

## **E. CHURCH TEACHING**

### **E.2 REFERENCES TO SUPPORT 25 QUESTIONS**

**1. The sexual difference between male and female has a meaning and a purpose. (True)**

The difference between male and female is not random; that is, there is a purpose and meaning to being a man and being a woman. Scripture tells us that God created us male and female, and that to be created in this way is a reflection of God's image. Why? Simply stated, male and female are complementary; one discovers him- or herself in the light of the other. In the light of male and female, we can see that maleness and femaleness not only complement each other, but also reveal the dignity of each other.

**2. Men and women are different but equal in dignity and rights. (True)**

Dignity and rights are based on the intrinsic value of the person, not on the extrinsic features of the person (e.g. job, height, sexual inclination). Being male or being female does not make one any less or better as a person. Men and women are biologically, physically and emotionally distinct from each other and yet complementary to each other. This difference is willed by God and is good.

**3. Every Christian should remain chaste until he or she marries. (False)**

One of the most common misconceptions about chastity is that it only means refraining from pre-marital sex. In fact, chastity means to respect yourself and to use your sexuality properly. One does not stop being a sexual being when he or she gets married; therefore every person, married or not, is called to chastity throughout his or her whole life. Sexual intercourse between spouses is considered a chaste act.

**4. Chastity and continence are the same thing. (False)**

Keeping in mind the above definition of chastity, it is clear how continence is not the same thing. Plain and simple, continence is refraining from sexual intercourse. Therefore, the way unmarried person's practise chastity is by refraining from intercourse. Sometimes married couples practice chastity through continence, other times through sexual intercourse.

**5. Sexual intercourse in marriage is a physical expression of love while abstinence is not. (False)**

Human persons express themselves through their bodies by giving a hug, expressing emotions, or having intercourse with their spouse. The key here is understanding the proper definition of love. Love is a self-gift that always seeks the good of the other. Therefore, continence can also be a physical expression of love. This is because one is loving the other with his or her body (by abstaining from sexual urges). For example, if a woman were in a stage of her life where getting pregnant was not healthy for her, abstaining from sex on fertile days would be a bodily act of love. In light of this, it is clear that celibacy and conjugal love are not opposites. Celibate people (priests, consecrated religious, etc.) also give themselves bodily in love through corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

**6. An inherent purpose of the human body is to reflect the love of God. (True)**

Scripture teaches us that God does not 'have love'; He 'is' love. Love is His very essence. We were created by Him through His act of love. As a result of this, we are made to love in the same way (*Gaudium et Spes* 24). One example is procreation. The inherent ability of a man and a woman to join in sexual intercourse and create a new life reflects God's expression of His love in creation.

**7. Love and lust are not the same thing. (True)**

Love is a self-gift that always seeks the good of the other. Lust is an inordinate desire for sexual pleasure. In short, love seeks to give to the other while lust seeks to take from the other. Love and lust are incompatible because lust does not seek the good of the other. Masturbation, discussed below, is a good example. There is no generosity in masturbation as the act seeks to please oneself only.

**8. The human sexual drive is a gift from God, not just a source of temptation to be overcome. (True)**

The desire for sexual intercourse is natural and healthy. It moves us to create new life and supports the unitive love of spouses. There is a misconception that the Church sees sexual desire as disordered. She does not. Sex must, however, be expressed in the proper context. Sexual temptations will probably have to be confronted. For example, a married man or woman tempted to commit adultery is called to rise above, by the help and grace of God, these disordered temptations. Nevertheless, our sexual drive points towards the union of a man and woman which is a good, God-made reality.

**9. You are safe from contracting a sexually transmitted disease when you use a condom. (False)**

Condoms may tear or may be used improperly, resulting in the possibility of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease. Furthermore, even properly functioning condoms provide only limited protection against sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis, herpes simplex virus 2 and HIV/Aids. (<http://www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/latex.htm>)

**10. Because of the physical, emotional and spiritual risks, premarital sex is not a loving act. (True)**

Would you ever purposely put your children at risk? Even if there were only a slight risk only? Why not? Because you love them. So how is premarital sex different? In premarital sex, there are numerous risks: STDs, unplanned pregnancies, emotional scars and complications for future relationships. If you love somebody, why would you put her or him at risk of any of these harmful consequences? Do the advantages of pre-marital sex outweigh the advantages of waiting until you are married? No. Why not give your beloved and yourself the very best?

**11. Marriage is more than just an earthly reality. (True)**

Marriage between a man and a woman ends at death. However, marriage on earth is a reflection of the essence of marriage which is between Christ and His Bride, the Church. Furthermore, the love between a man and a woman (which normally results in a child) is also a participation in the Trinitarian love between the Father, the Son, and the love between them, which is the Holy Spirit.

**12. The love between husband and wife is an important icon of the love between Christ and us, the Church. (True)**

Marriage is the gift of self to the beloved. Christ gave himself to the Church, us, fully, faithfully, freely and fruitfully. This was seen in His whole human life, culminating in His crucifixion. In short, Christ did not hold anything back. In the same way, a man and a woman give themselves to each other fully, faithfully, freely and fruitfully when they consent to marriage. The marriage vows are a reflection of Christ's self-gift to us.

**13. The Church teaches that couples are obligated to have as many children as possible. (False)**

The Church teaches that the spouses must always be open to life. John Paul II states that parents must also practice responsible parenthood. This is because to be open to life is to be life-giving to all present and future children. Being open to life does not mean trying to conceive a child; it means accepting that God is present in the sexual love between spouses. It calls them then to be responsible and accountable for their fertility with respect to the overall well-being of the family.

**14. Contraception is wrong because the couple should always want a child. (False)**

The reason contraception is wrong is because it changes the nature of the sexual act by preventing it from fulfilling its nature of being both open to life and unitive. First of all, when using contraception, the spouses are willfully changing the act from being life-giving to being sterile. Being open to life, of course, does not mean a married couple is obliged to conceive during every act of sexual intercourse, which is biologically impossible. Secondly, a contraceptive act fails to be fully unitive because the spouses are willfully holding back a part of themselves, in this case, their fertility. Who would want to receive less than 100% from his or her beloved?

**15. Natural Family Planning (NFP) and contraception are the same thing. (False)**

Contraception fundamentally changes the sexual act from a life giving one to a sterile one. Natural Family Planning (NFP) does not do this because the intrinsic nature of the sexual act has not been changed. When attempting to avoid a pregnancy, NFP uses the natural rhythms of the couple's fertility, whereas contraception either changes or suppresses those natural rhythms. There are several other differences. Unlike contraception, NFP can also be used to achieve a pregnancy. Unlike contraception, NFP has no negative health effects for the woman. Finally, NFP, unlike contraception, calls the couple to periods of abstinence if they intend to avoid a pregnancy. This invites them to express their love in other ways (see number 5 above).

**16. In vitro fertilization (IVF) is okay because it is the right of every married couple to have a child. (False)**

First and foremost, children are a gift from God, not a right. In vitro fertilization is wrong for the same reasons that contraception is wrong; both negate the unitive and procreative aspects of sexual intercourse. No sexual intimacy is possible when fertilization takes place in a test tube. Furthermore, the couple ceases to participate in God's creative act and reduces this to the manufacturing of offspring. These "products" are then in danger of being treated as commodities to be bought and sold, destroyed or preserved at the whim of the "owners." It is vitally important to clarify, however, that the way one is conceived does not take away one's inherent dignity and value as a child of God. For example, a child conceived through IVF is considered a child of God with inherent dignity and worth.

**17. Sexual intercourse is a physical expression of the marriage vows. (True)**

The marriage vows must always be full, faithful, free and fruitful. Sexual intercourse in marriage is the bodily expression and renewal of those vows. This is why the Church sees an act of premarital sex as lying with the body, since the bodies are speaking the language of the marriage vows but the vows have not taken place.

**18. There is a difference between the identity of a person and her or his sexual inclination. (True)**

The Church does not view one's sexual inclination as one's identity. To view sexuality as the primary aspect of identity runs the risk of reducing a person to a fixed single dimension. A man with same sex attraction is not less of a man because he is sexually attracted to men. Gender, race, age and other factors like these speak much more about one's identity than simply one's orientation. It is the entire person who matters.

Limiting one's identity to sexual inclination alone can also lead to two dangerous extremes. First, in recognizing the truth that same-sex-attracted people are loved by God, one may conclude that same sex-acts are therefore good. Second, one may transfer the sinfulness of the **act** to the person and incorrectly conclude that people with these inclinations are evil or hated by God. The Catholic Church rejects both of these erroneous conclusions and while recognizing the goodness of **all** people, teaches that some sexual **acts** are sinful. In short, same-sex inclination is not identical to same-sex acts and neither determines the identity of the person.

**19. Same-sex inclinations are not immoral. (True)**

We must distinguish between the person, the inclination and the act. The person is always good and has inherent value and dignity no matter what the inclination. A same-sex inclination is described as a 'disorder' because it points to an act that is not chaste or intended by God. This does not mean that the person is person disordered, rather that the inclinations are (just like a married person's inclination to commit adultery, or a anyone's inclination to masturbate are disordered but he/she is not). To conclude, having a same-sex attraction is not sinful but acting on it is because it does not conform to the nature of the sexual act.

**20. It is morally evil to unjustly discriminate against a person with same-sex attraction. (True)**

Absolutely. All unjust discrimination is evil. However, one must remember that while the word “discrimination” usually has negative associations, some forms of discrimination are fair, necessary and good. For example, we discriminate against a five year old child from drinking alcohol. Discrimination between unequals is not unjust. Because the Catholic Church understands marriage as a union between one man and one woman, it cannot call any other kind of union marriage which deviates from this (i.e. two men, two women, one man and two women, one man and six women).

**21. Persons with same-sex attractions can be full, equally participating members of the Christian community. (True)**

*Lumen Gentium* specifically states that all men and women are called to holiness by participating in the life of the Church. One’s age, race, occupation, sexual inclinations, etc. do not negate this call. People with same-sex attraction, being children of God, are also called to holiness and perfection by clinging to Christ. The Church does not demand that people with same-sex attraction “change” their orientation. However, it does teach that they, and all people, are called to chastity (see numbers 3 and 4). God’s grace assists us all in the challenges we face in responding to the call to holiness.

**22. Masturbation is not a healthy sexual behaviour. (True)**

Despite popular belief, masturbation is not a healthy act. In our sexually saturated culture, many people will find themselves confronted by the urge to masturbate. Having the urge does not make masturbation healthy (a spouse’s urge to cheat on his/her spouse does not make it a healthy act). The fact is that masturbation makes one look towards him or herself only and causes the person to objectify another human being. Studies show that biochemical release during climax can lead to unhealthy and unreal bonding with images or fantasies.

**23. Pornography has a negative effect only on the individual who views it. (False)**

John Paul II stated that the problem with pornography was not that it showed too much but that it did not show enough. This is because pornography only values specific body parts. This reduces people to objects, and suggests to the viewer that people have no value other than their body parts. One cannot have a relationship with the person being viewed in pornography; therefore the viewer can only use them. The greatest damage caused by pornography is to family relationships. The love between a husband and a wife can be destroyed, and the healthy relationship between parents and children seriously jeopardized. Actors, directors and all other individuals involved in the production, distribution and sale of pornography are also hurt. The effects of pornography also extend far beyond the industry and the home into areas such as human trafficking and the drug trade.

**24. Parents have a right and a duty to be involved and consulted in the sex education of their children. (True)**

Parents are the primary spiritual and physical educators of their children and are called to be proactive and involved in their development. This fact is verified by the Church and confirmed by most civil jurisdictions as well as the United Nations.

**25. The media give an undistorted presentation of human sexuality. (False)**

The media has a vested interest in supporting views and interests that may be harmful to a healthy view of human sexuality. The media and its advertisers are supported by large companies including those that produce contraceptives, abortions, fashion accessories, plastic surgery, etc. The sex industry itself generates more revenue than all the sports industries combined. A significant percent of the revenues generated on the internet come from sex related sites. This makes it abundantly clear that the media has a vested interest in supporting views and interests that may be harmful to a healthy view of human sexuality.