

# Session 8



## A LOVE THAT LASTS GOD'S PLAN FOR SEXUALITY



**SYMBOLON**  
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

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# A LOVE THAT LASTS

## God's Plan for Sexuality

### INTRODUCTION

**God has a plan** for every part of our lives—including our sexuality. The marital act is God's gift to husbands and wives, enabling them to give completely and totally of themselves to each other. In this intimate act, the couple expresses with their bodies what God means when he says two shall be one.

When a husband and wife come together, they show that God has united them in a life-long covenant of love. Sex is the way that married couples express both the physical and spiritual aspects of their love. It is the way they say, "I give myself to you totally and faithfully, holding nothing back—I give myself to you spiritually, emotionally and physically" (CCC 2360–2361).

This union of man and woman in marriage is a reflection of Christ's own love. It must be faithful, a commitment that ends only with death, and fruitful, open to the transmission of new life. The Church offers guidance that is intended to help us say "yes" to God's plan for love so that through our sexuality we can experience authentic love.

As Pope St. John Paul II said, "We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures, we are the sum of the Father's love for us and our real capacity to become the image of His Son Jesus." The proper use of our sexuality is one way that we show the sum of that love and fulfill our capacity to become the image of Christ.

### THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **Why sex is meant to be an expression of total, self-giving love, a love in which couples give themselves to each other physically, emotionally, and spiritually**
- **How marital sex must be both unitive and procreative**
- **How the marital embrace fits into the total, free, faithful, and fruitful aspects of marriage**
- **What the Church teaches about contraception**
- **Why the separation of pleasure from self-giving love is so destructive**
- **The challenge—and joy—of lifelong love**



## OPENING PRAYER

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.

He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

—I John 4:7-12

*“Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them—every day begin the task anew.”*

—St. Francis de Sales



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is total and self-giving love at the very heart of our sexuality?
2. It has been said that sex is like atomic power. When used according to God's plan, it creates massive amounts of energy...but when used contrary to God's plan, it destroys. What are some examples that demonstrate this point?
3. Contraception was supposed to make marriages better, but from 1965 to 1975 the divorce rate doubled. Why do you think that is?

## CALL TO CONVERSION

After spending a few moments in prayer, write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:



### #1 Reflect on the following quote from Pope St. John Paul II:

*“Consequently, sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. The total physical self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving, in which the whole person, including the temporal dimension, is present: if the person were to withhold something or reserve the possibility of deciding otherwise in the future, by this very fact he or she would not be giving totally.” (Familiaris Consortio, 11)*

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- If you are married, consider how you use your sexuality in your marriage. Do you truly give a total gift of yourself to your spouse, physically, emotionally, and spiritually? Is your sexual relationship with your spouse an expression of personal trust, intimacy, and union, or more about use, gratification, and pleasure?
- If you are single, and considering marriage, do you respect the gift of your sexuality as a gift that you may someday give to your spouse in the Sacrament of Matrimony?

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**#2** Do you need any healing or forgiveness in the area of sexuality and purity? Start now by entrusting yourself to the mercy of Christ, and trust that he will give you the grace to love your spouse or possible future spouse with a total and authentic love. Do not be afraid to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where Christ is waiting to forgive, heal, and strengthen you.

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Love is patient, love is kind.  
It is not jealous,  
love is not pompous,  
it is not inflated,  
it is not rude,  
it does not seek its own interests,  
it is not quick-tempered,  
it does not brood over injury,  
it does not rejoice over wrongdoing  
but rejoices with the truth.  
It bears all things,  
believes all things,  
hopes all things,  
endures all things.

—I Corinthians 13:4-7



## SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

**Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:**



*Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

—1 Peter 4:8

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## DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GOD'S PLAN FOR SEXUALITY?

**TO ENRICH YOUR CATHOLIC FAITH, VISIT [formed.org](http://formed.org)**

Where you'll find helpful videos, audio presentations, ebooks, and feature films from the most trustworthy presenters in the Catholic world.

### **For Further Reading:**

For more in-depth reading about the Church's teaching on sexuality, see the following *Catechism* passages:

- *Sexuality: CCC 2333-2335, 2360–2362*
- *Fecundity of Marriage: CCC 2366*
- *Regulation of Procreation: CCC 2368*

### **Other Resources:**

- *Encyclical Letter, *Humanae Vitae*, by Pope Paul VI*
- *Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio* by Pope St. John Paul II*
- *Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary, Explanation, & Defense, 3rd Edition by William May, Joseph Boyle, Ronald Lawler*
- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 30 and 33*
- *Good News about Sex & Marriage: Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching by Christopher West*