



Answering an Old Question by Joe Sixpack

Sometimes people already know the answers to the questions they ask me, but they ask anyway with the hope that maybe the answer will be more to their liking. I genuinely believe that is the case with a question that was recently asked by a cradle Catholic. Still, I'm going to reproduce my answer here (with only slight editing), because we're so often only told we can't do a thing, but not *why* we can't do it. Well, I'm going to try to explain the "why" in this one.

Here it is...

You asked, "Is it wrong to satisfy yourself [masturbation] and is this a mortal sin?" In a word, yes. Let me try to explain it so you can understand why it's wrong, so bear with me. You asked what time it is, but I'm going to tell you the time *and* how the clock works.

First, there are two sets of moral laws—natural and divine. We're not even going to deal with divine law, because it simply says a thing is right or wrong; it doesn't tell you why a thing is wrong beyond God saying so. Natural law, on the other hand, tells you why a thing is wrong. Neither law is a philosophy or something dreamed up by man, but rather actual, provable fact. Just as there are consequences in criminal law if you violate it, there are consequences in natural and divine law as well.

The differences between natural and divine law are simple. Natural law is just as the term implies: that which is discernible in nature. We know intuitively that it's wrong to lie, steal, unjustly take an innocent human life, and so on. This isn't a religious moral formation, but a fact of nature. Explorers over the centuries (particularly in the 19th) have discovered indigenous peoples who'd never heard of God or Jesus, yet they had a moral code in place that observed natural law. Divine law merely takes some aspects of nature and elevates them to the level of virtue or vice; good or evil.

If you saw a squirrel and chicken mating you'd say, "That's not natural," and you'd be right. That would definitely be a perversion of nature—natural law. The consequences of such a perversion would be devastating. So we ignore or deny natural law to our own demise, because human perversion is much more devastating. That's the reason the world's in the shape it's in.

When it comes to sexual activity of any kind, following natural law is simple. We're made as male and female, and the reason is so we can procreate. Therefore, all sexual activity must be open to the generation of life. Any sexual activity that isn't open to generation of life violates

natural law, and has dire consequences. For example, the reason why there is such a high rate of breast cancer and other “female problems” in the “civilized” West is because over 90% of women in developed countries have been practicing artificial contraception for about 90 years. Underdeveloped countries, where artificial contraception is rare, don’t have this “epidemic” of breast cancer and other “female problems”.

When it comes to masturbation, you have to ask yourself if that sexual act is open to the generation of life. If the answer is no (and that’s obvious), then it is a perversion of nature. Indeed, whereas procreation is the very definition of generosity, masturbation and other violations of this aspect of natural law (artificial contraception, masturbation, homosexual activity, oral or anal sex, etc.) are the very definition of selfishness. The consequences? Well, that’s a whole other discussion.

God has taken this aspect of natural law and elevated it to divine law in the 6th & 9th commandments by telling us His consequences of violating them are loss of friendship with God, loss of the benefits of that friendship, and the risk of eternal separation from Him when our life on earth is complete.

At the end of the day, being pleasing to God is all that’s important. It’s more important than our parents, spouses, children, friends, or anyone and anything else. The story that best illustrates this is the true story of Queen Blanche.

King St. Louis IX (1214-1270), for whom our midwestern city in Missouri is named, was one of the most benevolent monarchs in all of history. He became the only king in Catholic France’s history to become a canonized saint.

Just like every saint, there was an impetus that led to his sanctity. For some saints it was a particular hardship that led them on the road to sanctity. For others it was an event of divine intervention at some point that made them seem chosen in a special way by heaven. But the impetus that led Louis to sainthood was the most common of starting points—his mother, good Queen Blanche.

Blanche began teaching her son to become a Christian leader when he was but five years old. Her greatest desire was for Louis to place Jesus Christ and His Church first in all things. From the time Louis was old enough to understand what she was saying, Blanche would take Louis onto her lap and say to him, “Louis, my precious son, I love you more than anyone in the world. No mother ever loved her son more than I love you. *But I would rather see you dead at my feet a thousand times than to know that you had offended God with one mortal sin.*”

Blanche was a mother who understood what is important, and that is why Louis is a saint! Really, this whole thing begs the question: If you don’t want to become a saint, why are you a Catholic? So don’t hope for answers to your questions that match your own desires, but rather will help you subdue your desires in favor of sanctity. That’s What We Believe... Why We Believe It.

Got questions? Go to JoeSixpackAswers.com to ask me directly, or look among the Q&As already there. And sign up for the **free** email course and get weekly invitations to regular **free** webinars.

Oh! And go to Etsy.com to visit the EVERY CATHOLIC GUY shop for teeshirts and coffee mugs that will actually help you evangelize for the Church!