

## The Catholic Approach to Morality

### True Love Waits

The LIFENET team recently conducted a 5-session True Love Waits program for 37 Confirmation candidates (mostly 8<sup>th</sup> graders) at Holy Cross Church in Harrison. Later, one mom said that she went into the bathroom after her daughter had taken a shower and she saw that **she had written “purity” in the steam** on the mirror.

The program is designed to teach youngsters about the beauty and sacredness of intimacy in marriage, the risks of premarital sex, and about what goes on in an abortion procedure. Executive Director Christine Flaherty shared remarks from students’ feedback surveys:

“I actually did change my mind because I was planning to lose my virginity next time I went to a big party just so I can be proud of it and experienced but **now I know better.**”

“Yes, I’ve decided to save sex for marriage. I haven’t thought about it before but now I did.”

“I changed my mind about abortion and how sinful it can be. You’re actually **killing a human being.**”

“The abortion session touched my heart to see the tools the doctors use to perform this sin.”

“I changed my mind about having sex before marriage because **I want to follow God’s plan** and not to catch STD”

[[www.lifeneteducation.org](http://www.lifeneteducation.org)]

### Dear Abby to Pregnant Teen

Although the secular press tries to avoid saying that a pregnant teen is carrying a baby, the reality sometimes can’t be avoided.

**Dear Abby:** “I am 16 now, and just found out I’m pregnant. Only the father knows and he is thrilled for us. But I am terrified of the uncertainties. My father & I don’t get along, and my mom is not close because of a long prison term.”

“My father will want me to get an abortion, but I would never choose that for myself or my baby. It seems my only option is to move in with my boyfriend and his family while I finish school and then get a job.”

**Dear Uncertain:** “Talk to your father and tell him what’s going on. You may need his help. A loving father will give it to you. And he can’t force you to get an abortion. You and your baby’s father should talk to his parents so that, if necessary, you’ll be able to stay with them. You must also be sure to have the best prenatal care possible so your child will be born healthy.” [*Newark Star-Ledger*, 4/11/15.]

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### Catholic Moral Teachings Too Tough?

Even many faithful Catholics think the Church ought at least to soften its moral doctrine on sexuality. In another area of moral concern, the Church’s teaching on just war is just as strict as its teaching on sexuality. Morally, actual waging of war needs to be proportionate to its purpose, and must avoid harm to non-combatants. These are often difficult to achieve.

But does anyone really think that the Church ought to lower its standards in regard to just war? Does anyone really think that the difficulty of following the Church’s norms in this arena should cause a softening of those norms? The Catholic Church’s job is to call people to sanctity and to equip them for living saintly lives.

The Church’s moral norms serve as our guide to behavior. To reduce moral standards, because most people have a hard time realizing them, is to compromise the very meaning and purpose of the Church.

Likewise, it is difficult to live up to all of the demands of the Church’s sexuality norms. Living a virtuous life is difficult. Compromising her extraordinary moral demands would represent a lessening of the Church’s fundamental responsibility of equipping us as saints.

Thankfully, the Church also provides an extraordinarily lenient penitential system – Confession. Priests listen, give counsel and penance, and say “I absolve you of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” The Church calls people to be great saints, and this is why its moral ideals are so stringent. [excerpt from Fr. Robert Barron, *The Beacon*, 4/915]

### Is New Human Life a Person?

Many believe that the fetus, or “little one,” must be able to do something to qualify as a person. Is he producing heartbeats or brain waves (about 3 to 4 weeks)? Is he responding to sensory stimuli (about 6 weeks)? Growing hair on his head (about 16 weeks)? Or able to live outside the womb (about 28 weeks and constantly decreasing)? Or is an even longer period – does the baby talk and socialize adequately? – needed to qualify for the dignity of personhood?

Those who want to deny personhood to the new human life, not those who affirm it, are the ones who invoke a host of unverifiable and debatable opinions about personhood. [Rev. Msgr. Daniel S. Hamilton, letter to editor, 5/20/81, in *Jousting with the New York Times 1961-2014.*]

## Survey Results

According to the most recent comprehensive survey by the University of Chicago (NORC), attitudes towards sexual morality have been changing in complex ways.

