

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Sixth Commandment - Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery. Another way to state this is: "Do not do anything that breaks marriage."

Marriage is rooted in the creation of man and woman, and the creation of man and woman is rooted in God himself since the Scripture says, "He created man and woman in His image." Sexuality is important because as the catechism says, "Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It affects the capacity to love and procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others."

Chastity is the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of a person in his bodily and spiritual being. Being chaste means being faithful to the marriage vow, for marriage is the means by which most people will achieve this integration of body and spirit.

Being faithful to marriage means sexual activity only takes place within the boundaries of marriage. Any sexual activity outside marriage breaks marriage. Therefore fornication--sex outside marriage--is forbidden. Co-habitation--living together before marriage, is a form of fornication. Prostitution, pornography, adultery, rape and divorce are all grave offenses against marriage.

The Catholic church teaches that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered, and same sex marriage is therefore impossible. However, the Catholic Church also teaches that homosexual people must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity, and there must be no kind of prejudice or persecution of people with same sex attraction.

Because marriage, by its nature, includes the procreation of children, the Catholic church teaches that artificial contraception breaks marriage. Sterilization breaks the procreative aspect of marriage as does any form of fertility treatment which interrupts the marriage act or destroys a human embryo.

It is important to remember that marriage is a public sacrament. By this we mean that we all share in marriage. Marriage is not simply a private act between two people who love one another. It has a social dimension, so that when we break marriage through adultery or divorce or any of the other actions that break marriage, we are sinning not only against God, but against other people. When we sin against marriage, it is a public action, and we cause scandal to others with our immoral actions.

God's teaching on marriage is given to lead us to the highest form of happiness: a family life that is loving, abundant, and full of love and life. Marriage is a fragile, precious and beautiful gift. It is our ladder to heaven and the way most of us participate in the love of God and learn the difficult lessons of love. That is why the Catholic Church is so opposed to all the choices that break marriage--because when we break marriage, we are also breaking our chances to learn how to love.

The Catholic church's teaching on marital love is not easy. "Chastity," St. John Paul II said, "is the work of a lifetime." We are all called to live out the highest ideal in our sexuality. When we fail, we must turn to ask for God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of those who we have offended.

Your Pastor,  
Fr. Longenecker