

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A few weeks ago my pastor's letter was a reminder about the church's discipline and doctrine regarding the Sacrament of Marriage.

Continuing on this topic, I would also like to remind you about the church's teaching regarding relations within marriage. The Sacred Scriptures say, "The marriage bed is to be undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4).

Like the discipline regarding divorce and re-marriage, the principle is simple. The application is complicated. Put simply, the relationships between husband and wife should be pure, natural and pro-life. Any practice that is unnatural, distorted or perverted from its proper design is illicit. Any practice that is artificially contraceptive is illicit. Surgical or chemical sterilization with the sole intention of contraception is illicit. These actions—even within marriage, when undertaken with full knowledge and consent constitute mortal sin.

While the church teaches that artificial contraception is illicit, she also teaches that most forms of artificial conception are also illicit. IVF procedures, genetic engineering, surrogate motherhood and artificial insemination are all illicit because all of these artificial technologies involve a seriously sinful act in one way or another.

Other artificial and unnatural actions in this area of life are pornography, masturbation, voyeurism and immodest words and actions. In an artificially sexualized society, it is difficult to maintain purity and modesty without sometimes seeming prudish and puritanical. However, if we focus on the positive aspects of purity as what is natural, wholesome, good and life giving, we can be successful in being fully and positively pro-life.

This emphasis is a reminder to us that the church does not have these teachings in order to make us feel guilty and ashamed, but to guide us to all that is best, most wholesome, natural, healthy and beneficial to our eternal souls.

If you stumble and fall in these, or any areas of your spiritual life, have recourse to the confessional and if you have questions about specific matters do not hesitate to ask your parish priests for guidance. Remember that Fr. Ballard is a licensed marriage counselor. We are blessed to have him in our parish!

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker