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„Current Views on Marriage and Sexuality:  
An Addendum to the  
,Trinitarian Dimension of Conjugal Love“

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In this paper, the author has integrated two different works to comply with the requirements for the Diplomarbeit of the University of Vienna.

The first part is the defended thesis at the Pontifical University of Sto. Tomas, Manila, Philippines for Licentiate in Sacred Theology and Masters in Theology, The Trinitarian Dimension of Conjugal. Here, a new way of looking at sexual morality through the Trinitarian love and not anymore through the natural law perspective, has been presented

The second part is an addendum, Current Views on Marriage and Sexuality. This has been recommended so that a complete view of sexuality can truly be captured in the work, inasmuch as, in the first part, the orthodox teachings of the church on marriage and sexuality has been put forward, while in the second part, the current views of proportionalists, who are understood to offer an opposite view from that which the church upholds, have been elaborated. Thus, the end result of these combined works is a more integrated view of sexuality and marriage.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*my deepest gratitude and appreciation*

TO ALL

*who guided, inspired and helped me...*

*With all my love, thank you...*

Jolly JOJO

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>FC-</b>	<i>Familiaris Consortio</i>
<b>GS-</b>	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
<b>CFC-</b>	<i>Catechism for Filipino Catholics</i>
<b>CCC-</b>	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
<b>ST-</b>	<i>Summa Theologica</i>
<b>LG-</b>	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
<b>MD-</b>	<i>Mulieris Dignitatem</i>
<b>CIC-</b>	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici</i>

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## CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

### 1. Introduction

Many of the controversial issues in the Church today pertain to sexual morality. As a matter of fact, several books in this area appear annually in reaction to the position of the Church. Though the Church has issued several documents on sexual ethics in the form of an encyclical letter and guidelines,<sup>1</sup> yet it seems that hardly anyone denies that the Church has not really succeeded fully in communicating to people and persuading them of her teaching on sexual morality

Almost everywhere, the Church is being challenged as the older and generally accepted conventions regarding human sexuality and its expression are being questioned, not only by many outside the religious traditions but also by many within them; not only by revolutionaries but by relatively conservative men and women who find those conventions quite meaningless under the very different conditions in which one lives today. Among her faithful, there is an apparent dilemma which translates to a dichotomy between what they profess and what they live. Indeed, one does not have to go far in order to prove that the Church in this area is undergoing a crisis. Crisis here would not mean decadence or fall, for otherwise the credibility of the Church as the authentic interpreter and dispenser of Truth would be greatly undermined. It simply means a difficult time.

Faced with this difficult situation, a question arises whether this would force the Church to abandon her teaching on sexual morality and come up with something more acceptable to the people. Of course, the picture of dissatisfaction and indifference among the majority, as most writers would describe it, cannot really be the reason for the Church to give in and formulate a new teaching even if the majority would demand this. This can never be the basis for such assumption,

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<sup>1</sup> Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae, Encyclical Letter on the Regulations of Birth* (July 25, 1968); Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Humana Persona, Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics* (January 31, 1976); Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality. Guidelines for Education within the Family* (December 8, 1995); Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance for Human Love, Outlines for Sex Education* (November 1, 1983).

for “the supernatural sense of faith does not consist solely or necessarily in the consensus of the faithful. Following Christ, the Church seeks the truth which is not always the same as the majority opinion.”<sup>2</sup> But the Church in the modern world is also called to read the ‘signs of the times.’ “At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task.”<sup>3</sup> The Commission that drafted *Gaudium et Spes* defined the signs of the times as those phenomena that, by their widespread prevalence and their frequency, characterize an epoch and express the needs and aspirations of mankind today. This means attention to the concrete realities of contemporary society, culture and human experience. But one can hardly avoid the impression that the experience of married persons and of women in general has not been heard with real openness.

The Church is therefore challenged to reflect deeper on this pastorally alarming reality: Has the Church become irrelevant to many in terms of her teaching on sexual morality? What could be done if the Church has really fallen into such a predicament? Must she change her teachings? Definitely not! Many may like it or not, but the Church is on the right track when she teaches consistently that sex has its proper place within the context of the stable institution of marriage, for sex must be understood as a means of deepening mutual love more than anything else.

Though the Church cannot change her teaching; nevertheless, there is obviously a need to change her expression of it, addressing it within the context of contemporary understanding. While retaining the revealed content of the teaching, it may be opportune to reconsider the manner in which it is to be presented. Pope John XXIII in his opening address at the Second Vatican Council said:

From the renewed, serene and tranquil adherence to  
all the teaching of the Church in its entirety,

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<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, Familiaris Consortio* (November 22, 1981), no. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Vatican Council II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), no. 4.

transmitted with the precision of terms and concepts that constitutes the peculiar glory of the Tridentine, First Vatican Councils, and the Christian, Catholic and Apostolic spirit expects of everyone a step forward. . . by the study of the same (teaching), putting it in conformity with the methods of investigation and the literary expression required by the methods prevailing today. One thing is the deposit itself of the faith, to wit, the truths of our venerated doctrine, and another thing is the manner in which it is expressed.<sup>4</sup>

Obviously, the truth of faith and the manner of expressing it are two different things so that a change in the latter is not really a deviation from the truth. On the contrary, it helps the truth of faith to be better understood and lived.

It is the conviction of the author of this study that it has become most opportune and even necessary for the Church to make her teaching on sexual morality more intelligible to modern men and more relevant to the experience of married couples. Attempting this may be risky, unless the assurance be given that the position of the Church is unconditionally upheld in the process.

Considering then that Church and the faithful may not have been speaking the same language, it may be worthwhile to search for a common ground where mutual understanding becomes possible again. This ground may well be the sacramental nature of marriage, a truth to which the Church and the faithful subscribe. From that vantage point, a fruitful communication can begin.

As it begins its search for a theological approach to marriage and sexuality through the theology of the Most Holy Trinity, this work becomes timely and relevant. This year the Church commemorates the 2000th Jubilee Anniversary of the Incarnation of the Son of God. As she celebrates this solemn event, “the aim will be to give glory to the Trinity, from whom everything in the world and in history comes and to whom everything returns.”<sup>5</sup>

May this humble work contribute to the praise and glory of the Triune God!

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<sup>4</sup> *Acta Apostolica Sedes*, 54 (1962), p. 792.

<sup>5</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter on Preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000, Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (November 10, 1994), no. 55.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The official teaching of the Church establishes a close bond between sexuality and procreation and then links the two in matrimony. This argument, which is based on Natural Law, highlights the inseparability of the unitive and procreative aspects of the marital act. This position of the Church on sexual ethics has not succeeded in awakening and penetrating the moral consciousness of the faithful. On the contrary, it has for many created a dichotomy between the faith they profess and the moral life they lead.

This contemporary situation raises the question whether it would be possible to determine the morality of the sexual relation of the spouses in marriage in a new way so that the position of the Church could be better understood and accepted by the faithful. Rather than philosophizing about sexuality in marriage, is it possible to find a theological approach?

This work sees marriage as a sacramental configuration to the Trinitarian communion of love. The following questions will be considered:

- 1) In what way is the sacrament of marriage a configuration to the Trinitarian communion of love?
- 2) What new understanding can we gain therefrom regarding the sexual relation of the spouses?
- 3) And as a corollary question: what moral criteria can be deduced from that configuration which can be used for the evaluation of some moral issues in conjugal sexual relations such as contraception, extra-marital and pre-marital sex?

## **3. Significance of the Study**

The family is called not only to become recipient of God's love but also to become a sign of that same love for others. Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation on the Family states that "the Christian family, which springs from marriage as a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church and as a participation in that covenant will manifest to all people the Savior's living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the church."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 50.

Unfortunately, the family today is affected by a secular attitude of skepticism and indifference, which leads to the spread of divorce and remarriage, to the scourge of abortion, to the ever more frequent recourse to sterilization, to the appearance of a contraceptive mentality and to the rejection of the moral norms that guide and promote the human and Christian exercise of sexuality in marriage.<sup>7</sup> All these are great threats to the very foundation of the family.

Clearly, the nature of those problems only affirms that marriage, sexuality and the family are closely bound to one another. For, while marriage is the foundation of the family, sexuality nurtures its growth. Unless one goes to the roots of the problems, the issues will not die down. Whether one admits it or not, a dichotomy prevails between the Christian faith and the moral life of many couples. They may not openly criticize the Church's sexual morality but they often fail to conform their marital relations to it.

The situation therefore challenges the Church to come up with a clearer way of presenting her teachings on marriage and sexuality but without compromising tradition. Pope John Paul II has already alluded to this in his address to the members of the Pontifical Council for the Family during their Plenary Assembly on December 3, 1985. He said:

The apostolic activity of your council, based on doctrine, should aim at a better pastoral care of the family which will enable the faithful to accept this truth in a better way and to make it enter into their lives, as well as into the morals of society.<sup>8</sup>

Acknowledging that urgency, and accepting the challenge, have led to this present work which tries to present a new way of understanding sexuality based on the sacramental nature of marriage as it is configured after the Trinitarian relationship. However, let it be known at the outset that this work is not meant to replace and supplant the position of the Church on sexual morality. Rather, it only wishes to give a modest contribution to the Church's thrust of unfolding the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, nos. 6 & 7.

<sup>8</sup> Pope John Paul II. "Truth of the Family" (Address of Pope John Paul II to Members of the Pontifical Council for the Family for their Plenary Assembly, December 3, 1985), *The Pope Speaks*, 31, no. 1 (1986), p. 57.

truth to many people so that in return “every family may generously make its own contribution to the coming of his Kingdom in the world—a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace, toward which history is journeying.”<sup>9</sup>

#### **4. Objective of the Study**

This study aims at a two-fold result:

- (1) To present a different theological understanding of the marital sexual relationship based on the perspective that marriage is a configuration to the Trinitarian life of love.
- (2) And, in the process, to justify, with a new moral criterion deduced from such relationship, the sexual morality of the Church regarding pre-marital and extra-marital sex and contraception.

#### **5. Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The work is a study on the Trinitarian dimension of conjugal love. It presents the configuration of marital love to the communion of love of the Three Persons of God.

The work is limited in three respects:

First, it makes no use of references and books in foreign languages, but depends on translations.

Secondly, it does not make an in-depth presentation on the sacrament of matrimony and the theology of the Trinity but only makes mention of those elements necessary to bring to light the connection between the two.

Finally, this work does not present an exhaustive discussion of contraception, and pre-marital and extra-marital sex. Only a short corollary is given in chapter four which specifically deals with a new understanding regarding the sexual relation of the spouses in the context of marriage’s configuration to the Trinitarian communion of love.

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<sup>9</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 86.

The thesis is divided into five chapters:

The first chapter makes an inquiry with regard to the effectivity of the teaching of the Church on sexual morality in our times. Discovering a negative reaction among the faithful, the author explores the possibility of formulating a new expression without changing the contents of the teaching of the Church.

Chapter two tries to establish marriage as one of the channels through which man's divine vocation is realized sacramentally. It begins its discussion with man, a being created in the image and likeness of God. From this, his divine vocation to love follows, and is made sacramentally concrete through the sacraments of Matrimony and of Holy Orders. Then the constitutive elements of the sacrament of marriage are expounded, a clear understanding of which is facilitated by a preceding overview of the nature of the sacraments in general. Emphasis is given to the marital bond realized through the mutual love of the couple that signifies the relationship of Christ and the Church, the 'great mystery', which is derived ultimately from the Trinity and by reason of which, the bond becomes a means of salvation.

Chapter three presents marriage as a configuration to Trinitarian love. It begins with the Scriptural truth, 'God is love', which points not only to the fact that God is loving his creatures but also implies that love constitutes His inner life. It delves into an inquiry of the Trinitarian relations-- the love existing among the Three Persons of God, which leads to creation and, subsequently, to the redemption of man. The characteristics of that Trinitarian love are also enumerated which, in the process, become the point of convergence for proving that conjugal love is a communion of love which the divine love assumes and divinizes, making it, in the process, a saving reality.

The succeeding chapter stands as a corollary for the morality of the sexual relation between the spouses in the light of the Trinitarian dimension of marriage. A new understanding of conjugal sexual morality in the light of Trinitarian love is offered here.

Finally, chapter five, as an answer to the problem posed in the introduction regarding the possibility of coming up with a new formulation of the teaching of



the Church on sexual morality, elaborates how this new paradigm arrives at such consideration.

## **6. Survey of Related Literature**

**Elliot, Peter J. *What God Has Joined... The Sacramentality of Marriage*. Australia: St. Paul Publications, 1990, 287 pp.**

This is a study which sets forth “sacramentality” (of marriage) in both its specific and wider meanings. This it does by bringing its readers in contact not only with the historical development of marriage from the Scriptures and the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church, each contributing to the developing teaching of the Magisterium on Holy Matrimony, but also with the contemporary challenges in living out that sacramentality in married couples’ daily lives.

**Gallagher, Charles A. et al. *Embodied in Love: Sacramental Spirituality and Sexual Intimacy*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1994, 162 pp.**

This book, authored by experts in the various aspects of marriage, seeks to come up with a theologically sound and pastorally oriented spirituality of married life that can in a way correspond to the prayer life in the celibate life. This, it does, by underlining the sexual intimacy of the spouse as the way to realize spiritual union into the inner life of God in the mystery of communion of love, inasmuch as it is a human image of that divine picture of perfect union.

**Nelson, James B. *Embodiment, An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology*. Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978, 303 pp.**

This work tries to answer two questions, namely, what does Christian faith have to say about our lives as sexual beings? And, what does our experience as sexual human beings mean for the way in which we understand and attempt to live our faith?

Sexuality as being established here is the foundation for man’s capacity to enter into relationships which are life-giving, life-enhancing, life-enriching; it

enables humans to become what God would have them to be; namely, fulfilled, integrated, sharing and free recipients of divine love.

**Prokes, Mary Timothy. *Mutuality: The Human Image of Trinitarian Life*. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1993, 167 pp.**

This is a book about mutuality, that reciprocal self-gift that is foundational for a spirituality of interpersonal relationship. With such aim, it first explores the meaning of mutuality in Trinitarian relations in order to perceive anew the human vocation to love as image of this divine mutual love. Then it provides examples of mutuality within the Church that (imperfect as they are) put flesh to this image.

**Thomas, David M. *Christian Marriage. A Journey Together*. Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983, 207 pp.**

This volume five in the series of eight on "The Message of the Sacraments" discusses ritual practices and understanding of the different aspects of the sacrament of marriage. In particular, it delves into the existential or experiential meaning of the sacrament of marriage, its historical development, the theological exposition of the meaning, function and effect of the sacrament in the context of present official Catholic doctrinal positions and some pastoral reflections.

## **7. Methodology**

The author has made an extensive use of the available literature related to the present study. This, however, has been made difficult due to the scarcity of relevant sources since the topic at hand has yet to be explored exhaustively. Following his own line of inquiry, the author has arrived at his own theological analyses and evaluations after having researched the separate fields of sacramentology, the sacrament of marriage, human sexuality and the theology of the Trinity. In the discussion of the sacraments and of the sacrament of matrimony in particular, the author has relied on the traditional teaching regarding those topics. Great care has been exerted to develop the topic on the Trinity in

conformity with the Church's teaching. This work has made use of the Church's documents of Vatican II and of the post-conciliar documents on sexuality and marriage, and of the writings of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, especially on the "Theology of the Body" as he developed it during a series of General Audiences. Finally, the composition of the gathered data has been designed so as to draw the attention of the reader to some salient points which are relevant if one tries to answer some of the important questions being raised in this work.

## CHAPTER TWO: MARRIAGE, LIVING MAN'S VOCATION

### 1. Man the Image of God

God created the heavens and the earth and everything in it: birds, fishes, plants, etc. Each of these created beings received God's affirmation of goodness, and the animals were given the blessing to multiply and fill the earth.<sup>1</sup> Other creatures came into being by a spontaneous and direct command of God. Man's creation, however, involved a special deliberation on God's part, because He intended to establish a particular and specific bond with him:

“Let us make man in our image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle and all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth.”  
God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.<sup>2</sup>

Having been created in the image and likeness of God, a similarity exists between man and his Creator. The Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* affirms this truth:

Man. . . is a manifestation of God in the world, a sign of his presence, a trace of his glory. Man has been given a sublime dignity, based on the intimate bond which unites him to his Creator: in man there shines forth a reflection of God Himself.<sup>3</sup>

All creatures reflect the beauty and goodness of God. All reflect a certain similarity with Him because to Him their perfection is traced back, He being their cause. But they bear only vestiges of God. In man, however, analogically and imperfectly, an image of God is found. He mirrors in a special way God's nature in his ability to actualize the unique qualities with which he has been endowed: rationality, creative freedom, a possibility for self-actualization and the ability for

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. **Gen.** 1:22.

<sup>2</sup> **Gen.** 1:26-27.

<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life, Evangelium Vitae* (March 25, 1995), no. 34.

self-transcendence. It is this nature which, in the words of a Romanian Orthodox theologian, makes possible “the deification of man, which is the greatest possible union with God wherein the fullness of God is stamped upon man yet without him thereby being dissolved into God.”<sup>4</sup>

### **1) Man’s Divine Vocation: To Love**

Obviously, the similarity called forth by such ‘likeness’ is not a physical one, because God is spirit and has no physical form. God is an intellectual being whose operations of knowing and loving, however, are one with His undivided essence and substance. The common understanding of the Christian tradition and of the Church has been that the image of God in man is bound up with the fact that he, like God, has intellect and will, which makes him able to understand, to judge, to exercise freedom and to love. “He is the only creature that God has willed for its own sake,”<sup>5</sup> and “he alone is called to share by knowledge and love, in God’s own life.”<sup>6</sup>

Being an image of God is both a gift and a task. It gives man dignity, but with it goes the responsibility and vocation to conform. Understanding the implication of man’s “likeness to God” is the key, therefore, to unfolding the meaning of his vocation.

Man is called ‘to deify’ himself, to live a life similar to God’s. This demand is not an ideal since it is in his very nature ‘to be like God’. But a question arises: what is the life lived by God?

God is Love, which implies that God’s life is a shared life.<sup>7</sup> In a similar way, man’s life ought to be a life of love which mirrors in human relationships the communion of love of God. Precisely, “to be human means to be called to interpersonal communion”<sup>8</sup> because to be created in the image of God is, in a

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<sup>4</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, “Image, likeness and deification in the human person,” *Communio International Catholic Review*, 31, no. 1 (1986), p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 24.

<sup>6</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Manila: ECCCE & Word & Life Publications, 1994), no. 356.

<sup>7</sup> An in-depth presentation on the Holy Trinity is discussed in chapter three.

<sup>8</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter on the Dignity of Women, Mulieris Dignitatem* (August 15, 1988), no. 7.

deep sense, a call to love. Now, love is a relation realized between two persons who are endowed with the capacity to know, and to give themselves deliberately to the other. In other words, man's divine vocation is realized when in a communion of love with another, he reflects God's inner life, as it is a communion of love among the three divine Persons.

This call to communion in love should be established first with God and then with other human beings.<sup>9</sup> Thus, to give oneself in love to God and neighbor is to fulfill the fundamental vocation of a person, that is, "to live in a communion of love, and in this way to mirror in the world the communion that is in God, through which the Three Persons love each other in the intimate mystery of the one divine life."<sup>10</sup> The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms this: "God who created man out of love also calls him to love—the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is Himself love."<sup>11</sup>

The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has also made mention of this in various writings. In his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, he said: "Man cannot live without love. (Without love), his life is senseless."<sup>12</sup> In a document on family life, the Pope says:

God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image. . . God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rev. Richard M. Hogan & Rev. John M. Levoir, *Covenant of Love: Pope John Paul II on Sexuality, Marriage and Family in the Modern World* (New York: Image Books, 1986), p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Pope John Paul II, *MD*, no. 7.

<sup>11</sup> *CCC* no. 1604.

<sup>12</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* (March 4, 1979), no. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 11.

