

Introduction

Sexuality and conyugal **SPIRITUALITY**

An invitation to dialogue



Dear couples and spiritual counselors:

During his entire life, Father Caffarel, permanently questioned himself about human love and the sexuality of couples. This concern has remained alive in our Movement throughout the years. It started with a survey launched by Father Caffarel in 1969 directed to all team couples. From the findings of this survey we started preparing a book that was never completed. This topic has also been explored by the International Responsible Team and by some Super Regions with the purpose of facing the challenge of supplying tools that would help couples understand their sexuality, as a source of richness and not of weakness, in order to achieve sanctity.

In 2007, when we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Teams of Our Lady founding charters, Father Olivier – in one of his last presentations – stated in the speech to the Teams of Our Lady, that our Movement still had a challenge: the incorporation of the treatment of sexuality in the route to sanctity.

At the 2012 Brasilia International School, which was the starting point of the current work of the International Responsible Team, IRT, the International School led by the responsible couples of Super Regions and directly related Regions, expressed the need that, with a second wind, the International Responsible Team will revisit the topic, considering it a priority to be studied and discerned. This petition was the origin of the satellite team that was created for such purpose and of the work that joyfully we show cast for you today.

Paraphrasing Jean Allemand, Father Caffarel's good friend and biography author, we want to underline with this work that the human being is one and that fulfilled human love includes all zones of the self. If one zone is not a part of the concert, love is not in harmony, it is divergent, and that is why we must give our sexuality the place it has in our completeness.

Dear couples, that your dialogues, or the 'sitdowns' prompted by these eleven booklets and the testimonials that come with them, be a source of grace and richness in your road to sanctity.

To and Ze Moura Soares
INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBLE TEAM

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Introduction

Dear T.O.L. friends.

We are contacting you, beloved couple and sought in a special manner by our God. As a couple you are His favorite work and His best expression of love. Every kiss and hug you give each other are the best gift and the most tender caress God gives to this world.

When we started writing these booklets we imagined you interweaving the laces that keep your home united with your work, the children's school and the sites of your daily activities. We envisaged you tired, busy, almost without time to experience love with your words and the donation of your body. We pictured you concerned about the babies or small children or about the experiences of your teen agers or while the older children come and go. We have also imagined you in the peace and quietness of your home, enjoying your leisure time, prayer and the relaxation of being retired.

Every line, every paragraph, every one of the topics we present here have been enlightened by your joyful and creative image, because we are convinced that between "being limited to get old" or living with enthusiasm to "create and grow", you have chosen the latter.

The time we have dedicated to write and think of you has been a time of "excellence". Because dedicating time to love and to motivate love is doing the richest revolution: the interior one, the

silence revolution, the one done in the sole and most beautiful temple created by God: interiority.

Jesus elevated women to the same social and personal “category” of men and helped to dignify relationships among people; He has enlightened us to choose the path of positive and nurtured sexuality, that considers us sexed individuals and destined by our God to know, desire, love and enjoy each other, to be fertile, to organize our life and to give each other as a gift within love. This is the sexuality path that Jesus lived without fear, without apprehension and without imposing heavy burdens.

This path is positive, smells like mercy, forgiveness, understanding and dignity. It is a free, respectful path, full of responsibility and signs of God’s love in every person we find walking through it. And for all these reasons, it is a demanding path.

You will realize that we have opted to follow God’s example when He created our body (creating us as a whole), He admired it and recognized it was superb..., so extraordinary that he became one of us!, with our same hands, feet, arms and body to be able to touch, heal, love, enjoy, pray and caress. This was the best present God gave us: a body to give and share as a couple, accompanied by God that enjoys the love of couples that love each other.

We believe this is the path of sexuality that God wants us to go through and live: sexuality that is felt and lived in the light of the Gospel, and in Jesus’ divine humanity. A sexuality that aims at

the encounter of husband and wife, shared enjoyment and the freedom of your self-giving.

Pope Francis tells us that there is another remedy to watch Jesus and set aside issues that are not proper nowadays. We have chosen love that creates and crops and not resulting from fear, sacrifices without love or the limitations that do not allow a human sexuality, as Father Caffarel insistently requested in the Chantilly conference: “it is not possible to have true sexuality morals without human quality in the experience of sexuality... Morality is predicated in marriage, what is permitted and what is prohibited is discussed, but there are no books at all for married Christians on “how to make love well”, about the way to live copulation well (tell me if you know any, I don’t!)”¹

We shall discuss sexuality and spirituality: two drops of water fallen from the same rain: the rain of Gospel. And in front of this very interesting and exhilarating challenge we would like to express our deepest and most sincere wishes. But we consider that what is most important is what you say and share. Therefore we suggest:

that you open your arms and mainly your heart, to mutually show the new idea, our new feeling and the last experience lived, so that reading your heart you are more concerned about your common interest – your project as a couple – than about your particular interests.

That holding your hands you read together, free of prejudice, of previous sad remembrances and

1. Father Caffarel. Chantilly Conference

decided to be authentic witnesses of your splendid and beneficial present.

That you reflect together, that you two give words to your feelings and that you also share those words and they become your joint property. And all this with the attitude that both of you are equally important. We grow if we reflect, if we meet, pray and dialogue in an equal level. If we have a dialogue thinking that either one can be mistaken and that the two of us have part of the truth, we assure our mutual communion. Our sexuality would not be so if we do not live and feel our encounters based on equality. If there are small domains, possessions and submissions as well as slight violence between us, sexuality could become pure genitality.

That you finish every topic you stand before the Lord to let yourselves be “warmed” and “tanned” by Him, as it happens with the wheat in the field, that with the patience of a “farmer”² waits for the summer sun to mature it to be then taken to the thresh. Let that “thresh” be your spouse’s encounter and your encounter with God in your prayer.

Only love will permit the free and joyful expression of your sexuality by means of pacific silence, with hugs and caresses, with the accomplice gaze, with the “I love you” kiss and, whenever you desire with the giving of yourselves in the intimate encounter.

²Expression of Father Caffarel in the first chapter of the book ““En presencia de Dios”, (“In the presence of God”), PPC, Madrid 2015, translated by Mercedes Lozano.

We welcome you. Those who have prepared these topics open the door for you and give you the floor. We are on your side.

TWO SMALL SUGGESTIONS:

1.- Before reading, keep quiet for a while.

Be in the “proper attitude”, as Father Caffarel says because a “kind face is waiting for you”, a pair of hands greet you and get close to comfort you. Be convinced that you are expected. “I am going to prepare a site for you”. And He is in that site. His presence has made that your interior is a cozy home. That is what praying is about: “Peregrinate to the interior sanctuary to adore there the true God”.³ Tell the Lord what Father Caffarel suggests: “Lord, I love the beauty of your home and the site where your glory inhabits.”

Stand in front of God’s eyes and do not think He is a mute and passive witness of your words and ideas. Let him talk and that His words reach your hearts. And be sure that “willing to pray is already a prayer” and not necessarily to be free of feelings, distractions, remembrances or thoughts⁴

2.- Be prepared to Dialogue⁵: “Who amongst you, willing to build a tower does not sit first and calculates the expenses to see if you have everything necessary to finish it? (Lc. 14, 28-29)

Take time to facilitate the encounter; release your

3. Expression of Father Caffarel in the first chapter of the book “En presencia de Dios”, (“In the presence of God”), Chapter 1.

4.- Ibid

5.- P. Marcovits o.p. gave to those responsible of OLT., in St. Herblain, on November 20, 2011.

chains and leave behind the fear to dialogue and to the truth, because you need to build “your” tower.

Be ready to listen. Listen what the other says, what is not expressed and what is silenced. Listen to each other with your whole body. Listening is learning from his/her looks, words and all the gestures. While not listening is to give solutions, arguments and be surrounded by walls to defend your truth. Listening makes us supportive and accomplices. If you do not listen you become a judge or a teacher. If the tension between the two raises, postpone the dialogue. “Light is in the words of the other”, P. Marcovits states.

The secret is “loving each other enough to know when both have to silence”, to always accept the word of your spouse and always consider your couple a valid spokesperson.

Dialogue, listen, ask and respond. With all that you will comply with the Lord’s mandate: “I was hungry and you fed me” (Mt. 25, 35). Your answer shall not aim at changing the other but rather it shall allow the other to find his path.

And finish the topic giving thanks to the Lord for having had this wonderful opportunity.



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Sexuality and conyugal
SPIRITUALITY

An invitation to dialogue

1.
FIRST TOPIC

Marital sexuality,
the great gift of God.

What did God want when he made
us sexed?



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1°.- REFERENCE:

“Marital morality is predicated, what is allowed and what is prohibited is said; however, not one sole book is offered to married Christians about how to make love well, about enjoying intercourse well (tell me if you know of any, for I don’t)”¹, states Father Caffarel. God only knows, only wants and only can love

It is difficult to locate oneself in the mind of our God! For Him, sexuality is the nicest and fundamental reality of our existence. He made us man and woman to be sanctified loving each other, as Father Caffarel said in Chantilly. And with what eyes do we look at sexuality? With clean eyes? Or with tearful, frightened eyes? Or with joyous and vital eyes? The following story perhaps suggests something to us:

2°.- IT IS ONLY A STORY:

Two monks were up to cross a river when a young girl appeared and asked for help to cross. One of the monks gave his mat to the other, carried the girl in his back and together they crossed the river. The monks continued their walk and while one whistled and enjoyed the view of nature, the other walked annoyed and absorbed in his own thoughts. “Let’s rest for a moment, we are tired” said the first one to his irate companion. “You made vows not to touch a woman and you dared to carry the girl”. “Now I understand your anger” said the happy monk, and added: “I only carried

¹.Father Caffarel. Chantilly Conference 1987.

the girl to help her cross the river, while you brought her in your thoughts up to here!”

In the Song of Songs, we can see how God wanted sexuality:

*“I belong to my beloved,
and his desire is for me.
Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside,
let us spend the night in the villages. [a]
Let us go early to the vineyards
to see if the vines have budded,
if their blossoms have opened,
and if the pomegranates are in bloom—
there I will give you my love.”²*

If God is defined as LOVE, it is logical that he made us sexed to love. “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”³

Kissing each other is like praying together to the Lord, for “Kissing is praying”⁴.

