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### **III. Proper Uses of the Gift of Human Sexuality**

#### **A. Sexual Feelings**

Sexual feelings remind us of the God-given potential of our sexuality. It is normal to have sexual feelings. 2333, 1768, 1770

When we have sexual feelings, we may sometimes feel confused and ashamed. However, feelings in themselves are neither right nor wrong. 1767-68

Our responsibility is to exercise self-control in relation to our feelings, thoughts and desires, out of respect for God's gift and plan for us and others. 377, 2339, 2342

A sense of modesty in dress and behavior shows respect for ourselves and others. 2522-24

#### **B. Relationships**

We see in Genesis that we are created to be with other people (Genesis 2:18). As we come to know people of the opposite sex, we also come to understand better the variety and diversity of human experience. 369, 371-72, 383

All of our human relationships, whether with people of the same sex or with people of the opposite sex, are marked by our distinctively masculine or feminine personality. 369, 2332

To be life-enriching, our relationships with others must be based on respect and trust. 1702, 1879

#### **C. Sexual Union in Marriage**

Sexual union within marriage is a sign of mutual self-surrender and total self-giving. 371, 2361, 1643

Since self-surrender and self-giving form the very basis of love, sexual intercourse is often described as making love. Sexual union in marriage is noble and honorable, bringing joy and pleasure to the spouses. 2362

Sexual intercourse by its very nature is intended to enable the man and woman to cooperate with God the Creator in bearing children. 372, 2366-67

The total self-surrender and self-gift to another (of which sexual intercourse is the sign and expression), as well as the potential to create new life, require the public, unconditional commitment of a man and woman to each other which only marriage can provide. Sacred Scripture, the teaching of the Church, and the experience of the faithful over the centuries have confirmed this to be true. 2337, 2361, 1643

Today, the need for the public commitment of marriage is challenged by many. However, only the public and lifelong commitment of the man and woman can provide the context of security and trust which is necessary for such a total gift of self. This public commitment is intended to provide the stable community of love in which children can be raised in a family and educated in accord with their God-given human dignity. 2390-91, 1648, 1644, 1653

The sexual union of husband and wife in marriage has a two-fold purpose: the good of the spouses themselves, and the transmission of life. 2361, 2369

Sexual intercourse in marriage deepens and uniquely expresses the love between husband and wife by: 2360-62

- signifying and communicating their interdependence and their mutual trust, fidelity and acceptance; 2365, 1646
- establishing their relationship as unique and permanent, the primary one among all the other relationships in their lives; 2364, 1647
- assisting both of them to grow in holiness and in their ability to place the needs and desires of the other above their own. 1641

In God's plan, it is through the act of sexual intercourse that human beings are created. The husband and wife, through their sexual union, cooperate with God in the act of creation. From the moment of conception, the child thus created is to be cherished and protected. Children are a public sign of the community of life and love which the man and woman establish in their marriage. 372, 2367, 1652

In keeping with their responsibility to provide for the well-being of the children they bring into the world, parents may at times find it necessary to use natural methods of family planning which do not abuse the life-giving dimension of sexual intercourse. 2368, 2370