Deep within man lies an urgency to respond to and to fulfill his vocation. This is because only “love gives human life its definitive meaning.”<sup>14</sup> Man only realizes himself when he actualizes his potentiality to love.

## **2) Sacramental Loving: Marriage and Sacred Orders**

People tread different paths to respond to their vocation. Ordinarily, according to the various forms of love such as filial, paternal, fraternal love and friendship, love is given to different persons in varying degrees. However, in terms of intensity, two ways present themselves which claim one’s whole being, thereby signifying and actualizing divine love in this world: Marriage and Sacred Orders.<sup>15</sup> They are “two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person to love in its entirety. They are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of God’s covenant with his people.”<sup>16</sup> What makes these two ways even more special is the fact that both of them are sacraments; hence, they are efficaciously salvific and offer supernatural aid in the achievement of one’s goal.

In marriage, man’s vocation to love is lived out by a man and a woman who are bonded together by a deep love for each other, a love which, ultimately, points to God as to its source. In marriage, a man and a woman establish an intimate partnership of life and love,<sup>17</sup> a mutual self-giving which is patterned after the Trinitarian communion of love. Just as in God there is unity in plurality of relationship, so also in marriage there is unity in plurality of relationship. In this manner, there is a likeness between that total self-giving love of the Trinity and of husband and wife.

As a primary community of love, wife and husband  
enliven each other, while at the same time, their  
marriage gives witness to being rooted in God’s

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<sup>14</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Homily (November 4, 1979) at Luke’s Parish, Via Prenestina,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, no. 49 (December 1979), p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> The *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, in the subsequent footnote, though specifically referring to the tandem of Marriage and Celibacy, can also be broadened to apply to priesthood, interchanging it with Celibacy. This connection is clear enough when one understands a deep relation between celibacy and priesthood so that the Latin Church has even prescribed an obligatory celibacy to her priests. *Presbyterorum Ordinis* no. 16 also speaks of this relation.

<sup>16</sup> Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: ECCCE and Word & Life Publications, 1997), no. 1938.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. CCC no. 1601/ also cf. Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 48.

own life. . . their love for each other is not meant to remain solely within their mutuality, but like God's love, it is to be creative of new life both in terms of children which might issue from their union and from other types of service they may render in the community.<sup>18</sup>

There exists another way of loving which mirrors God's trinitarian love, namely, Sacred Orders or Priesthood.

Priesthood "confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful."<sup>19</sup> The priest manifests this in "his loving concern to the point of total self-giving for the flock, which he gathers into unity and leads to the Father through Christ and the Spirit."<sup>20</sup> The Latin Church has attached celibacy to the ministerial priesthood, in imitation of Jesus Christ, the eternal High Priest, and as a source of availability to the people of God. "Modelled on the total and exclusive dedication of Christ to his mission of salvation, and (making) it the cause of (one's) assimilation to the form of charity and sacrifice proper to Christ our Savior,"<sup>21</sup> priestly celibacy "signifies a love without reservations, and stimulates to a charity which is open to all."<sup>22</sup>

Sacred Orders therefore is a sacrament of service for God's sake to the people in which a man gives himself totally to God, the sole object of his love, in an integral self-dedication to the salvation of others. In marriage, the love for God grows in the love for one's partner; in the priesthood, the love for God is translated into service to Christ's bride, the Church.

## **2. The Sacrament of Matrimony**

A discussion of the sacrament of matrimony is preceded by a presentation of the sacraments in general.

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<sup>18</sup> David M Thomas, *Christian Marriage, A Journey Together* (Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> CCC no. 1592.

<sup>20</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day, Pastores Dabo Vobis* (March 25, 1992), no. 15.

<sup>21</sup> Paul VI, *Encyclical Letter on Priestly Celibacy, Sacerdotalis caelibatus* (June 24, 1967), no. 25.



## The Nature of the Sacraments in General

Scriptures affirm how God chose from the beginning to enter into dialogue with man by conferring on him His image and likeness. However, by sinning man willfully broke this special relationship with God. Yet, God did not abandon him but promised a Saviour who would restore the original friendship. In the fullness of time, Jesus came into the world to fulfill God's promise of redemption. He concretely manifested God's saving love in His Life, Passion, Death and Resurrection—the Paschal Mystery.<sup>23</sup> From this Paschal Mystery, the Church was born to continue embodying Christ's loving and saving activity for mankind. As such, the Church's activity is redemptive. She is “the universal sacrament of salvation.”<sup>24</sup> The Church exercises her saving mission in her seven sacraments, the channels through which Christ's saving love reaches each person.<sup>25</sup>

This is the context in which the seven sacraments of the Church should be viewed: They are “actions of Christ and of the Church,”<sup>26</sup> because they are “grounded directly in both Christ as the Primordial Sacrament and the Church as the Foundational Sacrament.”<sup>27</sup>

Jesus in his humanity is the sacrament of God's saving love for all: the Church is the sacrament of Jesus and the seven ritual sacraments are the sacraments of the Church, that is, they visibly manifest and effectively enact the Church's mystery and mission of making Christ present.<sup>28</sup>

A sacrament is a sensible sign instituted by Christ to give grace. As a sign, it expresses in a sensible manner a sacred reality, which is itself outside the grasp and reach of the senses. By the fact that Jesus was their author and

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, no. 24.

<sup>23</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 64, a. 5 presents the sacraments as being directly connected to the Incarnation and the entire paschal mystery. His treatise on the sacraments comes immediately after that on the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord. It is not simply that God conveys his grace to man; rather, the Word made flesh came among his people and directly and physically, through his humanity touched their human activities.

<sup>24</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), no. 48.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. John P. Schanz, *The Sacraments of Life and Worship* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 3-15.

<sup>26</sup> *1983 Codex Iuris Canonici*, English translation, CIC can. 840.

<sup>27</sup> *CFC* no. 1517.

institutor,<sup>29</sup> the sacraments become an efficacious sign of grace; efficacious in the sense that what they signify is also actualized, provided the recipient puts no obstacles. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work; it is he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies.<sup>30</sup>

Each sacrament confers sanctifying grace whereby the individual receives either justification (if in sin) or further growth in the life of grace. Through this growth in the life of grace, the individual is increasingly configured to Christ. St. Thomas spoke of the sacraments as the instruments God uses in communicating to man the graces of salvation.<sup>31</sup> Now if sacraments are instrumental causes of grace (God being the primary cause), it follows that the sacramental rituals themselves, not the ministers who perform them, convey grace. The sacraments gain their efficacy from the power of God Himself through Christ's saving acts in order to make present and visible the mystery of Christ's worship and man's salvation.<sup>32</sup> They are effective *ex opere operato*, regardless of the worthiness of the minister.

Over and above this sanctifying grace, a special sacramental grace is conferred. This sacramental grace is a divine assistance to help the individual achieve the end toward which the particular sacrament is ordered.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., no. 1524.

<sup>29</sup> Among the seven sacraments, most have no explicit affirmation of their institution by Christ from the Scriptures (except Eucharist, Penance and Baptism). Nevertheless, it is possible to affirm their immediate institution by Christ without holding that He determined everything in the sacraments in an immutable and definitive way. Certainly, He willed each of these sacraments and their special efficacy, but He entrusted to the Church their administration and the determination of those words and actions that would express the hidden reality contained in each sacrament, which is the work of God. Cf. John P. Schanz, pp 38-39/ Ludwig Ott, *The Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Patrick Lynch, Ph.D., trans. (Rockford Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1974), pp. 336-337.

<sup>30</sup> CCC no. 1127.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 64, a. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. CCC no. 1128.

## 1) The Sacrament of Matrimony

The Council of Trent defined that marriage is one of the seven sacraments.<sup>33</sup> It therefore possesses the three-fold element that makes up a sacrament—*sacramentum* (the external sign), *res et sacramentum* (the signified reality) and *res tantum* (the grace effected). Like all the sacraments, marriage is a sign that brings about that which it signifies. The sign (*sacramentum*) is the indissoluble bond created by the marriage *ratum et consummatum*. The signified reality (*res et sacramentum*) is the bond between Christ and the Church, and the *res tantum* is the sanctifying and the sacramental grace which is proper to the married state.<sup>34</sup>

### (1) Constitutive Elements of Sacramental Marriage

In the traditional view, the presence or absence of love would not make a difference to the sacramentality of marriage. It was not considered a constitutive element of marriage. What mattered was the legal form. This was consonant with the concept of marriage as a contract, of which the object was understood to be the right to the partner's body, that is, the right to sexual intercourse. The Second Vatican Council adopted a more personalistic view of marriage in which marital love was given importance. The biblical term *covenant* was applied to marriage in order to emphasize the close relation of sacramental marriage to the faithful love between Yahweh and His people, and between Christ and His Church. By invoking the covenantal dimension of marriage, the Council cast a new light on its sacramentality.

Marriage as a sacrament can be regarded in two ways: first, as the celebration of marriage (*matrimonium in fieri*) in which the couple publicly exchange marital vows, and secondly, as a permanent state, marriage as a lived sacrament (*matrimonium in facto esse*). On the basis of this distinction, the constitutive element of marriage becomes clearer: love freely and publicly vowed

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<sup>33</sup> "If anyone says that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law, instituted by Christ the Lord, but has been devised by men in the Church and does not confer grace—anathema sit." *Ds* 1801 [Denzinger 33<sup>rd</sup> Edition].

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Waldemar Molinski, "Marriage," *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol.3.

through the exchange of consent, and, from then on, to be lived in an exclusive and permanent conjugal relationship that is continually nurtured by the couple's mutual help and made to bear fruit through the gift of children.

Marriage is often taken as a synonym of wedding which is a transitory act. Marriage is, however, a status and a lifetime commitment which begins with the couple's exchange of marital vows that makes it a sacrament, an efficacious sign of Christ's redemptive love. This work will primarily consider marriage in the second sense, as a lived sacrament.

**(a) getting married: the exchange of marital vows  
between baptized Christians**

Sacramental marriage begins when the couple, by mutual consent, publicly exchange their marital vows.

Do you take (him/her) for your lawful  
(husband/wife) according to the rite of holy Mother  
the Church? Do you give yourself to (him/her as  
his/her husband/wife)? Do you accept (him/her) as  
your lawful (husband/wife)?

Through consent, the couple confirms their love before God and before the community and “their will to give themselves, each to the other, mutually and definitively, in order to live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love.”<sup>35</sup> By it, each of the spouses must give him/herself, and accept the other, “in a relationship characterized by exclusiveness (‘you and you alone’), permanence (‘till death do us part’) and procreativity (‘openness to the children with whom God may bless their union’).”<sup>36</sup>

The marriage vow is the unconditional promise to love one another under all circumstances. Its goal is the creation of an intimate lifetime community of life and love. Pope John Paul II identifies this “living and concrete word whereby a man and a woman express their conjugal love” as an expression of the

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<sup>35</sup> CCC no. 1662.

<sup>36</sup> Cormac Burke, “Marriage,” *Our Sunday Visitor Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine*.

revelation, ‘God loves his people’, so that by reason of this, “their love becomes the image and symbol of the covenant which unites God and his people.”<sup>37</sup>

The exchange of marriage vows in the midst of the church community becomes a unique moment in the life of faith of the couple. The Pope describes the exchange of vows as “the basic moment of the faith of the couple.”<sup>38</sup> The faith should not be seen as extrinsic to the interpersonal event. Rather, it is effectively operative within the act through which two people vow unconditional love for each another. A church wedding makes this faith dimension explicit. It brings out that the human and the divine are joined for the couple and for the community.

Marriage, like the other sacraments, is a sacrament of faith. It does not only “presuppose faith, but by words. . .” it also nourishes, strengthens and expresses it.<sup>39</sup> Without faith, there is no sacramental marriage. By their living faith, the couple relates their marriage “to Jesus, who is actively confessed as the Christ, and to the community of people called Church, which is actively confessed as Christ’s Body in the world.”<sup>40</sup> In this light, it becomes clear why the exchanging of marital vows should take place before a priest or deacon as the representative of the Church. They, as ministers of the Church, receive the consent publicly manifested by the couple in the name of the Church.<sup>41</sup>

The mutual consent expressed in the marriage vows, while sufficient for constituting a Christian marriage, is sealed and completed in sexual intercourse. The words of consent establish a valid sacramental marriage before God and His Church, but the marriage is, in the words of the Church, consummated by sexual union. Through this consummation, the marriage becomes *ratum et consummatum*, or absolutely indissoluble.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 12.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 51.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Vatican Council II, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium* (December 4, 1963), no. 59.

<sup>40</sup> Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament. A Theology of Christian Marriage* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *CCC* no. 1630.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *CIC* Can. 1061, 1141; *CCC* 1640

**(b) being married: the marital bond**

By getting married, the couple enter into “a new relationship, which must be lived out daily, with the sacramental grace, until its completion in the fullness of the Beatific Vision.”<sup>43</sup> The life of the married couple can be said to be the real unfolding of marriage’s sacramentality.

Marriage as permanent, lived sacrament<sup>44</sup> is alluded to in Pius XI’s<sup>45</sup> *Casti Connubii*:

[This] love is not based on the passing lust of the moment nor does it consist in pleasing words only, but in deep attachment of the heart which is expressed in action, since love is proved by deeds. This outward expression of love in the home demands not only mutual help but must go further; must have as its primary purpose that man and wife help each other day by day in forming and perfecting themselves in the interior life, so that through their partnership in life they may advance ever more and more in virtue, and above all that they may grow in true love toward God and their neighbor. . . . This mutual molding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense, as the Roman Catechism teaches, be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided matrimony be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of the child, but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Rev. Michael W. Ashdowne, “A Study of the Sacramentality of Marriage: When is Marriage Really Present? Future Dimensions,” *Studia Canonica*, 9, no. 2 (1975), p. 299.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Bellarmine (1542-162), in developing a deeper awareness of the sacramentality of Marriage after the Council of Trent, was actually the first one to take it up as a lived sacrament by proceeding from St. Thomas’ “*res tantum*,” in his work, *De controversiis christianae fidei*.

<sup>45</sup> In this encyclical, Pius XI was addressing the unitive-procreative meaning of marital act. To a certain degree, his work offered a revolutionary ferment towards the elimination of the hierarchy given to these meanings. The Pope seems to imply that the unitive aspect can also be considered as the chief purpose of marriage in the wide sense. Though the Pope was not directly speaking of marriage as a permanent state, it can be deduced from the importance given to the unitive aspect of marital act that this aspect of sacramental marriage is implied indirectly. For ‘the mutual moulding of husband and wife’, their perfecting of each other is realized in the couple’s daily living out of their marriage covenant, in marriage as permanent, lived sacrament.

<sup>46</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Encyclical on Christian Marriage, Casti Connubii* (December 31, 1930), nos. 23-24.

In the Second Vatican Council, this aspect of the sacrament of marriage gained a deeper perspective when marriage was referred to as an “intimate partnership of life and love,”<sup>47</sup> and placed within the context of covenantal love. The mutual pledge is seen as the sealing of a covenant before God. Marriage becomes the venue where the discovery of the couple’s ‘two in one’ ideal is experienced and lived more deeply from day to day. It follows that the main objective of marriage as a permanent, lived sacrament is the nurture and growth of the love the couple publicly expressed at their wedding.

“By virtue of the covenant of married life, the man and woman ‘are no longer two but one flesh’ and they are called to grow continually in their communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage promise of total mutual self-giving.”<sup>48</sup> The full expression of their self-giving in marriage is pre-eminently articulated in the intensely personal interchange of sexual union. Through sexual union, the couple

give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses. . . (since sexuality) concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.<sup>49</sup>

The sacrament is not restricted to the couple’s becoming one. Their relationship has a life-giving capacity. Children “are the supreme gift of marriage and greatly contribute to the good of the parents themselves.”<sup>50</sup> “The couple, while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 48.

<sup>48</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 19.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 50.

<sup>51</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 14.

It can be said then that marriage as a permanent, lived sacrament is concerned with the realization of its necessary elements: the mutual love of the spouses and the generation and education of children.

## **(2) The Indissoluble Sacramental Marital Bond**

Jesus confirmed what God had intended ‘in the beginning’, namely that

the creator from the beginning made them male and female and that he said: This is why a man must leave father and mother, and cling to his wife, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then what God has united, man must not divide.<sup>52</sup>

The Church holds that “a marriage freely consented and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved.”<sup>53</sup> Once contracted, marriage creates a bond which “by its nature is perpetual and exclusive.”<sup>54</sup> This marital bond is derived from ‘the great mystery’ of Christ and His Church. It is a supernatural bond, a divine gift.<sup>55</sup> The married couple therefore has the task to preserve this indissoluble bond until death with the help of God’s grace.

### **(a) Signifying the bond of Christ and the Church**

Marriage is “a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church and a participation in that covenant;”<sup>56</sup>

In the Old Testament, the prophets, particularly Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel<sup>57</sup>, used marriage to explain God’s undying, steadfast and forgiving love for mankind. In the New Testament, that communion between God and His people, “finds its definitive fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom who loves and gives himself as a Savior of humanity, uniting it to himself as his own

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<sup>52</sup> Mt. 19:4-6.

<sup>53</sup> CCC no. 1640.

<sup>54</sup> CIC can.1134.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Peter J. Elliott, *What God Has Joined... The Sacramentality of Marriage* (Australia: St. Paul Publications, 1990), p. 144.

<sup>56</sup> Vatican Council II, GS no. 48.

<sup>57</sup> See Hosea 1-3; Jeremiah 2,3; Isaiah 40-45; Ezekiel 15-16. Excellent commentaries are provided by Edward Schillebeeckx, *Marriage. Human Reality and Saving Mystery* (London: Sheed & Ward Ltd., 1965), pp. 34-52.



body.”<sup>58</sup> St. Paul captures this truth in his letter to the Ephesians, which led eventually to the understanding that marriage is a sacrament:

Give way to one another in obedience to Christ. Wives should regard their husbands as they regard the Lord, since as Christ is head of the Church and saves the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife, and as the Church submits to Christ, so should wives to their husbands, in everything. Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her. . . In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it; and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because it is his body—and we are its living parts. For this reason, a man must leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two will become one body. This mystery has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church. To sum up; you too, each of you, must love his wife as he loves himself; and let every wife respect her husband.<sup>59</sup>

Modern man may find the admonition to women outdated. But one must take into account that a writer is always affected by the cultural assumptions of his time. St. Paul lived in a predominantly patriarchal society. He should therefore not be accused of sexism.

The key statement is that “Christ’s love for his body, the church, is the model for the husband’s love of his wife,”<sup>60</sup> Hence, marriage signifies and shares in “mystery of the unity and faithful love between Christ and the Church.”<sup>61</sup>

In order to have a deeper insight into this supernatural signification of marriage, one has to look into the quality of Christ’s love for His Church and then relate it to marriage.

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<sup>58</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 13.

<sup>59</sup> **Eph.** 5:21-25, 28-33.

<sup>60</sup> Raymod Brown et al, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1990), p. 890.

<sup>61</sup> Vatican Council II, *LG* no. 11.

Christ loves the Church totally. The gospel narratives attest to this. It can even be said that the gospel itself is the unfolding of the story of Christ's love for His Church. Out of love, the Lord assumed a human nature and gave up His life on the Cross for His bride, the Church.<sup>62</sup> In the sacrament of matrimony, the couple reenact this relationship between Christ and the Church, and reflect it in their own relationship. They freely enter into this marital covenant, and accept with it a lifelong commitment of mutual self-giving and surrender. They do not merely exchange rights and duties, but rather dedicate themselves in a total way, to the point of taking on a new identity through the other. Their love as total giving asks for unity and indissolubility. This love that constitutes marriage is similar to the love that binds Christ and His Church.