3°.- SOME REFLECTIONS:

God wanted us to be MAN or WOMAN. Different, so that we were attracted, desired each other and became a couple. Father Caffarel says that the vertex of creation is not the individual but the couple. Therefore he made us man and woman: two different genders: masculine and feminine. And how did God want us to have relations between ourselves? How did he want us to live our sexuality?:

2.- Song of Songs, 7, 11-14

3.- Song of Songs, 1,2

4.- Title of the book of Wunibald Müller. Edt. Sal Terrae, Santander -2005

God wants that sexuality is the source of spirituality: He made us different so that we had the deepest relationship and in order to meet him in our interior. "Sexuality is the true source of spirituality"⁵ He wanted us man and woman to love each other because He is the one that loves the most and He likes that we love each other. Our sexual encounters may become a prayer if we live them from our equality and in communion with God. When we love each other angels fly with envy and nature is delighted and beautified. That is God's message in The Song of Songs.

He has made us man and woman so that the force of sexuality helps us to live intensely⁶. In our daily life we feel that spirituality and sexuality are the two most intense vital forces. Separating these forces is like breaking the heart of men and women. If we happily join religion and sexuality we make that our religion blooms. Sexuality is not a force to be repressed, or to enclose it in a tower, it is a gift God has given us so that we enjoy it with happiness.

God wants us to harmonize the two forces he has deposited in us: We are frequently told that God clashes with sexuality. We have heard that eroticism is the enemy of sexuality. Wrong. God has made us erotic and spiritual and He wants us to put both things together. When we separate eroticism from religion we trivialize eroticism and make out of religion something cold and little human. Eros isolated from love is egotistic, dehumanizer, idealist and chauvinist. God gave us eroticism and a heart to love. Together, Eros

5.- Anselm Grün, quoted by Wunibald Müller in "Kissing is praying"

6.- Anselm Grün, *Intimität und zolibatares*, Leben, Würzburg 1995

and intercourse give our spiritual life enthusiasm and joy. Sanctity demands that we are human, and being human demands that our sexual encounters are a mutual gift reflected in hugs and caresses and in our common devotion.

With sexuality God awakes in us a need and at the same time He tells us how to satisfy it.

We all have the need to be touched, embraced, caressed and supported by the other. It is a basic need. And the force of sexuality is what moves us out of ourselves and drives us to deliver our love, to give ourselves and to become one sole flesh. Many Christians feel that sexuality nourishes their hope and charity and allows them to go towards God.

God is the one that loves the most. The one that most wishes our well-being. For Him, human love is the best evidence of His love. Therefore our greatest sin could be to separate and detach human love from God's love. If we desire each other, if we feel the attraction force that leads us towards love, everything comes out agreeable and all signs of life are enlightened. Sexuality places us in the deepest part of the other, where God is found.

Eros, hand in hand with love makes life joyful, covers nature with beauty, livens up the hearts of lovers and the heart of God, who is happy with them. "He who cannot feel emotion in his soul may be successful as an official of the Administration, but shall not transmit enthusiasm to the people."⁷.

7.- W. Müller, "Kissing is Praying". Sal Taerre . ST Breve. Santander 2005

4°.- IN ORDER TO HAVE A DIALOGUE:

After being silent for a while we will see God naked, free of caricatures that distort Him, as we see each other: naked, without prejudice, without deceit or dissimulation. Let us look at our eyes and surely we shall see God in them, who wishes that we look at sexuality in a positive way. And, let's ask ourselves:

1st - What is SEX for us?

2nd – What is SEXUALITY for us?

3rd – How does God regard sex and sexuality?

Look for the answer in your heart, without any other reference than your love and the Gospel. (After dialoguing about these questions, read the following and compare it with your recent comments):

SEX is not part of us. It is not the genitals with which we obtain pleasure or we procreate. Sex is you and her, man and woman, masculine and feminine genders. Sex is your whole and her whole, built throughout all our life; it is our biography.

SEXUALITY is the way we accept, assume and identify our gender. It is the way we exist and have relations. And it is the mode to desire us, to love each other, to give our love, to find and give our mutual love and to organize our life as sexed beings.

5°.- WE HOLD OUR HANDS AND HAVE A MOMENT OF SILENCE - PRAYER

After this simple reading it is possible that you have reached the following CONCLUSION: We are sexed beings because God wanted so. Gender makes that we are either a man or a woman. And God wants us to have mature and deep relationships and that we get close to the Reign of Love. God wants us to accept our sexuality and that we have joyful encounters. Taking into account these desires of God...

We pray⁸:

Lord, give us clear ideas so that we live with peace and joy our encounters..... and when we look at each other in silence, we see in our eyes the loving eyes of God.... and

We pray:

Lord, give us clear ideas so that we live with peace and joy our encounters..... and if we look at this God with love, we shall see that he laughs at the silliness we have said and done around sexuality.

We kiss each other convinced that with the kiss we pray, we desire each other, we get out of ourselves and we both deliver ourselves to this God that keeps us Company... and together

8.- The suspension points we use in all the PRAYER moments indicate times of silence.

We pray:

*Lord, give us clear ideas so that we live with peace and joy our encounters.....
and we read slowly in an attitude of prayer:*

“Earthly love is just the transit towards celestial love” says W. Müller. Let’s not forget that sexuality is praying and kissing, it is passion, fire and desire. And also looking, touching, setting the table, holding our hands, speaking affectionately, sweeping the kitchen and making the bed... All that can make us feel that we are close and when we feel close we get close to God and feel touched by Him.

And we pray:

Lord, give us clear ideas so that we live peaceful and joyful encounters.....



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2.

SECOND TOPIC

Man and woman:
different and equal.



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1°- REFERENCES:

1-1- “male and female he created them.”(Gn 1,27) and (Gn 1,31).

He made us in his own image. Woman was bestowed with femininity and man with masculinity. And God liked so much our masculinity and femininity, that he became equal to us through the tenderness of a child. God made man and woman with a different gender each, so that together we procreated. And because we are different, we feel and live sexuality and all human realities in a different way.

Women were made very feminine and with a bit of masculinity, and men with different tones of masculinity and some femininity. We should be proud to be part of that rich and diverse picture painted by the hand of our God. It is the multicolor picture of human existence. And this variety of feminine and masculine tones is made for the encounter, the relationship and love of the two genders, rather than for them to “struggle” or to have domination or violence.

1-2- He made us of two different genders to love, the total and most delicate act of the soul. Male and female animals are ruled by their instinct, which assures the species, but we, man and woman rule ourselves by love that improves such species.

Existence is rich and complex in the feminine gender and is less rich and simpler in the mascu-

line gender. Let's men not be offended because we all have masculinity and femininity. We ought to be allowed to be different so that we can be equal. Equality and difference belong to different spaces. The first one refers to social matters, to functions and behaviors and difference is related to individual identity, which sets the way to be profound and the way to live life either as a man or as a woman.

COMMENT: We are all aware of our physical and social differences. We shall address the psychological differences. All our differences are originated by a succession of biological, psychological and environmental elements that define us as men or women throughout the process of our SEXING.¹ Here we only want to see ourselves in the inside not in the outside. We don't want to describe thoroughly our differences, but to know and help ourselves to assume the differences that condition the experience of our sexuality.

2°.- OUR DIFFERENCES: YOU AND I INSIDE.

2-1- I AM A WOMAN AND FEMININITY PREVAILS IN ME. Husband, you know me already, but I wish to tell you what I am, what I feel and some of my needs. I am and feel that I am a woman, therefore my form is different from yours; I

1.-We understand by SEXING the process that starts when the spermatozoid and the ovule of our parents met to start configuring throughout life and by means of many elements (biological, social, educational and cultural) the masculine or feminine gender. The main elements of that process and which define the final gender are: chromosome 23, the gonads, gametes, hormones, neuronal sexing, the assigned gender, education, social influence and culture. It is a different process in each person. God lets nature act and the result is a rich and colorful picture; it is the picture of differences and equality. All that process that ends when we die, justifies that we "are not made", but rather that we are constantly "being made". All the process comprises our biography, our gender, the masculine or feminine gender.

see the world, our relations and God differently from what you see them. I like to contemplate and see inside and my closest surroundings. I am not so interested in what is objective and distant as much as in what is nearby. I like to see how people are related and try to see what happens inside them. I assume my identity and it is not difficult for me to integrate my masculine part. With cultural and social changes that occur, you are somehow clueless and do not see clearly what is your role. Notice that I am not so impacted by the masculine weakness or strength as much as by your ability to integrate your feminine part.

“Eve shall always be a mystery for you, Adam..... do not try to judge her under duress, under the costume or under the law”, says John Paul II.² You will notice that almost always I unify life, I don't like to divide it, therefore when I am annoyed I don't want to have intercourse with you. I like to express myself with all my body because I am very sensitive to what it tells me. Yes, I am complicated, but understand that I am the source of life, I am a mother and creative. All this makes me somehow mysterious, vital, intuitive, subtle and spiritual. Femininity allows me to feel and be exited until I reach my own bottom. And because I provide poetry to life, because I am generous, affectionate and a good friend of interior life, I am defined as “anima”. I like to “be” and be aware of the life I live, of the present time and I would also like to be the gardener of our common garden.

Look at me with good eyes and talk to me be-

2.- Quote of Michel Randon of the text: “The last recommendations of God to Adam and Eve” page 17 in “The Inner Couple”

cause I like that you look and talk to me. You seduce me through the ear, your voice moves me. I like that you desire me; that every day you make me fall in love, that you surprise and caress me. Touch me more and without objectives. I have all my body for you to touch me without being limited to some inches of my skin. Touch me please because you renew me, you give me life and put wings on me with your caresses! I like to say it, touch you and express my desire to give you my love, but I want your body to dialogue with mine. I wish to move in the same path with you before we totally meet. That is my mystery. Show me yours and then we shall share it.

History has been very unfair with me. It had to be Jesus the one that appreciated me and raised me to the same step where man was standing.

2-2- AND MASCULINITY PREDOMINATES IN ME, MAN. I, a man, the other end, the other gender. I like to reason, be more objective and spend time looking for success and power. You see, the contrary, to interiority. I would like to be concerned about "being", but my trend is "doing", transforming things, I work to understand, separate and divide. My endeavor is to conquer and travel to the outside. My predominant masculinity leads me to go through life in tip-toes and somehow live in the surface. My sensitiveness is different from yours and it is hard for me to express it. I don't find words to "say to myself" or to "tell" to your attentive ears. I fall in love through my eyes. I am pleased to see you but I am tired soon because caresses are not my strength and at times, I compromise to be able to have an intimate relationship with you. It is hard for me to

understand and integrate my feminine part. Testosterone makes me somehow aggressive and a fighter. My EGO loves that because it increases my power.

