



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## A GUIDE FOR THEOLOGY OF THE BODY FOR TEENS FACILITATORS

This guide is divided topically as follows:

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Bullet point answers begin with a word or phrase in **bold** to help with memorization of the points to be made. These are not complete answers to people’s questions. Bullet points should not be read to an audience. They are intended as an outline to which you, the teacher, must add the proper content.

All answers are derived from *If You Really Loved Me* by Jason Evert and *Good News About Sex & Marriage: Honest Questions and Answers About Catholic Teaching* (Revised Edition) by Christopher West (Servant, 2004). For further study and reference, citations are offered from both texts. For example, “IfU Q. 46” refers to the question number 46 in *If You Really Loved Me*, and “GN p. 46” refers to page 46 in *Good News about Sex in Marriage* (page numbers may differ, depending upon edition).

### General Pointers for answering questions:

- Let people know up front that the present format doesn’t allow exhaustive answers to questions, but that you are happy to offer some “food for thought.”
- You might also state up front that you do not have the answer to every question, but you are happy to direct people to resources or organizations that could answer their questions.
- Do not make up answers. Have the humility to admit when you are unable to answer a question and then offer people a resource to have their questions answered. Perhaps you can offer to study the question more deeply, and provide a fuller answer in a week. Teens especially appreciate such sincerity.

- If the questioner is being aggressive or combative, use his or her name while addressing the question. “Thanks for that question, Bill. I appreciate where you’re coming from, and I can tell how much this topic is affecting you. Allow me to offer you some food for thought.” It helps to diffuse any sense of being adversarial.
- *Always affirm in some way the person asking the question.* Even if a person is challenging Church teaching, there is usually some point or element of truth that can be affirmed. For example, behind the angst of birth control is the truth that couples often have just reasons to space births. Affirm that, and then demonstrate logically and sensitively the “why” behind the “what” of the Church’s teaching.
- *Discern the root of the question.* Sometimes questions are asked that are already “root” questions. In other words, there is nothing behind it, no deeper issue that needs to be addressed. Other times there are deeper or more important issues “underneath” a given question. For example, behind questions of Church authority is the question of “objective truth.” Is there such a thing and can we know it with certainty? Don’t ignore the questions people actually ask, but help them get to the real issue(s). It also may be important to ask for an opportunity to address their “deeper” questions outside of the formal setting. This will allow for more time to explore these issues with the person asking the question.
- *If someone poses a seemingly hostile question, how do I respond?* First, you want to be aware if this student is simply very curious and aggressive about getting questions answered, or if the person may actually feel threatened and begins to get aggressive, particularly if it is a point of possible embarrassment or anger. The lesson to be learned here is when you “back a lion into a corner” you want to make sure the lion has an exit or it will strike at you. For example, Joe asks, “What do you mean sex out of marriage isn’t loving?” Your response would be: “Joe, thank you for your question. I don’t want to imply that people who have sex before marriage don’t have genuine feelings for one another. I don’t know their hearts. But what I want to look at is whether or not their actions really express love.” Here you are trying to mitigate the feelings of defensiveness that Joe might have. You have, in a sense, given him an out, but also achieved your desired ends of catechizing him a little more about a particular truth. In this hypersensitive age in which we live, the method of delivery is almost as important as the message itself. We are, as St. Paul says, becoming all things to all men for the sake of the Gospel—yet we’re not compromising. We’re simply strategically thinking on how best to approach a given person in a given situation—always desiring, though, to continue to charitably turn up the heat towards deeper conversion.
- While the Theology of the Body is not strictly a form for apologetics, it does happen that students approach you with questions (sometimes not purely out of charity or sheer curiosity) but rather with a posture of doubt or even by attacking what the Church teaches. Below is a helpful guide to responding to questions and hopefully intelligently answer the question but also win over a teen who is searching for the truth.

### 1. LISTEN CLOSELY AND IDENTIFY CLEARLY THE OBJECTION

What is the objector really saying? Often times we argue a point that really isn't the objection, but rather *our* favorite argument. Therefore, it is important to be able to answer the *actual* objection.

### 2. RESTATE THE OBJECTION

You do this for several reasons. First, you do this to make sure you understand the objection at hand. Second, you do this to be fair. You want his objection to be as clear and as strong as possible. Third, you also do this to build credibility for yourself. Fourth, it gives the other students the opportunity to hear the question again, and perhaps with greater clarity. And finally, you do this to rapport with the person. Now they know that you really understand their position.

### 3. CLARIFY THE TERMS

Many times the objector does not have a clear understanding of Catholic doctrine. Before you can explain the importance of the doctrine, you must correct any misconceptions. For example, when dealing with immodesty, you can clarify that the Church does not believe the body should be covered because it is dirty or bad. Rather, the body is veiled to guard the dignity of the person.

### 4. PRESENT YOUR REPLY

Show the basic evidence from Scripture and Tradition to support the Catholic position. In addition, show how the Church teaching has remained unchanged, and how it resonates with human experience.

### 5. REPLY TO SECONDARY OBJECTIONS

Use the same four steps from above to answer any further objections that the objector may have.

## 1. GENERAL THEOLOGY OF THE BODY:

1. Since we're teens, marriage is still perhaps a decade away. What does the TOB teach us about our state in life? (See GN p. 170 & IfU Q. 16, 33)

- **Affirmation:** Acknowledge that teens do not have to wait until marriage to live out the Theology of the Body.
- **Circumstance/choice:** distinguish being single by circumstance and single by choice.
- **On hold:** even if a person is single by circumstance, this doesn't mean life remains "on hold."

- **Nuptial gift:** every way a single person is a sincere gift to others (workplace, friends, family, community, school, parish, etc.) he or she is living the “nuptial meaning of the body.” As Pope John Paul II said of the youth, “Young people know that their life has meaning to the extent that it becomes a gift for others.”
- **True Marriage:** awaits us in heaven, and everyone is invited regardless of his or her state of life or circumstances here on earth.
- **Therefore,** no one should think that his or her life is meaningless without a spouse. Accepting this gift and giving ourselves back to Christ is how we all fulfill our call to nuptial love, whether we’re married or not.

## 2. Why haven’t I heard about the Theology of the Body before now? (See GN p. 68)

- **Affirmation:** Acknowledge that most people haven’t heard this beautiful vision before.
- **Trickle down:** Always a slow trickle down effect in the Church, this is actually much faster than usual.
- **Crisis:** Part of the reason has to do with a crisis in Catholic education. People have been scared of talking about the “difficult” teachings of the Church.
- **Challenge:** Let’s take responsibility for spreading this message ourselves.

## 3. How did Pope John Paul II come up with this?

- **Background:** Trace Karol Wojtyla’s history as a young man, having lost his family and forced to live under Nazism and Communism. The degradation all around him forced him to search for deep answers to life’s most difficult questions. He was attracted to questions of the “human person” and came to see man and woman’s relationship at the heart of culture.
- **Couples:** As a wildly popular college professor and chaplain, Wojtyla worked extensively with hundreds of dating, engaged, and married couples. He counseled thousands of people in confession. He also saw the value as a cleric to socialize with lay people so as to understand the challenges and joys of being a person living marriage as a vocation.
- **Love & Responsibility:** This book is a philosophical reflection in which Wojtyla explores the ideas about human love and sexuality. Published in 1960, it provides a personalistic approach to sexual morality.

- **Whole life:** His entire life was spent pondering the question, “What does it mean to be a human person?”

## 2. QUESTIONS ON CHURCH AUTHORITY

### 1. How can a celibate priest tell me about sex? (See GN p. 41)

- **Affirmation:** At first, it may seem strange. Married people do have a special knowledge about sexuality. To assume, however, that priests have nothing to offer on the subject would be akin to saying that a doctor cannot treat a particular condition unless he himself has experienced the same illness.
- **Root issue:** debunk the idea that celibacy is a rejection of sex using all that’s taught in TOB, reiterate firmly that celibacy, properly lived and understood, is a living out of the deepest truth of sexuality.
- **John Paul II:** was able to speak so convincingly about sex precisely because he lived the full truth of his own sexuality in “total self-donation” to his bride, the Church. He also had an advantage because due to the perspectives of the thousands of couples and individuals he counseled over the years. As well as the collective wisdom drawn from his role as a Confessor where he heard the myriad of problems and issues facing couples in the intimacy of the confessional.

### 2. Authority of the Church (GN p. 31-43, IfU Q. 8,9)

- **Source of Church authority is Christ:** Christ promised that his Church would teach the truth (see Jn. 16:13). The Bible calls the Church the “Pillar and Foundation of Truth,” (1 Tim. 3:15). The source of her authority is not the perfection of her members, but the promise of Christ (Matt. 16:15-19). Even if members of the church commit great sins (Judas), this does not take away the authority of the Church.
- **Logic:** Only makes sense that God would establish an authority on earth to make his will known. We believe that the authors of the four gospels did not error when writing these gospels, why would this not continue within the life of the Church? Otherwise, determining matters of eternal significance would amount to a guessing game. The formation of over 20,000 Protestant denominations since the Protestant Reformation shows what happens without an infallible authority. In essence, the Church’s moral authority is like a guard rail on the side of the road, protecting us from error and sin.
- **Deeper Question:** Does God have any authority in my life? Have I made myself out to be the final judge of right and wrong? JPII summarized this mentality, “If it is convenient and helpful to me, well

and good, but if not, I refuse it and leave. . . . Christ is found particularly in the field of sexual morality, because it is here that Christ makes demands on men.”

### 3. Scandal in the Church. (See GN p. 34)

- **Affirmation:** We should all be disturbed by scandal in the Church, but we shouldn't be surprised if we have a realistic view of human nature. History has shown that some terrible things have been done in the name of the Church.
- **Wheat & weeds:** Christ chose sinful men as his closest collaborators (he had no other choice!). One would betray him and another deny him. He said the wheat and the weeds would grow together within the Church until the end of time.
- **Root issue:** While certainly a scandal, in the Church is no excuse for us to turn a deaf ear to the Church's teachings. This, in fact, is the cause of scandal in the Church. Turning a deaf ear, then, makes us part of the problem rather than a solution to it.
- **Example:** Do you believe that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John sinned? They also, by the grace of God communicated the Gospel without error, right?

## 3. WHAT IS LOVE?

### 1. What's wrong with sex if you really love the person. (See GN p. 66, IfU Q 47)

- **Affirmation:** I agree that love is a requirement of sex. But what is love? Explain love as willing the good of another, willingness to sacrifice.
- **Logic:** Make the case that premarital sex is not best for the other person (you can explain consequences of premarital sex as they relate to: family, future, finances, relationship, emotions, spirituality, etc...).
- **Language of Body:** Sex is meant to express the language of divine love. That's the basic Christian proposal. God's love is free, total, faithful, and fruitful. That's called the marriage commitment.
- **Ready for Marriage:** If that's the kind of love you are wanting to express, then go see a priest. You're ready to get married. If not, don't confuse the desire for sharing sexual pleasure with an authentic and full definition of love.

## 2. How do you know when it's love? (IfU Q 14, 15)

- **Affirm** that desire for love. Affirm that they desire love because God has created them to deserve love.
- **Review** above definition of love, and expand upon it. Explain the role of attractions, emotions, and how they are a part of love, but not to be confused with love itself.
- **Fruits of love:** peace, union with others who love you (God, family, real friends).
- **Bible:** Use 1 Corinthians 13 to help them learn the characteristics of a loving relationship.

## 3. As a teen, can you really love another person? (IfU intro)

- **Affirm:** The culture has low expectations for the youth. JP II said, "Do not be afraid to be the saints of the New Millennium."
- **Necessity of love:** Love is not merely a possibility. It is a requirement.
- **Not all love is romantic:** When JP II said, "Man cannot live without love . . ." He did not mean that man could not live without dating.
- **Examples of youthful love:** St. Maria Goretti, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, etc.

## 4. HOW FAR IS "TOO FAR"?

### 1. What is chastity? (IfU Q 1,2)

- **Affirm:** Most people don't know what chastity is. Confusion with celibacy, abstinence, prudery. Explain difference.
- **Define:** Chastity is the virtue of purity, not the absence of sex. This is why married people must be chaste. It is the virtue that orders all our sexual desires towards the truth of love.

### 2. How far is too far? (See GN p. 74-78, IfU Q 44-52)

- **Wrong question:** This is a legalistic and minimalistic approach to morality. People who truly love each other aren't looking to "get away" with as much as possible before they "break the rules." They're looking to love one another as sincerely as possible.
- **Real Question:** should be "What does it mean to love?" And "what more can I do, what more can I sacrifice to love this person sincerely"?

- **Drawing a Line:** merely at behaviors doesn't do justice to the human heart. It's possible to hold hands with the wrong motive or intention.
- **Personalistic Norm:** is the true line. It states that you must never treat a person as a means to an end. The opposite of love is not "hatred," but to use someone as an object for your selfish pleasure.
- **Homework of the soul:** You have to be honest with yourself and your own motives. No one can do that "homework of the soul" for you by simply giving you a list of do's and don'ts.

### 3. But how do we know where to draw the line? (IfU Q 44-52)

- **Reminder:** Purity is not about following a list of rules, but about having a change of heart.
- **Practical tips to awaken consciences:** How far is too far for your future spouse? Future daughter? Expression on her dad's face if he were to walk in? Would you do it with Jesus in the room?
- **Challenge:** Live with integrity. Don't live one way, and expect your future spouse to live another. Become the type of person you would want to date your future child.

### 4. Doing things the moral way cramps spontaneity. (See GN p. 98, IfU Q 3)

- **Define terms:** Spontaneity in this sense usually refers to abandoning oneself to the passion of the moment. If that "passion" is lust, yes, the Church's teaching will "cramp your style." Virtue calls us to a much richer and more beautiful kind of spontaneity.
- **Spontaneity of love:** is the fruit of virtue. When, through ongoing conversion from lust to love, authentic love wells up as a passion of the heart, spouses can and should "abandon themselves" to it.
- **Purpose of Purity:** Only with purity can one tell the difference between selfish seduction and romantic love. True Romance is impossible without a pure heart.
- **Piano analogy:** Anyone can walk up to a piano and "spontaneously" bang on the keys and make meaningless noise. A concert pianist can also "spontaneously" touch the keys and make music that raises our hearts to the heavens. But we know behind the beauty of the spontaneous music is a lifetime of effort, discipline, and sacrifice.

5. What's wrong with pornography? Nobody's getting hurt.  
(See GN 83-85, IfU Q 53-55)

- **Affirm:** The body is beautifully made. But as JP II said, the problem with porn is not that it shows too much, but that it shows too little. It reduces a person to their body parts.
- **Porn does hurt people:** Some people hurt by porn include: the model, spouses of those who are hooked on porn, children abused by people addicted to porn, and those who view porn. The viewer of porn is hurt because his ability to love is being crippled. He sins against his own body by training himself in boredom. The images take moments to see, and years to forget.
- **Frog in boiling water:** This popular analogy can be used to show how the effects of porn are often unnoticed until the damage is caused.
- **Appeal to the heart:** Would you want your future spouse looking at online pornographic images right now? Would you want your future son or daughter involved in the porn industry?
- **Dignity:** Even if a person is willing to be viewed in porn, this does not make it moral. She is using and being used. The viewer is also using and being used. No one is satisfied or loved.
- **Encourage:** The habit of viewing porn can be difficult to break, but with God's grace all things are possible.

6. What's wrong with masturbation? (See GN 78-82, IfU Q 56-58)

- **Affirm:** Modern society does not often consider the meaning of sex, so it can be hard for those of us immersed in this culture to step back and take a deeper look.
- **Review meaning and purpose of sex:** Wedding vows made flesh, Love of God expressed in the body, procreation and union, etc. Explain how masturbation communicates none of this.
- **Training in selfishness:** Masturbation trains you to take, and to expect instant gratification.
- **Habit can be broken:** Offer encouragement that this vice can be overcome with prayer, perseverance, spiritual direction, etc...

## 5. BIRTH CONTROL

*Note: It is critical that you spend quality time fine-tuning your responses to this issue. This is the lynch-pin of all sexual morality. If you can successfully explain this, you can successfully explain anything the Church teaches about sex.*

### 1. What's wrong with contraception? (See GN p. 109, IfU Q 63)

- **Affirmation:** Heap lots of affirmation on those who have questions about this. "Yes, Molly, I can totally relate. It does seem odd, at first, doesn't it? I mean, it seems like the Church is just denying people a modern convenience. What's the big deal? Let's take a deeper look....."
- **Define terms:** (See GN p. 114-115) birth control, artificial birth control, contraception, artificial contraception. The Church is not opposed to "controlling births." Nor is she opposed to all things "artificial" (that would make wearing polyester immoral). The Church is opposed to those methods of controlling births that are "contraceptive" – that impede the procreative potential of a given act of intercourse.
- **Why?** Because rendering the sexual act sterile radically changes the meaning and significance of the act, the spouses' relationship to one another, and the spouses' relationship to God. It does "violence" to God's creation and the physical and spiritual integrity of spouses. If spouses choose to engage in sexual intercourse, they must do so with respect for God's design for the act.
- **Wedding Vows:** Body has a language that is meant to express wedding vows, and one of the promises you make at the altar is to "receive children lovingly from God." Rendering the act sterile turns the "I do" of wedding vows into an "I do not."
- **False Sign:** Contracepted intercourse is not an act of love that images the divine. It makes of the spouses a counter-sign of God's life-giving love and a kind of "anti-sacrament" of Christ's love for the Church.

### 2. What is the difference between contraception and NFP? (See GN p.114-117, IfU Q 65)

- **Eating analogy:** To which I respond, what is the difference between dieting and bulimia?
- **In short:** If you can understand the difference between bulimia and dieting, you can understand the difference between contraception and natural family planning.

- **Same difference:** One requires temperance, while the other binges and purges. Both achieve the same end, but with different means.

### 3. What constitutes just reasons for using NFP to avoid children? (See GN p. 118)

- **Avoid extremes:** Some wrongly think that only the most grave reasons such as a deadly disease or extreme poverty would justify avoiding a child. Others think that just about any reason whatsoever justifies avoiding children.
- **Avoid selfishness:** The Church teaches that it is the parents' duty to "make certain that their desire [to space births] is not motivated by selfishness" (CCC, n. 2368). That's it in a nutshell.
- **Some reasons:** Just reasons could include financial (hard time feeding the kids you already have, just lost a job, etc.), physical (legitimate health concerns), emotional (already have 6 kids under the age of 4).

### 4. Is it morally acceptable to take the pill for medical reasons? (See GN p. 128, IfU 70)

- **Principle:** Medical procedures that cause sterility are not in themselves immoral (e.g. hysterectomy, removal of cancerous testicles) so long as the sterility they cause is not directly willed or rejoiced in. Likewise, the pill is often prescribed to treat medical problems in teen girls (irregular cycles, painful cramps, ovarian cysts, etc.)
- **Alternatives to pill:** The good news is there are medical alternatives to the pill (recommend contacting the Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction, or using the NFP directory at [www.omsoul.com](http://www.omsoul.com) to find a local doctor).

## 6. HOMOSEXUALITY

### 1. Does the Church expect those with same-sex attraction not to love, and to just live in the closet? (See GN p. 145-157, IfU Q 59)

- **Affirm:** People with same-sex attractions deserve love, just as every other person does.
- **Re-define love:** Culture equates sex with love. So, culture thinks that a lack of sex is a lack of love. The world does not understand how abstinence can express love.

- **Two options?** The world says that those with same-sex attractions have two options: live in the closet out of fear, or come out, embrace your identity, and make up your own rules with regards to your sexuality.
  - **Third Option:** The world never proposes chastity as an option. In this option, you acknowledge your attractions, define your identity as a child of God, and have the courage to follow God's designs for sexuality.
  - **Referral:** [www.couragerc.net](http://www.couragerc.net) and [www.narth.com](http://www.narth.com)
2. What light does the Theology of the Body shed on homosexuality? (See GN p. 151ff)
- **Body reveals the person:** This basic truth demonstrates that, since the body is clearly oriented toward the opposite sex, so too is the person at his or her deepest level oriented toward the opposite sex.
  - **Cut off:** Some people might be cut-off from that deepest part of themselves, but orientation toward the "other" is still at the deepest level of the person.
  - **Sexual "re-orientation":** All of us are sexually disoriented in one way or another because of the effects of original sin. Same-sex attraction is only one manifestation of a universal human problem. The redemption of sexuality is offered to one and all as a living possibility. With Christ's help all of us, regardless of our distortions, can gradually reclaim God's original plan for our lives.
3. What's wrong with two people of the same sex loving each other? (See GN p. 152, IfU Q 59)
- **Nothing:** But what does it mean for two men or two women to love each other?
  - **Root question:** What does it mean to love someone sexually? Basic proposal of the TOB is that the "language of sexual love" is stamped in our bodies as male and female and it is meant to express the free, total, faithful, and fruitful love of God. Does homosexual activity qualify?
  - **Another root question:** (for those still resisting) Do we determine reality? Are we free to "eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"?
4. Why would God make people this way and tell them they can't live this way? (See GN p. 154, IfU Q 60)
- **Root problem:** need to understand that we live in a *fallen* world. All of creation is affected by original sin. God created an original order that was "very good" and human sin has distorted it.

- **Jesus words:** to the Pharisees can apply to homosexuality as well – “In the beginning it was not so.” Homosexuality is not part of God’s original order and plan for human life.
- **Biological?** Even if science could prove the existence of a “gay gene” or the like, that wouldn’t demonstrate “God made me this way.” All of biology is impacted by the fall. Alcoholism is said to have roots in biology. Does this mean the only way such a person can be happy is by bingeing on booze?

5. I know a gay couple who love each other very much. I see how they care for each other and their children. I refuse to believe they’re living in sin. (See GN 157, IfU Q 59)

- **Affirmation:** I’m sure the love they have for each other and the children they care for is genuine in many ways. But that doesn’t mean everything they do in their relationship is loving and good.
- **Recognizing goodness:** in some areas of a relationship does not mean the whole relationship is necessarily a good thing. Whatever is erotic in their relationship can only be based on a misunderstanding of who they are as men or women.

## 7. STARTING OVER AND STAYING PURE

1. Can God forgive you if you’ve already been sexually active? (See IfU Q 79)

- **Affirm:** God’s mercy is his greatest attribute.
- **Biblical examples:** Prodigal son, Woman caught in adultery, Peter’s denials.
- **Historical examples:** St. Augustine (premarital sex), David (murder & adultery), St. Margaret of Cortona (cohabitation), St. Pelagia (prostitution), etc.
- **Confession:** Encourage student to experience God’s mercy in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

2. How do you forgive yourself? (See IfU Q 87)

- **Affirm:** Everyone has things in their past that they wish they could erase.
- **Future:** Living purity heals the past. By making smart decisions about future relationships, you will impress yourself that you have learned from the past instead of repeating it.

- **Forgiveness not a feeling:** Regret may linger for some time. Forgiveness is a decision to let go. Do not beat yourself up. As St. Francis De Sales said, "Have patience with the whole world, but first of all with yourself."
- **Confession:** It is easier to forgive yourself when you know that God has forgiven you.

### 3. How do you avoid making the same mistakes in the future? (See IfU Q 86, 90-96)

- **Affirm:** Praise their desire to be pure and for their insight in the necessity of planning ahead.
- **Sports / Theatre Analogy:** How would an actor or athlete perform without practice and rehearsal? When the time came to say one's line or run the play, the person would be caught off guard. Therefore, to be pure, one must plan ahead.
- **Strategies for purity:** Avoiding bad relationships before they begin, breaking off unhealthy relationships, surround yourself with good friends, get involved in youth groups, group date, don't be alone with date when parents aren't home, pray.
- **Acknowledge:** All of these things are more easily said than done. But, you have confidence in them.

## 8. CELIBACY

### 1. If the Church is so gung-ho on marriage, why does it promote celibacy? (See GN p. 164)

- **Affirmation:** does sound strange at first. But a deeper look reveals the Church's understanding of celibacy flows directly from her understanding of marriage.
- **Foreshadowing:** The purpose of marriage is to provide an earthly foreshadowing of the "Marriage of the Lamb," the eternal union between Christ and the Church that awaits us in heaven.
- **No Marriage in Heaven:** when Jesus says this, he's pointing to the fact that marriage on earth will be fulfilled in the marriage of heaven.
- **For the Kingdom:** In Mt 19, Christ calls some to "skip" the sacrament of marriage in order to devote themselves entirely to the marriage that alone can satisfy – the marriage of Christ and the Church. It is celibacy not for celibacy's sake, but *for the kingdom*.

- **Not a Rejection of Sex:** but a living out of the ultimate purpose and meaning of our creation as male and female and our call to union – to point us to Christ’s union with the Church.

## 2. Does the Church still teach that celibacy is a higher calling than marriage? (See GN p. 165)

- **Affirmation:** There has been a lot of misunderstanding of St. Paul’s teaching that he who marries does well, but he who refrains does better (see 1 Cor. 7:38). Marriage is not a “second class” vocation. Nor is it only for those who “can’t handle” celibacy.
- **JP II’s TOB:** firmly denounced any interpretation of these words that would belittle or devalue marriage.
- **Value of Marriage:** determines the value of celibacy. The value of a sacrifice is determined by the value of that which a person sacrifices (no merit if a non-smoker gives up smoking for Lent). If marriage were “bad,” every Christian would be called to renounce it.
- **Objective/Subjective distinction:** What’s better – heaven or earth? Celibacy is “better” by virtue of its object, it is a choice for the heavenly marriage. Subjectively speaking, the better vocation for you is the one to which you are called by God.

## 3. Why aren’t Catholic priests allowed to be married? (See GN p. 166, IfU Q 100)

- **Some are:** We often forget in the West that Eastern Rite Catholic Churches have married priests. They are just as Catholic as Roman Rite priests. It is a discipline of the Latin or Roman Rite of the Church to choose her priests from among those men who have embraced a life of celibacy for the kingdom.
- **Important Symbolism:** While it’s not essential that a priest be celibate, a celibate priest retains an important symbolic value in imaging Christ, who himself was celibate. Christ was not married to a particular woman because he came to “give up his body” for all humanity, for his Bride, the Church.
- **Free choice:** the vocation of celibacy, like the vocation of marriage, must always flow from a free choice. The Church forces no one to be celibate. As a discipline, the Roman Church chooses her priests from among those men who have freely chosen celibacy as their life’s vocation.

## 4. Why can’t women be priests? (See GN p. 168)

- **Affirmation:** We must work to overcome all exaggerations of the differences between the sexes that have been used to favor men and op-

press women. But in the final analysis there are still differences that matter. Men and women are not simply interchangeable.

- **Where difference matters:** What is one thing a woman can do that a man can't? Be pregnant and give birth. What is one thing a man can do that a woman can't? Father a child. This is where sexual difference really matters.
- **Not a career choice:** Women are right to insist that they can be doctors, lawyers, politicians, astronauts – those things traditionally denied them by men. But priesthood is not a career choice. It is spiritual fatherhood and in order to be capable of being a father in the spirit, you must be capable of being a father in the flesh.
- **Eucharist union of Bridegroom & Bride:** The Eucharist is the consummation of a mystical marriage. Ephesians 5: the one flesh union is a great mystery and it refers to Christ and the Church. The difference of the sexes matters precisely here.
- **Priest acts as Bridegroom:** giving up his body for his bride, the Church. For a woman to attempt to confer the Eucharist, this changes the relationship altogether. It's no longer bridegroom to bride, but bride to bride. Just as in the case of two women, there is no possibility of a true communion and there is no possibility of new life.

#### 5. How do you know your vocation? (See IfU Q 97-99)

- **Affirmation:** Most teens don't spend much time thinking about this question, so it is a sign of maturity, courage, and generosity to open your heart to God's will for your future.
- **Practical ideas:** Daily prayer, discernment retreats, talking with those who have different vocations & spending time with them, consideration of your personal talents and desires, etc...
- **Be careful:** Some people mistakenly assume that they do not have a vocation to the religious life simply because they desire children or a spouse. In a profound way, the religious life fulfills both of these yearnings.
- **God's will:** God will not call you to a vocation that will not fulfill you. No matter what vocation you are called to, sacrifice and joy will be mingled daily.

