and wife, and also for procreation. Unnatural sexual acts are both non-procreative and non-unitive. The only truly unitive sexual act is that act of natural intercourse established by God as integral to human nature and to the propagation of the human race. The absence of the unitive meaning in a sexual act always necessarily makes that knowingly chosen act an intrinsically evil objective mortal sin.

An unnatural sexual act is any sexual act, i.e. any use of the genital sexual faculty, which is not in and of itself, by the type of the act, capable of procreation. An unnatural sexual act accompanied by a natural sexual act is two distinct acts; the unnatural sexual act is not inherently capable of procreation and is not justified by being accompanied by another act, one that is capable of procreation.

Unnatural sexual acts include masturbation, manipulative sexual acts, anal sexual acts, oral sexual acts, and sexual acts using devices. Even though some unnatural sexual acts may have a certain mere physical union, such acts are not the type of union ordained by God for the use of the sexual faculty by men and women. Therefore, all unnatural sexual acts are both non-procreative and non-unitive.

If a man and a woman have natural intercourse, the type of act inherently capable of procreation, but they use contraception, the act itself is unitive, but not procreative. In some sense, even contracepted natural intercourse is unnatural, since the natural tendency of the act toward procreation is contravened. However, in order to maintain a clear distinction between different types of sexual acts, the term unnatural sexual act refers to any sexual act which is not that genital-to-genital sexual act between one man and one woman which, as a type of act, is inherently capable of procreation. And the term natural intercourse (or natural sexual act, or natural relations) refers to that genital-to-genital sexual act between one man and one woman which is the type of act inherently capable of procreation. Contracepted natural intercourse is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, because the procreative meaning is absent, but the act may still called natural intercourse because it is that same type of act, despite the contraception. Unnatural sexual acts are not the natural type of act, and so they necessarily lack both the unitive and procreative meanings; as a result, unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral.

An act of masturbation is the solitary use of the sexual faculty; it is the direct and voluntary use of the sexual faculty without the unitive, procreative, and marital meanings. Masturbation is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. Whenever the term 'direct' is used to describe an intrinsically evil act, the meaning is moral directness, not necessarily physical directness. Thus, even if a person is able to use the sexual faculty in a seemingly indirect manner, any such use is nevertheless morally direct. Whenever the term 'voluntary' is used to describe an intrinsically evil act, the meaning is the deliberate choice of the act itself (the concrete act), regardless of intention or circumstances.

A manipulative sexual act is similar to masturbation, except that one person performs the act on another; it is the direct and voluntary use of the sexual faculty without the unitive and procreative meanings. The term masturbation is sometimes used to describe this act. Such acts are performed with the hand, or with another body part, or with an object or device. Even if such an act occurs between husband and wife, the act is deprived of the marital meaning in its moral object because this type of act, within the moral order, is not inherently directed at the expression and strengthening of the marriage as ordained by God. Intrinsically evil acts between a husband and wife are never truly marital. For all such acts are inherently contrary to the will of God for the marriage relationship.

An oral sexual act is the use of the genital sexual faculty by oral stimulation; it is the direct and voluntary use of the sexual faculty without the unitive and procreative meanings. An anal sexual act is the use of the genital sexual faculty by anal stimulation; it is the direct and voluntary use of the sexual faculty without the unitive and procreative meanings. Even if such acts occur between husband and wife, these acts are deprived of the marital meaning in the moral object because these types of acts, within the moral order, are not inherently directed at the expression and strengthening of the marriage as ordained by God.

Since sexual climax is a use of the genital sexual faculty, any deliberate stimulation to sexual climax, other than by natural marital relations, is intrinsically evil and always immoral, even if the means does not involve the genitals. If a person is able to be stimulated to sexual climax by physical stimulation of a non-genital body part, or by a non-physical stimulation (such as by word or thought), such a deliberate act constitutes a morally direct and voluntary use of the sexual faculty which is not procreative, not truly unitive, not truly marital, and therefore intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral.

A physically indirect stimulation of the genital sexual faculty can occur in a number of different ways, each of which is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, since the unitive and procreative meanings are absent. A person might stimulate themselves or another person to sexual climax by touching parts of the body other than the genitals; any such deliberate act is morally direct and intrinsically evil, even though there is only an indirect physical stimulation. This type of stimulation of the genital sexual faculty is physically indirect, but morally direct.

A non-physical stimulation of the genital sexual faculty can occur in a number of different ways, each of which is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, since the unitive and procreative meanings are absent. A person might stimulate themselves to sexual climax by means of mere thought; any such deliberate act is morally-direct and intrinsically evil, even though there is no direct or indirect physical stimulation. A person might stimulate themselves or another person to sexual climax by sight or sound, apart from any physical touching; any such deliberate act is morally direct and intrinsically evil, even though there is no direct or indirect physical stimulation. Examples would include the use of pornographic movies or photographs, or so-called phone sex (use of another persons' voice on the phone for stimulation to climax), or any similar act.

Any such act, and any combination of such acts, and any similar types of acts (which are inherently non-unitive, or non-procreative, or non-marital) are necessarily always intrinsically evil and gravely immoral. All sexual acts are an objectively grave matter, and so, in addition to being intrinsically evil, every immoral use of the genital sexual faculty is an objective mortal sin. No intention or purpose, no set of circumstances, no motive however compelling, no situation however dire, can justify an act that is intrinsically evil.

Any deliberate and morally direct use of the genital sexual faculty, whether by a physically direct means, or by a physically indirect means, or by a non-physical means, or by any means whatsoever, is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral whenever any one or more of the three meanings are absent (unitive, procreative, marital). The only sexual act that is unitive and procreative and marital is natural marital relations open to life. The only moral type of sexual act is natural marital relations open to life. All other sexual acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral.

All these various unnatural sexual acts have the same evil moral object: the direct and deliberate use of the genital sexual faculty deprived of the threefold moral object intended by God for human nature and for relationships between human persons. All unnatural sexual acts are essentially the same under the second font of morality. There may be differences between these acts in the intention or in the circumstances. But intrinsically evil acts are always immoral, regardless of the intention and circumstances. Therefore, each and every unnatural sexual act is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, due to the lack of the unitive and procreative meanings.

#### Unnatural sexual acts within Marriage

Unnatural sexual acts remain immoral, even within marriage, because all three meanings (unitive, procreative, marital) must be present for a sexual act to be moral. Extra-marital sexual acts are immoral because they lack the marital meaning. Contracepted sexual acts are immoral because they lack the procreative meaning. Unnatural sexual acts are immoral because they lack both the unitive and procreative meanings. Unnatural sexual acts are also not truly marital, even if these acts occur between husband and wife, because intrinsically evil sexual acts are not a part of God's plan for the expression and strengthening of marriage. The lack of even one meaning (unitive, procreative, marital) is sufficient to make any sexual act intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. But unnatural sexual acts, even between husband and wife, lack all three meanings required by the natural law. Therefore, unnatural sexual acts are not justified by being done by a husband and wife within marriage.

The basic principles of morality are the same for all areas of human life, for each and every knowingly chosen act. There are no exceptions from the eternal moral law for the marital bedroom. The husband and wife cannot do any acts whatsoever to one another, nor can they disregard the eternal moral law, on the excuse that these acts are within marriage. There are no situations within human life that are exempt from morality. Each and every knowingly chosen act must be good under all three fonts of morality; otherwise, the act is a sin before God, who is all-knowing and who punishes every kind of sin. His mercy is not unjust. His love is not unjust. Therefore, He does not permit a husband and wife to engage in inherently unjust acts, on the basis of a claim that such acts are loving, or merciful, or mutually-pleasing.

#### Unnatural sexual acts before, during, or after natural marital relations:

In all areas of life, each and every knowingly chosen act must be moral under all three fonts of morality. In all areas of life, whenever two or more acts are chosen, either one after the other or at the same time, each chosen act must be good on its own, as the three fonts of morality apply to that particular act. A good act does not justify a prior, concurrent, or subsequent bad act. If a good act occurs before or after a bad act, the



good act remains good and the bad act remains bad. If a good act and a bad act occur at the same time, the good act remains good and the bad act remains bad. An immoral means is never justified by a good intended end, nor by the circumstances of the chosen act.

Intrinsically evil acts are always immoral, regardless of intention or circumstance. Whoever says or implies otherwise has abandoned the true moral teachings of the Roman Catholic Faith. Nothing whatsoever can justify an intrinsically evil act. If any act is intrinsically evil when done by itself, then it remains intrinsically evil when done before, during, or after another act, one that is good. Therefore, unnatural sexual acts remain intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, even when such acts are done before, during, or after a good act of natural marital relations open to life.

Any use of the sexual faculty is immoral when the act lacks the unitive, or the procreative, or the marital meaning. Each and every sexual act that lacks the unitive or the procreative or the marital meaning has an evil moral object. Each and every sexual act, other than natural marital relations open to life, is intrinsically evil and always immoral. Each and every intrinsically evil act is the direct and voluntary deprivation of a particular good required by love of God, neighbor, self. The good required of each and every sexual act is the threefold good of the unitive, procreative, and marital meanings.

Therefore, if a sexual act within marriage lacks the unitive or procreative meanings, that act is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. Furthermore, unnatural sexual acts within marriage are not truly marital, since this type of act is contrary to the plan of God for marriage. All unnatural sexual acts are inherently contrary to the meaning of marriage as intended by God, which is inherent to human nature and to the human race, male and female, as created by God. And so no one can justify an unnatural sexual act by saying that God permits such acts between a husband and wife.

[Ephesians]

{5:5} For know and understand this: no one who is a fornicator, or lustful, or rapacious (for these are a kind of service to idols) holds an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

{5:6} Let no one seduce you with empty words. For because of these things, the wrath of God was sent upon the sons of unbelief.

{5:7} Therefore, do not choose to become participants with them.

{5:8} For you were darkness, in times past, but now you are light, in the Lord. So then, walk as sons of the light.

{5:9} For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and justice and truth,

{5:10} affirming what is well-pleasing to God.

{5:11} And so, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead, refute them.

{5:12} For the things that are done by them in secret are shameful, even to mention.

If anyone teaches that an unnatural sexual act is not intrinsically evil, or is not always objectively gravely immoral, or is moral between a husband and wife, or is moral before, during, or after natural marital relations, or is moral for any particular intention or purpose, or is moral in any particular circumstance, then he is teaching heresy, and promoting grave immorality, and doing serious harm to souls and to marriage, and he has gone astray from the true moral teachings of Jesus Christ and His Church.

[James]

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

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. By his chastity he attracts the good will and protection of God for his whole household."[191]

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 even unchaste thoughts do not 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 the positive precept of chastity. No one is exempt from the requirement of the eternal moral law to practice chastity according to one's 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, with or without sexual climax, 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

Saint Jerome: "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."[192]

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 cannot justify an intrinsically evil act. Intrinsically evil acts are inherently contrary to reason and justice, and so St. Jerome refers to the choice of such acts as a type of insanity, figuratively speaking. Thus, if a sexual act is a sin, it does not matter how honorable a person's intentions are, or what his intended end (or purpose) may be, the act is inherently gravely contrary to the moral law.

Jerome plainly taught that there are sexual sins within marriage. The idea that no sexual act is immoral as long as the natural 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.

Saint Augustine, Bishop and Father of the Church

Commenting on The Epistle to the Romans, in his moral treatise 'On the Good of Marriage', Saint Augustine writes on the subject of unnatural sexual acts:

St. Augustine: "nor be changed into that use which is against nature, on which the Apostle could not be silent, when speaking of the excessive corruptions of unclean and impious men.... by changing the natural use into that which is against nature, which is more damnable when it is done in the case of husband or wife." [193]

The expression 'that use which is against nature' refers to unnatural sexual acts, such as oral sex, anal sex, or manual sex. Saint Augustine condemns such acts unequivocally. He states that such unnatural sexual acts are even more damnable (i.e. are more serious mortal sins) when these take place within marriage. God is more offended by a grave sexual sin that takes place within the Sacrament of Marriage, since this offense is not only against nature, but also against a Holy Sacrament. "So then, of all to whom much has been given, much will be required. And of those to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be asked." (Lk 12:48).

This teaching of Saint Augustine is not merely the theological opinion of a Saint and a Father of the Church; it is his understanding of the teaching of Sacred Scripture. And the Magisterium has never contradicted his teaching on this point. Moreover, the subsequent teaching of the Magisterium on sexual ethics has always reinforced this same teaching: each and every sexual act must be inherently marital, procreative, and unitive in order to be moral.

Now some persons claim that unnatural sexual acts are only unnatural, and therefore only immoral, between persons of the same gender. But Saint Augustine understands Sacred Scripture to teach that these types of sexual acts are still unnatural and still gravely immoral even when they occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. Augustine refers to these acts as "that use which is against nature", even when the two persons are husband and wife.

St. Augustine: "For, whereas that natural use, when it pass beyond the compact of marriage, that is, beyond the necessity of begetting, is pardonable in the case of a wife, damnable in the case of an harlot; that which is against nature is execrable when done in the case of an harlot, but more execrable in the case of a wife.... But, when the man shall wish to use the member [*i.e. body part,*] of the wife not allowed for this purpose, the wife is more shameful, if she suffer it to take place in her own case, than if in the case of another woman." [194]

In this passage, Saint Augustine first compares natural sexual relations within marriage, done out of impure desires, to the same natural sexual acts outside of marriage. He teaches that having natural sexual relations within marriage, when done to satisfy a somewhat impure desire, is pardonable, i.e. a venial sin. But natural sexual relations outside of marriage is damnable, i.e. a mortal sin. Then Saint Augustine goes on to consider "that which is against nature", i.e. unnatural sexual acts. He condemns such unnatural sexual acts as

'execrable' (utterly detestable, abominable, abhorrent). Therefore these acts are among the worst of the sexual sins. He also teaches that unnatural sexual acts within marriage, far from being permitted because they take place within marriage, are even worse, calling them "even more execrable" than the same unnatural sexual acts outside of marriage. This is because the sin is not only against nature, but also against a Holy Sacrament instituted by Christ himself for the sake of our salvation.

Therefore, unnatural sexual acts do not become permissible when these take place within marriage. Instead, unnatural sexual acts are made even more sinful when these take place within marriage because they offend against both nature and a Sacrament.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church

In the quote below, St. Thomas teaches that grave sexual sins within marriage are comparable to adultery, because the acts offend against the good of marriage. He does not teach that all sexual acts within marriage are moral. He does not teach that all sexual acts occurring before or after the natural act are moral.

Saint Thomas Aquinas: "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." [195]

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.

Saint Thomas Aquinas: "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." [196]

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

Second, as is clear from the quotes above, St. Thomas taught that not every sexual act is justified 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, which is an intrinsically evil and gravely immoral sexual sin.

Third, St. Thomas does not even consider the absurd claim 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 such a position, then he would have to say that a husband's ardent love would be entirely justified, as long as 'the semen is not misdirected' (as some claim). Saint Thomas does not consider any and all sexual acts to be justified merely because, at some point in time, a completed act of natural marital relations also occurs.

The popular idea, that a husband and wife can commit any kind of sexual act toward one another as long as the husband climaxes during the natural act, is false, is contrary to the teaching of the Saints, is a serious doctrinal error, and is entirely incompatible with the teaching of the Magisterium on the marital, unitive, procreative meaning of natural marital relations, and on the grave immorality of intrinsically evil sexual sins.

#### 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, who is 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 and reasonable Catholic believe that these two very holy Saints would make use of unnatural sexual acts within their holy marriage, or that they would advise any married couple 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 immoral act, from all sexual sins, from actual mortal sins as well as objective mortal sins. We are all called to imitate the Saints, even the least worthy among us.

#### The Sacrament of Marriage

The Sacrament of Marriage confers grace on the husband and wife throughout their marriage, not only at the wedding ceremony, when the marriage vows are taken. The whole of married life, each and every day, continues to be a part of the Sacrament and a source of grace. And the consummation of the marriage in natural marital relations is a part of the Sacrament, not only once, but each time.

Therefore, whenever any gravely immoral sexual sin of any type occurs within holy Matrimony, there is an additional offense against the Sacrament. If a man rapes a woman, he commits a serious sin. If a man rapes his own wife, the sin is even more serious because it is also an offense against the Sacrament of Marriage. If two unmarried persons commit an unnatural sexual act, they commit a serious sin. But if a husband and wife commit an unnatural sexual act, the sin is even more serious because it is also an offense against the Sacrament of Marriage.

Worse still is the sin of anyone who encourages married persons to commit unnatural sexual acts, or who teaches them that such acts are not immoral within marriage, for such a one as this is responsible for much harm to many souls and to many marriages. This false teaching does grave harm to the Sacrament of Marriage and to the Church and to the faithful. Such a one as this has gone astray from the true love taught by Christ, and is teaching a false gospel, not the true Gospel taught by Christ and His Church.

[Galatians]

{1:6} I wonder that you have been so quickly transferred, from him who called you into the grace of Christ, over to another gospel.

{1:7} For there is no other, except that there are some persons who disturb you and who want to overturn the Gospel of Christ.

{1:8} But if anyone, even we ourselves or an Angel from Heaven, were to preach to you a gospel other than the one that we have preached to you, let him be anathema.

{1:9} Just as we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone has preached a gospel to you, other than that which you have received, let him be anathema.

### The Absence of Sexual Climax

The moral use of the sexual faculty may occur even in the absence of sexual climax.

Examples: (1) A husband and wife begin to have natural marital relations open to life. They are interrupted, and as a result neither the husband or wife attains sexual climax. In this case, the use of the sexual faculty was moral because the act of natural marital relations open to life is inherently ordered toward its proper moral object (the unitive, procreative, and marital meanings), even though the act was, in some sense, incomplete.

(2) A husband and wife have natural marital relations open to life. The husband climaxes, but the wife does not. In this case, the use of the sexual faculty was moral because all three meanings were present in the act. Neither the unitive meaning, nor the procreative meaning, nor the marital meaning depend on the occurrence of sexual climax. The natural sexual act remains inherently ordered toward procreation, even if climax happens not to occur.

And it would be contrary to reason to claim that the spouses have not had sexual relations in this case. For the wife might even become pregnant, proving that sexual relations did occur. Or if by chance she does not become pregnant, it would be absurd to claim that whether or not sexual relations occurred depends on whether or not conception occurred.

(3) A husband and wife have natural marital relations open to life. The wife climaxes, but the husband does not. In this case, the use of the sexual faculty was moral because all three meanings were present in the act. Even though the lack of sexual climax in the husband makes procreation an unlikely result, the act itself was still the type of act inherently directed toward procreation. It is not the attainment of the moral object that makes an act moral or immoral, but the inherent ordering of the act toward its moral object. The morality of the second font never depends on the attainment of the moral object (in this case procreation), but on the inherent ordering of the act toward its moral object.

The immoral use of the sexual faculty may occur even in the absence of sexual climax.

Examples: (1) A man rapes a woman, and neither person reaches sexual climax. The act is not only immoral as an act of violence, it is immoral as a sexual act. It would be absurd to claim that no sexual act occurred merely because climax was absent.

(2) A young man and young woman decide to commit the sin of premarital natural intercourse. If neither the man or the woman reaches sexual climax, the chosen act still has the same inherent moral meaning, and the same moral object, i.e. use of the sexual faculty without the marital meaning. The lack of sexual climax does not affect the immorality of the chosen act.

(3) A man or woman is masturbating, and is interrupted, so that sexual climax never occurs. The person still chose an act that is inherently non-procreative, non-unitive, and non-marital. Therefore, the sexual act remains intrinsically evil and gravely immoral, despite the lack of sexual climax.

(4) A husband and wife use an unnatural sexual act as a type of so-called foreplay, in order to become aroused for a subsequent act of natural marital relations. The good end of natural marital relations does not justify the intrinsically evil means of an unnatural sexual act. Even if sexual climax does not occur during the unnatural sexual act, the act itself is still inherently non-procreative and inherently non-unitive and inherently non-marital; therefore, the act itself is intrinsically evil. A lack of sexual climax does not cause an unnatural sexual act to become moral.

Also, the mere use of a different terminology, by calling an intrinsically evil unnatural sexual act 'foreplay,' does not justify the act. It is still the same immoral act, no matter which words are used to describe it. "Woe to you who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light, and light for darkness; who exchange bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).

The immoral use of the sexual faculty may occur with or without sexual climax.

(1) A husband and wife engage in natural marital relations open to life. In order for one or the other spouse, or both spouses, to achieve sexual climax, or to achieve greater enjoyment of the act, they make use of one or another unnatural sexual act during the very act of natural marital relations. The act of natural marital relations open to life remains a good act. But the accompanying unnatural sexual act remains intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. The purpose of the evil act, i.e. to facilitate a good act, does not justify the evil act. Nothing whatsoever can justify that which is inherently immoral. It is never the case under the eternal moral law that a good act could justify an evil act, regardless of whether the evil act occurs before, during, or after the good act. Even if sexual climax occurs during natural marital relations, and as a result of natural marital relations, the intrinsically evil unnatural sexual act remains intrinsically evil and always immoral. The inherent moral meaning of an unnatural sexual act is not changed by a prior, concurrent, or subsequent act of natural marital relations. The morality of a sexual act does not depend on the absence or presence of sexual climax, but on the absence or presence of the proper threefold moral object: the unitive, procreative, and marital meanings.

(2) A husband and wife have natural marital relations, and the husband reaches climax, but the wife does not. The husband then performs an unnatural sexual act on his wife to bring her to sexual climax. In this case, the chosen act is a completed unnatural sexual act (including sexual climax). Such acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. The husband's intention to satisfy his wife does not justify the intrinsically evil sexual act, because intrinsically evil acts are always immoral, regardless of intention. The circumstance that the wife is unable to achieve sexual climax without one type of unnatural sexual act or another does not justify the intrinsically evil sexual act, because intrinsically evil acts are always immoral, regardless of circumstances. The lack of sexual climax for the wife during natural marital relations does not justify committing an intrinsically evil sexual act. The end does not justify the means. Neither good intention, nor dire circumstances, can justify an intrinsically evil act of any kind.

Sexual climax occurs as a consequence of a moral or immoral sexual act; and so climax is in the third font, not the second font. The completion of a sexual act in sexual climax does not determine the morality of the second font. Even if the consequence of sexual climax is lacking, the inherent moral meaning of the act itself, as determined by the moral object, remains the same. Regardless of whether or not sexual climax occurs, such acts remain a use of the genital sexual faculty. Therefore, even if sexual climax does not occur as a result of an unnatural sexual act, the act itself remains intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral

because unnatural sexual acts are not inherently ordered to the proper threefold moral object: the unitive, procreative, and marital meanings.

### Which Sexual Positions Are Permitted?

Any sexual position which includes an unnatural sexual act is prohibited because all such acts are inherently gravely contrary to the moral law. However, every solely natural position is permitted. A natural position allows the marital act to be both unitive and procreative; then the moral object is good and the sexual act is not intrinsically evil, but intrinsically good. As is always the case, intention and circumstances must also be good. A number of different physical positions of the bodies of the husband and wife permit the act to be unitive and procreative (so that the husband's penis enters his wife's vagina for copulation).

### Marital Foreplay

Foreplay is a means to an end; it is a means to prepare for sexual relations. The end does not justify the means. Therefore, each and every act of foreplay must be morally good. No act of foreplay is justified merely by being foreplay. Foreplay within marriage is not exempt from the moral law. In all areas of human life, each and every knowingly chosen act must be good under all three fonts of morality, as each font springs up from, and applies to, that particular act. An act of foreplay can never borrow its morality from a prior, concurrent, or subsequent act of natural marital relations (nor from any other act). Each act must stand on its own as to its morality. Natural marital relations open to life is good, but the foreplay that prepares for this good act must also be good in itself. Knowingly chosen acts are never morally indifferent or morally neutral. Each and every knowingly chosen act is either moral or immoral. And God hates all immorality.

Each and every knowingly chosen act is under the eternal moral law. Each act of foreplay must be good, as the three fonts of morality apply to that particular act, regardless of the fonts of other acts. Foreplay is not an exception to the moral law. There are no exceptions to the eternal moral law. If anyone says or implies that there are exceptions to the eternal moral law, let him be anathema.

Unnatural sexual acts are not morally licit, even if used as so-called foreplay, i.e. as a means to prepare for natural marital relations. Intrinsically evil sexual acts are never moral, not for any purpose, not in any circumstance, regardless of whether or not sexual climax occurs. Other intrinsically evil acts (non-sexual acts) are also not moral to use as foreplay, for the same reason. Sexual acts are not an exception to the moral law. Intrinsically evil acts are never moral, regardless of whether or not those acts are in the realm of sexuality or not.

But not every immoral act is intrinsically evil. Any act that is immoral due to the second font is intrinsically evil. But an act may have a good second font, and still be immoral under the first or third fonts. All immorality is offensive to God. If a particular act used as foreplay is not intrinsically evil, but is immoral under the first or third font, then that act of foreplay is a sin against God.

Moral acts of foreplay remain moral even if the end of natural marital relations open to life is not achieved. The same is true for any good means to a good end. If, for any reason, the good end is not achieved, the good means remains good. The end does not justify the means because the means takes its morality from the three fonts as these apply to that particular act (the chosen act of the means). A good means may stand on its own and remain moral because it does not take its morality from the end. And this is the same reason why the end does not justify the means. Each and every knowingly chosen act must be good on its own, i.e. according to the three fonts of morality as these spring up from, and apply to, each chosen act. A good



means to a good end never becomes immoral when the good end is absent, because good acts remain good regardless of other acts. Under the eternal moral law, each and every knowingly chosen act stands on its own before God.

A husband and wife may engage in acts of moral foreplay (such as hugging and kissing), without subsequently engaging in natural marital relations open to life. In one case, they might intend to have marital relations, but then change their minds or be interrupted. In another case, they might wish to use moral acts of foreplay in order to express their affection for one another. Such acts are perhaps more accurately termed acts of affection, rather than acts of foreplay, when they are not being used as a means to the end of natural marital relations. But because the types of acts are generally the same, the term foreplay may also be used.

Moral acts of foreplay are not sexual acts per se because they are not genital sexual acts. Moral acts of foreplay are never sexual acts per se, because the only moral sexual act is natural marital relations open to life. And natural marital relations is not foreplay; it is not a preparation for a sexual act, because it is a sexual act. Neither is any per se sexual act properly called a type of foreplay. Moral acts of foreplay do not involve the deliberate or morally-direct use of the genital sexual faculty.