I love to act, be recognized, admired and in many occasions I prefer to move in the consumerist world than intimating with you. You tell me I am simple, that I do not make my life complicated; that I frequently tell you: <leave me alone, do not involve me>. That is true, and a consequence that I look to the whole and don't see the details.

As a result of my professional occupation, of my search for power and success and of the efforts I do to obtain things, I am defined as "animus"

In the intimate sexual encounters it is hard to enjoy while I wait and in the advancement process. I recognize I like to reach and enjoy the climax soon. This sequence of preparation, caresses, words and desire glances is long for me and I don't realize you are delayed, and I am not attentive to what you tell me or ask for. I usually remain wordless and waiting for the climax to arrive. For all these reasons I behave like any tourist which target is to arrive to his destination rather than enjoying the path and all the preparation that nurture the arrival.

All these differences and many others are the ones that define and condition the experience of our sexuality.

3°.- ONE ANECDOTE:

In the wedding anniversary Carlos arrived home happy for having remembered the date, important for his wife Carmen, for whom he brings flowers. Upon arriving he delivers the present, gives her a hug and tells her how happy he is for the years they have been married. Then he asks: What's for dinner? Carmen serves dinner bitterly.

_ What's wrong? I remembered our anniversary and brought you flowers, Carlos says.

_ Nothing, she answers, I thought you were going to take me out to dinner, but of course, you never think of that...

_ Why didn't you tell me? If you want, let's eat at a restaurant.

_ And furious Carmen tells him that the idea should have come from him. That would have been more romantic.

_ I'm sorry, Carmen, says Carlos, you want me to read your mind, but I am not a mind reader.

4°.- LET'S SIT TO DIALOGUE ABOUT YOUR AND MY PECULIAR A

We learn that our sexuality is rich when supported on reciprocity and equality. And we want to see each other as God sees us. He likes that women become women under the look of men and that men become men under the look of women.

1ª- We ask ourselves: What feelings do we share in our intimate relationship? Do we express what we like and what we don't? And do we tell our couple what we need? And if we don't do all this, or do it seldom, what refrains us from doing so?

2nd- Man's trend is to be genital and little friendly with caresses and tenderness; and women expect caresses, the look and spiritual union before delivering their love. When we end our sexual encounter how do we feel? Do we silently turn to the other side or do we comment we have lived those moments? If we have no comments, do we think that the subsequent silence is a solitary silence, when it should be solidary? Women love to remain in contact with their couple in those moments of rest.

3rd- Testosterone, - a masculine hormone – potentiates aggression and estrogens – feminine hormones – inhibit it. Are your sexual encounters conditioned by aggression, violence and a dominating trend? Or on the contrary, by equality, respect and pleasing the other, meeting his/her needs? In what measure and how?

LET'S MAKE A PROMISE TO EACH OTHER

You, woman, participate of my characteristics, due to your masculinity, relatively small, and I also participate of yours, due to my small feminine part. This reality may help us to

understand each other. I will try to understand you and you, an expert traveler, shall give me a hand. If you marry your woman's femininity with your small masculinity and I do the same with my masculinity and small femininity, we shall have celebrated, each, a wedding inside us. That celebration will be the best preparation for the marriage that we both want to celebrate each day.

5°.- LET'S JOIN OUR DIFFERENCES IN PRAYER:

We hold hands and are silent for a while... From this silence and close to our God, who created us different, we look deeply at each other to see, accept and assume our differences. We want to walk with more or less long steps but in the same path and with the same dignity. God wants us to look at each other in the same footpath. He looks at us. In that way we shall be authentic neighbors and will tell each other: I would like to see you with your own eyes and that you would see me with mine, so that reciprocally we could see our most authentic reality.

.....

The wife: Lord! We are sure you see us with mercy, that you are joyful with our differences and that you have made us different, not only for us to be wife and husband, father and mother and brothers and sisters,.. but to be attracted and love each other and simply be man or woman.

Both: Increase our love so that we are not limited to comply with some roles, but that we are completely human man and woman, knowledgeable of our reality and lovers of our identity.

The husband: When you made us different you allowed that nature followed its rules and irregularities. The result has been diversity and variety. We feel we are man and woman: heterosexual.

Both: Help us understand that others may feel differently their sexual desire and that you are also with them, because everything that comes from your hands is good and because you are always there where there is love.

The wife: We know that assuming our differences supposes accepting each other the way we are, adding between the two of us and eliminating domains, submissions, violence and passivity.

Both: Lord, let these differences allow us to find ourselves deep inside and be sanctified. That we can file the corners that arise these differences, so that they do not harm us, and that at the same time we learn to respect each other.

The wife: We want to see clearly, oh Lord. Help us to integrate what you gave us: our masculinity and our femininity. In this way we would no longer be cold or excessively objective and we would not fall in an exaggerated sensibility. We would like to have light to see clearly and warmth to easily express our love. Give us Lord that light and that warmth.



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Sexuality and conyugal
SPIRITUALITY

An invitation to dialogue

3.

THIRD TOPIC

**The language
of sexuality:
*tenderness.***



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1ST.- REFERENCE:

We are the children of tenderness:

It was God father and mother, the God of tenderness who "made man and woman" and "he created us in his image"¹. He designed us with love. That tender God saw that it was not sound that we lived alone and did not want the solitude of the individual but the solidarity of the couple. And when that God became man, talked from the tenderness of His mother's arms.

2°.- SOME IDEAS:

If we observe our sexual relations we notice that what humanizes and spiritualizes them is the language we speak during those relations: tenderness is a humble and simple but solemn language. It is a language abundant in expressions of need, therefore it is the most human language. F. Torralba says that tenderness establishes a profound union among those that speak it. It is the language of the heart that allows us to thoroughly live sexuality.

Tenderness is like a pinch to the heart that makes us move when we see the tenderness of the other². God painted the world with beauty and this beauty filled it with goodness. Without goodness tenderness would not be possible.

1.- Genesis 1,26 and 2,18

2.- Francesc Torralba, in "La ternura" ("Tenderness"), Edi Milenio. Lleida 2010

And tenderness is not seen, it is not an object or a thing; it is a mystery and the bond that strongly binds those who love each other. When we give our love, we are tender and see tenderness in the world.

Tenderness is the language of children: The child plays because he wants to play but not to conceal or disguise. Being like children we spontaneously express what we feel, without any shame. Therefore, being like children we save the couple and nurture our sexual life. Having tender feelings towards the couple is to break the shell that separates us from him/her. Being tender is forgetting the "war", the daily difficulties and eliminating the shields behind which we hide. As the "Knight in rusty armor"³ we need to break the armors that make difficult that we deliver our love to our couple. Only tears of grief expressed by the tenderness of forgiveness make these armors disappear, which prevent us from looking with love to the other. That cry of tenderness would make us say: "I will not do it again, but I did it, I did it and I am sorry, I am sorry".

Tenderness makes sexuality possible. We express tenderness with all our body and it helps us see the beauty hidden in things and persons. Tenderness humanizes our encounters. We speak this language with gestures, words, feelings, caresses, pleasure and looks. If we love each other, tenderness penetrates everything we say and do. We are the children of tenderness that others gave us. It is fair that we speak the language we were taught when we were children. Our sexual

3.-(Book that we recommend READING). Robert Fisher. "The knight in rusty armor", Obelisco Editors, 1989

encounters shall be full of tenderness when they are human and spiritual.

According to F. Torralba⁴, "tenderness is the artery where our feelings circulate. It is littleness, sound dependence, fragility and the extreme weakness with which we present to the other to inspire in him/her the desire of being protected, until it makes us cry: "I have a great need to be the most beloved person for someone"!

Tenderness is merely the simplest and most spontaneous expression of "I love you". With this short expression we get out of our routine and introduce ourselves in the other to value and inaugurate him/her when we see and accept his daily originalities. Living sexuality without accepting the other is difficult and it might just be stuck in genitality.

Tenderness is clarity and honesty. With a sincere "I love you" "what hides comes out to the light, what is imprisoned asks from liberation, what is despised demands admiration, neuter vindicates personality and badness asks for goodness"⁵

Tenderness is the contrary of Angelism that ignores human eroticism; and it is also the opposite to the equalizing roller that makes no difference between masculine and feminine.

Absence of tenderness creates a sad gap in us because it deprives us from the care and delicacy we all need. And this tenderness is absent when

4.- Ibid

5.-E. Amezu. "Amor , sexo y ternura". Edc Adra Madrid 1976

we are not aware of what the other wants, when there is no emotion, when the gesture becomes a routine and when "I love you" is reduced to a cold formula.

Tenderness lets us see that we, the sexed subjects, are more important than the achievements and goals in our sexual encounters.

3°.- A LIVE STORY AND FULL OF TENDERNES⁶.

" I am 77 and my wife has been the joy of my life. After 45 years of marital life I love her far more than when she hugged me for the first time. My tenderness has become less passionate but more profound. We have not said everything yet to each other. Tender kisses, hugs without violence, I remember old springs. But mostly, our souls are mingled in the same faith and in the same hope"..... When the 6th of July comes every year, it is quite pleasant to say YES again from the bottom of my heart. The same as a priest or a nun, aware of his/her vocation, renews the vows. It would have not been so if my Susan, bravely and close to heroism, had not always performed her duties of spouse and mother... But she always kept, as the blue sky above the clouds, the tenderness of her heart, the desire to make my life sweet... I will leave this world in the assurance that as long as she survives me she will not cease asking God to open the door of heaven to my soul."

6.- Testimony read by F. Caffarel at the end of the Chantilly Conference - 1987

4°.-IN ORDER TO SIT DOWN AND DIALOGUE:

We are going to convert the parcels of the desert that we cross every day, in small oasis of affection, through a simple and sincere dialogue.

1st.- We know it is not enough to cover our biological needs. Up to which point are our sexual encounters soaked with tenderness?