By virtue of the sacramentality of their marriage, spouses are bound to one another in the most profoundly indissoluble manner. Their belonging to each other is the real representation, by means of the sacramental sign of the very relationship of Christ with the Church.<sup>63</sup>

**(b) Means of salvation: towards a Godlike fashion**

“Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons (and daughters), partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.”<sup>64</sup> It is “a participation in the life of God.”<sup>65</sup> It points toward eternal life. All the gifts of grace are intended to lead man to the fullest sharing in the life of God, which is consummated at the end of time when, having become like God, one sees Him face to face. Grace is therefore a transforming and “deifying” element,<sup>66</sup> through which one grows into “the fullness of the personhood God intends for us.”<sup>67</sup>

Since marriage is a sacrament, it confers gifts of grace. Pius XI, in his encyclical *Casti Connubii*, following the tradition of the Church, affirms this:

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 13.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> *CCC* no. 1996.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., no. 1997.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., no. 1999.

Christ the Lord, the Institutor and “perfecter” of the holy sacraments, by raising the matrimony of His faithful to the dignity of a true sacrament of the New Law, made it a sign and source of that peculiar internal grace by which it perfects natural love, it confirms an indissoluble union, and sanctifies both man and wife.<sup>68</sup>

The Pope distinguishes a three-fold grace in marriage: (1) increased sanctifying grace; (2) a special grace elevating and perfecting natural power; (3) the right to actual graces.

They [spouses] open up for themselves a treasure of sacramental grace from which they draw supernatural power for the fulfilling of their rights and duties faithfully, holily, perseveringly even unto death. Hence this sacrament not only increases sanctifying grace, the permanent principle of the supernatural life, in those who, as the expression is, place no obstacle (obex) in its way, but also adds particular gifts, dispositions, seeds of grace, by elevating and perfecting the natural powers. By these gifts the parties are assisted not only in understanding but in knowing intimately, in adhering to firmly, in willing effectively, and in successfully putting into practice, those things which pertain to their marriage state, its aims and duties, giving them, in fine right to the actual assistance of grace, whensoever they need it for fulfilling the duties of their state.<sup>69</sup>

The distinctive sacramental grace of marriage provides the spouses with the help and strength to fulfill their natural conjugal obligations, including their parental obligations, and to achieve their Christian goal. By this, they “help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children.”<sup>70</sup> It offers “distinctive graces, which correspond to the peculiar

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<sup>67</sup> Thomas N. Hart, *Living Happily Ever After, Toward a Theology of Christian Marriage* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 25.

<sup>68</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, no. 38.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 40.

<sup>70</sup> Vatican Council II, *LG* no. 11; cf. *LG* no. 41.

aspirations, duties and difficulties of married life.”<sup>71</sup> Sacramental grace then helps in perfecting marital love so that it may endure the test of time and make the couple a “living image of that fruitful union of Christ with the Church, which is to be venerated as the sacred token of that most perfect love.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Cormac Burke, “Sacrament of Marriage,” *Our Sunday Visitor Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrines*.

<sup>72</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, no. 42.

## CHAPTER THREE: MARRIAGE: THE CONFIGURATION TO TRINITARIAN LOVE

### 1. The Divine Communion of Love

“The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life.”<sup>1</sup> It is a mystery of one God in three divine Persons. God has gradually revealed this mystery through the Son incarnate, “who was sent into the world by the Father and together with the Father sends the life-giving Spirit to the People of God.”<sup>2</sup> Christ’s revelation gives some knowledge of God’s inner life, as a life shared by the three Persons, which the Church sums up by teaching that “God is one, but not solitary,” inasmuch as there is a real distinction between these Persons within the one Godhead.<sup>3</sup>

No amount of human reasoning can demonstrate this mystery which exceeds human comprehension. In fact, even some of the best minds in the early Church have been led into error when they tried to capture the mystery and translate it into human terms: Tritheism (there are three gods), Patripassianism (Father, Son and Holy Spirit refer not to real distinctions within God but simply to different ways in which God relates to his people), Subordinationism or Arianism (recognizing Christ as mere creature of the Father, yet the best creature), to mention the major ones.

Faith, however, throws some light on the mystery. In the eyes of faith, God is love. Love implies otherness as well as unity or union. Thus, in God, there “is an eternal exchange of love as Father, Son and Holy Spirit”<sup>4</sup> constitute a oneness of three, without dissolving the distinction between their Persons.

Truly, God seen as love is more apt to human comprehension, imperfect though it may be, for love is known by human experience.

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<sup>1</sup> CCC no. 261.

<sup>2</sup> Sacred Congregation on the Doctrine of Faith, *Mysterium filii Dei, Errors Concerning the Mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity* (February 21, 1972), par. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. CCC no. 254.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., no. 221.

## 1) **God is Love**<sup>5</sup>

God's "inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before the incarnation of God's Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit."<sup>6</sup>

The Lord Jesus Christ revealed that the Father "is eternally Father by his relationship to his only Son, who reciprocally is Son only in relation to his Father."<sup>7</sup> He claimed that ". . .no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."<sup>8</sup> Before His Passover, the Lord also announced the sending of 'another Paraclete' (Advocate), the Holy Spirit, who is another Person with the Son and the Father.<sup>9</sup>

This is the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, the mystery of God in Himself: God is one in three divine Persons, "who do not share the one divinity among themselves, but each of them is God whole and entire. Each of the persons is that supreme reality, viz., the divine substance, essence or nature,"<sup>10</sup> yet each is distinct from the other.

St. John the Evangelist has, in a way, offered a light to understand God's inner life.

My dear people, let us love one another since love comes from God and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Anyone who fails to love can never have known God, because God is love. God's love for us was revealed when God sent his only Son so that we could have life through him.<sup>11</sup>

'God is love' is rightly recognized as one of the high peaks of divine revelation in this Epistle, for it conveys that to know God is to view Him as love. Hence, one begins to see the mystery of the Trinity in a different light: Since God

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<sup>5</sup> **1 Jn** 4:81; **1 Jn** 4:16.

<sup>6</sup> **CCC** no. 237.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 240.

<sup>8</sup> **Mt.** 11:27; Cf. **Jn.** 10:15; 13:3..

<sup>9</sup> Cf. **Jn.** 14:16; 15:26; 16:7.

<sup>10</sup> **CCC** no. 253.

<sup>11</sup> **1 Jn.** 4:7-9.

is love, “love is not only one of His activities but all his activity is loving.”<sup>12</sup> The Father and the Holy Spirit, with the Son who revealed them, constitute the three Persons in God who by reason of God’s nature are eternally exchanging love, which amounts to the oneness of the three. Love after all entails otherness as well as union.

‘God is love’ brings us to conclude that first of all God is the source of Christian love which is “the eternal love of the Father and the Son (Jn. 17:24, 26) which is also the love of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:13),-- the eternal love of the Trinity. . .”<sup>13</sup> It brings to light the understanding that the divine reality is intrinsically relational, for what is love, in its depth, if not the deepest relational concept of all. If God is love, then the divine reality must be intrinsically relational in which the Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, and the Father and Son’s mutual love is the Holy Spirit. It follows that man as created in the image and likeness of God is also a relational being who realizes himself in love, and is called to love as God loves.

## **2) The Communion of Love of the Three Persons**

The Fourth Lateran Council taught that it is to be believed and professed “that there is only one true God, . . . the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: three Persons, but one essence. . . : the Father proceeding from none, the Son from the Father alone, and the Holy Spirit equally from both: and from the beginning, always and without end.”<sup>14</sup>

The angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas has ventured to explicate this immutable Catholic truth through a psychological approach. He used the patterns of the human mind, its knowledge and its self-possession, in the expression of the internal word and of love, to illustrate the two immanent divine processions. From those two immanent divine processions, he established that real relations exist among the

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen S. Malley, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 51: 1,2,3 John* (Texas: Word Book Publishing., 1984), p. 239.

<sup>13</sup> Rev. Ernest Lussier, SSS, *God is Love. According to St. John* (New York: Society of St. Paul, 1977), p. 136.

<sup>14</sup> **Ds** 800 [Profession of Faith of the Fourth General Lateran Council, 1215].

divine Persons which result in relative opposition whereby each divine Person is constituted in a distinct personality.

### **(1) The Proceeding of Divine Persons<sup>15</sup>**

The processions in God are internal processions of an intellectual nature as those occurring in the intellect and the will.

St. Thomas explains the procession of the Second Person of the Trinity through an analogy of the act of human understanding in which something proceeds within the intellectual agent, namely a concept of the object understood and proceeding from the knowledge of that object. This conception is then signified by the spoken word. What proceeds from this intellectual procession is not necessarily separate from its source. On the contrary, the more a thing is understood, the more closely is the intellectual concept joined and united to the intelligent agent, since the intellect by the very act of understanding is made one with the object understood. It is in this manner that the Second Person proceeds, that is, by way of perfect intellectual generation, inasmuch as in God the act of the intellect is the very substance of the one who understands.

The procession of the Word in God is called generation. By generation, we refer to the origin of a living being from a conjoined living principle and proceeding by way of similitude in the same specific nature, for instance, as a human being proceeds from a human being. The Second Person, in an analogous way, can also be called begotten or Son inasmuch as He proceeds by way of an intellectual action from a conjoined principle in which the concept of the intellect is a likeness of the object conceived, and thereby existing in the same nature, since in God His existence and His understanding are one. The Son begotten in God's understanding of Himself shares therefore the whole of the Father's divine nature. Precisely, this is the meaning of divine procession—the communication

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 27, a. 1-5.



of the divine nature. As such, the Son, Himself of divine nature, is a subsistent divine being, subsisting in the one divine essence.

Aside from an intellectual procession, we know also of a procession by way of an act of the will. In loving, the object loved is in the lover in the manner that the object understood is in the intellect of the agent. It is in this manner that the Holy Spirit proceeds. This procession is not called generation, because, unlike the Word, love does not beget a likeness of its object but is an inclination towards the beloved. In the procession of love in God, the one who proceeds by way of the will loving is called Spirit since love impels one towards what is loved.

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the mutual love of the Father and the Son. This mutual love of Father and Son is a subsistent internal relation which proceeds from within, as is His understanding of Himself. Now, since God's loving and His existence are identical, what actually proceeds from God's loving is also God.

The divine processions can be derived only from the actions which remain within the intellectual agent, in the operations of intellect and of will. No other procession is therefore possible apart from the procession of the Word and of Love.

## **(2) Relation in God<sup>16</sup>**

Relation, when applied to God, simply signifies reference to another, a purely relative reality, a mere rapport to another. A real procession necessarily implies a real relation. When something proceeds from a principle of the same nature, both the one proceeding and the source of procession exist in the same nature, and they stand in a real relation to each other. Thus, because the Son proceeds from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, there is a relation of paternity between the Father and the Son, a relation of filiation between the Son and the Father, and a relation between the Spirator, Father-Son, and Their common Spirit of Love.

These relations are not accidents, since in God there is nothing accidental. They are realities because God is truly the Father, truly the Son, truly the Holy Spirit; but they are realities existing by the very subsistence of the divine essence, so that the divine relations are the divine substance itself. A real relation, however, necessarily means a reference of one to another, in which case, one is relatively opposed to another. The very nature of relative opposition includes distinction. However, as it is applied to God, the distinction is not in the essence of divine nature in which there is unity and simplicity, but according to the way the Persons proceed. This “real distinction of the Persons from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another.”<sup>17</sup> They are distinct from one another in their relation of origin: “It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.”<sup>18</sup> It is in this opposition of relation of origin that the divine persons are constituted, who insofar as they are a distinct subsistent reality, are incommunicable.

### (3) The Divine Persons<sup>19</sup>

Person signifies what is most perfect in all nature—that is, a subsistent, individual of a rational nature. Since everything perfect is attributable to God whose essence contains every perfection, personhood is fittingly applied to God but not in the same manner as it applies to us.

Person as applied to God means a divine relation as subsisting, that is, perfectly existing in the divine essence itself. And this subsistence is actual in the terminal of the divine relations, that is, in the three Persons, without being shared among them. The undivided nature of God subsists perfectly in each of the Three Persons, so that, while they are really distinct Persons, they are one and the same God. The term person means a really distinct divine relation which subsists in one and the same undivided nature or essence.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. *ST* 1, q. 28, a. 1-4.

<sup>17</sup> *CCC* 255.

<sup>18</sup> *CCC* 254.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *ST* I, qq. 29 & 30.

In the one God there are three Persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This must not be understood as if there were three existences in God. In God “everything is one where there is no opposition of relationship.”<sup>20</sup> There is a distinction of persons in God without division of the divine substance. The divine essence is not multiplied by there being three supposits because God is His essence. Since essence and existence are identical in God, the divine persons do not have three existences, as three men do, but one.<sup>21</sup> They are undivided in their existence as they are in their nature. No one is the other since to be the Father is not to be the Son; but the existence of the Father is the same as the existence of the Son. There is distinction in the Trinity but the Godhead exists entire and undivided in each person. This points to the conclusion that there is in God an inner incommunicability which confronts one with another, three mutually distinct persons subsisting in the same divine nature.

### **3) God’s Creative and Redemptive Love**

It is out of love that God created, so that His creatures in turn can participate in His love and goodness. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: “God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness.”<sup>22</sup> In a special way, he established friendship with man by creating him in His image and likeness. But man rejected God by sinning. Thus, sin entered into the world and the whole of creation lost the grace of original holiness. But man never lost God’s love. God promised a redeemer who would restore man to His friendship.

Seen against the background of sin, the creative act of God was only an initial movement of divine love. Its perfect manifestation is contained in the Incarnation of the Word. “God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal

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<sup>20</sup> CCC 255.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2 ad 3.

<sup>22</sup> CCC no. 293.

life.”<sup>23</sup> God’s self-communication in the mystery of the Incarnation is so perfect that nothing more complete can be conceived. In essence, it is the giving of the Second Person. It is not a gift that can be distinguished from the giver, for the giver himself is the gift. The noblest acts of human selflessness imply only a limited self-giving. The lover can communicate his own vital spirit to another; he can even sacrifice himself to the point of laying down his life for his beloved, but he cannot give his own living personality and still continue to exist as an individual. Yet this is actually what happened to God in the mystery of the Incarnation: God in the person of the Son, gives Himself to humanity, as represented by a simple individual, in a mode of union to the closeness of which there exists no parallel whatsoever. Human nature whose separate existence, apart from a human personality giving it subsistence, might have been thought inconceivable here, receives its subsistence, the ultimate perfection which renders it incommunicable, from a divine person. This was the extent of God’s giving Himself to mankind, that upon the humanity of Christ—the nature which he shares with us—should be bestowed the personality of the Second Person.

Jesus’ offering of Himself was consummated on the Cross. On the Cross, we witness “a love to the end, that confers on Christ’s sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. Christ’s death [thus] both accomplished the divine redemption of men and restores them to communion with God.”<sup>24</sup> In suffering and death, Christ’s humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love, which desires the salvation of men.<sup>25</sup>

Though redemption may have manifested the peak of God’s love, it is not the end. From the death and the resurrection of the Redeemer, a Church is born to continue manifesting God’s saving love until Christ will come again in glory.

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<sup>23</sup> **Jn.** 3:16.

<sup>24</sup> **CCC** no. 613.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. **Heb.** 2:10, 17:18; 4:5; 7-9.

## **2. Characteristics of Trinitarian Love**

The Trinity is the most basic and at the same time, the loftiest of Christian mysteries. It is most basic because it underlies and encompasses all other Christian mysteries: Creation, Incarnation, Redemption, Sanctification, and the Beatific Vision. It is loftiest because it is the revelation of the inner life of God. As such, it seems impossible to identify some of the characteristics of Trinitarian love. Characteristic refers to “the qualities that distinguish one person or thing from another.”<sup>26</sup> To discover that distinctive feature in someone or something entails that it first be perceived and understood, a fact that is lacking in Trinitarian love which is a mystery no human mind can fully understand.

Nevertheless, the revelation of the Father and the Holy Spirit by the Word Himself, coupled with St. John the Evangelist’s insight which was written under divine inspiration, can offer light to unveil certain features of Trinitarian love: God is love in the three divine Persons who eternally interchange love among them. Their love effecting oneness in three, is of boundless creativity inasmuch as it constitutes the divine Persons themselves in the one divine essence, while at the same time, extending the fecundity of their love to those outside them.

### **1) Interpersonal**

Love is interpersonal. It exists between two or more persons who individually choose through a personal will’s act to give themselves to one another. One can like a thing or a pet animal, but the feeling does not qualify as love because love is between persons who are endowed with the spiritual faculties of reason and of will. The specific act of the will is love. The will tends towards an object, which is another way of saying that it loves the object. Through the same faculty, a person is able to reciprocate, making the love mutual. A genuine mutual love is more than an exchange of feelings between persons. It constitutes and realizes the persons by completing them.

Love is a receiving of the other person and a giving of oneself to that other person that has as its immediate goal nothing other than the full realization of the other person. In acting to accomplish this goal, the lover is also realized or constituted as a person.<sup>27</sup>

The divine love is interpersonal for it is trinitarian. There is an eternal exchange of love among the divine Persons,<sup>28</sup> by reason of which, each is constituted—the Father is Father in relation to the Son; the Son is Son in relation to the Father, the Holy Spirit is in relation to the Father and the Son who breathe Him forth. In their self-giving in love, the divine nature is communicated to the other. Richard Schneider describes clearly this interflow of divine life:

The first Person is the complete giving of the divine essence through generation and spiration... His very existence and identity depend upon this two-fold relation... The Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, is the acceptance of the divine essence and is the active giving (together with the Father) of the divine essence to the Spirit. His immanence consists in his relation of Sonship and active Spiration... The immanence of the Spirit consists in his transcendence to the Father and the Son, in his active acceptance of the divine nature from the Father... The three divine persons are persons by being related to one another... In God the persons are constituted by the dynamic mutual giving of themselves.<sup>29</sup>

The three Persons are “totally dependent on one another. Although, each possesses the fullness of the divine substance, each is not and cannot be except in relationship to the other two.”<sup>30</sup> Obviously, to be a person within the Trinity is to be ordered to another person. This interdependence extends even to

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<sup>26</sup> Reader’s Digest. *Word Power Dictionary* (Hong Kong: Reader’s Association, Far East Limited, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> Mark Lloyd Taylor, *God is Love. A Study in the Theology of Karl Rahner* (Atlanta, Georgia: America Academy of Religion, 1986), pp. 296-297.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. CCC no. 221.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Schneider, Lecture on “The Human Person as the Image of the Three-Personal God” at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin on August 8, 1966, pp.8-9. Quoted by Mary Timothy Prokes, *Mutuality: The Human Image of Trinitarian Life* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1990, p. 34.

the way the divine persons are perceived. Leonardo Boff calls this “reciprocal revelation,” an interpersonal revelation where one person is the condition for the revelation of the others.<sup>31</sup>

## **2) A living, dynamic reality, consummated in union**

God is eternal and unchanging. Yet, this does not make God a static being. On the contrary, God is unceasingly dynamic because of those two processions, that constitute his inner life, by which the Son is begotten and by which the Holy Spirit is spirated. They operate eternally since in God there is no ‘before’ or ‘after.’ “It is from eternity and without beginning that the Son took his origin from the Father, and from eternity and without beginning that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.”<sup>32</sup>

The Trinity is a vital divine communication in which each of the divine Persons is related to the others in an active state of mutual indwelling. Theology uses the Greek word *perichoresis* to describe this union of mutual indwelling of the persons, or the interpenetration of one person by the others. *Perichoresis* has a double meaning:<sup>33</sup> in the first place, it implies a static state which entails a mere containment in another, of being in another. The second sense has an active connotation. It expresses the living and eternal process of relating, intrinsic to the three Persons, in a permanent process of active reciprocity—the very process of communing that forms their very nature.<sup>34</sup> This circular movement of complete and reciprocal interchange of life and activity is consummated in a mutual indwelling through which “the Father is wholly in the Son, and wholly in the Spirit; the Son wholly in the Father and wholly in the Spirit; the Holy Spirit wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son.”<sup>35</sup>

The mutual indwelling of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is beyond anything one can imagine. It is a union in which the three Persons, infinitely perfect,

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<sup>30</sup> Joyce Little, “Trinity,” *Our Sunday Visitor Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrines*.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, Paul Burns, trans. (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1988), p. 46.

<sup>32</sup> *Ds.* 1331 [Council of Florence, Decree for the Jacobites, 1442].

<sup>33</sup> The first meaning is translated as *circuminsessio* and the second as *circumincessio*.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Boff, pp. 135-136.

possess everything in common even their very nature. Each is totally identical with the divine essence; each of the three is God, and yet there is only one God. It is therefore a perfect union without extinction of identity. Each keeps His own self just in the precise degree necessary for union with the Others. The uniqueness of each person is not absorbed by His unity with the Others. On the contrary, Their identities are established by Their union: the Father is Father because of His total abandonment of Himself to His Son and the Spirit; the same applies to the other Persons. This is, as one author puts it, “unity-in-distinctness par excellence,”<sup>36</sup>

### 3) **Fruitful (*ad intra* and *ad extra*)**

Fruitful or creative love “means not only to will the good of someone but also to produce the good that one wills.”<sup>37</sup> And what good could be better than that which pertains to the being of someone. Thus, in a sense, creative or fruitful love can also be called ‘productive love’ inasmuch as it produces and perfects the being of the beloved, and in turn, also the lover’s.

By reason of the procession of the divine persons, Trinitarian love is fruitful within the Godhead. Divine procession refers to the divine emanation of the Son from the Father and to the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son. These three, the Father, the Son and the Spirit, are in an eternal movement of giving and receiving of self, in perfect union with one another, which constitutes God’s inner life. It is in this giving and receiving of self to and from the Others that each “is.” Thus, we can say that every movement within the Godhead is life-giving.

Love can never remain static. It is always a burning desire to stretch to greater and greater transcendence to find oneself in self- surrender to another. This is also true of God. Going beyond the self-contained circular movement, the Trinity share their love in creation. Creation is the fruit when “the circular

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<sup>35</sup> *Ds* 1331 [Council of Florence, Decree for Jacobites, 1442].

<sup>36</sup> Charles A. Gallagher, et al., *Embodied in Love: Sacramental Spirituality and Sexual Intimacy* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1994), p. 110.



dynamism within God opens as the principle of productions of an entirely different kind outside of God.”<sup>38</sup>

Creation, which means to cause or produce things *ex nihilo*, pertains to the divine essence. This means that it is common to the three Persons. The causality of creation can also be traced back, however, to each of the divine Persons, in a manner that corresponds to their divine procession. St. Thomas explains this by taking as an example

the craftsman (who) works through the word conceived in his mind, and through the love of his will regarding some object. Hence also God the Father made the creature through His word, which is His Son; and through his love, which is the Holy Ghost. And so the processions of the persons are the type of production of creatures inasmuch as they include the essential attributes, knowledge and will.<sup>39</sup>

### **3. Sacrament of Marriage as Configurative to the Trinitarian Love**

Trinitarian love is the primary basis of a perfect relationship of love. Any conjugal and familial relationship is to be patterned after it: “The primordial model of the family is to be sought in God Himself, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life.”<sup>40</sup>

The Trinity is made up of three distinct and differentiated persons whose nature is one. They are united in love, the love of equals in relationship with one another. It is a total self-giving love where the Father is wholly Himself in giving Himself, all that He is and has, to His Word which is of one nature with Him; Father and Son are wholly Themselves in breathing forth the Holy Spirit, who is also Himself, as the bond of love, as the gift of equal love between the Father and

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<sup>37</sup> John J. Sullivan, SJ., “Love,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Home*, Vol. 6.

<sup>38</sup> William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God. The Trinity* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982, p. 76. (St. Thomas also emphasized this by discussing immediately the treatise concerning ‘the coming forth of the creatures of God’ after ‘the procession of divine Persons’.)

<sup>39</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 45, a. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Families, On the Occasion of the Year of the Family* (February 2, 1994), no. 6.

the Son. Each person is thus totally differentiated from the other and possesses himself fully and affirmatively.

The married couple in their mutual relationship complement one another; they become gradually differentiated and acquire possession of themselves in an affirmative manner. They become fully available to themselves and thus can donate themselves fully to and for others and to their children. This gift of themselves flows from their pledge to “give themselves to each other and accept each other.”<sup>41</sup>

Marriage is constituted by the irrevocable choice of the couple, which has a Trinitarian dimension. In marriage, as in the Trinity, love is manifested as “one person’s total and absolute gift of self to the other, a total and irrevocable gift.”<sup>42</sup>

Clearly, marital love as a type of human love is derived from the Trinitarian love. In his *Letter to Families*, Pope John Paul II speaks of “the divine ‘we’ (as) the eternal pattern of the human ‘we’, especially of that ‘we’ formed by man and the woman created in the divine image and likeness.”<sup>43</sup> It is possible to say that the Trinity is the pattern for marriage because there is “a certain parallel between the union existing among the divine persons and the union of the sons of God in truth and love.”<sup>44</sup>

As a derivation from divine love, marital love has the potentiality to reflect that divine paradigm of love. It can even be said that the whole truth about marriage emerges only on the basis of and in reference to the Trinitarian mystery of the being and life of God.

### **1) Marital Love as “Constitutive” of the Spouses’ Persons**

Man is made for woman and woman for man. In both, there exists a complementarity that brings about each other’s completeness when joined together. Pope John Paul II in his theology of the body, successively delivered

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<sup>41</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 48.

<sup>42</sup> Wanda Pottawska, “Roots of Spousal Love are found in Man’s Origin: God the Creator” (Reflections on the Letter to Families), *L’Osservatore Romano*, no. 39 (1994) p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, no. 6. (The human ‘we’ referred to here by the Pope is marriage, “the covenant of persons in love” no. 8 and “a unique communion of persons” no. 10.)

during his 1979-1980 General Audiences<sup>45</sup>, traced this phenomenon back to creation. He says that man at creation is characterized by original solitude, a 'lack' of a certain good: "it is not good that the man (male) should be alone"—God Yahweh says—"I will make him a helpmate."<sup>46</sup> But none of the created beings offers man the basic conditions which make it possible to exist in a relationship of mutual giving.

The words 'alone' and 'helper' indicate as fundamental and constitutive for man both the relationship and communion with one another in order to deliver him from his original solitude.<sup>47</sup> Thus, when the man saw the woman, he cried out ecstatically: "This at last is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh! This is to be called woman, for this was taken from man."<sup>48</sup> Only then man lost his original solitude.

Pope John Paul II has repeated in *Mulieris Dignitatem*: "Man cannot exist alone (cf. Gen 2:18); he can exist only as a 'unity of two,' thus in relation to another person. . . . Being a person in the image and likeness of God therefore entails an existence of relationship, in relationship to the other "I."<sup>49</sup>

The truth about man emerges from the words 'male and female he created them,' which express at the same time the diversity, the equality and the reciprocity between man and woman. Man exists as male and female; no man can be fully human by himself alone. Instead, he has always before him the other mode of being human of which he feels in need inasmuch as he/she needs this 'other' for his/her fulfillment.

"Man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself."<sup>50</sup> This complete giving of oneself takes place fully in marriage, "the covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the

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<sup>44</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 24.

<sup>45</sup> These talks have been published successively in the weekly English edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* (1979-1980).

<sup>46</sup> *Gen.* 2:18.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, "Revelation and discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body" (General Audience of 9 January), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 2 (615), (1980), p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Gen.* 2:23.

<sup>49</sup> Pope John Paul II, *MD*, no. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 24.

intimate community of life and love willed by God himself,”<sup>51</sup> which leads to a communion of persons. “In the intimate union of marriage, as a mutual giving of two persons, the partners surrender themselves to each other in their irrevocable personal consent.”<sup>52</sup> This surrender of selves creates a special union and constitutes and realizes the couple. Of course, each man and woman is a complete being ontologically speaking. But his/her full realization as a person, created for communion, is found through the other. The woman gives the boy his true identity and completion by making him a man, husband, and father. The man gives the girl her true identity and completion by making her a woman, wife and mother.

The man is enriched not only through her, who gives him her own person and femininity, but also through the gift of himself. The man’s giving of himself, in response to that of the woman, is an enrichment of himself. The man, therefore, not only accepts the gift, but at the same time, is received as a gift by the woman in the revelation of interior spiritual essence of his masculinity... The mutual exchange is mutual, and in it, the reciprocal effects of the sincere gift and of finding oneself again are revealed and grow.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, through marital relationship, the personality of each acquires a new dimension and distinctness, psychologically, emotionally, and socially.

## **2) Procreative Love**

Love’s fecundity is a reality totally different from biological fertility and/or any productivity of technical man. God has created men and women in His image and likeness, and blessed them so that, in their mutual self-bestowal, they may be sharers of His creative love. This divine calling to creativity is not just for producing children but also for “knowing” each other. As such, the fruitfulness of marriage can be seen from two aspects: the communion of love of

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<sup>51</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 48.

husband and wife and the children that may issue from the superabundance of their love.

“By virtue of the covenant of married life, the man and woman “are no longer two but one flesh”.<sup>54</sup> Conjugal love, which leads the spouses to reciprocal knowledge, “aims at a deeply personal unity, the unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul.”<sup>55</sup> This union establishes a conjugal communion which “sinks its roots in the natural complementarity that exists between man and woman, and is nurtured through the personal willingness of the spouses to share their entire life project, what they have and what they are...”<sup>56</sup> In conjugal love, each of the couple draws the other out of the isolation of merely individual existence. In this experience, man learns that it is not good for him to be alone and that it is only in giving and receiving true love that he can be truly himself, and can come to the true fulfillment of his being. “By means of the reciprocal personal gift of self, proper and exclusive to them, husband and wife tend towards the communion of their being in view of mutual perfection...”<sup>57</sup> “Thus, the man and the woman, who are no longer two but one, help and serve each other by their marriage partnership.”<sup>58</sup>

That becoming a ‘we’, a two-in-oneness, is the first instance of the fruitfulness which directly benefits the couple. The first life generated by the marriage of a man and a woman is their life together, their “mutual communion.” This communion generated and nurtured between the couple is mutual love, mutual care, mutual joy, and mutual enhancement of life. That loving communion is a prime end of their marriage, indeed, the very reason they decided to get married.<sup>59</sup> It is also the prime end of their sexual intercourse, for in every

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<sup>53</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Man and woman: a mutual gift for each other,” (General Audience 6 February), *L’Osservatore Romano*, no. 6 (619), (1980), p. 12.

<sup>54</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 19.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 13.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 19.

<sup>57</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae, Encyclical Letter on the Regulation of Birth* (July 25, 1968), no. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 48.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage And Sacrament. A Theology of Christian Marriage* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 102.

loving act of intercourse, the communion of persons is both signified and enhanced. “Married love is uniquely expressed and perfected by the exercise of the acts proper to marriage. . . the truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude.”<sup>60</sup>

Conjugal love however is “not exhausted by the communion between husband and wife, but is destined to continue, raising up new lives.”<sup>61</sup> “Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents.”<sup>62</sup> As such, the unitive love of marriage while leading the spouses to the reciprocal ‘knowledge’ which makes them ‘one flesh,’ opens “towards the greatest possible gift, by which they become cooperators with God for giving new life to a new human person,”<sup>63</sup> which is the fruit of their love. In giving themselves to each other, they, in the process, are given children, “who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother.”<sup>64</sup>

Through the children, “there appears a new unity, in which the relationship of communion between the parents attain complete fulfillment” insofar as they deepen, enrich and complete the conjugal communion of father and mother.<sup>65</sup>

### **3) Conjugal Love Taken up in Divine Love**

Conjugal love is human love elevated and assumed into divine love in a sacramental marriage. *Gaudium et Spes* affirms: “authentic married love is caught up into divine love.”<sup>66</sup>

Human love is “not the simple union of two persons who are in harmony with each other on the level of sensate affections. What gives human love its originality and grandeur is that through the medium of the body it reaches to the

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<sup>60</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 49.

<sup>61</sup> Pope Paul VI, *HV* no. 9.

<sup>62</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 50.

<sup>63</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 14.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, no. 7.

loftiest part of the soul.”<sup>67</sup> Marital love is human love because it “is an affection between two persons rooted in the will.”<sup>68</sup> It comes about by a free, mutual human decision of the couple to live a partnership of love and life, a covenant of love. This mutual love of the couple is rooted “in their irrevocable personal consent by which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other; for the good of the spouses, of the children and of society,”<sup>69</sup> This love binds the couple to each other to a unity of life.

Among the many characteristics of conjugal love, human love was the first to be mentioned in *Humanae Vitae*:

This love is first of all fully human love, that is to say, of the senses and of the spirit at the same time. It is not, then, a simple transport of instinct and sentiment, but also, and principally, an act of the free will, intended to endure and to grow by means of joys and sorrows of daily life, in such a way that husband and wife become one only heart and one only soul, and together attain their human perfection.<sup>70</sup>

In giving eminence to human love, the encyclical emphasizes that the sacramentality of marriage elevates it to the level of divine love. “The Lord, wishing to bestow special gifts of grace and divine love on it, has restored, perfected and elevated it.”<sup>71</sup> In this way, marital love itself in its entirety becomes more genuine and richer through the sacrament, because it is more closely united to the primal source of all love. By reason of this,

Christ the Lord has abundantly blessed this love, which is rich in its various features, coming as it does from the spring of divine love and modeled on Christ’s own union with the Church. He abides with them in order that by their mutual self-giving

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<sup>66</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 48.

<sup>67</sup> Charles V. Heris, OP., *Spirituality of Love*, David Martin, trans. (Missouri: B. Herder Book Co., 1965), p. 75.

<sup>68</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 49.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 48.

<sup>70</sup> Pope Paul VI, *HV* no. 9.

<sup>71</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 49.

spouses will love each other with enduring fidelity. .  
<sup>72</sup>  
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Thus, consecrated by Christ's sacrament, marital love while retaining its human form takes on supernatural meaning. It signifies the love-bond of Christ and of the Church, which is characterized by a covenantal spirit of fidelity. Perhaps, it can even be deduced that since Christ is the Second Person Incarnate, the Christ-Church union is ultimately derived from the love shared within the Godhead. Thus, because of the sacramentality of marriage, those who give and receive each other "in the Lord" have within them not only the very limited power of a man and a woman, but also the power of Christ's and ultimately of God's love, which makes them capable of living a covenantal love of unbreakable fidelity.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., no. 48.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE MORALITY OF THE SEXUAL RELATION BETWEEN THE SPOUSES [IN THE LIGHT OF THE TRINITARIAN DIMENSION OF MARRIAGE]**

Theology is the science of God. It is the “branch of human knowledge which presents organized and systematic information about God, and about creatures insofar as they are related to God.”<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch as it seeks to contemplate the mystery of God, theology is speculative. However, in the process of such contemplation, God is known as the very source of man’s happiness and destiny. Man’s final destiny is the eternal participation in the divine life. This leads theology to study the activity by which man can return to God. This study of the relation of human acts to man’s supernatural end, God, is *moral theology*. Thus, with moral theology, the science of theology becomes a practical knowledge, directing the conformation of man to Christ, the realization of the perfect image of God in man.<sup>2</sup>

Moral theology studies human action and lays down practical rules of conduct based on faith. With this noble goal, it tries to answer the question: What ought man to do by reason of who he is, a creature “created in the image and likeness of God?” It approaches this question in two ways: on the one hand, it tackles Christian life in general—virtue, grace, law, conscience, sin; on the other hand, it deals with specific areas of living—justice, respect for life, truth-telling, property rights and sexuality. Sexual morality, which attempts “to explain the meaning and purpose of human sexuality and the moral significance of those human acts and relations which are of an erotic sexual nature,” belongs to the latter category.<sup>3</sup> It is not, however, different in kind from morality in general; it is only a particular application of general moral principles.

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<sup>1</sup> Colman E. O’Neill, OP, “The Science of Theology,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Home*, Vol. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Joseph Costelloe, SJ, “Morality,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Home*, Vol. 7; Colman E. O’Neill, OP, “Science of Theology,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Home*, Vol. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Karl H. Peschke, SVD, *Christian Ethics. Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, Vol. 2 (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1994), p. 389.

The sexual morality of the Church is not a “given” revealed datum as if the applicable ethical standards were formulated from on high. On the contrary, it developed from the explications of divine truths of the Catholic faith. Neither did it evolve apart from the philosophical systems that were prevalent in the early stages of her life. In fact, from those systems, she discriminately took what is in conformity with the gospel of Christ and incorporated and assimilated it into her teachings. One of such systems that has greatly influenced her teaching on sexual morality is Stoicism which may be considered as the pioneer in the formulation of natural law.

The Stoics held that there is a reason for every thing. The world is a purposeful place and a harmonious whole in which each element fulfills the natural purpose which is proper to it. Man in particular has his own nature and purpose; he must always live according to this nature. His sexual power has a function, which is for reproduction and not for pleasure, for otherwise, it is a form of submission to irrational desires, and therefore, a form of degradation of one’s body.<sup>4</sup> It was roughly this schema that was adopted by Christianity.

Such was the beginning of the teaching of the Church on sexual morality, which exalted the procreative dimension of sexuality on the basis of natural law. Catholic moral theology has “approached the question of sexuality in the light of a natural law methodology. Such methodology recognizes that there exists a source of ethical wisdom and knowledge apart from the explicit revelation of God in the Scriptures.”<sup>5</sup> This teaching was further solidified when it was used to counter the errors of Gnosticism, which considered it wicked to beget children and so imprison another spirit in matter.<sup>6</sup>

St. Augustine and later St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>7</sup> further developed the understanding of natural law, explicitly relating it to God, who is the author of

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. John T. Noonan, Jr., *Contraception, A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 46-49/ 76-85.

<sup>5</sup> Charles E. Curran, *Themes in Fundamental Moral Theology* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1977), p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. John T. Noonan, pp. 95-98.

<sup>7</sup> There are other Fathers of the Church and Medieval thinkers who have dealt with this subject, yet these two made far a remarkable development in this area.

nature. The order of nature has its source in the eternal plan of God for his creation. This plan can be perceived, though with considerable difficulty, by human minds which recognize what things are and how they are intended to interact.<sup>8</sup> In creating man as male and female, God has given them sexual organs for reproduction. To use one's sexual power aside from this function is therefore an offense against nature and a sin against God.

Such a rigorist position on sexual morality has prevailed for long. Although the place of love in marriage was eventually also acknowledged, the procreative dimension continued to enjoy the primacy. It was not until the Second Vatican Council that this hierarchy of the procreative and unitive aspects of the sexual act was de-emphasized. Instead the complementarity and inseparability of both aspects was stressed. *Humanae Vitae*, the controversial encyclical of Pope Paul VI, has established the relation between these two meanings of the marital act:

That teaching, often set forth by the Magisterium, 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. Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most clearly uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman. By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its ordination towards man's most high calling to parenthood.<sup>9</sup>

On this inseparability of the unitive and procreative meanings of the marital act, the Church has founded her condemnation of homosexuality, masturbation, contraception, extra and pre-marital sex, among others. To suppress one of the two aspects constitutes sexual immorality and sin.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 1-II, q. 91, a. 2; q. 93; Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, L.K. Shook, trans. (New York: Random House, 1956), pp. 246-267.

<sup>9</sup> Pope Paul VI, *HV* no. 12.

However, many outside and even within the Church have had difficulty in accepting this teaching. This can be gleaned from the various negative reactions to *Humanae Vitae*. The oppositionists based their attack primarily on the inadequacy of natural law as being static and unchanging, while recent studies have brought out the changing nature of man. The accusations put into question the very foundation of sexual morality, namely, natural law. The Church can and must correct false perceptions concerning her teaching. However, instead of finding counter-arguments, would it not be better to explain the traditional teachings from a different point of view?

The natural law methodology is based on conclusions drawn from what is natural to man as perceived by the intellect. This is a philosophical approach. A new approach should be theological. It could take as its starting point the mystery of Trinity, which would be acceptable to all, since it is the very foundation of the Christian faith. It is a dogma, a revealed truth which cannot be called into doubt. This would surely be a strong foundation for a sexual morality.

### **1. Towards a Deeper Union**

By identifying sexuality with the sexual act, past generations have failed to come up with a proper understanding of sexuality. Sexuality was seen as proper to married couples only. Children, celibates, the unmarried, the divorced and the widowed were denied sex as if they were not sexual beings. Because of the discoveries of the human sciences, a completely different view of sexuality is upheld today. Sexuality is now understood to affect every person in the totality of his/her being. It is “a force that permeates, influences and affects every act of a person’s being at every moment of existence. It is not just an operation in one restricted area of life but is rather at the core and center of (one’s) personal life-response.”<sup>10</sup> It is regarded as a constituent part, not just an ‘attribute’ of the person. By it, a person is constituted as ‘he’ or ‘she’ and is defined in his or her concrete personal identity. At the level of concrete individuality, bodily sex

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<sup>10</sup> Gennaro P. Avvento, *Sexuality: A Christian View* (Connecticut: Twenty-third, 1982), p. 18.

determines one's personal identity. "It is from sex that the human person receives the characteristics which, on the biological, psychological and spiritual levels, make that person a man or a woman, and thereby largely condition his or her insertion towards maturity and insertion into society."<sup>11</sup>

In order to appreciate the context within which human sexuality is properly understood, one needs to go back to "the beginning."

The first account of creation in Genesis reveals that man is image of God in his totality as he is body and soul. "Let us make man in our image, in the likeness of ourselves. . . God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."<sup>12</sup> One can deduce from this passage that the differentiation of the human being as male and female is closely connected with his being image of God.

The fact that man is created as man and woman in the image of God means not only that each of them individually is like God, as a rational and free being. It also means that man and woman, created as a "unity of the two" in their common humanity, are called to live in a communion of love, and in this way, to mirror in the world the communion of love that is in God through which the Three Persons love each other in the intimate mystery of the one divine life.<sup>13</sup>

One could even say that by reason of this capacity to mirror the Trinitarian communion of love, man and woman, as they are bound together in a relationship of love, image God more perfectly than when taken individually. The Second Vatican Council affirms this when it states that

man and woman constitute two modes of realizing on the part of the human creature, a determined participation in the Divine Being: They are created in the image and likeness of God and they fully accomplish such vocation not only as single

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<sup>11</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics, Humana Persona* (January 31, 1976), no.1.

<sup>12</sup> **Gen.** 1:26-27.

<sup>13</sup> Pope John Paul II, *MD* no. 7.

persons, but also as couples, which are communities of love.<sup>14</sup>

This call to a union in love is supported by the second account of creation, which further qualifies this union as the way by which each man and woman can truly attain the perfection of their humanity. Human nature is one, yet it is expressed in two different and complementary embodiments. Man and woman are, therefore, a dual mode of humanity. By reason of this, there is a sense of something lacking in each of the sexes that can only be filled up by the other. Adam only found “a helper fit for him” in the person of Eve, who made him cry for joy, “this is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh.”<sup>15</sup> In mythical language, the biblical account expresses the truth that humankind exists in two different ‘incarnations’, two ways of being a body in the same humanity which, in their physical differentiation correspond to each other or complement one another. As such, the unity of human nature is realized in the joining of male and female, or more properly, in their living one for the other.<sup>16</sup> One author defines complementarity as that where “each sex can be a humanizing inspiration and a guide to personal growth and maturity for the other.”<sup>17</sup>

It is clear from the foregoing that sexuality “from the beginning”, is geared towards human completion. It makes human beings attain the fullness of their humanity as man and woman, particularly when they come together in a union of love. Even the controversial book *Human Sexuality* by Kosnik subscribes to this when it speaks of human sexuality as

the concrete manifestation of the divine call to completion, a call extended to every person in the very act of creation and rooted in the very core of his or her being. (It) is the mode or manner by which human experience expresses both the incompleteness of their individualities as their relatedness to each other as male and female.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Gen.* 2:20-23.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, *MD*, no. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Cormac Burke, “Sexual Identity in Marriage and Family Life,” *Linacre Quarterly*, 61, no. 3, (1994), p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Kosnik et al., *Human Sexuality. New Directions in American Catholic Thought* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), p. 82.

Saying that through sexuality man and woman attain completion does not mean that God left them half-made or incomplete. Rather, God aims at a communion of persons in which each is ‘a helpmate’ to the other by reason of their equality as persons and their complementarity as masculine and feminine. God did not create humans as solitary beings.<sup>19</sup> Man is by nature a social being. He can never live within the confines of himself. He only finds the meaning and value of his own existence when he reaches out to others in a relationship of love. This is so because man is “created according to God’s image precisely as male and female. It is not in lonely solitude but in relating to others through (their) sexual nature that (they) share in God’s life of love and creativity.”<sup>20</sup> The Sacred Congregation for Education speaks along this line in its guidelines for sexual education when it defines sexuality as “a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and of living human love.”<sup>21</sup> Truly, “sexuality like every other aspect of humanness is destined to serve human relationships. . . (it is) an integral part of their personal self-expression and of their mission of self-communication to others.”<sup>22</sup> Sex, therefore, is primarily a means towards realizing relationship and attaining communion.

However, it must be underlined that being male or female is not enough to reflect the image of God. To realize God’s image and likeness, man and woman are called to enter into a relationship with each other and to achieve within that relationship the fullness of what it means to be a man and a woman respectively. And it is not just any relationship. They are explicitly called to enter into a marital relationship, a love of “friendship and self-giving, (which has) the capacity to recognize and love persons for themselves,” and is thus capable of generating communion between persons “because each considers the good of the

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. CCC no. 372.

<sup>20</sup> CFC no. 1062/ Cf. Vatican Council II, GS no. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance for Human Love, Outlines for Sex Education* (November 1, 1983), no. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

other as his or her own good.”<sup>23</sup> Only in marriage does the man become husband and father and the woman wife and mother, and this is the perfection they are called to achieve.

In this light, it becomes clearer that sexuality is a means and a help for man and woman to attain their divine vocation to love. Through sexuality, man and woman are able to achieve a communion of love which is patterned after the Trinitarian self-giving of life and love.

Marriage is a special form of companionship, an “intimate partnership of life and love,”<sup>24</sup> that leads to a communion of love. To it solely belongs sexual giving, “realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.”<sup>25</sup> There is reason to reserve sexual acts only to marriage for it is there that love is nurtured and deepened as it seeks to mirror the divine love. Sexual giving is the expression of and a means to perfecting marital love. It is the “body language” par excellence of altruistic love.

Sacramental marriage creates a spiritual union. This is taught in the Old Testament and reiterated by Christ.

This is why a man must leave father and mother,  
and cling to his wife, and the two become one body.  
They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So  
then, what God has united, man must not divide.<sup>26</sup>

Now since the couple are embodied persons, it is impossible to accomplish this two-in-one-flesh without involving their bodies. The body becomes a means of communicating love. It speaks a language of love<sup>27</sup> which can be more effective than words. A handshake, an embrace, holding hands, a hug or a kiss, a mother nursing her child, a father using his body to protect his child—all these are ways of saying “I love you”. And each of these is rooted in human sexuality. The

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality. Guidelines for Education within the Family* (December 8, 1995), no. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 48.

<sup>25</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 11.

<sup>26</sup> *Mt.* 19:5-6; Cf. *Gen.* 2:24.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Bernard Haring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, Vol. 2 (Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1985), pp. 493-496.



most total and complete form of bodily love is expressed and attained in the sexual union of husband and wife.

Sexual union, or intercourse, is “a deep and powerful expression of the two-in-oneness of two lives, and itself develops and deepens that two-in-oneness.”<sup>28</sup> Through that bodily union, the spouses are speaking out and deepening the irrevocable “Yes” of the covenant exchanged on their wedding day. It can even be said that “through sexual intercourse, in which they consummate their love,” the couple “restore the original pattern of human unity. Each of them integrates and is integrated by the other.”<sup>29</sup> Concretely, the man is realized in his manhood and his potentiality of becoming a father may be actualized; in her turn, the woman is realized in her womanhood and may become mother.

Obviously, sexual intercourse is more than a mere physical act; it involves the total person, in the depth of his being. It is a sign of total, unreserved giving of self. It is the act in which husband and wife are united in a unique communion in which they give themselves to one another in the deepest sense of the word and belong to each other in an interpenetration of their selves. At the moment of orgasm, “the individual is lost in an interpenetration of the other self.” It is at the same time “an expression of one’s person.”<sup>30</sup> This is so because intercourse is not just a union of bodies, but a union of persons, and the act of love is within marriage a means for growth and an expression of union. That is, persons in a marriage are giving not just their bodies but their very selves. After all, “conjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter—appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Irish Bishops, *Love is for Life*, [http://www.cco.caltech.edu/~newman/love/Love\\_for\\_Life/LfL.17.html](http://www.cco.caltech.edu/~newman/love/Love_for_Life/LfL.17.html), p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *The Mystery of Love and Marriage. A Study in the Theology of Sexual Relation* (New York: Harper & Bros. Publishers, 1952), p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> John F. Derek, *Contemporary Medical Ethics* (New York: Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1975), pp. 82-83.

## 2. Understanding the Sexual Relationship of the Spouses

Married love is fully human, personal and total. The whole human being expresses him/herself in it, with will and heart responsive to the beloved partner in willing self-giving. *Gaudium et Spes* states:

Married love is eminently human love because it is an affection between two persons rooted in the will and it embraces the good of the whole person; it can enrich the sentiments of the spirit and their physical expression with a unique dignity and ennoble them as the special elements and signs of the friendship proper to marriage.<sup>32</sup>

This love, the document continues, “is uniquely expressed and perfected by the exercise of the acts proper to marriage.”<sup>33</sup> This, of course, does not limit marital love to sexual love. The point is that the marital act is “a culminating expression of love and of its continued development.”<sup>34</sup> “The truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude.”<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, the Lord Jesus, in restoring, perfecting and elevating this love so that it may bestow special gifts of grace and divine love on it, has included in it its human aspects, that is, its sexual dimension.<sup>36</sup> This love has assumed a sacramental character in its totality; thus, it has the power to convey grace. It follows that the couple’s sexual life is included in this sacramentality so that the “eros while retaining all its natural force, becomes agape, the expression of a love which is essentially orientated to God.”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the sexual relationship of the spouses is part of sacramental marriage and mirrors the self-giving love of the Trinity. “The primal symbol of sexual intercourse enacts the psycho-physical intimacy found between the spouses as their participation in God’s own activity,

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<sup>31</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 49.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Bernard Haring, “Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II,” *Readings on Christian Marriage. Doctrinal Perspectives*, Pedro S. Archutegui, SJ., compiler (Loyola School of Theology: Ateneo de Manila University, 1976), p. 134.

<sup>35</sup> Vatican Council II, *GS* no. 49.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Denis O’Callaghan, “Marriage as Sacrament,” *Concilium*, 55 (1970), pp. 106-107.

in his self-giving, trine love.”<sup>38</sup> Human relationships in general are reflective of the inter-trinitarian love of God which reaches out to the other and then reaches out to man.

Though in a very imperfect manner, the sexual relationship of the spouses can be said to re-enact the Trinitarian movement of loving, giving and receiving of personhood. It can even be called the concrete manifestation of that divine reality at the human and physical level of intimacy. In their sexual relationship, the spouses give themselves to the other in the totality of their being. There is a physical and psychological penetration into the other. One enters into the being of the other without confusion of identity. In this exchange of selves, they attain their fulfillment as man and woman. Each is constituted in his identity and completed by the other. The woman is realized in her womanhood, and reaches eventually her perfection as a woman in motherhood; the man is realized in his manhood, and eventually in fatherhood, the perfection of manhood.<sup>39</sup> Truly, “in no other human action do persons so dramatically give themselves to each other and thereby become totally themselves. Such ecstatic love resembles the inner life of God, in which the three persons give themselves to each other in a communion that is infinitely perfect.”<sup>40</sup>

This conjugal union may result in the gift of children, through which the union of the two is sealed. Children “are living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother.”<sup>41</sup> They are the living sign of the union of the two spouses, the natural and most obvious expression of their love.

It is in this light of total self-giving that the morality of the conjugal act should be viewed. The morality depends on the degree of self-giving. If the act is lacking in this essential aspect, it lacks moral perfection. The term total, however, needs to be qualified. Totality in the giving of oneself implies that the act be

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<sup>38</sup> Charles A. Gallagher, *Embodied in Love: Sacramental Spirituality and Sexual Intimacy* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1994), p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Paul M. Quay, SJ, *The Christian Meaning of Sexuality* (Illinois: Credo House Books, 1985), p. 34.

<sup>40</sup> Charles A. Gallagher, p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> Pope John Paul II, *FC* no. 14.

fruitful just as Trinitarian life is creative. It should be fruitful in terms of the growth in love of the spouses for one another as their relationship perfects and constitutes each one of them. It should also be fruitful in the sense that they welcome the possible issue from their love.

Applying this to sexual issues such as contraception, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, one can arrive at these provisional conclusions:

Contraception aims at preventing conception. Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* refers to it as “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 means, to render procreation impossible.”<sup>42</sup> The evil then of contraception lies in the fact that the conjugal act ceases to be an authentic manifestation of conjugal love for conjugal love should confirm and perfect the personhood of each of the spouses. In contraception, that perfection is denied to both of them for they are denied the ultimate perfection of fatherhood and motherhood. To reject the other’s fertility or procreative potentiality is to reject his or her masculinity or femininity, the very aspect in which the spouses accepted each other.

Pre-marital sex is the engaging in sexual activities prior to marriage. In this case, the giving of self is not total; something is held back. It is as if one claims: “I love you for the moment but I don’t know about the future.”

Finally, adultery, which is a sexual activity between two persons of whom at least one is married, is also contradictory to the Trinitarian concept of love inasmuch as one is saying: “I belong to my wife or my husband but I will give a part of myself to you.”

What may be considered as the basic premise in the foregoing evaluation is the need for a full affirmation of the value of the other as man or woman which includes the capacity of attaining the perfection of fatherhood or motherhood.

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<sup>42</sup> Pope Paul VI, *HV* no. 14.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **1. Summary**

Man is created in the image and likeness of God. This confers on him a unique dignity. This dignity flows from his intellectual nature: the faculties of reason and will which capacitate him to know and to love. The image of God is manifested in those faculties.

The similarity with God does not only bestow on man a privilege; from it flows a corresponding task, a vocation, for the image of God in man is a potentiality which is to be actualized. But what is it in God that man must seek to reflect?

St. John the Evangelist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has brought to light that God is love. God has manifested His love in the history of salvation. This revelation gained a deeper meaning when the Lord revealed the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, one God in three divine Persons. This mystery leads us to understand God's inner life as love. In the one Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in love.

It is this trinitarian life that every man is called to reflect and to live. He is called to mirror in human relationship a love patterned after the Trinitarian communion of love.

The love of the Trinity in a total self-giving communion of persons is mirrored in a special manner in marriage and the priesthood. Both are sacraments, which means that they actualize what they signify, namely, the divine love.

Marriage is a lifetime partnership of life and love. As a sacrament, it confers the capacity to reflect the bond of love between Christ and His Church. That bond is an unbreakable bond of total fidelity and commitment. Sacramental marriage assumes that characteristic.

The bond between Christ and His Church is derived from the Trinitarian communion of love. It shows the same elements that are found in the Trinitarian

love. Being the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Christ is bound to the Father in the union of the Holy Spirit. In this perspective, there exists a similarity between sacramental marriage and the Trinity. One may even say perhaps that while the Christ-Church union is the proximate reality signified by marriage, the Trinity is the ultimate reality signified.

Does sacramental marriage bring about a configuration to the Trinitarian communion of love?

Trinitarian love and marital love are interpersonal. In a process of mutual self-giving, the Father and the Son are constituted as distinct Persons; the Father as Father and the Son as Son. The same is true of the Holy Spirit as He proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Something similar happens in marriage. Through their total self-giving, the man and the woman are constituted in their respective personality: the man makes the girl woman, wife and mother. In her turn, the woman makes the boy man, husband and father. As in the Godhead, the relationships are 'constitutive' of the persons. In their mutual self-giving, the man and the woman attain their full stature as human beings and as persons, receiving themselves as it were from the other. Although they existed as distinct persons before their marriage, through their marriage, they attain the perfection which God intended for them.

In the Trinity, the love that is shared among the Persons bears fruit in creation. Creation is the fruit of Trinitarian love. In marriage too, the love between husband and wife results in child/ren, the concrete manifestation of their love for each other. Children, in fact, perfect the realization of the persons for they make husband and wife, parents.

The similarity that exists between marriage and the Trinity can be used to judge the sexual relation of the couple by judging it according to the degree of self-giving. The sexual relation is moral when it is constitutive of the person of the other and when it perfects the other as intended by God.

## **2. Conclusion**

Perfection is being complete. Since every person naturally tends towards the good, perfection is a common human quest. In one way or another, every person aims and desires to perfect him/herself whether it be in his/her personality, in his/her undertakings and even in his/her relationships with his/her fellow men.

The sexual morality of the Church has been under attack from all sides. The common objection is against the Natural Law methodology it employs. Whether the accusation is true or not does not really matter here. What matters is that the Church must be alarmed by this growing discontent among her faithful. Instead of looking at this phenomenon as something which would undermine her authority, she must look at it as something which may be echoing ‘a sign of the times’.

This work has upheld the position of the Church but going beyond the Natural Law approach. It takes a new point of view by looking at marriage from the perspective of the theology of the Most Holy Trinity. This theological approach enjoys an edge over the Natural Law methodology because it is based on a truth every Catholic accepts and believes in.

What emerges as the fundamental moral criterion is the human person him/herself and his/her perfection and realization as a person.

## **3. Recommendations**

1. The study has, in passing, made mention of such issues as contraception, pre-marital and extra-marital sex. Its primary objective has been to establish a new understanding of marriage as it is configuring to the Trinitarian communion of love. Having established that link, it has derived a fundamental moral principle from the relation of marriage to the Trinity. With the moral principle set in place, it is recommended that another study be made applying this principle to sexual issues.

2. Spirituality is usually thought of as proper of clerics. The real meaning of spirituality, however, is one’s relationship to God. Every human being has the capacity to relate to God. In fact, our actions gain meaning only insofar as we

relate to God. There are forms of spirituality that are suited to one's state of life. A spirituality suited to married couples should be developed. This study could be helpful as a point of departure.

3. A new study should be undertaken which is directed to help married couples with respect to the moral dilemmas they face. Many couples violate the moral doctrine of the Church without feelings of guilt. It would be opportune to find a new way of forming their conscience.



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## **ADDENDUM:**

### **CURRENT VIEWS ON MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

July 12, 1968 marked a significant day for all Catholics: it was a day anticipated with excitement by everyone but evoked varied reactions when it finally came. It was the day when Pope Paul VI officially released *Humanae Vitae*, the Encyclical Letter on the Regulation of Birth.

To some it was the triumph of orthodoxy as the Church officially remained steadfast to her teachings on marriage and sexuality, despite the majority opinion that she should change her stand on artificial contraception.<sup>1</sup>

For the majority members of the Papal Commission of 1966 who recommended to the Holy Father in “The Theological Report of the Papal Commission on Birth Control” commonly known as “the majority report” that artificial contraception may be allowed in ‘some cases’,<sup>2</sup> *Humanae Vitae* was a source of frustration.

To most lay Catholics, it was a sign of the Church’s insensitivity to the experience of married couples.

In general, though, it was the day when the church finally made clearer its teachings on sexuality and conjugal love by laying down a different aspect of the sexual act from that which had been proposed by past magisterial teachings by using the terms, primary and secondary ends of marriage. It did omit the subordination of the mutual help of spouses to the procreation and education of

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<sup>1</sup> John T. Noonan, Jr. attested to this long-standing tradition of the church on contraception. Surprisingly, however, when he became a member of the Papal Commission on Population and Birth Control, who considered the question on contraception, he approved of contraception as espoused by the majority report. Cf. John T. Noonan, Jr., *Contraception. A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonist*, enlarged edition, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1986), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> The article, “Marriage and Sexuality: Magisterial Teaching from 1918 to the Present”, by John Gallagher offered a 6-point summary of this report. Cf. Charles E. Curran, ed., *Change in Official Catholic Moral Teachings*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2003), pp. 227-247; also cf. Robert Blair

children using instead the unitive and procreative meanings of conjugal love,<sup>3</sup> thus, in a way, approaching marriage in a more personalistic way.

That teaching, often set forth by the magisterium, 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. Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to the laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman. By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its ordination towards man's high calling to parenthood.<sup>4</sup>

The encyclical, furthermore, by invoking the norms of natural law, teaches that "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life."<sup>5</sup>

These two inseparable meanings of the sexual act became the basis for judging the morality of such acts as: masturbation, which lacks the two meanings; pre-marital sex, "because only in a stable marriage can the full meaning of self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love be maintained... it cannot be properly procreative because it lacks the stable family unit in which children can be properly nurtured"<sup>6</sup>; sterilization, which is defective in the unitive aspect; and contraception, because it impedes the procreative aspect of a sexual act.

To put emphasis on artificial contraception, the encyclical declares as intrinsically immoral "every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal

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Kaiser, *The Encyclical That Never Was. The Story of the Pontifical Commission on Population, Family and Birth, 1964-66*, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> The Second Vatican Council's Document, *Gaudium et Spes*, already did away with the use of hierarchical ends of marriage but it did not directly tackle the issue of contraception. Pope John XXIII left this issue to the commission he established which was set to study questions on birth control and population.

<sup>4</sup> *Humanae Vitae*, 12. (Hereafter HV.)

<sup>5</sup> HV 11.

<sup>6</sup> John Gallagher, "Marriage and Sexuality: Magisterial Teaching from 1918 to the Present", p. 244.

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.”<sup>7</sup>

The past magisterial teachings have been accused of leaving out the personalistic aspect of marriage by putting too much stress on procreation, which is the primary end of marriage. In *Humanae Vitae* that may seem to be solved, but several moral theologians do not really believe this. It is claimed that *Gaudium et Spes* was already on the right track towards this personalistic approach by not using the hierarchy of marriage ends used by the magisterial teachings. However, *Humanae Vitae* backtracked by using the inseparability of the unitive-procreative meaning of the sexual act, by which procreation is still given importance. As such, it is no wonder, that *Humanae Vitae* invited even greater opposition and reaction when it was finally released. The extent of non-acceptance of this teaching by lay people could even be described as a modern great schism within the Catholic Church.

And even until the present day, it remains unacceptable to most Catholics as shown by some recent events.

In October 2010, a Catholic parish in Lucerne, Switzerland distributed condoms at a train station as part of an AIDS awareness campaign.<sup>8</sup> In the Philippines, a predominantly catholic country, a Reproductive Health Bill, which aims to provide government-funded family planning contraceptives and sex education even to teenagers, is slowly gaining stronger ground among law-makers in the House of Representatives?<sup>9</sup> The bill even received surprising support among several professors from the prestigious Roman Catholic Ateneo de Manila University.

In 2008, The Tablet, to commemorate the 40th year anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, undertook a major study on the influence of this encyclical and it was found that the Church’s teaching is ignored by the great majority of Mass-

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<sup>7</sup> HV 14.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.worldradio.ch/wrs/news/wrsnews/lucerne-catholic-church-distributes-condoms.shtml?21479>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.siiionline.org/?q=programmes/insights/philippines-reproductive-health-bill-marks-break-catholic-church>

going Catholics. 1,500 Catholics from parishes across England and Wales participated in the survey. Although almost half had never heard of *Humanae Vitae*, a large majority is aware of its teaching on artificial birth control and more than half believe that it should be revised.<sup>10</sup>

I believe that this scenario is not unique to England alone but that it is a worldwide phenomenon that is very disturbing inasmuch as it creates a dichotomy in the lives of Catholics; it creates a double standard of morality. As a Catholic priest of 10 years, I have often encountered Catholic married couples who are, on the one hand, very active members of the parish but, on the other hand, are not faithful to what the church teaches on contraception. They are so to say, so to speak, practicing Catholics practicing contraception. And worse, this does not seem to matter much to them. And if this is the scenario created, then it leads to questioning the very credibility of the church in her moral teachings.

Joseph A. Selling said that the official position of the church on the regulation of birth became the stumbling block for the much needed development of sexual ethics. “The official position of the leadership of the church in the area of sexual ethics has lost a significant amount of credibility, especially among those who are well educated, and who have long since taken their own responsibility for dealing with issues in sexual ethics. Because of the loss of credibility on the contraception issue, the official church has little impact on the opinions of large numbers of people on any issue that touches upon human sexuality, including and especially the role of women in the church.”<sup>11</sup>

40 years have passed since *Humanae Vitae* was issued, much opposition and reaction still come to the fore and these have reached the point of undermining the teaching authority of the church and the very foundation of moral theology.

A group of theologians gathered at Marquette University in August 1968 summarized the debate engendered by the encyclical as follows:

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. “Sex and the modern Catholic”, *The Tablet* (26 July 2008), pp. 14-15.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph A. Selling, “Twenty Five Years After *Familiaris Consortio*”, *Intams Review*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (2006), p. 164.

(1) in the areas of human understanding which are proper to human reasoning such as natural law, what is the function of the Church as the authoritative teacher of revelation? (2) what are the sources for the formulation of binding moral doctrine within the Christian community? (3) what is the precise role of the Church as authoritative teacher in these areas? (4) what is the role of the bishops, of the body of the faithful and of the church's theologians in formulating such moral teaching? (5) what qualifications may be attached to the individual Christian assent to admittedly fallible statements of the merely fallible magisterium, especially when this involves practical judgment of grave consequences?<sup>12</sup>

These critiques did not die down, but have even intensified. And what is really now at stake is the whole moral theology involving issues such as natural law, the moral absolutes and the infallibility of the church as a teacher of morality. Because of this, it can be said that if one intends to study contemporary and current perspectives on marital love, natural family planning and artificial contraception, one cannot ignore *Humanae Vitae* because if theologians were to propose new perspectives on conjugal love, they would be either a defense and clarification of the teachings set forth in *Humanae Vitae* or a direct attack on the encyclical, which would eventually offer new ways of approaching sexual morality. One author even commented that the issue on birth control liberalized and radicalized even some of the most conservative theologians in the church, e.g., Mc. Cormick, around the time of its release.<sup>13</sup>

This paper is an addendum to the Masteral and Licentiate Dissertation, *The Trinitarian Dimension of Conjugal Love*. Inasmuch as the dissertation delved into the orthodox teachings of the Church, this addendum will explore the arguments of those who dissent from the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* and from the moral teachings of the Catholic Church on marital love. Although this addendum particularly seeks to deal with contemporary views on marital love, Natural

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Our Sunday Visitor, August 18, 1968.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor, S.C.Sp., *Moral Theology in An Age of Renewal. A Study of the Catholic Tradition Since Vatican II*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), p. 74.

Family Planning and artificial contraception, it cannot but touch also on some important moral principles such as the moral absolutes and natural law from which the opposition and doubts basically stemmed.

Bernard Hoose<sup>14</sup> generally categorized 3 approaches to the question of absolute norms dealing with concrete, moral behavior: (1) official hierarchical teaching, (2) Germain Grisez and John Finnis<sup>15</sup> and others, and (3) revisionists or proportionalists.<sup>16</sup>

This addendum will address the third approach, that is, the revisionists or proportionalists, inasmuch as the second group maintains a similar position with the Church, although its approach is different from the one traditionally espoused by the Church.

Another limitation of this addendum is that it cannot really present in detail the thoughts of all the revisionist or proportionalist theologians, much less the perspectives of all theologians. It will try, however, to cite some important points of the so-called dissenters of *Humanae Vitae*.

## I. NATURAL LAW AND THE MORAL ABSOLUTES

As already mentioned, the issue of marital love and contraception has basically put into question the very existence of an important teaching of the Church—the existence of moral absolutes, which states that certain actions are immoral regardless of the intention of the agent and the circumstances

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bernard Hoose, ed., *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), pp. 78-79.

<sup>15</sup> Germain Grisez and John Finnis develop a different natural law approach based on human flourishing or integral human fulfillment. For them, there are certain basic goods which human beings can never go directly against. While this theory disagrees with emphasis on the nature of the faculty in the natural law theory of the hierarchical magisterium, it arrives at the same conclusion in practice.

<sup>16</sup> Revisionists or proportionalists disagree to some extent with body theory and conclusions of the natural law theory. This, on the contrary, distinguishes between moral evil and premoral (physical or ontic) evil, thus, trying to avoid the danger of physicalism. They claim that one can never intend premoral evil as an end, but one can intend and do premoral evil as a means to an end provided there is proportionate reason

surrounding the act. Included here are divorce, direct abortion, euthanasia, sterilization, artificial insemination and artificial contraception.

*Humanae Vitae* insists that certain acts are intrinsically evil. In the language of Catholic moral theology, this means that certain acts are always wrong, and that there can never be a circumstance in which they are permissible if done knowingly and intentionally. Stated another way, this is a strong support for the long-held doctrine of Catholic moral theology that "the end does not justify the means." John Paul bases this on the argument that certain acts are so destructive to the human person that there are no extenuating circumstances that would allow them. As an example, John Paul specifically reaffirms the teaching of Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* concerning contraception that there are no circumstances in which the practice is licit.<sup>17</sup>

Reason attests that there are objects of the human act which are by their nature "incapable of being ordered" to God, because they radically contradict the good of the person made in His image. These are the acts which, in the Church's moral tradition, have been termed "intrinsically evil" (*intrinsece malum*): they are such always and per se, in other words, on account of their very object, and quite apart from the ulterior intentions of the one acting and the circumstances of the act. Consequently, without in the least denying the influence on morality exercised by circumstances and especially by intentions, the Church teaches that "there exist acts which per se and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously wrong by reason of their object".<sup>18</sup>

The constant teaching of the Church was again stated on March 1, 1997 when the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Family issued a *Vademecum for*

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, 80.

<sup>18</sup> In discussing the respect due to the human person, *Evangelium Vitae* no. 3 gives a number of examples of such acts: "Whatever is hostile to life itself, such as any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit; whatever is offensive to human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children; degrading conditions of work which treat laborers as mere instruments of profit, and not as free responsible persons: all these and the like are a disgrace, and so long as they infect human civilization they contaminate



*Confessors Concerning Some Aspects of the Morality of Conjugal Life*. Included in this document is the following statement:

The Church has always taught the intrinsic evil of contraception, that is, of every marital act intentionally rendered unfruitful. This teaching is to be held as definitive and irreformable. Contraception is gravely opposed to marital chastity; it is contrary to the good of the transmission of life (the procreative aspect of matrimony) and to the reciprocal self-giving of the spouses (the unitive aspect of matrimony); it harms true love and denies the sovereign role of God in the transmission of life.<sup>19</sup>

This important teaching of the Church has been primarily attacked by the proportionalists.

Initially, it can be said that the root of the rejection of moral absolutes by the revisionists stemmed from the reasoning of the majority Report which espouses the moral acceptability of contraception based on the proportionate good that it can bring to the whole marriage.

Reason, objectivity and truth require that an action be evaluated as being right or wrong only as a totality that includes all the circumstances and motivations, considered in relation to all “pre-moral (but morally relevant) goods and bads involved in that totality, for the purpose of identifying the behavior that will further human realization and self-development, or, at least, will contradict or negate its own good purpose.”<sup>20</sup> William May in describing the position of the revisionists would further clarify that human goods and values are not, of themselves, moral in nature. Rather they are described as “pre-moral”, “non-moral” or “ontic”, which means that they only gain their morality when seen within the context of the whole act, that is, with the agent and circumstances. Thus, intending and doing good of any non-moral evil— that is, the deprivation of

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those who inflict them more than those who suffer injustice, and they are a negation of the honor due to the Creator”.

<sup>19</sup> *Vademecum for Confessors Concerning Some Aspects of the Morality of Conjugal Life* (February 12, 1997), 4.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. William E. May, *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2003) p. 145.

any non-moral good—can be justified if such intending and doing of evil is ordered to a proportionately greater non-moral good.

The tradition affirming such absolutes arbitrarily abstracts some elements of an action from its total, concrete reality and renders a moral judgment on this abstraction and not on the total human act. Such judgments simply ignore the moral reality of an act as a whole, as claimed by the revisionists. To absolutize norms proscribing contraception is to be blind to the wholeness of the concrete human act.

To the stand of the church that there exists moral absolutes, the revisionists would say that there is transcendent, transhistorical and transcultural dimension of human persons, in so far as human persons are called to a steadily advancing humanization. Nonetheless, concrete human nature, by reason of its historicity is subject to far reaching changes. It thus follows that no specific material norm, articulated under specific historical conditions can be true and applicable universally and unchangeably. Material norms are valid only for the most part.<sup>21</sup>

Some moral theologians would even react that the formulations made by St. Thomas several centuries ago especially with regard to the ends of marriage, which has dominated the church for so long, is a sign of non-development. In St. Thomas' time, the knowledge about biological functions and processes were not as advanced as today and, clearly, the formulations that were based on the level of knowledge about nature at the time cannot be really considered updated and true. Thus, sticking to his views stagnates the total understanding of human nature and the human person. True indeed, human nature never changes as the church claims. But how can we truly say that St. Thomas, in the first place, formulated the correct understanding of the sexual nature of man?

Charles Curran, who can be considered as one of the leading theologians belonging to the revisionist or proportionalist group, said that the existence of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

moral absolutes stems from the historically wrong understanding of natural law and also from the insistence on the teaching authority of the church.

In tackling the historical development of natural law from Aristotle until St. Thomas Aquinas, it was discovered that “natural law does not designate a coherent philosophical system with an agreed upon body of content which has been in existence in the Catholic Church from the beginning.”<sup>22</sup> “Before the time of St. Thomas, there was not a coherent philosophical system with an agreed upon ethical content which was called natural law.” Thomas himself denied “that natural law is a written code” and admitted “that as a principle that once one descends from the first principles of the natural law which are known by inclination and not deduction, then the possibility of defectibility in particular cases becomes a reality.” Thus, it does not “seem to justify the insistence on universally valid, absolute norms of human behavior in Catholic moral theology.”

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The weakness in the theory of moral absolutes, as it has derived from Aquinas, originates from his argument. He said that primary precepts of natural law are completely unchangeable, while secondary precepts may change and it may appear that the Ten Commandments are to be included in this. That is why stealing and killing may be justifiable. But this itself is an acknowledgment that circumstances can make a moral difference.

Following this argument, it can be said that “if nature can and does change, either in general or in specific instances, then natural law conclusions claiming to originate in nature must themselves also change accordingly.”<sup>24</sup>

Another problematic area with absolutizing norms and attaching the meanings of the act with nature is physicalism.

Undeniably, a large number of, but not all, Catholic moral theologians disagree with the criterion of sexual morality based on the nature and purpose of sexual

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<sup>22</sup> Charles Curran, *A New Look at Christian Morality*, (London: Sheed & Ward Ltd., 1969), 74.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 83.

<sup>24</sup> John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology. A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 314.

faculty and act—an approach from the perspective of natural law but described by “the so-called dissenters” as physicalism. Physicalism “identifies the moral aspect of the act with its physical structure or aspect. The physical act of depositing male semen in the vagina of the wife must always be present and can never be interfered with. The physical act must always be present and cannot be interfered with either to prevent procreation or even to help procreation.”<sup>25</sup>

Richard Mc. Cormick surmised that the argument put forth by *Humanae Vitae* that every act should be open to the transmission of life, rested on the supposition that “every act of coitus has and, therefore, must retain a *per se* aptitude for precreation.” But this, according to him, is based on an obsolete biology because sexual intercourse in the infertile period cannot be said to be destined for procreation. Thus, there is really the separability of the unitive and procreative meanings of the sexual act performed during infertile periods. Such an approach, therefore, is wrong because it determines the meaning of the act, and eventually its morality, by examining the physiological structure. In contrast to this, in a more personalistic tone, Mc. Cormick suggested that “the meaning of the sexual activity cannot be derived narrowly from biological materialities: for this does not take into account the full range of meaning of human sexuality. It is not the sexual organs which are the source of life, but the person.”<sup>26</sup>

It is also argued that “in other areas of life, Catholic teaching does not identify the human moral act with the physical aspect of the act.” This applies to killing for self-defense, and theft for the preservation of life, both of which can be morally acceptable in grave cases and with grave reasons.

The example of lying is put forward as an example of a problem of moral criterion based on the faculty and purpose of speech. Lying is always considered as being morally evil. In contrast, Curran employs a more relational criterion—the malice of lying consists in the violation of my neighbors’ right to truth. Thus, according to him, there should be a distinction between lying and false speech.

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<sup>25</sup> Charles Curran, “Dangers of Certitude”, *The Tablet*, (26 July 2008), p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Mc Cormick, *Notes on Moral Theology: 1965-1980*, (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1980), p. 218.

There are types of actions which are inherently evil and absolutely forbidden. Considered in abstraction from the circumstances surrounding them, their intrinsic malice is readily arrived at by the process of natural law reasoning elaborated by Aquinas, and that none of the other features of the situations in which they actually occurred could penetrate or alter this intrinsic malice.<sup>27</sup>

The problem with this is: when applied to such acts as lying or killing, for example, why are they justifiable in some circumstances but not in others? Which of a particular cluster of circumstances make a crucial moral difference, and what is the criterion for deriving morality for some and not in others?

In short, therefore, the problematic areas in Catholic moral theology and life in our time center around the absolute moral norms where the moral aspect of the act is described in physical and metaphysical terms.<sup>28</sup>

Timothy Radcliffe, a former Master of the Dominicans who offered another Christian vision of sexuality and, thus, another kind of sexual ethic derived from Jesus' gift of himself at the Last Supper, developed such an approach because of his own view of morality based on natural law. He said: "When the Church does articulate a vision of sexuality, it is usually in terms of natural law. That has its own usefulness and beauty, and I do not want to dismiss it at all, but it carries the danger that sex may then be seen reductively, in terms of the production of children."<sup>29</sup> For him, sexuality must be placed in the complex context of human communication: on the night before he died, Jesus gave us his body and this invites us to a deeper understanding of what it might mean to offer our body to another person. Sexuality speaks of a relationship that is founded in the giving and receiving of gifts. At the heart of sexuality is gratitude and generosity. Sexual intercourse is the transmission of the gift of our being and therefore a profound expression of what it means to be human.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Mahoney, p. 312.

<sup>28</sup> Curran, "Dangers of Certitude", p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> Timothy Radcliffe, "The Joy of Giving Ourselves", *The Tablet*, (23 February 2008), p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Curran, "Dangers of Certitude", p. 23.

The point of presenting this new way of looking at sexual morality other than from natural law is merely to affirm the inappropriateness of judging the morality of sexual acts by means of natural law alone. This is all the more striking coming from a priest belonging to a religious order known for its conservatism and strict adherence to the Church.

“The absolute moral norms rely heavily on natural law and human reason.” And as such, “they fall under the accepted category of non-infallible teaching.”<sup>31</sup> Curran was even very radical to claim that the magisterium of the church had no particular competence over or special insight concerning issues pertaining to natural law.<sup>32</sup> And when there is sufficient reason, anyone can dissent in theory and in practice. Thus, it can be said that these teachings do not claim absolute certitude.

Francis Sullivan would even argue that *Humanae Vitae* which is an example of moral teachings derived from natural law, is not in itself infallible. He said that it is now generally agreed, that the process by which we arrive at knowledge of concrete norms of natural law is through shared reflection on human experience, and the exercise of human intelligence. And it is on this account that the problem arises because human experience is an on-going, open-ended reality. This is, of course, in line with Karl Rahner’s theology which claims that the concrete nature of man in all its dimensions is always subject to the process of change. Thus, Sullivan concluded that no specific moral norm can be taught infallibly.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> The Washington Declaration led by Curran signed by over 600 theologians concluded that the encyclical’s teaching is irreformable because it is open to error and is inadequate and erroneous with regard to birth control. Cf. Odozor, p. 56.

<sup>33</sup> Francis Sullivan, S.J., “The Authority of the Magisterium on Questions of Natural Moral Law”, in Readings in Moral Theology No. 6. Dissent in the Church, Charles E. Curran & Richard A. McCormick, S.J., eds., (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1988), 42-57. Thus, he claims that the Catholic teaching on contraception (and by implication, including other questions about sex and marriage) has not been taught infallibly by the ordinary magisterium. Against this, a counter rebuttal has also been offered by those constant defenders of the magisterium holding that the condemnation of artificial contraception has been infallibly proposed by the ordinary magisterium: J.C. Ford & G. Grisez, “Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium,” Theological Studies 39 (1978, 258-312 esp. 312.

Curran, for his part, enumerated several instances when the magisterial teachings of the past made a mistake on some moral issues and, thus, later on, the Church changed her stand. These are on usury, the right of the defendant to keep silent, religious freedom, the ends of marriage, the best form of government and on slavery.<sup>34</sup>

More specifically, in the area of sexuality, there have been instances that the Church deviated from her former magisterial position, as in the case of having sex during menstrual period. Earlier, it was considered morally wrong to have sexual intercourse during the menstrual period of the wife.<sup>35</sup> The Church, of course, merely terms this as a development and not a change.

And the big question posed by Curran and other opposing theologians is: why should the Church not change its teaching on moral absolutes and, specifically, on contraception? The answer they themselves offer is: because changing it will undermine the very foundation of the moral teachings of the Church. It will really put the Church in crisis.

## II. THE PROCREATIVE MARRIAGE

In contrast to the traditionalist stand of the church, proportionalists would rather espouse a personal approach to sexuality. The problem that they see in the past magisterial position is that because of so much focus on procreation, one could even marry an enemy.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the element of love is not really present. With the release of *Gaudium et Spes*, which is in line with *Casti Connubii*, a more personalized description of marriage began to bloom, speaking of marriage as a partnership of life and love, a covenant of love... However, the direction started by *Gaudium et Spes* was diverted by *Humanae Vitae*. Saying that every marital act should be open to procreation is tantamount to saying that procreation is the primary end of marriage.

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<sup>34</sup> Curran, "Dangers of Certitude", p. 24.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. <http://shout.webring.com/people/up/pharsea/Contraception.html#Reversal> of this teaching

<sup>36</sup> Todd Salzman & Michael G. Lawler, *The Sexual Person. Toward A Renewed Catholic Anthropology*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008), p. 38.

It is even argued that although the Church has already acknowledged the unitive aspect of the marital relationship, that in itself is very much directed toward the procreative aspect, inasmuch as it is there to assure the successful nurture and education of children that may result from the sexual act of the married couple.<sup>37</sup>

This is clearly captured by Michael Lawler who has written extensively on marriage. He stated that there are 2 models of marriage in the Catholic Church. The first, which dominated the Catholic tradition from the second to the twentieth century, is a model which imaged marriage as “procreative institution, a socio-religious, thoroughly stable structure of meaning in which a man and a woman become husband and wife in order to become mother and father; in order to procreate.”<sup>38</sup>

It was said that this model was aimed to legitimize marriage and sexuality as being good especially from the accusations of Gnostics who believed otherwise. However, “the procreative marital contract was about bodies and acts; the procreative model was not about persons and their mutual love.”<sup>39</sup>

The second model, the interpersonal union, which was given impetus by Pope Pius XI’s encyclical, *Casti Connubii*, inasmuch as it acknowledged the importance of the mutual love and marital life of the spouses, suggested that marriage is the building up of loving communion between the spouses. This model was well taken by the Second Vatican Council in its Constitution in the Modern World, where it described marriage as communion of love and interpersonal covenant. Unlike the procreative model which focuses on animal bodies and acts, the interpersonal model focuses on persons. “In their marital covenant, spouses create not a procreative institution but a loving interpersonal union which, since genuine love is steadfast, is to last as long as life lasts.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Salzman & Lawler, p. 188.

<sup>38</sup> Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and the Catholic Church, Disputed Questions*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002), p. 30

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 36.



Precisely, in this interpersonal model, there is no suggestion that either end is superior to the other.

Each of these models evokes corresponding attitudes and actions consonant with the model. The attitude required by the procreative model is the procreation of children. In contrast, the action required by the interpersonal union model is “the procreation and nurturing of the relationship between the spouses, a relationship that is mutually loving, faithful, self-sacrificing, just, compassionate, forgiving and peaceful.” Lawler continued that “in a marriage, the time to procreate children is when the spousal relationship is sound and the climate, therefore, right for the procreation of children and their positive nurture into functioning adults.”<sup>41</sup> Clearly in this model, the procreation of the relationship of the spouses, their marital life and love, is on equal footing with the procreation of children.

Currently, it can be said that what has come increasingly into fire in the moral sphere is the relational aspect of sexuality and its fundamentally interpersonal character. “Married couples are to be considered as more than two individuals. They are two people who because of their sexual union change from two people into a single mysterious unit of one flesh, with moral consequences to be drawn from the appreciation that the need for frequent sexual union in marriage is the implementation, expressing and strengthening of the oneness.”<sup>42</sup>

These and other developing insights into human sexuality that stress the nature and quality of human relationships are perhaps the most illuminating consequences of the growing appreciation that as in God, so in His human creatures made in His image, reality is essentially relational, and that the fullness of personal identity is to be found only as interpersonal identity.<sup>43</sup>

In this new way of looking at marriage, christian fruitfulness in marriage also gains a new perspective. Fruitfulness is not the bedrock of marriage, for it depends on something more foundational, namely, generativity, the capacity to

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 38,

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Price, “Sexual Misunderstanding,” *The Clergy Review* 65 (1980), p. 162.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Mahoney, p. 319.

generate and nurture life... beyond one's own. The first Christian life generated in a Christian marriage and family, and the one on which all others depend, is the life of the spouses together, their life of marital love in Christ, their mutual communion. The loving communion between spouses is the prime end of their marriage; the very reason they decided to get married in the first place is so that they could spend the rest of their lives together as best friends. Communion is also a prime end of their sexual intercourse, for in every loving act of intercourse the communion of the spouses is both signified and realized, a fact enshrined in the common phrase which describes their intimate intercourse as "making love".<sup>44</sup>

Childless marriages are fruitful marriages if and when they are made fruitful by the two-in-one life of the spouses. The generation and loving nurture of children can undoubtedly bring spouses together and enhance the life communion between them, but if there is a two-in-one communion generated between them— mutual love, mutual care, mutual nurture, mutual enhancement of Christian marital life— then their marriage is already generative and fruitful, even if childless.<sup>45</sup>

To be generative of not only children but also functioning adults, and therefore fruitful in marriage and family, requires more than the fleeting act of genital intercourse. It requires also, indeed, above all, the loving nurture of the life generated in that intercourse. Beyond facile paternity and maternity, which produce a child, generative fruitfulness requires dedicated motherhood and fatherhood to produce a functioning adult.<sup>46</sup>

This thought is very much in line with that of the majority papal commission which considered "contraception from the point of view of the totality of marriage—that is, from the point of view of what is good for the marriage and not from the consideration of the sexual act or the sexual faculty." Therefore, the morality of the sexual act is not based on the fecundity of every

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Lawler, 205

part-act, but from the ordering of their activities for a fruitful married life, that is, one which is practiced with responsible, generous and prudent parenthood.<sup>47</sup>

I believe that the real problem in the conflict between the church and the proportionalists is the acceptance of the unitive-procreative aspect of every sexual act. As such, it would have been better to change these terms into unitive and generative. In this sense, generation is not only the begetting of children but can be applied to the relationship of couples; generative means empowering the bond of the couple which is realized and deepened through the sexual act. If we would say that each and every sexual act should be unitive and generative, it would not anymore matter whether it is open to procreation, as long as it nurtures and deepens the couple's relationship.

It can be said that the opposition to the Church's teaching on sexuality is generally a development of the argument forwarded by the Majority Report of the Papal Commission.<sup>48</sup> And, practically, the argument espoused is the procreative finality of marriage, from the consideration of what is good for the marriage as a whole.

One author even touched on St. Augustine's exposition of 1 Corinthians 7:5-6, which exhorted couples not to abstain longer from sex to avoid the temptation of Satan for lack of support. Thus, despite Augustine's negative view on sex, from the context of this passage, he acknowledged it as a forgivable fault. The point is: there is goodness in sex. And the sexual act should be placed not only within the confines of procreation. Married couples may have sex even if it is not fruitful because it is for the good of the relationship and marriage as a whole. Following from this, artificial contraception may be allowed in certain cases as long as this is done to protect the stability of marriage and familial life.

Bernard Häring said that "the human person is not to be absolutely subjected to biological laws and rhythms, but should rather be the wise administrator of his generative faculties. This even though it may be correct to

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Odozor, p. 48.

<sup>48</sup> John A. Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future. An Historical Study of Catholic Moral Theology*, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), p. 239.

assert, that any arbitrary interference in the generative process is against the natural moral law, such an assertion does not warrant the subordination of the whole human person and the institution of marriage to the absolute sacredness of biological laws. These are not immutable. These laws are constantly subject to change.”<sup>49</sup> For him, the focus should be on the good and wholeness of a person in a community.

Joseph Selling, quoting and using *Gaudium et Spes* 47 and 48 concluded that it is marriage and conjugal love that are potentially fertile and not necessarily the individual sexual encounter. That is why, according to him, procreation is the ultimate crown of marriage and conjugal love.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, commenting on the two meanings of the sexual act and its inseparability, he asserted that,

- 1) Sexual meanings do reside in nature or in mere physical things. Meaning is rather “the result of personal, social construction that is attributed to experience uniquely by human beings. Without persons, there are no meanings, only things.”
- 2) From the perspective of experience and scriptural context, human sexuality has multi-dimensional good and meanings which could include not only intimacy (unitive), fertility (procreative), but also pleasure, recreation (play), relief, affirmation, receptivity, self-acceptance, forgiveness, reconciliation, gratitude and of course, respect. They would stretch as well beyond the personal experience of the couple to the social institutional, political and religious meanings that can only be appreciated in those respective contexts.<sup>51</sup>

Hence, his point is: the meaning of sexuality can never be confined only to unitive and procreative aspects and much more, making these two as the only basis for determining the morality of a sexual act.

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<sup>49</sup> Bernard Häring, “The Inseparability of the Unitive-Procreative Functions of the Marital Act” in *Contraception, Authority and Dissent*. Charles Curran, ed., (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), pp. 179-180.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Selling, „The Meanings of Human Sexuality”, *Louvain Studies* 23 (1998), p. 26.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Salzman and Lawler argued that in *Gaudium et Spes*, sex does not only mean procreation. This was made clear in its move to do away intentionally with procreative and unitive sexual intercourse, and instead, discussing conjugal love as human, dignified, graced, charitable, reciprocal, virtuous and it did this without mentioning procreation. It only mentioned procreation in the context of responsible parenthood.

It is from this that the revisionists developed their position that procreation is important in marital relationship but it is not the only predominant aspect of human sexuality. This leads to the procreative dimension of human sexuality in terms of the totality of interpersonal relationship which makes not an act-centered morality but a value-oriented relationship, relation-centered, virtuous morality.<sup>52</sup>

Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler published a book in 2008 which offered a very comprehensive and critical presentation of the development of the theology of marriage and the morality of sexual acts. The book expounded not only the magisterial teachings but also those ideas opposed to it. Towards the end, having examined the contrasting positions, the authors developed a renewed principle on human sexuality, mixing the positions of the church and the proportionalists, and eventually applying it to specific issues including contraception and cohabitation. This principle is deemed as an alternative to the primarily procreationist, traditionalist sexual anthropology.

The authors took as their point of departure the words from *Gaudium et Spes* 49 (with additions in brackets): “(Conjugal) Love is uniquely expressed and perfected through the marital act. The actions within marriage by which the couple are united intimately and chastely are noble and worthy ones. Expressed in a manner which is truly human, these actions signify and promote that mutual self-giving by which spouses (immediately) enrich each other (and mediate) enrich their family and community) with a joyful and thankful will” Furthermore, “to be moral, sexual acts must be just and loving.”

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<sup>52</sup> Salzman & Lawler, pp. 94-95.

The key element in this is: the sexual act must be *humano modo*, truly human, a deliberated intentional act. But it turned away from the magisterial understanding, which maintains that sexual relations are human, when and insofar as they express and promote the mutual assistance of the sexes in marriage and are open to the transmission of life, properly called sexual complementarity, that is, biological and personal complementarity. In contrast, the authors, having justified that heterogenital and reproductive complementarity are not necessarily present in every heterogeneous relationship approved by the church (this it did by employing the examples of intercourse in infertile times, such as the NFP espoused and approved by the church and also to those couple, who are unable to beget children by reason of age and medical condition such as impotence), it goes for holistic complementarity that unites people affectively, spiritually and personally, under the umbrella of a person's sexual orientation, including homosexuality. In holistic complementarity, genitals are at the service of personal complementarity and not exclusively for procreation, and they may be male-male, female-female, male-female, depending on one's orientation, i.e., homosexual or heterosexual.

A truly human sexual act is *actus humanus* in accord with a person's sexual orientation that facilitates a deeper appreciation, integration and sharing of a person's embodied self with another embodied self. Genital complementarity as understood within the context of orientation, personal complementarity is always a dimension of the truly human sexual act, and reproductive complementarity may be a part of it in the case of fertile, heterosexual couples that choose to reproduce. Reproductive complementarity will not be a possibility in the case of homosexual couples (or infertile heterosexual couples), but genital complementarity, understood in an integrated, embodied, personal, orientation sense, and not just in biological, physical sense, will be. This personalist interpretation of genital complementarity, which contextualizes the physical genitals as organs of the whole person, allows us to expand the definition of a truly human sexual act to

embrace both heterosexual and homosexual nonreproductive acts.<sup>53</sup>

The authors believe that the human sexual act and its moral evaluation rests not on heterogenital/reproductive complementarity but on the integrated relationship between orientation, personal and genital complementarity. It is, therefore, a matter of asking whether this act facilitates or frustrates the partners' human flourishing, their becoming more affectively and interpersonally human and Christian.

Interpersonal relationship, therefore, is the crux in this holistic complementarity and human flourishing. Complementarity can thus be understood as “multifaceted quality—orientational, physical, affective, personal and spiritual possessed by every person, which draws him or her into relationship with *an other* human being, including the lifelong relationship of marriage, so that both may grow, individually and as a couple, into human well-being and human flourishing.”<sup>54</sup> Holistic complementarity, in this context, includes “orientation, personal and biological complementarity and the integration and manifestation of all three in just and loving, committed sexual acts that facilitate a person’s ability to love God, neighbor and self in a more profound and holy way.”<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, to say that a sexual act is just and loving gives priority to equality and equal freedom for both partners, free mutuality between partners and mutual commitment for both partners.

Finally, one of the applicable implications of this renewed principle is that “nonreproductive sexual acts cannot be absolutely morally prohibited. Although such acts violate the reproductive complementarity, they not ipso facto violate personal complementarity and diminish human flourishing.”<sup>56</sup> The truly human sexual act is one that facilitates holistic complementarity, which may or may not include reproductive complementarity in any given act.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 153.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p. 156

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 157.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 159.

Obviously, the authors interpreted *Gaudium et Spes* when it stated that the act of intercourse is the perfection of conjugal love, and this for them means that it expresses and strengthens the interpersonal union between a couple. This is why St. Paul also said that the church has recognized that abstaining from sexual relations for too long can be detrimental to the marital union.

From this, it could be easily concluded that the marital relationship finds an essentially nurturing component in just and loving sexual acts that procreate, occasionally in a physiological sense, always in the sense of creating life for the couple, their bonded relationship, their family and their wider community.<sup>57</sup>

After all, according to them, the dimensions of sexual persons cover the physical, psychological, spiritual and relational, a comprehensive meaning of sexuality not confined only to the physical level but embracing the whole of the human person. When sexuality is considered only in its totality can there be holistic sexual anthropology.

Furthermore, there is also a glimpse and unique insight into the love of the Trinity in sexual intercourse. The mutuality, reciprocity and unconditional acceptance of both partners, expressing that love and drawing them together into communion truly reflects Trinitarian life and love. Moreover, just as in the Trinity where the love of the Father and the Son yields the Holy Spirit, the sexual union of a couple also procreates.

And to this, they added: “even in cases where biological procreation is neither possible nor desired for legitimate reasons, their sexual union procreates and enhances the couple’s life in communion in imitation, and as sacrament, of the divine Trinity, the infinite source of gracious and loving communion.”<sup>58</sup>

Jack Dominian, in his article, *The Meaning of Sexual Intercourse*, also spoke along this line. He first traced the history of sexuality in Christianity starting from the Old Testament until the *Humanae Vitae*. He pointed out that right from the start the Yahwistic tradition of the account of creation (Genesis

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 127

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 135.



2:18-25), which is much older itself than the other account of creation, set the theological basis for sexual intercourse as being the heart of the relationship of married couples. And even the later account of creation (Genesis 1:26-31), although it has as its emphasis procreation, still values sexual intercourse as very good.

The real problem which led to the devaluation of sexuality started in the early Christian centuries and produced massive distortion of the goodness of sex. In this era, the goodness of sex was seen merely in the context of procreation, and even sexual pleasures between married couples had no place unless it had an advance motivation for procreation. It was only with the second Vatican Council, which jettisoned the language of primary and secondary end, that a new era on seeing the goodness of sexuality was opened up. But, it was cut short with the coming of the *Humanae Vitae* because the latter hindered the discovery of the unprecedented richness of sexuality. “What is absolutely certain is that the controversy over *Humanae Vitae* and the fear of offending the official teaching of the church have led to a silence of exploring the meaning of sexual intercourse, and that the richness that were opened by the second Vatican Council remained unexplored.”<sup>59</sup>

It is to such a pitiful background that the author, in his books<sup>60</sup>, tried to explore the meaning of love and sexual intercourse.

Speaking of the biology and psychology of sexual intercourse, he concluded that “although procreation is undoubtedly an important component in sexual intercourse, it is clear in our day and time that, with the size of the family being reduced to an average of 2 children, and sexual intercourse continuing well into the sixties, seventies and eighties, the main purpose is not procreation but relational.”<sup>61</sup> He further said that to produce a desired family, few acts of sexual intercourse would only be needed. However, from the pattern of nature, a woman

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<sup>59</sup> Jack Dominian, “The Meaning of Sexual Intercourse,” *Intams Review*, Vol. 5, no. 2, (1999), p. 176.

<sup>60</sup> See *Marriage, Love and Faith*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981); *Sexual Integrity*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981); *Passionate and Compassionate Love*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981).

is only capable of being fertile about 3 days in a monthly cycle. His point is: there are several days really when the couple can have sex, but it is not really open for procreation. In such case, it is open to unitive aspect. For him, therefore, “sexual intercourse is intimately linked with falling in love... (it) is an encounter between persons and its meaning is interpersonal.”<sup>62</sup> Sexual intercourse should not only be linked primarily with procreation because sex, after all, is a language, speaking several meanings as the couple speak to each other with their bodies.

Particularly, he speaks of sexual intercourse:

- (a) As a way to affirm the couple’s identity, that is, there is the recognition, appreciation and valuing of each other. Sexual intercourse, which says that each needs the other, is, in this case, a renewal of marital vows.
- (b) As a way to affirm the partner’s sexual identity. “Though intercourse, we make available the strengths and weaknesses of our masculinity and femininity, and genitally, we are saying to each other what sort of person we are in our gender.”<sup>63</sup> Through intercourse, both discover and realize fully their sexuality, thus, mutually endowing each other with personal meaning.
- (c) As a way to enhance self-esteem, inasmuch as sexual intercourse is “a continuing thread in establishing the spouses’ lovability and goodness. This self-esteem draws its strength from the relationship of the couple, culminating in intercourse, which expresses physical erotic accomplishment and personal affirmation.”<sup>64</sup>
- (d) As a way to relieve distress, meaning it has a medicinal aspect, inasmuch as it creates a relaxing experience
- (e) As a way for reconciliation, that is, it is a language of forgiving and thus, also furthering healing

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 177.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 178.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 179.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 180.

- (f) As a way to powerfully say to each other 'thank you' and in this way, it can even be said to be "their recurrent act of the Eucharistic experience."<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, sexual intercourse itself also plays a vital role in the *loving* relationship of the couple. Dominian encapsulates the characteristic of this loving which includes sustaining, healing and growth.

Sustenance of love requires availability, communication, demonstration of affection, affirmation and resolution of conflict. In all five, sexual intercourse is very important. In sexual intercourse, there is also the potential of healing physically, psychologically and even sexually. Finally, growth is also realized and perfected by sexual encounter inasmuch as there is the growing awareness of self: there is a shift from dependence to independence and finally to interdependence; a person also becomes less egoistic, becoming more sensitive of the other, making him/her empathetic; and lastly, there is growth in creativity.

In all these, Dominian concluded that sexual intercourse is much more than achieving orgasm, rather it is a language which speaks to the couple of their marriage and love for each other. From this, he further concluded that the basis for the morality of sexual intercourse should be by means of whatever safeguards its continuity, reliability and predictability. "What sexual intercourse needs for the expression of its integrity is to be placed in an environment which allows free expression in its multiple meanings. This environment needs exclusiveness, faithfulness, commitment and permanency, which are themselves essential safeguard for the very essence of sexual intercourse, guaranteeing over time its various expressions."<sup>66</sup>

As a conclusion, he also touched on the spiritual dimension of sexual intercourse, where he said that it is the profound expression of love. "In the married, the chief demonstration of God's love is sexual intercourse...and he is even saying that the carnal becomes the manifestation of divine love. Thus, the body far from being the source of suspicion, fear and anxiety becomes the main

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 181.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 184.

instrument of conveying the continuing will of God in creating, redeeming and transforming human nature.”<sup>67</sup>

Sexual intercourse itself is a mirror of the Trinity, because in sexual intercourse is found an interpersonal union of love in which, at the moment of consummation, the spouses are one and yet, at the same time, they are separate persons.

In what has been said so far, one thing is very clear: sexual intercourse for married couples should not be merely for procreative purpose. It is a lot more than this. And more importantly, its worth is truly immense in enriching and deepening the love relationship of the couple.

### **III. NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING AND ARTIFICIAL CONTRACEPTION**

The Church particularly judges the morality of the sexual act based on the separability or inseparability of the unitive-procreative significance of sexual act. From here flows the principle that each and every marital act should be open to procreation. Applying this principle, contraception is immoral, while natural family planning (NFP) as morally acceptable.

*Humanae Vitae* 16 particularly mentioned the difference between the two, which is really an essential difference and, therefore, a difference of ethical nature: “in the first case, married couples rightly use a facility provided them by nature; in the other case, they obstruct the natural development of the generative process.”<sup>68</sup>

A closer look however at the issues of contraception and rhythm method would reveal that there is not much difference between the two.

Both intend to prevent conception: in NFP, the physical procreateness of the act is also thwarted. One author reasoned: “If we argue that sterile periods are a natural means of avoiding procreation, we are saying it is natural to separate

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

the two dimensions of the conjugal act, so why can't we do it with certain contraceptives instead of calculations of time and temperature? Rhythm and certain contraceptives should stand or fall together. They are all, in a certain sense, unnatural, and if one is allowed, so should others.”<sup>69</sup>

“How can one explain the inseparability of the unitive and procreative in every act when the act is known to be infertile (because of age) or intended to be (as in NFP)”.<sup>70</sup>

Certain modern studies have indicated that a woman's desires may peak at the time of fertility and women often have physical indications of fertility in the form the cervical mucus takes. From here, it is clear that the conjugal act could follow rhythmic patterns of attraction to sex at fertile times. This is probably how nature works to help conception. In the case of NFP, though, the process is inverted. And because of this, we ask: isn't this a going-against natural method, having sex in a time when the woman is not ovulating, and it is done only because one wants to avoid conception?

Salzman and Lawler were also speaking along this line: “In the face of evidence, both scientific and experiential, that women in general experience the peak of their sexual desire and responsiveness immediately before, during and after ovulation, it is arguable that the decision not to have intercourse at that time is acting against total self-giving and nature, at least, as much as any act of artificial contraception.”<sup>71</sup>

Richard A. Mc. Cormick mentioned the criterion offered by *Gaudium et Spes* that the moral aspect of any procedure... must be determined by objective standards which are based on the nature of the person and the person's acts. An official commentary on this noted two things: first, the expression formulates a general principle that applies to all human actions, not just to marriage and

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<sup>68</sup> Also cf. *Theology of the Body*, 395.

<sup>69</sup> James Arraj, *Is There a Solution to the Catholic Debate on Contraception?*, (U.S.A.: Inner Growth Books, 1989), p. 42.

<sup>70</sup> Richard A. Mc. Cormick, S.J., *The Critical Calling. Reflections on Moral Dilemmas Since Vatican II*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006), p. 214.

<sup>71</sup> Salzman & Lawler, p. 189.

sexuality where the phrase occurs, and secondly, this means that human activity must be judged insofar as it refers to the human person integrally and adequately considered. On this important phrase, Mc Cormick quoted Louis Janssens,<sup>72</sup> explanation of “integrally and adequately considered” referring to the human person in all his/her essential aspects, which he listed as 8: (1) as subject (normally called consciousness to act according to conscience, in freedom and in a responsible way; (2) as subject embodied; (3) as an embodied subject that is part of the material world; (4) as persons essentially directed to one another; (5) persons need to live in social groups, with structures and institutions worthy of persons; (6) the human person is called to know and worship God; (7) the human person is a historical being, with successive life stages and continuing new possibilities; and (8) all persons are utterly original but fundamentally equal.

From these, Janssens formulated a general criterion for the rightness or wrongness of human actions: an act is morally right, if according to reason enlightened by faith, it is beneficial to the human person adequately considered in himself and in his relations.

This principle can be well applied to sexual ethics when the over-all good of the person is considered; e.g. for contraception and sterilization. Mc. Cormick asks: “Does contraception or sterilization promise to help or hinder the total relationship that is marriage?” He continued, “What has happened in the past is that we have attached an almost mechanical significance to the natural inclinations... (and seeing) divine providential wisdom at work in these natural purposes. When the natural ends, by appeal to God’s creative wisdom, are viewed as inviolable, the significance gets set and the norm becomes absolute.” For him, in concurrence with other theologians, the extent of respect that is to be given to these natural ends in individual cases depends on its effect with concurring personal values. And thus, to decide on the appropriateness of those ends to personal good must be left to the power of judgment.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Louis Janssens, “Artificial Insemination: Ethical Reflections,” *Louvain Studies* 8, (1980), pp. 3-29.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Richard A. Mc. Cormick, S.J., *The Critical Calling*. pp. 14-15.

Pope John Paul II explained that in contraception there is a lie in the total self-giving. To this, however, Curran would readily criticize that “no one act can ever perfectly express the total commitment of the spouses to each other.” The Pope’s analysis demands too much meaning and symbolism from each and every single sexual act. In addition, there are many sexual acts, such as embraces and kisses that by the pope’s understanding do not express total self-giving. “The totality of the acts of the spouses in all their different dimensions shows their commitment to each other. But no single act can always be said to require showing for the symbolism of total gift.”<sup>74</sup>

And this is one problem acknowledged by Todd and Lawler who says, “Catholic moral theology is an act centered morality with a static view of the person, tantamount to neglecting the over-all intention and complexity of the person which cannot be defined by one single act.”<sup>75</sup> Indeed, for them, one cannot define the character of the person, much more fully define the meaning and nature of human sexual relationships.

Curran added: “The faculty of human sexuality and human sexual acts must be seen in relation to the person and the person’s marital relationship. For the good of the person or the relationship, one can interfere with the sexual faculty and its act. The physical and conjugal act cannot and should not become a moral absolute.”<sup>76</sup> He even quoted Pius XII who said that the bodily aspect of human existence is subordinated to personal and spiritual ends.

Similarly, Salzman & Lawler put forward the argument that it is “marriage itself, and not each and every marital act, that is to be open to the transmission of life and parenthood. Contraception, whether natural or artificial, should be morally judged on a basis that includes what is good for the couple, their marriage and any children previously born of their marital intercourse.”<sup>77</sup> The authors even advanced the varied distinctions used by Pius XII and Paul VI in justifying some marital intercourse which may allow the avoidance of procreation for “serious

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<sup>74</sup> Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of John Paul II*, (London: T & T Clark, 2005), p. 176.

<sup>75</sup> Todd & Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>76</sup> Curran, *The Moral Theology of John Paul II*, p. 116.

reasons”, “just reasons”, “worthy and weighty reasons”, and even “probable reasons”.<sup>78</sup> Using this distinction, they drew out an important principle: “When spouses have a serious, just and weighty marital and familial reason to preclude procreation in specific concrete circumstance, procreation can be precluded by any means that does not damage their complementary, just, loving marital or parental relationship, and is not otherwise immoral.” They continued further that “the rational basis for such a judgment in the nature of both the marital and familial relationship and the necessary good associated with them, which, when a serious, just and weighty reason is present, take precedence over the good of procreation.

In what has been said so far in this paper, I cannot personally deny that the proportionalists themselves have valid points and arguments. It is always a question of what is really the most important in marriage: children or the relationship of the couple. I would agree with the proportionalists that the relationship really matters in marriage, because it is the very reason why a man and a woman decide to marry in the first place. Moreover, if the relationship is really made stable by the couple, then familial life would eventually enjoy also that stability and love shared and started by the couple themselves. Now, in enriching and deepening this love, sexual intercourse, as argued by the heretofore referenced authors, is very much important. It seems to me that the Church also has to listen to these opposing voices and learn from them how to make an effective sexual morality that can truly help the relationship of couples.

## CONCLUSION

I love the Church!

I love the Church as a divinely instituted society founded by the Lord and to whom the Lord has vested full authority to teach divine precepts to bring people closer to God. This has been my conviction in studying theology: so that I

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<sup>77</sup> Salzman & Lawler, p. 189.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. HV 10 & 16.



can have a better grasp of what the Church teaches and, in my own capacity, further spread this in my ministry as a priest.

But I also love the Church which is constituted by the majority of the faithful, most of them married couples, struggling in their own ways and means to follow what the teaching Church gives them. These very people are the subject of my ministry as a priest, inspiring me further to live my vocation, as they do.

There should really be no conflict between these two loves but I see that there is, especially with the phenomenon existing within the church society.

On the one hand, there is the magisterium of the Church imposing her teaching on sexuality, which invokes the power of the natural law as springing from the divine law, thus, divinely approved, that each and every marital act should be open to procreation. I have no problem with the teaching that the sexual act should always be done within marriage, for the stable institution of marriage can truly safeguard the dignity of sexuality, human persons and the children that will result from the sexual act. What is difficult to accept is that every marital act should be open to procreation, a way of saying that procreation is given prominence, despite the justifications of the Church that such hierarchy of the ends of marriage was already modified in the document of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*.

In the process of holding on to these teachings, the Church is also endangering the relationship of married couples. In marriage, the sexual act is very important as a way to deepen the relationship of the couple. And often, they engage in such act with the intention of avoiding pregnancy for various valid reasons, such as financial, social or even medical constraints. The sexual act is a means to express their love for each other. Of course, the Church will say that if that is the case, then they should perform the act when the woman is infertile. But it seems that this is something abstract, and even illogical to delay the couple's moment of expressing love, and even their needs! Why should the Church impose the same continence that it has imposed on clerics? Is this not a way of clericalizing married couples, making them live as ordained ministers? But in fact,

they are not ordained and they have a way of life that is totally divergent from that of clerics.

On the other hand, the laity clamor about the difficulty of what the Church imposes on them. They have even reached the point of accusing the church of being insensitive to their plight, and deaf to their concerns. I have met many of them in my ministry as priest. And most of them are active members of our Church. Of course, they are the ones most affected because they know what the Church teaches and that, in a way, has a compulsion factor on them. Sometimes, it is better for those who are not too close to the Church because they do not have a clear knowledge and thus, they can do behave without guilt. But, as I indicated, those active members are the ones most affected and often this results in a kind of dichotomy in their lives: they try to be good Catholics and yet lack in practice in following the Church law on contraception. If this is the scenario, who is to blame? The Church as the teacher has her share of the blame. In a way, it can be said that the Church develops and tolerates this dichotomy.

The big question then is, why can't the Church change its teaching on sexuality?

Many things surely have changed since St. Thomas Aquinas perfected the understanding of natural law, and as it was eventually applied to the sexual teaching of the Church. In the past, there was the problem of the high rate of mortality among babies. Thus, in that context, it may seem logical that the church should declare that, in the light of the natural law, each and every act should be open to procreation. But times have changed. We live in a completely different world, far different from that of Thomas or even those who lived immediately after him. Now, we have a high rate of survival for babies, and women are employed for financial reasons, for self-fulfillment and in the name of women's emancipation. Such a changed environment surely affects also the number of children that women would have to bear and rear.

Truly, the question amidst this scenario reverberates: can the Church not update her teaching on sexual morality in the light of the vast changes that have affected our society?

There were several instances when the Church magisterium completely deviated from a magisterial position that it formerly held. Several cases have been mentioned in this paper. Can she not do likewise on the subject of sexual morality?

Too often, though, changes were not really named as such but as the development of a doctrine, meaning that because of the limitedness of a truth to be captured completely, there is a possibility that it could still be subject to a newer and clearer formulation in the future. And such a process may have been applied to the so-called changes in the Church' magisterial teachings. The big question, then, is: why can the Church not also effect development in her teaching on sexual morality?

It is possible that changing or developing the Church' position on sexuality will affect many issues in sexuality. In the first place, it may make the Church herself vulnerable to many issues, and the position it holds on these things would truly be jeopardized. Giving importance to the relationship of married couples and the place of sex within it and, thus, allowing moments when they would have sex without the possibility of conception with the help of contraception might be open to several abuses. If so, such abuses are just a small parcel compared with what the zealous couples are struggling.

Several traditionalists would say that to allow contraception would eventually lead to tolerating and allowing abortion. But these two are completely different! Abortion is murder of the innocent and I am very sure that there will never come a point when the Church would allow it that nor that theologians espouse its practice.

Probably, the Church is afraid that once she changes her views on sexual morality, she would be succumbing to modernism. But I don't think that this is

really the case. It is not embracing modernism and hedonism but it is merely updating her teaching to suit the very realities and experiences of married couple.

Furthermore, if the Church cannot really deviate from what she teaches, she could at least explain her teachings in another way. Natural law methodology was an effective instrument in the past. But now, it has really lost its taste and touch.

A few years ago, I began to be confronted as a young priest by couples asking many things about sexual morality. I could easily offer to them the explanations of the church based on natural law. But I observed that they could not grasp my explanations. Worse, my answers even opened the doors to several practical questions even coming to the point of questioning natural law itself.

My point in all these is: if the Church does not wish to change its teachings on sexual morality, it can, at least, change the way it explains this teaching. The explanation should no longer be from the perspective of natural law. It must be possible to explain it in a way that is very close to the hearts of the people. This would be the best compromise that the Church can offer to all married couples.

This has been my intention in my licentiate and masteral dissertation, *The Trinitarian Dimension of Conjugal Love*. In that paper, I sought to explain conjugal love from the perspectives of the Trinitarian life and from this, drawing out conclusions from such a set-up, applying them to sexual morality. This earlier work has deemed to move away from the natural law approach, and to foster a more acceptable position which is closer because it comes from the very foundation of our faith. I do believe that it will not encounter as much opposition as it is now experienced by using Natural Law, where its very credibility is put into question. This is what I hope the Church would do in her updating of sexual morality.

As I have said, at the beginning, I love the Church. This is the very reason that I became a priest. I do not wish to go against this Church. I only wish that it

would come up with a reasonable teaching for her people, a teaching that does not foster a double-standard morality, but instead leads people closer to God.

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## ABSTRAKT

Ist es möglich, die Sitten der sexuellen Beziehung der Eheleute theologisch neu zu bestimmen, abseits von der philosophischen Methodik der Naturgesetze?

Das ist die primäre Aufgabe der These über das trinitarische Ausmaß von Eheliebe.

Als Ansatzpunkt wird die sakramentale Konstitution der Ehe für die trinitarische Gemeinschaft für Leben und Liebe eingeführt. An erster Stelle sagt die Konstitution der Ehe die Unwahrheit über den Fakt, dass trinitarische Liebe und eheliche Liebe zwischenmenschlich sind, wo während der gegenseitigen Hingabe die Rolle des Liebenden und des Geliebten eingerichtet wird. Zweitens lügt die Konstitution auch über die Fruchtbarkeit beider Beziehungen – die trinitarische Liebe ist ergiebig in Form von Schöpfung, während sich aus der ehelichen Liebe Kinder ergeben. Die Ähnlichkeit zwischen Ehe und Dreifaltigkeit wurde dazu benutzt, um die sexuelle Beziehung des Paares im Verhältnis zum Grad der Hingabe zu beurteilen. Am Ende wird eine neue Aufstellung von moralischen Kriterien abgeleitet von solchen Konstitutionen, die für die Evaluierung für moralische Aspekte in ehelicher sexuellen Beziehung wie zum Beispiel Verhütung, Sex außerhalb der Ehe und vorehelichen Sex.

Auf der anderen Seite, im Addendum, strebt „Die aktuelle Sicht auf Ehe und Sexualität“ an, die Position des Revisionists zu präsentieren, der sich gegen die Ansicht der Kirche, dass jeder eheliche Akt offen für Nachwuchs sein soll, stellt. Im Gegensatz dazu schlägt der Revisionist vor, die Fruchtbarkeit der Ehe nicht auf jeden sexuellen ehelichen Akt anzusetzen, sondern auf die ganze Ehe selbst. Dadurch würde Verhütung erlaubt werden, wenn es zum Guten für die Ehe wäre. Andere kritische Aspekte die in diesem Addendum aufgegriffen werden, sind die Naturgesetze und moralische Absolutismus, welche als Grund dafür gelten, dass die Revisionisten die Lehre der Kirche nicht akzeptieren. Letzen Endes wird die Autorität der Kirche als Lehrer für moralische Gebote in Frage gestellt.

## **ABSTRACT**

Is it possible to determine the morality of the sexual relation of the spouses in marriage in a new way, that is, theologically, aside from the philosophical methodology of Natural Law?

Such has been the primary task of the thesis, *The Trinitarian Dimension of Conjugal Love*. As a starting point, it has established the sacramental configuration of marriage to the Trinitarian communion of life and love. In the first place, the configuration of marriage lies in the fact that Trinitarian love and marital love are interpersonal, where in the process of mutual self-giving, the persons of the lover and the beloved are constituted. Secondly, the configuration lies also in the fruitfulness of both relationships—the Trinitarian love bears fruit in creation, while marital love results in children. This similarity that exists between marriage and the Trinity has been used to judge the sexual relation of the couple by judging it according to the degree of self-giving. In the end, a new set of moral criteria has been deduced from such configuration which can be used for the evaluation of some moral issues in conjugal sexual relations such as contraception, extra-marital and pre-marital sex.

On the other hand, the addendum, *The Current Views on Marriage and Sexuality*, seeks to present the position of the ‘revisionists’ who oppose the position of the Church that ‘every marital act should be open to procreation.’ In contrast, the revisionists propose that the fruitfulness of marriage does not apply to every sexual marital act but to the whole marriage itself. In lieu of this, contraception itself may be permitted if it is done for the good of marriage.

Other crucial things that were tackled in this addendum are the issues on natural law and moral absolutes, which are deemed to be the reasons of the revisionists for not accepting the teaching of the Church. Eventually, this would further lead to the questioning of the authority of the Church as a teacher of moral precepts.

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