Moral acts of foreplay between a husband and wife include various acts that are moral under all three fonts of morality. A moral act of foreplay cannot be a use of the genital sexual faculty. A use of the genital sexual faculty is either a physically direct act, or a physically indirect act, or a non-physical act, that tends to stimulate the genitals to sexual climax. All such deliberate uses of the sexual faculty (physically direct, physically indirect, non-physical) are morally direct and are intrinsically evil whenever any one or more of the three meanings are lacking (unitive, procreative, marital). All such deliberate uses of the sexual faculty are immoral, even if sexual climax does not occur, because the use of the genital sexual faculty is only moral when these three meanings are present.

Sexual climax is a consequence of the use of the sexual faculty, but consequences are in the third font. And so, even when that consequence is not present, the sexual act is still moral or immoral based on the presence or absence of that threefold moral object, which is unitive, procreative, and marital. If an act is a genital sexual act, then the act must be unitive, procreative, and marital. Any use of the sexual faculty is only justified if each such act is unitive, procreative, and marital.

Immoral acts of foreplay include any and all unnatural sexual acts, regardless of whether or not sexual climax occurs. Such acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, because they are not unitive and procreative and marital. The use of an unnatural sexual act as a way to prepare for natural marital relations is not moral because the end does not justify the means. In addition to unnatural sexual acts, immoral acts of foreplay include any act that is immoral under any one or more of the three fonts of morality.

Sexual arousal by itself is not an act. Sexual arousal by itself is a consequence; consequences are in the third font. Sexual arousal by itself might be intended, as an end, or as a means to an end; intention is in the first font. The three fonts of morality always apply to every knowingly chosen act; all three fonts must be good for a knowingly chosen act to be good. However, arousal by itself is not an act, and so it cannot be intrinsically evil. The act that causes arousal might be intrinsically evil (under the second font), or the act that causes arousal might be immoral under the first or third fonts.

Illicit sexual acts are intrinsically evil because the moral object is deprived of one or more of the three meanings of sexual relations: unitive, procreative, marital. All unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil and

always gravely immoral, regardless of whether or not sexual climax occurs, even if used as a form of foreplay in marriage.

### Is All Touching Prohibited?

Is every type of touching of the spouse's genitals prohibited by the moral law? No, but any type of touching that is masturbatory is prohibited. A husband may not masturbate himself, nor may he masturbate (perform manipulative sex on) his wife. A wife may not masturbate herself, nor may she masturbate her husband. All such acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, with or without sexual climax, because these acts are non-unitive and non-procreative sexual acts. Neither are such acts, even within marriage, truly marital, since they are contrary to God's plan for holy matrimony. Every sexual act must be unitive, procreative, and marital.

A masturbatory or other unnatural sexual act cannot be used, even without climax, to prepare for a subsequent act of natural marital relations, as a type of foreplay. Foreplay is a means to the end of natural marital relations. The end does not justify the means. Some acts of foreplay are moral, and other acts of foreplay are immoral. No act is justified merely because it is used as a type of foreplay. Unnatural sexual acts are contrary to the moral law because they lack the procreative meaning. (Neither are such acts truly unitive or truly marital.) The lack of sexual climax does not change the fact that the moral object is deprived of the procreative meaning. And a different act, an act of natural marital relations, cannot contribute its procreative meaning to the unnatural act because each knowingly chosen act must stand on its own as to its morality. Each and every marital act must have both the unitive and procreative meanings.

Unnatural sexual acts, with or without sexual climax, are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, and such acts do not become moral by being done within marriage, nor by being done before, during, or after natural marital relations. The only moral sexual act is natural marital relations open to life. Every use of the genital sexual faculty must be marital, unitive, procreative.

Caressing, stroking, or otherwise directly stimulating the genitals of one's spouse is a non-unitive and non-procreative use of the genital sexual faculty. This type of stimulation remains non-unitive and non-procreative even if climax does not occur (as a consequence in the third font) or is not intended (as the purpose in the first font). This act is morally no different than masturbation without climax, and so is intrinsically evil and gravely immoral.

Kissing, embracing, and caressing the body of one's spouse, but not the private areas, is generally not ordered toward climax. This might include touching of the hands, face, neck, back, breasts, abdomen, legs, or feet. This type of sensual touching, done to excess, might cause sexual climax in some persons. Even married persons must avoid any act that results in sexual climax outside of natural marital relations open to life. However, this type of act is not a use of the genital sexual faculty, and so, as long as climax is not likely for a particular married couple, these acts are moral. These are not per se sexual acts, and so they need not be unitive or procreative, as long as there is no danger of sexual climax.

### Foreplay Prior to Marriage

The absence of the marital meaning from acts of foreplay (when those acts are not a use of the genital sexual faculty) does not, by itself, make these acts immoral. Each act in every area of human life must be moral on its own. So even if the means of foreplay is not followed by the end of natural marital relations, the morality of the means stands on its own. If all three fonts of morality are good, then the chosen act is good. If an unmarried man and woman express affection for one another, with good intention, without any unnatural

sexual acts, and without any deliberate or morally-direct use of the genital sexual faculty at all (since they are unmarried), and such that the good consequences outweigh the bad, then these acts of affection are moral. Whenever all three fonts are good, the act is moral, without exception.

The use of some limited sensual acts (similar to moral foreplay in marriage) by an unmarried man and woman as a way to express affection is not intrinsically evil, as long as such acts do not include any type of unnatural sexual act, nor natural sexual relations outside of marriage, nor any genital sexual act at all, even without climax. Each and every sexual act must have all three meanings in its moral object: marital, unitive, procreative. But when physical acts expressing affection are not any type of sexual act at all, then these acts do not need to be marital, unitive, and procreative. For an unmarried man and woman, all per se sexual acts are immoral, including natural intercourse, masturbation, and all unnatural sexual acts, such as oral, anal, or manipulative 'stimulation', with or without climax. However, other acts, those that are not per se sexual acts (not a use of the genital sexual faculty), are moral if all three fonts are good.

### Passionate Kissing Prior to Marriage

Many moralists claim that 'passionate' kissing is always an objective mortal sin for any unmarried man and woman, regardless of intention or circumstances, even if the couple is engaged. But they allow that non-passionate kissing is moral. There are several doctrinal problems with this claim.

First, only intrinsically evil acts are always immoral regardless of intention or circumstances. There are three fonts of morality, if an act is immoral regardless of two fonts, it must be immoral under the remaining font. Intrinsically evil acts have an evil moral object; the moral nature of the act is inherently disordered. But the addition of the adjective 'passionate' does not signify a different moral nature, nor a different moral object. So if the type of act and the moral object have not changed, then the act cannot be intrinsically evil. For the moral object always is the sole determinant of the moral nature (or species) of an act.

We are not here discussing lust, which is intrinsically evil, because lust is a type of act, not an adjective describing an act. Although, in secular terms, any act might be described as lustful, such a phrasing does not necessarily signify the objective mortal sin of lust. If kissing, or any other act, even the mere act of looking at a person, is accompanied by an interior act of lust, it is that interior act which is always gravely immoral, not the kissing or the looking.

Second, passion refers to emotion. But emotions, even strong emotions, do not necessarily imply sin. For example, Jesus became angry in the Temple, when He drove out the buyers and the sellers: "Zeal for your house consumes me." (John 2:17). And He experienced the emotions of sorrow and fear in the garden at the beginning of His Passion: "My soul is sorrowful, even unto death." (Mt 26:38), and, "And he began to be afraid..." (Mk 14:33).

Now the emotion of sexual passion is a result of the fallen state, and so neither Jesus nor Mary experienced sexual passion or sexual arousal. But this emotion which results from being in the fallen state is not itself a sin, and when it is accompanied by sin, the sin is not necessarily mortal. Emotions are not knowingly chosen acts. Only knowingly chosen immoral acts are sins. A knowingly chosen immoral act might result in one emotion or another, or a person might knowingly make a sinful choice in response to an emotion, but emotions are not themselves sins. So the idea that kissing becomes a mortal sin merely because an emotion occurs during kissing is absurd.

Third, kissing does not have an evil moral object. "Greet one another with a holy kiss." (Romans 16:16). A kiss might be accompanied by a sin of one type or another. "And he who betrayed him gave them a sign,

saying: 'Whomever I will kiss, it is he. Take hold of him.' " (Mt 26:48). But the act itself of kissing is not intrinsically evil.

Neither does any emotion, even emotions resulting from the fallen state, have an evil moral object. Although certain interior sins, such as lust, or hatred, or envy, etc., are often confused with the associated emotions (feelings), morally there is a very sharp distinction between experiencing an emotion, and knowingly choosing an immoral act. The emotion of anger is not the sin of hatred. The feeling of jealousy is not the sin of envy. The emotion (or feelings of) passion are not the sin of lust. No emotion has an evil moral object, because feelings are not knowingly chosen acts.

An excess of anger might occur if a person is harmed by another person, and he sins by choosing to dwell on that harm, and he sins by choosing not to forgive the injury, and he sins by choosing various acts that result in excessive anger. And in experiencing this excess of anger caused by his sins, he might next choose the sin of revenge. But the initial anger is not a sin. And the subsequent excessive anger is a bad consequence of his knowingly chosen acts, but it is not itself a sin. (Excessive anger is 'physical evil', not moral evil.)

An excess of passion may be the result of sinful acts, such as unmarried persons choosing acts of excessive physical affection or excessive sensuality. And the resultant feelings may make it difficult for the unmarried couple to remain chaste. In this case, if the acts of physical affection or sensuality do not include any intrinsically evil acts, then the morality would depend on intention and circumstances. But the fact that the emotion of passion occurs during kissing (or similar acts) does not cause the act to become an objective mortal sin.

Fourth, when an unmarried man and woman kiss, the fonts of intention or circumstances might be gravely immoral: such as an intention to induce the other person to commit an intrinsically evil sexual act, or a circumstance in which the kissing can reasonably be anticipated to have gravely harmful bad consequences (such as a near occasion of mortal sin). Or a related but distinct act might be gravely immoral, such as an interior act of lust. But the use the term 'passionate' to describe the kissing does not imply that any of the three fonts is gravely immoral, nor does it imply an accompanying gravely immoral act.

Fifth, kissing and similar acts of limited sensuality (but always non-genital acts) assist a couple who are considering marriage, or who are engaged, in preparing for later acts of natural marital relations open to life. This good consequence can certainly outweigh some bad consequences of limited moral weight. And the intention to express affection, or to prepare for moral sexual acts at a later time, within marriage, are moral intentions.

Sixth, the usual approach to this question lacks any consideration of degrees of sin. Kissing is said to be moral, but when it becomes, at some point, passionate, it is said to be suddenly gravely immoral. There is no acknowledgement of degrees of sin. But without any gravely immoral intention, or a gravely immoral object, or bad consequences that outweigh good consequences to a grave extent, there is no basis for this claim of mortal sin.

Seventh, under the three fonts approach to morality, none of the fonts is gravely immoral merely because the kissing has become passionate. Some degree of selfishness might be present in the intention of one or both persons, but this would be a venial sin. There may be some limited bad consequences to excessive sensuality in that the persons are aroused and chastity becomes somewhat more difficult, but not necessarily gravely so. And there is no gravely immoral object in such acts, since all genital sexual acts are absent from mere kissing and similar limited expressions of affection and sensuality.

Therefore, passionate kissing and similar acts of affection between an unmarried man and woman are not necessarily objective mortal sin. The mere emotion of sexual passion is not a knowingly chosen immoral act. And the acts that lead to this emotion may be moral, or may be venial sins. Kissing with passion may have some degree of disorder in intention or circumstances, but not so that this knowingly chosen act would be always entirely incompatible with the love of God and neighbor, and with the state of grace in the soul.

### The Gravity of Sexual Sins

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "Now according to Christian tradition and the Church's teaching, and as right reason also recognizes, the moral order of sexuality involves such high values of human life that every direct violation of this order is objectively serious." [197]

Sexual sins are always objective mortal sins. Each and every deliberate and morally-direct sexual act that is deprived of the unitive, or procreative, or marital meaning is necessarily and objectively a mortal sin, and is also intrinsically evil. Objective mortal sexual sins include masturbation, premarital sexual acts, homosexual acts, adultery, contracepted sexual acts, and all unnatural sexual acts, even within marriage. The use of the sexual faculty is a serious matter, and so any use, other than natural marital relations open to life, is a grave sin. However, this refers to sexual acts per se, not to acts that are peripherally-related to sexuality. If an act is sexual in the broader sense of being related to sexuality, without including any kind of sexual act whatsoever, then the act might not be an objective mortal sin.

Examples: (1) A married man has sexual relations with someone other than his wife. He has committed the objective mortal sin of adultery. (2) A married man flirts, but does nothing more, with a woman other than his wife. In this case, perhaps he has not sinned seriously, but only venially. However, even a venial act of flirting becomes a mortal sin if done with lustful intent. (3) An unmarried man and woman have sexual relations prior to marriage. They have sinned seriously. Their subsequent marriage does not justify the sexual sins committed prior to the marriage. (4) An unmarried man and woman, refraining from all sexual acts prior to marriage, indulge, to some degree of excess, in acts of physical affection. In this case, perhaps they have only sinned venially (as long as there was no interior sin of lust).