2nd- Dialogue is to be kept between the two of us. If you speak and I am silent, dialogue brakes and we shall not understand each other. In our intimate moments, and throughout the day, do we try to be tender? How do we express it? And if not what could we do to improve?

5ª.- WE FINISH PRAYING:

We place ourselves in the presence of our God and ask Him which are the causes for awkwardly "speaking" the language of tenderness?

1- *Is it perhaps due to machoism and feminism, that with their noise they impede us to learn this language?...*

2- *Is it due to puritan moralism?.....*

3- *Is it because we have known each other and nowadays we do not surprise each other?.....*

4- *Is it because we prefer techniques instead of the human language of affection?.....*

5 – *Is it due to the influence that the materialist society has on us?...*

6- *Or is it due to the old principles that the society and family taught us?.....*

God knows that. He will tell us which is the cause for not speaking properly the language that humanizes us. Let's listen to Him... (silence for some time)... and we pray:

- Oh lord, you have settled your dwelling in the bottom of my heart"⁷ help us find ourselves and that we speak from the bottom of our heart....

- Let's ask Him to teach us to talk with the eyes, the hands, a hug, a caress and with the tears of forgiveness to reach the heart of the other.... and we pray:

- Oh Lord, you have settled your dwelling in the bottom of our heart", help us find ourselves and talk from the bottom of our heart.....

7.-Father Caffarfel in the book "Dieu, se nom le plus trahi"



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Sexuality and conyugal
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4.

TOPIC FOUR

Sexuality envelops
all our being.



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1º. - FIRST REFERENCE:

It is important that we live and relate as sexed persons with coherence, authenticity and generosity. Otherwise, we will live with fears, apprehensions, pressures and dependencies.

“Without delivering our heart, without sentimental relationship, there is no human sexuality”¹.

Sexuality is an attitude towards life. It soaks everything we do. Being sexually alive is equivalent to relate ourselves in a and spiritual mode thinking about the good of the other and looking for a Deep pleasure.².

“Sexuality is not only a superficial quality. Everything a person does is marked by his (her) sexuality, because it is done because of that sexed condition”³.

All the above tells us that living sexuality positively requires being attentive to all aspects of life that may influence on the experience of our sexuality.

Our Sexuality is conditioned by the following areas:

Biological area

Affective area

Psychological area

Cultural area

Social area

Religious and social area

Hygienic area

1.- Santos Beneti in “Sexualidad creativa” pág 130., Ed S. Pablo 1994. Colombia

2.- A. Lowen quoted by Jane Howard, on “Tócame, por favor”, 1973, pág 171

3.- Maite Melendo. “Comunicación e integración personal”. Sal terrae, pág 162 Santander 1985

All our body is a unit that prays, thinks, feels, loves, enjoys, is related, heals or falls ill and is a big temple of our God. That is why...

.....the maximum expression of human love is similar to God's love revealed in the tenderness, the delivery and the beauty with which He has made earth beautiful.

2°. - SOME IDEAS TO EXPLAIN THE SCHEME:

a)- The biological area: is the most visible and external part of our body: the appearance, the genitals, the erotic, (the desire) and the pleasure. It is not the most important one, but it is the basis. From all the above comes the attraction, the pleasure, the procreation and the meeting. Our big mistake would be to remain searching exclusively the pleasure, obsessed by the orgasm, as the only purpose of sexuality. With E. Emezúa, we oppose to the excluding orgasm that does not give any importance to the loving meeting of two who love each other. The finalist orgasm that separates love from pleasure, contributes to make our meeting just genital.

b)-Affective Area: The physical genital meeting is not sufficient. It lacks something important. We need relationship, meeting and personal and innermost communication. We need and want affection and love to soak the gesture and the hug to communicate intimately. Sexuality begins with the attraction, followed by the desire, from which friendship love is born and it is completed with the love feast (agape, donation).

C-Psychological Area. Psychology tells us that men and women are and behave differently. Because of being different, we are attracted by the other. Masculinity likes sexuality with goals, somehow mute, without games and very little tenderness. Feminine sexuality is more expressive, likes playing, the road, the word, the gesture and tenderness. This is the travelling feminine sexuality that enjoys the road without giving so much importance to the end: the orgasm.

d)-Cultural Area: The machismo culture has harmed us a lot; the “conjugal duty” culture that pretended that women would always be well disposed for the husband, stopped women from living joyful meetings under equality conditions. The “coach” culture made men believe that only they knew about sexuality and that they could teach women how to enjoy it. How naive!

Our reference must be the evangelic culture, the culture of love between equal persons. The modern sexuality culture is that of equality, having as reference the feminine travelling sexuality because it is richer and more generous and looks more for enjoying the road (the loving game) than the achievements (orgasm).

This equality denies dissimulation and allows asking, suggesting, requesting and informing, with love and affection: “I do not want” or “I want...” Equality tells us that the request does not have sex, and that passivity and activity can also be lived, from the two sexes

Let us see a real case, seen in a therapy:

It is the case of a Young couple. He had master's degree and she was a nurse. They get married and go for a honeymoon trip. When they wanted to live their sexual meeting (they had not lived it together before) they found that he is not capable of having complete relationships. He had had relationships with other women without any problem and, always, leading the love game. When relating with his wife, she was the one who took the initiative and the husband was disrupted. The stereotype of passive woman and active man backed the wrong horse on them.

E-Social Area: Society influences our lives. Our society is sick of superficiality; it thinks that everything is the same and wants uniformity to manage us better. It creates topics and wants us to do what we are told by the media especially the TV. This requires us to be alert to be aware of reality, the fashion and the environment that surrounds us in order not be influenced by ideas and practices which make sexuality become banal.

f) - Religious and values Areas. We cannot live sexuality against our own values and religious feelings. It would be like lying, betraying, creating concern and distress within us. We would be lying to our own body. The feeling of blame, the distress and the internal tension would not let us enjoy our meetings.

Sexuality and religiosity get together and add up when trying to make man and woman, two hu-

man beings to care about the other human being; the two are like two drops of water: The two are looking for fraternity and demand a consideration of equality.

-Likewise, the two require dialogue, both with the other and with God

-And the two require the “for you” attitude which looks for the good and development of the other.

g)-Hygienic Area: We care especially about the mental and affective area. We assume the physical one. Likewise, it has been demonstrated that caress heal children and elders. “The welfare and happiness of men and women are almost unreach-able without the love and gratifying sexual contact”⁴. The gesture and mutual approaching with which we feel loved and valued, heal us and give a sense to life stopping us from getting depressed.

What really heal us are affection and love and not the technique that lacks the warm and spontaneity of feelings. When living sexuality, the skills are not as important as the expression of love. This requires time, dedication, effort as well as corporal hygiene.

4.- Masters & Johnson en “El vínculo del placer” Ed Grijalbo, Barcelona, 1995

3°- TO DIALOGUE:

We seat comfortably close to each other and in the presence of our Lord to give ourselves the opportunity to see our behaviours and interpret our words in order to avoid possible conflicts. We ask each other and face our reality with the best wishes to improve and grow.

1ª- If we look at our sexual meetings, in which of the seven areas explained, do we think it is necessary to pay more attention and care? And why?

2ª- In which aspects of our sexual meetings "you" (man) have to learn from "me" (woman), and me from you? Let us not forget that our differences enrich us.

5°- WE FINISH PRAYING TOGETHER⁵.

Husband:-We open the door to our Lord asking Him to accompany us saying: "we know whom we have trusted"

Wife: And we pray. Both: We can trust you Lord because you want us to be happy in order to be good. And you insist: if you want to be happy, you must be better.⁶

Wife: We hold our hands and repeat the words of prophet Osseo⁷. "I will take you to the de-

5.- Consecutive dots show the time for silence and personal reflection.

6.- Pensamiento del Arzobispo de Madrid, Carlos Osoro, expresado en la toma de posesión del Arzobispado de Madrid.

7.- Oseas, 2

sert, will speak to your heart and will seduce you”

Husband: In silence, we look at each other to the eyes and together, from the heart, we say to the Lord: BOTH: We know whom we have trusted that will never defeat us.

Husband: We acknowledge and value our body which is the UNITY, wanted by God in accordance with St. Paul: “...although there are many members, the body is only one. And the eye cannot tell the hand: “I do not need you”; nor the head can say to the feet: “I do not need you”. On the contrary, the members of the body that we consider weaker are the most necessary ones..... God himself distributed the body giving more honour to what was less noble”⁸.
.....

Both: Lord, we know whom we have trusted and you will never defeat us.....

8.- 1 Cor 12, 20-24



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Sexuality and conyugal
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5.

FIFTH TOPIC

**“Sexuality makes
us fecund”.**



Sexuality and conyugal SPIRITUALITY

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1°.- REFERENCE

"I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy. I will espouse you in fidelity, and you shall know the Lord"¹.

This text by Ossee² talks about the fruits of fecundity in marriage. The rejoicing meetings of husband and wife make our lives fruitful, make us creative and put us in touch with the ground we step on and with our Lord.

God made us man and woman to find each other, to give us one another and to sanctify ourselves. Living sexuality makes us fruitful because, when we live it joyfully, our existence is the opposite of an individualist, closed, selfish and solitary life³.

Let's stop asking ourselves "where do children come from? And from our condition as adults ask ourselves: "how do those children become fecund men?"⁴, -how do they become male or female – how do they meet, enjoy, have fun – love each other- take responsibility and how do they organize with good will and effort their sexual meetings?.

1.- Osee 1,21-22

2.- Oseas 2,21-22

3.- Idea taken from E.Amezua "Amor, sexo y ternura" y de Norberto Galli, en "Educación sexual y cambio cultural" ed Herder.

4.- Ibid E. Amezua

2°. - A LIFE EXPERIENCE.

Father Caffarel, at the Chantilly conference, told this story: "After a conference about conjugal spirituality, a woman came to see me. She would be around 60 and told me: "Oh father"! How thankful I am! but it is a pity that my husband and I did not know all this when we got married"! ...Look, the coronel, (her husband) was already well advanced in his spiritual life, he belonged to the Third Franciscan Order....." F. Caffarel says: "I was about to tell her, listen: one woman is enough, you do not have to wear a cilice". We interpret F. Caffarel's thinking in the sense that a life of relationship already has enough things to overcome without having to wear cilices. What is the lesson of this story? We think that fecundity is not measured in sacrifices, but in mercy and generosity.

Some comments: *The measurement of our fecundity is mercy, because we live in house of mercy (our Church) according to Pope Francis. And let us not forget that Jesus passed among us "and he went about doing well and healing all who were in the power of the devil and oppressed", (Facts 10, 38) in other words, doing mercy.*

Having a fecund life does not mean to live in accordance with some norms, "but it consists of maturing, deepening and intensifying the love experiences⁵. The level of our fecundity is measured

5.- Gabino Urribarri et al. "La familia a la luz de la misericordia", Sal Terrae. Madrid 2015

by the love we give, given that "man cannot live without love" as stated by S. John Paul II in *Redemptor Hominis*.

Living our sexuality with fecundity means to honor and at the same time, to learn from the other and with the other. Learning what the other says with his (her) words and whole body.

The joy of fecundity in the children has full sense when we are fecund living the sexuality spiritually and with the attitude of "for you and with you" and not the "for me"⁶.

3°. - SOME REFLECTIONS:

God wants sexuality to give fruits of positivism, happiness and spirituality. The mid is cold, rigid and normative. If we give it too much importance, it can turn off the sparkle of affection and desire. Let our bodies – You and Me -, talk, dance and be fecund living with evangelic attitudes. If we live with those attitudes, our joyful meetings "will bring along colour, happiness and good taste. They will fecundate our lives with their irrigation and will contribute to give it profoundness...It is like the blood that irrigates our body and the sap that fecund nature. Without them we would not be fecund even if our head would continue working."⁷ And, fecundity is not measured by the intimate meetings in the bed, but by the permanent attitude of delivery. Sexuality is lived all day long. Nothing beautiful can happen in our intimate meetings if during the day we have not had beautiful relationships. The dai-

6.- P. Caffarel, *Conferencia de Chantilly 1987*

7.- W. Müller citando a Adolf Köberle, en "Besar es orar"

ly experiences make our life fecund and give joy and enthusiasm to living.

Sexuality embellishes and makes our body fecund. Saint Paul⁸ tells us that we are God's temple and are possessed by the Spirit. Our body is expression of spiritual life, flesh life. God becomes flesh and penetrates in our flesh. God dignified us making us like Him and coating us with divine life. For that reason, touching and caressing us is like touching God himself, God became man for the man taking our body.

I am fecund with you when I give life and love, when I open my heart to be your house. And I am fecund when I am gift for you living the sexuality. And we are fund when compassion is the rule of our relationship.

You and I are two bodies made with divine craftsmanship, different to attract, look and enjoy each other and to fecundate the earth. With peace and justice and with fidelity and justice.

-Being open to the meeting with the other makes us fecund; it gives us life, joy and intimate emotion. When we look at our couple, when we value and deliver ourselves mutually, life blossoms, changes tone and everything we touch is transformed. This fecundity is lost when our life is boring, cold and selfish and we become routine officers of our own life.

We are fecund in the thankful look and when we contemplate and value the other's values. Jesus looked with love. Is our look similar to His? To

8.- 1 Cor 2,16

look like that means paying attention to what is important, is to encourage the other, to get out the best of him(her), to bring back his(her) dignity and confidence, to make grow self steam and to show Jesus way. To look is to do, and by doing, we fecundate our environment. A thankful look to the other is a positive look that recognizes and values God's work. The negative and pessimistic look is not fecund because it does not encourage or motivate and therefore, does not help at all. Only the compassionate and hopeful look is fecund ⁹.

To fecundate means changing and all changes follow the meeting. Truth is found through a meeting. Sexuality is lived through the profound meeting and, our Christianity, is the meeting with God. Only as of this meeting we can walk straight forward. ¹⁰.

4º. - WE SEAT DOWN AND DIALOGUE:

Without joy and enthusiasm it is impossible to encourage and motivate. We are fecund when, from the silence, we see the other's truth, when we do not judge each other and are attentive to what our couple lives and needs¹¹. We can do and say as Michael Sailer of the XIXth century priest¹², «if I speak and live with enthusiasm, I can make of my homily, a kiss for my parishioners”.

1ª Question: Your meetings: Are they fecund, give you

9.- Cardenal Kasper. "El Evangelio de la familia". Sal Terrae. Santander 2014

10.- Pope Francis. "Exhortación apostólica Evangelii Gaudium, (22-XI-2013)

11.- P. Timothy Radcliffe- Conference in Brasilia, 2012

12.-Quoted by W.Müller en "Besar es orar"

peace and joy or are they bored and dreadful? Why do you think they are either one or the other?

To deliver and give ourselves is our reciprocal need: "I give you my body. We give each other the word made flesh"¹³.

2^a Question: After our sexual meetings ¿which basic needs of the spouses (security, mutual acceptance, closeness, mutual acceptance, intimacy, loving and being loved, and making our sexual dialogue as total as possible among us) do we satisfy in our sexual meetings? Or which ones would we like to satisfy? And how could we get it?

3^a Question: Our Pope tells us that "love is the greatest force of transformation of the reality, capable of converting the Stone in tenderness, the periphery in the center, the injury in source"¹⁴.

When we join our bodies do we feel closer to our God and think that only love makes us fecund? Why do we think that only love is fecund?

5° WE KEEP SILENCE, WE PRAY:

Husband: We look at each other and see our Lord in us. In this silence we can get to know each other, to communicate, feel compassion, admire each other and finally, love us. Without knowing, it is the instinct the one who manages; without communication, there is no communion and without compassion, we do not give ourselves truly.¹⁵ We keep silence for a while because only in silence we can understand this.

13.-Ibid

14.- Pope Francis. Speech to the participants to the diocesane assembly in -Rome (17-VI-2013)

15.- Francoise et Remy reminded us during the Brazilian encounter, July, 2012

Wife: and we say as Samuel, to our Lord, both: «speak Lord for thy servant heareth »¹⁶

Wife:" We offer our God all the fruits of our fecundity. Let us open the door and let Him irrigate with his love our body and our common "garden" to make us fecund. Both: and, as Samuel we say: «speak Lord for thy servant heareth" »¹⁷"

The husband: Holding hands we feel that God whispers to us: You are fecund when you give your lives for the other, when you are loyal, when you respect each other and when you trust me.

The wife: And, also when with your abnegation you make love real with gestures, as F. Caffarel told us¹⁸. All of this approaches and gives you warmth, which means, lightly touched by my hand

Both: like Samuel we say to our Lord: «speak Lord for thy servant heareth ».....

Wife: We imagine the Jesus described in Mc in 2, 23-28 saying that the disciples pick up the wheat on Saturdays.....he answers that David also ate on Saturday the priests' bread and that Saturday is for the man and not the other way around. He adds that He did not come to restore the Saturday but to give dignity back to the man.....

Both: "Lord, perhaps being loyal to some norms commit us less than being loyal to You"¹⁹..... show us your way and help us to follow it with fidelity.

16.- Libro de Samuel 3,19

17.-Ibid

18.- P. Caffarel, Conferencia de Chantilly 1987.

19.- Comentarios al Evangelio, "Palabra y vida" del Cardenal Santiago Agreló.



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Sexuality and conyugal
SPIRITUALITY

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6.

SIXTH TOPIC

“Let us learn to educate”

Sexuality and
parenthood



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1°.- INITIAL REFERENCE:

“That is why the man leaves his father and his mother and joins his wife, and they become one flesh.” ¹. “And God created man in his own image; in the image of God created him. And God blessed them and said to them, “Be fecund and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.” ² God wants us to be one flesh and to be fecund in love and in the fruits of love.

We are sexed beings not just to have children. We are man and woman to relate as sexual beings. Talking about sexuality as a couple is like talking about the joy that nature shows when it is witness of the joy of those who love each other. “Amidst this universe where every creature spells my glory, celebrates my perfections, love had risen to show my love.” God means this in the Song of Songs. Sexuality is a dimension that God gave us for our human and spiritual development.

Therefore, our attitude has to be natural, spontaneous and positive.

God gave us a spiritual intelligence that knows about values, vital meaning and philosophy of life. This intelligence enables us to understand that man and woman are two beings made to know and

1.- Genesis 2,24

2.- Genesis, 1, 27-28°

love each other and to give life in children, when the right conditions for it exist.

“We understand by responsible parenthood the free, thought, loving decision taken in common by the spouses regarding the number of children they want to have.”³

One thing is living our sexuality and another is being parents.

Being parents is a free and AUTONOMOUS option to carry out with INTELLIGENCE, with GENEROSITY and TRUST IN GOD.

2º. - SOME IDEAS.

2-1 What do these four words ask us for? -

Being intelligent means:

-Deciding and living the options made as a couple taking into account work, psychological and family circumstances.

-Being aware of the motivations that lead us to decide the number and time for children.

-Deciding by mutual agreement, making it clear that a child is not a solution for a faulty relationship.

-Being clear that as long as we are a balanced couple, we will raise a harmonious family.

3.-Manuel Gómez Ríos, “Llamados al amor” (Topics for marriage) Edt. Cobarrubias, Madrid, 1987

What means being GENEROUS?

-Cultivating the attitude of being open to give life and give it abundantly.

-Little by little, including, our children into the circle of our friends and responsibilities.

- Living a dynamic generosity that adapts to the times in which the couple and their children live.

Being AUTONOMOUS means:

-Not being at the mercy of what others say or order us, being faithful to the project designed as a couple.

-Always being opened to information and training, to be able to make positive decisions.

-Being demanding with society in terms of day care, health, family-work relationship, teaching...

And what does it mean to TRUST IN GOD?

-Believing that God, expressed through tenderness, will always give us a hand.

-Being one for the other, signs of his love committed, trusting the other, practicing mutual help and welcoming and constantly communicating between us.

-Considering ourselves lucky man and woman being creators with God, contributing to the goodness, beauty and values of faith, hope and charity that shall nest and grow in our children.

2-2- Sexuality Involvement.

Children neither separate nor unite. They confirm and strengthen the couple's bonds or they may increase the already existing distance between the couple. If we want, we may live love and dedication to our children, as an expression of mutual love. The love and time that you give to our children is the expression of our mutual love, is what we say to each other when children and dedication to them are the demonstration of our love.

Therefore, a positive attitude towards sexuality makes it one of the most powerful and fruitful forces in us and at the same time, the most powerful source of living spirituality.⁴ Sexuality does not hinder relationships with children, and paternity/maternity can not be a source of jealousy or an obstacle to our intimacy. This requires us to take some time to be alone and savor our intimacy with the image of our children at heart.

Being paternity/maternity a new circumstance in our life, it shall require from us to rediscover our sexuality, celebrate it in another way and enjoy it progressively in this new circumstance. ⁵ "From the beginning giving the right place to the children, keeping the balance between the affection they need, the attention they demand and the intimacy of the couple, is not an easy task!" ⁶

4.- Wüller. "Besar es orar"

5.- Henri Nouwen, quoted by W. Müller in "Besar es orar"

6.- Father Yves Beyin in "Es la conquista de la intimidad". Intimicy dynamics – chapter 9/.

2-3.- Educating children in sexuality is our task.

“Biological” fecundity is therefore a human fecundity that does not end bringing a descendent to the world. It is a question of being responsible not only for births, but for the children’s raising and education. It’s about leading them into adulthood.⁷

-We are responsible for the education of our children from the moment they are born. And that education we do not give with speeches but with tenderness, hugs, looks and kisses in the appropriate moments. We educate our children in sexuality when we respect ourselves, we value ourselves, we listen and we positively identify with our sex. When a child sees how his parents love each other, express their feelings and how they care for and value their bodies, they are getting the best sexuality education with no need for words. The child who sees all this since he is born will feel that he has come to a world where it is worth while living.

3 .- A STORY TO TEACH:

We will educate in sexuality preparing the family environment with positivism, creativity and intimacy. Let us educate for high levels, for autonomy. Let us be like the good woodcutter: Once upon a time there was a king who was given two hawks. One flew and the other landed on a branch refusing to fly. The king promised a good

7.- “Evangelizar la sexualidad” – Equipos de Nuestra Señora.

reward to anyone who made his second hawk fly. One day he saw the two hawks flying together. Soon he wanted to meet who had caused such wonder and call him to the palace. A humble woodcutter came and the king asked him how had he achieved such a miracle. Very simple, Sir, said the woodcutter, taking away its merit. I simply cut the branch on which it was sitting and had no choice but to fly.

What branches keeps us from flying freely? Are they be the branches of security, fear, fear, lack of autonomy, not having clear ideas, ...? If we cling to the safety of the branch, our children will hardly learn from our free and autonomous flight and our joy of flying as a couple. Let us describe the trajectory of a free, joyful and evangelical sexuality. Let us not deny our children the chance to see that beautiful flight.

We teach sexuality by living it. Children internalize what they see in their parents. If they are proud of their body and their sex (male or female) children will positively identify with their sex. The world changes with our example and not with words, opinions or preaching. Educating is more difficult than teaching said Quino in *Mafalda*, to teach we only need to "know", but to educate we must "be". And let us not forget that we educate from the moment of conception. The child who feels he is loved, accepted and desired before birth perceives positive feelings that influence him afterwards.

4°.- SITE AND DATE CHOSEN, WITH OUR CHILDREN WELL LOCATED, LET SIT AND DIALOGUE!

“To avoid routine getting hold of our home, there is another means of which I want to speak a little longer. Take your agenda and, in the same manner you write that you are going to the movies or visiting friends, make a note about a meeting with yourselves. It should be clear that these two or three hours are ‘taboo’, or better, sacred, to use a more Christian expression! Don’t let any reason that wouldn’t cancel a meeting or dinner with friends, make you miss that meeting reserved for yourselves. ⁸ To educate, as the story says, is not moving our children’s wings but creating the space allowing them to fly freely. Let us substitute short “lights” for the “long ones”. Let us think more about their autonomy and skills for tomorrow than avoiding today’s pain or sacrifice. Because educating is not substituting but to accompany. If we educate through our loving relationships, we shall avoid the mistakes of educating influenced by our fears. If we overprotect, we penalize the overprotected, because we leave them defenseless by denying their ability to decide. Let us think about all this and ask ourselves:

1°.- How do we communicate our children that sexuality is the art of relating with quality and joy?

2°.- What kind of parents are we: 1 – parents who prepare the way their children will walk or, 2- parents who prepare children to walk their own way? Justify your answers.

3°.- In what way and when do we try to make our gestures, looks, caresses, hugs and kisses a testimony of the gestures, look, hands and face of Jesus for our children? The disciples of Emmaus recognized him “when he cut the bread”?

8.- Father Caffarel. “Las encrucijadas del amor” – The liability to sit down.

5°.- AFTER DIALOGUING, LET US PRAY TOGETHER:

-Wife: “Do not give charity donation without Jesus going in it. Do not give your alms if in your look, face, hand, you can not recognize the hand, the face and the look of Jesus. 9 (Silence)....

-Together: Lord, that our attitudes and gestures of tenderness and love create the right environment to educate our children in sexuality....

-The husband: Lord! We want to walk together, giving our hands to our children but without forgetting the hands of husband and wife... (Do some silence)...

- Together: Lord, give us the necessary balance and attention to keep our place as a couple without forgetting that the couple is better and ennobled with the children you give us ...

-The husband: Giving affection and the necessary attention to our children, without neglecting our intimacy, is not easy, Lord, Help us!...

- Together: That our professions, fatigue, leisure time, the T.V. or religious activities do not hinder our relationship as a couple or take away our children’s time.

9.- Cardinal Santiago Agreló, “Palabra y vida”, Comments to the Gospel regarding the Emmaus disciples.



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Sexuality and conyugal
SPIRITUALITY

An invitation to dialogue

7.

TOPIC SEVEN

**“Jesus and
sexuality”**



Sexuality and conyugal SPIRITUALITY

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1°.- REFERENCE:

"We have no other choice than turning to Jesus of Nazareth and forgetting about certain rules that are out of place at these times... Try to be there where the light and life of the Risen Christ is needed." ¹.

Some initial clues:

- "And God saw that all that he had made was very good " (Gn 1:31). God made everything for love, that's why:

- Jesus tells us that love is the fundamental law and fully human language.

- Jesus did not speak against sexuality; he condemned with force the hypocrisy, pride, greed, power and lies, and showed himself merciful to the adulterous woman.

- Jesus condemns the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, dignifies the woman and says that the rich will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

- And we can start the topic with the three conclusions of the authors of the last book that we suggest you in <Texts to read>.

- that God is by nature grace and love,

- that faithfulness is the ideal of the loving answer and,

¹.- Pope Francisco in *Evangelii Gaudium*, 30

- intercourse is a good way to encounter ourselves and going to God if they are guided by love.

2°.- JESUS AND SEXUALITY; SOME IDEAS:

Jesus was a good news for women, especially for Mary, a woman from Magdala, who held a special place in his heart². Women were faithful to him until the end (Jn 19,25). Jesus is and moves among those who are faithful and love each other, whether married or not, whether men or women, whether believers or not, whether homosexuals or heterosexuals.³

-He came to be good news for sexuality, for the body (our whole) and for our relationships. The consumer society says that the body is a business. The Church has often said that it is a sin. And the body says: I am a party. Jesus manifests so in the wedding of Cana, when he invites to enjoy together with the groom and the bride. But it lacked the joy and spark of good wine and it had to be the femininity of Mary that realized the scarceness. We are not totally convinced that when our love shines, so does the love of God.

For Jesus the body is celebration and joy and gave it to us to deliver our love to it. He did so: "I give you my body". He told us that love is to be open to the needs of the other. To love is to look at the other as a gift and not just pleasure. Jesus sees in the encounters between men and women love and salvation, while some "religious" men

2.- J.A. Pagola, "Jesus, historical approximation". Edt PPC 2007, Madrid.

3.- Timothy Radcliffe. Conference during the international encounter in Brasilia 2012-

see a problem, such as the Levite and the priest, described by Jesus in the Good Samaritan.

Jesus saw women were used and, sexually abused and trivialized. And he began by dignifying women and discovering the wealth of the feminine. He defended women, as we see in the “story” that we will tell you later. Jesus makes women confident of his feelings and concerns. He went to their homes, let himself be loved and was special with them, because he knew that femininity is the root of a spiritual sexuality. He made His the cause of the oppressed and of women. He was “a man for men,” according to Bonhoeffer and Mark 2: 15. He relates openly with women (Lc 8: 2); He felt compassion for them (Mark 1: 29-31, 5: 21-43; Lc 7: 11-17); he mentioned them in his parables (Mt 13,33) and welcomed some in the group of his nearest friends (Lucas 10, 38-42; Jn 11). In short, “he created many bonds and found hearts”.⁴

Jesus understood that the lovable union is the invitation to leave ourselves. He left his land to give himself. How far have we been from understanding that “precisely in the sexual encounter we come out of ourselves and then we both have the opportunity to love God, give thanks and worship him”⁵.

In Jesus’ time, power annulled women and ignored sexuality. The “love for power hinders the power of love.” Love means service and not privileges. Jesus was subversive, acting against the established power and places divinity in love, which is always subversive regarding power.

4.- Motto of *cáritas* Guipuzkoa- España. 2015

5.- W. Müller. “Kissing is Praying”

Jesus opposed to powerful people who played with the people and imposed heavy burdens, which they cannot stand. Jesus opposed society that separates spirituality from sexuality because it separates man from women, considering them inferior than men.⁶

He did not write any program on sexuality, but his behavior was very eloquent. He did not proclaim a new sexual ethic, but made the best contribution to sexuality placing male and female equal before God, because there is no distinction between man and woman before Him (Gal 3:28).

Jesus was not an impersonal being, he was a man, a sexed subject. He assumed his sexuality because “what is not assumed can not be saved”.⁷ If Jesus had not assumed his sexuality he would not have redeemed it. The divine lover is spirit without body; the physical lover is a body without spirit; the spiritual lover is a spiritual body or an incarnated spirit. And Jesus is the model of the synthesis of spirit and body because it was sexed and wants us to join our Eros to our celebration so that, by doing so, God is present. Where husband and wife meet, “the Word becomes flesh.”

-Jesus, according to tradition, was celibate. Why? Maybe because he saw that it was the best option for him, the best way to give himself and to be free. The best for him, not the best per se. And it is curious that, being celibate, he never recommended celibacy, something that Pablo and many others did.

6.- “The interior couple” of Paule Salomon and Nathalie Calmé. Chapter of Nicou Leclercq-Dubois, page 173.

7.- “The interior couple” by Paule Salomon and Nathalie Calmé. Chapter of Jean-Yves Leloup page 165.

It is a pity that where Jesus saw a celebration, good news and joy, we remain obsessed with a trembling sexuality like autumn leaves in the tree. We have suffered and made men and women suffer without having discovered the gift that God deposited in our bodies. Jesus does not like us to condemn in temples and in the streets those who do not think like us; He wants us to say words of comfort, understanding and compassion.

2°.- A BEAUTIFUL TALE:

It happened at the end of the 1st Century: Jesus, the Master, sat in a square in Jerusalem. Religious men, on seeing him, took advantage to accuse and denounce a woman caught in adultery. And the Master, playing with the law, which he did not like, asked them: "and what does the law say? Well, that we have to stone her, they answered. The Master was surprised that they did not take the man who was with her. And because he knew how double they could be, the lack of coherence and spirituality of those who were called religious, he said to them: "What are you waiting to comply with the law? He who is free from sin, throw the first stone. And the Master, like playing with the insecurity of these religious men, crouched and did as he were writing on the floor. Very little time went by and the Master and the woman were left alone. All the accusers, beginning with the eldest, departed without the Master insulting or judging them. Then he looked at the woman with love and compassion and, seeing she was humble and repentant, said: "If nobody has condemned you, I do not condemn you either. Go, be happy and do not sin anymore." The entire "tale" is in John 8, 1-11. Do not you think that this teacher, our Master, is a magnificent pedagogue?

4°.- LET US DIALOGUE AS A COUPLE.

1st.-“God saw that everything he made was good and strongly recommended us to “love one another” We know that love ennobles everything we do. Let us answer with the heart: What have we prioritized in our relationships: the demands of love or the norms imposed from outside? Why?

2nd.-What can we do to improve and grow in our Church, the merciful and compassionate attitude shown by Jesus towards the adulteress?

3rd.- Jesus did not dedicate himself to judge, to criticize or to attack those who did not think like Him. His concern was to dignify love and accompany his fellow men. Our attitude with our couple, our children and our neighbors, does it look like the attitude Jesus had with men and women around him? How can we improve?

4.- With what attitudes and gestures do we try to live our sexuality, loyal with our couple and aware that the best way to meet God, is by meeting husband and wife?

5.- WE PRAY TOGETHER

Accompanied by Jesus, the adulterous woman and Martha and Mary.

-Husband: Here you have us, Lord, a little confused, but confident in You. You want a law and a morality that goes beyond external observance (Mat 5: 8) and You tell us that what makes man impure is what comes from his heart (Mat 15: 1-20)

Wife: Help us, Lord, to give each other our love with coherence, humbleness and generosity. In this way we shall meet with you.

-Husband: You understood weakness, forgave with affection and tenderly looked the woman to say: "incline only to love"⁸, do not give up your identity by a false love that annuls you...

Wife: Help us, Lord, do not let us humiliate ourselves and bend only to sow the seeds from which little flowers of love will be born.

Husband: Martha and Mary shared the house chores with the pleasant company of Jesus ...

-Wife: Lord, may we be signs of Your love in every corner of our house.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

-*"Jesús, aproximación histórica"*, José Antonio Pagola. Chapter: *"Amigo de mujer- Su mejor amiga"*.

-*"Erótica española en sus comienzos"* Efigenio Amezua. Ed. Fontanela, Barcelona 1974 *Apartado II, 1 y 2*

- *Quotes from the Bible.*

-*"Human Sexuality"* New perspectives of the catholic thinking. Study by Catholic Theological La Society of America. Ed Cristiandad. Madrid 1978.

8.- René Char, poet



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Sexuality and conyugal
SPIRITUALITY

An invitation to dialogue

8.

TOPIC EIGHT

During crises ...
Let us search together



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1ST.- STARTING POINT:

Our EGO makes tricks on us and frequently mingles with our love gestures and makes us suffer. Jesus understood it very well and demonstrated it in the following parable: The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn¹.

God enjoys and suffers with us because our intercourse is not only a pleasure paradise but also a set of frustrated desires, conflicts, complexes, jealousy and rivalries. And God suffers but never says: there you have the price of your sins! He always says: Enjoy life and relieve it from what makes you suffer and from what you makes others suffer! In the middle of this reality our crisis arises, and God himself that suffers with us

¹.- Mat 13, 24-30

cheers us up saying: Friends: be partners. Love desires you! Whether or not you know it, you also desire love. Live and love in peace.

A GOOD ADVICE. Father Caffarel knew the true story of many couples: from that knowledge his experience was born: "To the disunited families the first thing I have to say is: "never resign yourself to disunion; the first thing that has to be done is clarifying; you have to see; even if this entails findings that hurt, even and most of all if you have to discover personal mistakes, condemn yourself..., do it ... it does not mean to rush things: frequently, knowing when to wait, to be complaint is a sample of great prudence; a false movement may risk prompt healing. There is nothing else to do, if you have to learn to wait, out of prudence and patience, this should not lead you to elude the issues because of cowardice. To make light is to look for the causes of evil. The most visible are not always the most real...once these causes are identified then the point is dealing with true remedies. The first of those remedies is frequently a change in our heart...²"

Father Caffarel was aware that crisis regarding sexuality experiences was born from the lack of human quality in these relationships. «No true sexual morality may exist if there is no quality in human sexuality» When he said that our sexuality is rather «wild»³ it may be because such (coital) relationships are not inscribed within love relationships. Father Caffarel read about the sorrow of the couples when reading the survey on sexua-

2.- Father Caffarel, Article published in *Anneau d'Or*, special issue of January-February, 1947

3.-Father Caffarel, in the Chantilly conference

lity⁴ and he would have liked to say and do many things to avoid it. He used to say: «pleasure is a saint reality that is in the order created by God, and before which, no suspicion may be raised, as in those sad spiritualities that were so extended⁵» The different way to live pleasure may generate a crisis in our sexual experiences. Knowing and assuming our differences may help us to overcome those difficulties.

2ND.- THIS IS OUR REALITY:

Our love has a lot of difficulties in this consumer society. Consuming is burning and extinguishing and loving, on the contrary, is creating, recreating, constructing and replenishing.

Crises are the opportunity to grow. They give us information about the other, they show us the true, they make us compare, assess and choose the best, discarding what is bad or mediocre. The process is painful, but at the end we are somehow more mature and better persons. «The couple's relationships are not a status, but a continuous development process that evolves by successive crisis. Crises are completely normal and the fact of overcoming them keeps the relationship alive»(Serge Hefez).

If we give light to this process with love, which is our fundamental law and ultimate sense of our life, we shall return to mutual confidence and shall not defend ourselves behind the trenches of self-love. And let us always think that every dawn has its sunset and that we always have to choose

4.-Survey made in 1969.

5.-Faather Caffarel in the Chantilly conference

to be present (aware) where we are and always choosing kindness.

Jesus tells us: you have to see the weed and the wheat. Take care of the wheat –your couple– and do not fall with the weed – ego is distancing and separating-. Yes, it makes you suffer, but take some time, so that you don't hurt yourself when pulling it out. It's not easy. There are offenses that will never be forgotten because they destroy some very profound things. Forgetfulness and forgiveness are two different things. If we forgive we return to the other his dignity and faith in himself. Forgiveness makes us rise our head, say to each other: let's hold hands again and let us listen to Saint Paul: Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude...Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.⁶

3RD A RATHER REAL AND FREQUENT

Crises come from our immaturity and help us grow. Let's see: This is a couple in love. She is amusing and rather irresponsible. He is serious and responsible. They see each other fitting like a glove in the hand in a future life together. For her, he is the strong one who shall help her solving her problems and her ideal complement. For him, she is the spark of joy he always lacked, the spontaneity, freshness and the playful part that he doesn't have. This couple got married and started to share good and not so good moments.

⁶-1st to the Corinthians 13, 4-8

Time went by, and just any day, she gets home wanting to share with him her professional successes. With her usual cheerfulness she begins to tell him about her exiting activities. He, on the contrary, doesn't pay attention to her words or her joyful enthusiasm. Then she thinks: He doesn't care about me. He is only interested in his own things. The husband, obsessed with his labor problems (he has been fired from work) thinks for himself: My problem is irrelevant for her, because she does not love me anymore.

Angry because of her husband's silence she goes to her room thinking that if he acts like that it's because <he no longer loves me>.

A succession of negative judgments begins, fed by misunderstandings: He is very mad at me, maybe I must have done something wrong for him to have stopped loving me ...he no longer cares about me. He doesn't love me. These thoughts fill their minds, their anger and indignation grow. Unjustified judgments and deformed images occur in a cascade.

She doesn't analyze his feelings, and the husband doesn't join his wife's joy. They judge each other instead of empathizing between them. And both of them draw false conclusions based on assumptions. Their ego doesn't allow them to see the feelings of the other.⁷

And the cause of these disagreements between the couples is given by Aaron T. Beck:

-Because we insist on guessing what one only can know by asking and listening.

7.-The idea is from Aaron T. Beck. "Con el amor no basta" ("Love is not enough"), 1997 page 29

-Because it is difficult for us to ask for an explanation about ambiguous gestures that give false information.

- And because we trust more our mood than what the other says.

4TH.- TO DIALOGUE AS A COUPLE

Perhaps we are a young, middle age or elder couple. Our crises may have their origin in any of three following reasons. Once identified, we dialogue and give an answer to the three questions: why does it happen? Where have we failed? What are we going to do to improve?

1st.- Conceiving sexuality only as genitality looking for pleasure and children will arise inside ourselves the conviction that once procreation is not possible and passion disappears, sexuality shall be over, will it not? Let us not forget that procreation is part of sexuality and not the opposite.

2nd.- God gave us all the surface of the body for caresses and to treat ourselves tenderly. ¿Why do we sometimes reduce our caresses to a small part of the body? Caresses have a purpose in themselves and are not an exchange coin to get something.

3rd.- Some crises may be born from being slaves of intercourse. ¿Do you think it is more important to be good sexual travelers (who enjoy the route, the trip, the company, the preamble, caresses, words, etc.) than tourists that seek, above all, the end, the achievement, the goal (usually the orgasm)? Do you consider yourselves more tourists than travelers or the opposite? Why?

5^a.-TO PRAY TOGETHER.

Prayer is a good tool in crises. We withdraw, we hold hands and keep silent ... we relax and open the door to God that says "Christian couple, you are my pride and hope. I created the world but I never saw anywhere the image of my most intimate life. I tried to discover the best of myself and it has been my most beautiful creation. That is why I created you, human couple "in my image and likeness" and saw that it was very good. You are a privileged creature, ¿do you understand why are you so beloved among all the creatures? ¿Do you understand the immense hope I have deposited in you?⁸ (We remain in silence a few minutes enjoying these words.)

Husband: Lord, we know you understand us and make us company in our disagreements. We hope and wish you remain close to us in our weakness and insecurity.

Wife: Lord, teach us to be faithful to love, forgiving, and being patient and being truth and joy one for the other.

Husband: May we know how to demand without hurting us. May we be patient so we do not discourage and that our demands be always loving, so that we do not protest.

Wife: We know selfishness and misunderstandings, not listening and not communicating distance us. Help us to open our hearts so you may come in, together with my husband.

8.-Péguy, French catholic philosopher, poet and essay writer. Quoted in Topic of Study of O.L.T Spain – 2014 – 2015, chapter 7.

Husband: Give us enough maturity to differentiate what is important from what is urgent. Help us controlling what surrounds us, so that together we may grow in maturity.

6TH.- LET'S CONVERT OUR CRISES INTO EASTER

... Going from the negative things and the problem to what is positive and the encounter

- From cold ideas and individual truth ... - to the feelings and truth of being US.

- From grabbing to possess and be violent... -to caresses between equal persons.

- From being sexual tourists that only seek the end, coitus... -to be travelers that enjoy the trip without being obsessed to reach the end.

-From objective, functional, cold, fearful language and between superior and inferior... -to a ludic, confident, free language, full of feelings.

- From sick and toxic relationships... -to confident, affectionate and ecologic relationships.

- From a negative, tense environment that is an obstacle for sexual encounters... -to a positive, warm and free environment that is the preamble for joyful sexual relations.

Let us leave the conflict and suffering pond and let us make a TENDERNESS deal to achieve quality relationships where God may enjoy with us. And let us say to ourselves with confidence: "I don't care bout your truth. I mind about the Truth and come with me to find it, keep your truth," (A. Machado).



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NINTH TOPIC

“Forgiveness
makes tenderness
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1°.-INITIAL REFERENCES: FORGIVENESS FACILITATES OUR ENCOUNTERS.

1- To meet in the festivity of gratitude and generosity we have to look from our heart the needs of our couple.

2- The second step is dressing up properly: "Let your uniform be: endearing, mercy, kindness, humbleness, sweetness, understanding... And more than all, have love which is the bond of a consummated unity."¹ With this dress we may understand that God forgives everything, and as an old lady said to Pope Francis who asked her "why were you so sure" and she answered: "If God didn't forgive everything, the world wouldn't exist"... Maybe it helps us to forgive when we think that God never gets tired of forgiving us.

.3- With forgiveness we reach what is important: "to feel we are loved". If between the two of us there are pressures, we can't feel we are loved. Let's ask to be forgiven for thinking only in satisfying our needs, forgetting the needs of our couple. The old lady who met Pope Francis, whispers to us. "If you don't forgive each other for everything, your marriage won't exist",

4- Forgiveness allows us to leave behind the heavy loads of the past and shall open the door to new sexual encounters.

When we live **SEXUALITY**, maybe we have to ask ourselves for forgiveness for not taking into con-

1.- Colosenses 3, 12-21

sideration that Love is something you don't make, but rather you FEEL and LIVE. What is substantial is lived, what is accidental is done. That is why love as well as sexuality are not done but felt and lived. This is what is really important.

5- And how can we forgive? Being compassionate as the Good Samaritan. Looking with love, being in "the shoes" of the other who suffers profoundly. Being compassionate is feeling with him/her, being a companion in pain and at the same time being able to leave that the other person takes his/her own decisions. Therefore, it is being very close to that person we forgive, without forcing, without conditioning and without claiming anything.

2°.- SOME IDEAS:

Hug of Forgiveness

- With the hug of forgiveness we celebrate our union, we give warmth and feel new.

- "I forgive you" she muttered, feeling her voice faltering- "I just came to say I forgive you" and began to cry.

The young man kept silent but deep inside he felt that those words made him free. As though they had released him from a heavy weight on his back.

- Opening the arms to welcome, caress and forgiving each other, respecting our interiority, until we feel we are loved, is the best gift we can give

each other. Then, closing our arms tightly to get into each other. This is the hug of victory over our isolation, differences and weaknesses.

- Looking with the heart, compassion towards the other and the respect for his/her reality make our forgiveness possible.

- In forgiveness we may also be signs of God's love. Love shall help us enjoy the virtues of the other, if we forgive him/her and don't convert what is anecdotic into something important.²

- When we know each other we have the chance of understanding each other, but we can also hurt each other, therefore "denying forgiveness is as refusing to live the present"³

Living the sexual hug demands that we learn the science of forgiveness that is born from humbleness and is "a personal election and an option of the heart"⁴

3°.- TESTIMONY:

Carolina and Eduardo are part of OLT. They have 4 children. Not knowing why and not being able to do something different than praying for them,

Eduardo's team knew that Eduardo was living a double life. Discovering such reality was very hard for Carolina. She grasped to the sacrament and she prayed, was compassionate, accepted her husband and little by little forgave him.

2.- "Hombre y mujer los creó" – EL PERDÓN". J. Antonio and Amaya MARCÉN – ECHANDI.

3.-.- Rémi y Florence, OLT BRASÍLIA 2012

4.- Ibid

When he got aware of Carolina's pain and her fidelity, he reasoned and abandoned adultery. Both of them suffered, they were compassionate, and slowly forgave and made everything possible to love each other. All moved in the magical triangle of compassion, prayer and forgiveness. It was an experience that united the team, helping them to pray intensely and was the chance to live the generosity of forgiveness and feelings of gratitude towards Our Lord. (OLT BRASILIA2012- Rémi and Florence conference).

Example of forgiveness: Do we remember the father that had two children? We know what the youngest did: he went abroad and did many negative things until one day he said "I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have done wrong, and against heaven and in your eyes (...)" But while he was still far away, his father saw him and was moved... Get out the best robe quickly, and put it on him ... and let us celebrate have a feast, and be glad... For this, my son, who was dead, is living again..."⁵

4°.- WE WITHDRAW TO PRAY TOGETHER AND ASK OURSELVES FOR FORGIVENESS:⁶

We keep for a while in silence.... We ask our bodies to relax ... we keep a comfortable position.....

The Wife: We know that you are not a person that gives forgiveness away. You are but forgive-

5.- Lc. 15,11-32

6.- Dots mean moments of silence

ness and mercy. You are love, embracing and receiving whoever repents and runs to you. You don't like so much that we ask for your forgiveness but that we forgive each other. As any father, you like that your children love each other, forgive and get along well.

Both: Lord, please, receive us as the prodigal son and give us the bravery to recognize, as he did, our limitations. Help us opening the heart so that whoever caused us pain may have a place therein.

The husband: I apologize for my selfishness, only thinking about me, for being more aware of my needs than yours, my wife.

The wife: We know that forgiveness demands compassion, mercy and strength to remain near the person who offends us. Help us in this endeavor, Lord!

Husband: Give us the capability to think in what is good for both and not only in what satisfies one us individually.

Both: We would like to fuse our wounded hearts before any sexual hug. That our sexual experience may be the greatest expression of our love and the best sign of our God's love

5°.- WE SIT TO DIALOGUE AND GIVE WORDS TO OUR TRUTH. LET THIS TRUTH LAST!

With the feeling that God is inside us, we sit in our favorite corner. We read the following phrases and individually answer the questions. Finally, we compare your answers with mine and convert the words of both of us into common property. We want those words to be truth, tenderness, forgiveness, compassion and love.

With forgiveness we turn our stone heart into one of tissue, similar to the heart of our God.

¿What is our truth before these questions?

1.- ¿Why is it so difficult for me to recognize my mistakes and my lack of tenderness and compassion? What stops me from getting close, look at your eyes and ask you for your forgiveness?

2.- Is it difficult for you to see your couple's wishes and needs? If it is so, why is it?

3.- What do you ask your couple when you ask for respect during intercourse?

4.- ¿What do you admire most in Eduardo's and Carolina's attitude? (Testimony's participants)

5.- Which of the following words (in connection with the sexual experience) reflect the most frequent feeling during our sexual experience? We list them from less to most frequent: insecurity, love, respect, fear, confidence, freedom, joy, communion, and encounter with the other and with God, happiness, violence, compassion

Once in order, compare the differences between your lists and discuss them.

7°.-BIBLICAL REFERENCES:

- *Be in debt for nothing, but to have love for one another ... (Rom 13, 8-10) Let's not leave any pending matter that worries or concerns us.*
- *"Let him among you who is without sin be the first to send a stone at her." (Jn 8, 7)*
- *We are different, limited, and selfish and God understands "it is fine, not being well at times" And God saw everything which he had made and it was very good. " (Gn 1, 31)*



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Sexuality and conyugal
SPIRITUALITY

An invitation to dialogue

10.

TENTH TOPIC

Let's cultivate
our sexuality



Sexuality and conyugal SPIRITUALITY

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1°.- REFERENCES:

"Husbands, have love for your wives, as Christ had love for the Church, (...;)Likewise it is right for husbands to have love for their wives as if they were their own bodies. He who has love for his wife has love for himself: For no man ever had hatred for his flesh; but he gives it food and takes care of it, like Christ does for the church; because we are members of his body. For this cause will a man go away from his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."¹

"God has invented marriage to be the school of love and abnegation" This love and abnegation "are not two brothers that walk in parallel, but a communion where we impose ourselves the "obligation" (rule of life) of not ceasing our love; or what is the same, our decision to always live with a "for you" attitude rather than a "for me attitude"²

2°.- GOD WANTS US TO LIVE A CULTIVATED SEXUALITY THAT SPEAKS THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE.

Father Caffarel discovered that conjugal love and God's love may not be separated. God is where love is. And what unites us, unites us to God and what separates us, separates us from God. Therefore, our sacrament is being a sign and demonstration of the great love of God. Our love gestures-acts are the way to make visible that love.

1.- Ephesians 5, 25-33

2.- