

Other Moral Issues

Divorce

Because the Church believes in the sanctity of marriage and family life, it promotes the value of one marriage "until death do us part." The Church recognizes, however, that a legal marriage (marriage in the eyes of the State) may not be a sacramental marriage (a marriage in union with Christ and the Church—which is a symbol of God's everlasting love).

Divorce is the termination of the legal marriage contract, but not of the sacramental marriage covenant. According to Church belief, a sacramental marriage cannot be terminated. In some cases, Church members may apply for an annulment—a declaration that a sacramental marriage never existed. If the annulment is granted, Church members are free to marry again in the Church. If the annulment is not granted, separated or divorced Church members may not marry again in the Church.

Premarital and Extramarital Sex

The heart of any society is the family. The Catholic Church places utmost value on the sacredness of the marriage bond and on marriage as the best place in which to conceive and to raise children. Because the Church recognizes that the procreation of children is an essential purpose of human sexuality, the Church teaches that sex appropriately belongs only within marriage. For this reason, the Church teaches that premarital sex (sex before marriage) and extramarital sex (sex with someone other than one's marriage partner) are both immoral.

Homosexuality

Homosexuals are people who are sexually attracted to persons of their own sex. The Church recognizes that homosexual persons, like all persons, have been created in God's image and have dignity. However, because the Church values the sanctity of marriage and teaches that the sex act belongs only in marriage, it condemns homosexual acts and considers them to be destructive of the family structure in society.

Test-tube Babies

The term "test-tube baby" refers to a baby whose life was begun outside the womb of the mother, in a laboratory environment. Once conception takes place, the fertilized egg is implanted in the womb of the mother and normal growth (gestation) takes place. The baby so conceived is, of course, a human being and is honored and revered as such by the Church. However, the Church opposes this procedure. Under present-day technology, many eggs have to be fertilized in order for one egg to then be implanted in the mother's womb. The other fertilized eggs (which are human beings in the eyes of the Church) are usually thrown away or destroyed. The Church opposes this termination of human life, just as it opposes abortion.