- Disapproval of premarital sex has declined from 45.1% in 1972 saying it was always wrong or almost always wrong to a record low of 27% in 2010 and 2012.
- In contrast, two-thirds say it is always wrong for teens 14-16 to have sex & that level of disapproval was unchanged between 1986 and 2012.
- Judgments about same-gender sex became less accepting between 1974 & 1987 with those saying it was always wrong or almost always wrong rising from 71.4% to 79.7%. Then the trend reversed & by 2012 a record low of 46.1% thought homosexual sex was wrong.
- Approval of extramarital sex has declined from an average of 85.2% saying it was always wrong or almost always wrong in 1973-1980 to 91.1% saying so in 2012.

In sum, public attitudes towards these four sexual behaviors show distinct levels & trends. Disapproval of premarital sex is low and declining, but for teen sex disapproval is high and shows little change. For homosexual sex disapproval first rose, then markedly declined, and for extramarital sex disapproval is high and increasing. The study did not ask for views on abortion.

The study did not identify views by religion, but other reports seem to indicate that Catholics have bought into much of secular culture and may have similar views.

## Pro-Life Woman Sues Englewood, NJ

Last year the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a Boston ordinance that prohibited proliferators from coming within a 56-foot-wide area of public sidewalk outside an abortion facility during business hours. Now, a NJ woman says an Englewood ordinance violates her free speech by prohibiting people from remaining on a public sidewalk within 8 feet of an entrance, exit or driveway of an abortion facility.

In the federal law suit, Jeryl Turco of Wayne says she is a Christian with a “deeply held religious belief that abortion takes the life of an innocent child and is, therefore, immoral.” “We can help you,” she tells women on Saturday mornings as she distributes literature and offers women a rosary. “It’s never too late to change your mind.” [*Newark Star-Ledger*, May 1, 2015]

Lawyers from the Morris County-based group, **The Legal Center for Defense of Life**, have partnered with the American Center for Law and Justice to file the suit to protect the rights of a peaceful sidewalk counselor.

## Church Braces for Same-Sex Marriage

**Decision** The general expectation is that the Supreme Court will follow the pattern of lower courts and legalize same-sex marriage. Then the battle will move to state and federal legislative action to provide specific legal protection. But these very well may conflict with the Constitution’s guarantee of religious liberty.

There already have been cases in which providers of wedding-related services like florists and bakers have faced potentially crippling fines for violating anti-discrimination laws by refusing on conscience grounds to provide flowers or wedding cakes for same-sex couples.

In addition, the Church faces the prospect that specifically Church-related institutions or individuals will come under legal pressure to cooperate with legalized same-sex marriage or else go out of business.

Examples of what might lie ahead include lawsuits in which a Catholic high school teacher marries his same-sex partner and the principal declines to renew his contract; or a Knights of Columbus council that rents out its hall for non-church social events refuses to rent to a same-sex wedding reception.

In March, Archbishop Cordileone, chairman of the American bishops committee for promotion and defense of marriage, and two other USCCB chairmen wrote Congress endorsing pending legislation that would ensure the right of child welfare agencies acting for religious or moral reasons to place children for adoption or foster care only with married heterosexual couples. Such agencies have been prohibited from making placements in several states.

Other archbishops have stated their support of the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act of 2015, now being considered by Congress. [Russell Shaw, *Our Sunday Visitor*, April 19, 2015.]

## Quandary of a Stay-at-Home Feminist

A *Wall Street Journal* article (5/1/15) by Lauren Apfel, mother of four, concludes that all significant life choices come at a cost. Opposing a feminist argument that financial independence is the “most important thing” for women, her experience has taught her that other things are valuable as well, and women should recognize that in making their life decisions. Some feminists rightly argue that surrendering independence for the sake of having and raising children should not be viewed as a feminist “failure.” In opting to have children at a certain stage, or to stay home with them, means compromising our financial self-sufficiency. And yet the reverse involves its own loss.