

Session 8

THE LANGUAGE OF SEXUAL LOVE

1. SEXUAL HONESTY

The Body is “Prophetic”

A prophet is one who proclaims the mystery of God. Since the body is meant to proclaim the “great mystery” of God’s love, marital union is in this way “prophetic.” But we must be careful to distinguish true and false prophets (see TOB 106:4).

- If we can speak the truth with our bodies, we can also speak lies.
- Who is it that might want us to speak lies with our bodies?

1a. The “language of the body” bears within itself the whole richness and depth of God’s Mystery: first of creation, then of redemption (see TOB 105:4). When spouses proclaim this “language of the body” truthfully, they *perform an act of prophetic character*. In this way they confirm their share in the prophetic mission of the Church (see TOB 105:3).

Living as True Prophets

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

- All questions of sexual morality come down to one basic question: Is the act an authentic sign of God’s free, total, faithful, fruitful love or is it not?
- Practically speaking, how healthy would a marriage be if husbands and wives were regularly unfaithful to their wedding vows?

1b. One can speak of moral good and evil in the sexual relationship based on whether the couple gives to their union the character of a truthful sign (see TOB 37:6).

1c. The language of the body has “clearcut meanings” (TOB 105:6) all of which are “programmed” in a comprehensive way in conjugal consent” (TOB 106:3). For example, to “the question: ‘Are you ready to accept children lovingly from God ...?’ the man and the woman answer, ‘Yes’” (TOB 105:6).

2. RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

It is a myth that the Church teaches couples are obligated to have as many children as is physically possible. The Church calls couples to a *responsible* exercise of parenthood.

2a. One “must recognize that ‘responsible parenthood is exercised either by the prudent and generous decision to raise a [large] family, or by the decision, made for serious reasons and with due respect to the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth’” (TOB 121:5).

So, what could a couple do if they had a “serious reason” to avoid a child that would not violate the meaning of intercourse as a sign of God’s love?

- Abstaining from intercourse is in no way contraceptive.
- Contraception is the choice to engage in an act of intercourse but deliberately to deprive the act of its procreative potential.
- In order to deprive an act of intercourse of its procreative potential (in order to contracept), one must first engage in the act.
- Abstinence is the choice not to “speak” rather than to “speak-against.”

Another question arises. Would a couple be doing anything to violate their wedding vows if they had intercourse on a day on which they knew they were naturally infertile?

- Herein lies the principle of Natural Family Planning (NFP).
- NFP is acceptable not because it is “natural” as opposed to “artificial,” but because it is in keeping with the nature of sexual intercourse as a renewal of the couple’s wedding vows.
- Never does a couple using NFP do anything to sterilize their acts of intercourse. If pregnancy does not result from their acts of intercourse, it is God’s doing, not their doing. Every time such a couple have intercourse they can honestly pray, “Lord, your will be done.”

POINTS TO PONDER

St. Augustine is famous for praying, “Lord, make me chaste – but not yet.” Later he wrote: “I thought that [chastity] arose from one’s own powers, which I did not recognize in myself. I was foolish enough not to know ... that no one can be [chaste] unless you grant it. For you would surely have granted it if my inner groaning had reached your ears and I with firm faith had cast my cares on you” (CCC 2520).

Ask and you shall receive. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish will give him a serpent? How much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (see Luke 11:9-13)? It is precisely the Holy Spirit – God’s love dwelling in us – that empowers us to express the language of sexual love honestly.