But again, the three fonts of morality always apply. Even if an act is related to sexuality without being a sexual act per se, that act must be good under all three fonts in order to avoid sin. If any one font is bad, the overall act is immoral, even if the act is not intrinsically evil. And if any one font of such an act is so disordered as to be gravely contrary to the eternal moral law, then the act would be an objective mortal sin, even if the act is not a sexual act per se.

### Chastity in Marriage

The Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Chaste Marriage (in Latin: *Casti Connubii*) enlightens us on marital sexual ethics. The word 'chaste' refers to sexual purity according to one's state of life. For each and every unmarried person, chastity requires refraining from all sexual acts. For each and every married husband and wife, chastity requires that they have sexual relations only in natural marital relations open to life. Both the husband and wife must refrain from adultery, masturbation, and every kind of unnatural sexual act between themselves. The only morally licit sexual act is natural marital relations open to life.

Pope Pius XI: "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."[198]

This passage condemns not only contraception, but also all unnatural sexual acts, even within marriage. Unnatural sexual acts are non-procreative, and therefore are intrinsically evil. No reason, no matter how serious, can justify any intrinsically evil act. Nothing can cause an act that is intrinsically unnatural to become natural and moral. Unnatural sexual acts are inherently contrary to nature, because the natural law requires that "each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life."[199] Those who deliberately exercise the sexual faculty in a manner that is non-procreative, sin against nature and commit a shameful and inherently unjust act.

Pope Pius XI: "Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: 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."[200]

This teaching of the Church, that "any use whatsoever of matrimony 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," must be understood to condemn not only contracepted sexual acts, but also any and all non-procreative sexual acts, even within marriage, including unnatural sexual acts. For all sexual acts are a type of use of the sexual faculty, and all unnatural sexual acts are non-procreative. If the Pope had wished to narrow his statements to only contraception, he would not have said "any use whatsoever," or if he had wished to allow unnatural sexual acts only within marriage, he would not have said "any use whatsoever of matrimony." Instead, he unequivocally proclaimed the Magisterium's definitive teaching, which is also found in natural law, that "each and every" marital sexual act must include both the unitive and procreative meanings. This teaching necessarily prohibits the married couple from engaging in any kind of unnatural sexual act (consummated or non-consummated), because all such acts lack the procreative meaning.

Pope Paul VI: "The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life. 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."[201]

The Magisterium has never taught that non-procreative sexual acts are justified within marriage, or are justified by being combined in some way with acts of natural marital relations. The Magisterium has definitively taught that each and every sexual act must be unitive and procreative and marital in order to be moral, and that non-procreative sexual acts, even within marriage, remain intrinsically immoral. There are no exceptions to the moral law for the marital bedroom. Unnatural sexual acts are never justified by being combined in some way with natural marital relations. Non-procreative sexual acts are never justified by being combined in some way with procreative sexual acts. Each act must stand on its own as to its morality.

Pope Paul VI: "Neither is it valid to argue, as a justification for sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive...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." [202]

Contracepted sexual intercourse is intrinsically evil because such acts are non-procreative. All unnatural sexual acts are also non-procreative, therefore all such acts are intrinsically evil. Non-procreative acts cannot be justified by being merged with procreative acts (i.e. acts of natural marital relations) of the past or future. The eternal moral law requires that each and every act be good under all three fonts of morality, as those fonts spring up from, and apply to, each particular act. Therefore, even if two acts occur at the same time, each act stands on its own as to its morality. It is never the case, in any area of morality, that a good and bad act could be combined, as if to form a single moral entity, such that the good act would justify the bad act. It is never the case, in any area of morality, that an intrinsically evil act could be somehow transformed to have the same moral goodness as another act, one that is good under all three fonts of morality.

Pope John Paul II: "Consequently, circumstances or intentions can never transform an act intrinsically evil by virtue of its object into an act 'subjectively' good or defensible as a choice." [203]

The intention to perform an act of natural marital relations after an unnatural sexual act does not justify that unnatural act. The circumstance that an unnatural sexual act occurs before, during, or after an act of natural marital relations does not justify that unnatural act. The circumstance that an unnatural sexual act lacks sexual climax does not justify that unnatural act. Unnatural sexual acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral because all such acts lack the procreative meaning required by the natural law for each and every sexual act. And in truth, unnatural sexual acts lack all three meanings, for such acts are not truly unitive, nor are they truly marital, in the way that God intends for human nature and for a husband and wife in holy matrimony.

## Summary

Like all knowingly chosen acts, moral sexual acts must be good under all three fonts. The good moral object which must be present for any sexual act to be moral under the second font is threefold: unitive, procreative, marital. The unitive, procreative, and marital meanings are interrelated as one threefold moral object. Any sexual act that lacks one or more of these three meanings is an intrinsically evil sexual act.

The completion of the act in sexual climax does not determine the morality of the second font. As is true for all knowingly chosen acts, the inherent ordering of the act itself toward its moral object determines the morality of the second font. A contracepted sexual act that is not completed in sexual climax is nevertheless an intrinsically evil sexual act, since it lacks the procreative meaning. An unnatural sexual act that is not completed in sexual climax is nevertheless an intrinsically evil sexual act, since it lacks the procreative meaning. The lack of sexual climax does not allow the couple to claim that no sinful sexual act occurred. Even without sexual climax on the part of either or both persons, the couple knowingly chose a sexual act that is deprived of the procreative meaning.

In order to be moral, each and every sexual act must be good under all three fonts of morality. In order to be good under the second font, each and every use of the sexual faculty must have that threefold moral object which determines the inherent moral meaning of the sexual act itself, so that the essential nature of the act is unitive, procreative, and marital. This threefold meaning of natural marital relations, which is unitive, procreative, and marital, is a reflection of the threefold gifts to humanity of love, faith, and hope. The plan

of God for human sexuality is written into our very nature, and so every sexual act that is not unitive and procreative and marital is contrary to the natural law and is a serious sin before God.

Each and every sexual act that is non-unitive, or non-procreative, nor non-marital is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. Intrinsically evil sexual acts are not justified by being done within marriage, since all three meanings must be present for a sexual act to be moral. Unnatural sexual acts are neither procreative, nor truly unitive, nor even truly marital, and so such acts are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. A good intention, or dire circumstances, cannot justify an intrinsically evil act in any area of human life. All of the basic principles of morality apply to sexuality just as they apply to every other area of life. Marital sexual acts are not exempt from the eternal moral law, nor are marital sexual acts subject to a different set of basic principles, such that an intrinsically evil act might become good, or be considered morally neutral, by being done for the sake of the marriage.

Sexual acts other than natural intercourse are not truly unitive, because these acts depart from the plan of God for the union of husband and wife. Only natural intercourse is truly unitive in the moral sense of the word. Sexual acts other than natural intercourse are not truly procreative, because these acts depart from the plan of God for the procreation of new life within a marriage and a family. Only natural intercourse is both unitive and procreative, in the full moral sense of these words. And only natural marital relations includes all three meanings required by the natural law for each and every sexual act.

Artificial contraception, in all of its forms, is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral, because the use of contraception deprives the sexual act of its procreative meaning. Natural intercourse within marriage, but with contraception, is unitive and marital, but not procreative. Even so, when any one meaning is absent, the other meanings are harmed. The lack of the procreative meaning in contracepted sexual acts harms the unitive and marital meanings.

Artificial procreation seems to include a type of union (of male and female gametes) and a type of procreation. But this type of union is not union as intended by God for a man and a woman within marriage. And this type of procreation is not procreation as intended by God for marriages, and for families, and for the human race. Artificial procreation is contrary to the natural law, and so it is intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral. Artificial procreation of every type is not truly procreative and not truly unitive, in the moral sense of these words.

Only natural marital relations open to life is truly and fully: unitive, procreative, and marital. Natural marital relations open to life is the only act ordained by God to fulfill His will in human nature: for sexual union, for procreation, and for marriage. The only moral sexual act is natural marital relations open to life. All other uses of the genital sexual faculty are intrinsically evil and always gravely immoral.

[1 Corinthians]

{3:16} Do you not know that you are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God lives within you?

{3:17} But if anyone violates the Temple of God, God will destroy him. For the Temple of God is holy, and you are that Temple.

{3:18} Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become foolish, so that he may be truly wise.

{3:19} For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. And so it has been written: "I will catch the wise in their own astuteness."

{3:20} And again: "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."



[2 Corinthians]

{7:1} Therefore, having these promises, most beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God.

## Afterword

On certain questions in ethics, especially on matters pertaining to sexuality, the number of persons teaching and promoting error far exceeds the number who assert the truth. If you are the type of Catholic who simply follows the crowd, you are likely to fall into gravely immoral sexual sins. For the influence of sinful secular society on the members of the Church is extensively burdensome.

[Exodus]

{23:2} You shall not follow the crowd in doing evil. Neither shall you go astray in judgment, by agreeing with the majority opinion, apart from the truth.

But suppose you were to say to me, "How can I know that what you teach is true?" The answer is at once simple and difficult. You need not take my word for any of these assertions. Look to the teachings of Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium. Consider whether my theological arguments elucidate the truths of Divine Revelation and the teachings of the Magisterium. You have an obligation to study what the Church teaches as well as to understand and believe that teaching. Learning the Faith is difficult. But once you understand, all you need to do is live what you believe.

Do not listen to those foolish teachers who distort and pervert the teachings of the truth Faith by oversimplification. Do not listen to those teachers who offer you theological rationalizations that make almost all sexual acts seem moral. Did Christ exalt sex and sexuality as they do? Did Christ offer all manner of clever excuses to justify grave sin? Not at all. Those false teachers are not Christ-like, so you should not be fooled by them.

Heed the religious and moral truths found in Sacred Scripture. Keep yourself chaste and immaculate, apart from this age. For desire is the root of all evils. Some persons, hungering in this way, have strayed from the faith and have entangled themselves in many sorrows. But you, O child of God, flee from these things. If anyone, then, will have cleansed himself from these things, he shall be a vessel held in honor, sanctified and useful to the Lord, prepared for every good work. So then, flee from the desires of this evil generation, and truly pursue justice, faith, hope, charity, and peace, with all who call upon the Lord from a pure heart. But avoid foolish and undisciplined questions, for you know that these produce strife. (Hebrews 13:4; 1 Tim 5:22; James 1:27; 1 Tim 6:10-11; 2 Tim 2:21-23).

May God have mercy on the Sacrament of holy Matrimony and on all who devoutly seek its graces.

## Endnotes

*The Endnotes jump from number 3 to number 153 because this booklet is an excerpt (chapter 7) from the book: Roman Catholic Marital Sexual Ethics*

[1] United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, July 2006, p. 409.

[2] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 11.

[3] Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1756; see also Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 52.

[153] Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 36.

[154] Cardinal Seper, CDF, *Persona Humana*, n. X.

[155] Pope Leo XIII, *Arcanum (On Christian Marriage)*, n. 19.

[156] Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, n. 18.

[157] Cardinal Seper, CDF, *Persona Humana*, n. V.

[158] Cardinal Seper, CDF, *Persona Humana*, n. VII.

[159] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 12.

[160] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 11.

[161] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 11.

[162] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 14.

[163] Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 80; inner quote from *Humanae Vitae*, n. 14.

[164] USCCB Catechism, p. 409.

[165] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 11; inner quote from Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 49.

[166] Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church, 1983, Canon 1061 n. 1.

[167] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 50-51.

[168] Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, n. 59.

- [169] Council of Trent, Decree on the Sacrament of Matrimony, Canon X. "If any one says, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema."
- [170] *Rituale Romanum Pauli V Pontificis Maximi Jussu Editum et a Benedicto XIV*, (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1873), 'De Sacramento Matrimonii', p. 271.
- [171] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 51.
- [172] Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, n. 54-56.
- [173] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 14.
- [174] Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 32; inner quote is from *Humanae Vitae*, n. 12, 14.
- [175] Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 32.
- [176] Council of Trent, 24th Session, On the Sacrament of Matrimony, Canon VIII.
- [177] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 11.
- [178] Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 32.
- [179] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 16.
- [180] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 20.
- [181] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 16.
- [182] Pontifical Council for the Family, *Vademecum* ['Go with me'] for Confessors concerning some Aspects of the Morality of Conjugal Life, n. 2-6.
- [183] Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, n. 11.
- [184] Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 14.
- [185] Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 13; *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 6; Address to the Bishops of Thailand, August 1996. See also Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Bishops of South Africa, June 2005.
- [186] Cardinal Seper, CDF, *Persona Humana*, n. IX; inner quote is from Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 51.
- [187] Cardinal Seper, CDF, *Persona Humana*, n. VII.
- [188] Cardinal Ratzinger, CDF, *Considerations Regarding Proposals To Give Legal Recognition To Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, n. 3.
- [189] Cardinal Ratzinger, CDF, *Letter To The Bishops Of The Catholic Church On The Pastoral Care Of Homosexual Persons*, n. 7.

[190] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 11-12.

[191] Saint John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: 1986, trans. Roth and Anderson, p. 100.

[192] Saint Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, Bk 1, n. 49.

[193] Saint Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, section 11.

[194] Saint Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, section 12.

[195] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, A. 8.

[196] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 154, A. 12.

[197] Cardinal Seper, CDF, *Persona Humana*, n. X.

[198] Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, n. 54.

[199] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 11.

[200] Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, n. 55.

[201] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 11-12.

[202] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 15.

[203] Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 81.

[204] CCC, n. 1753; cf. Romans 3:8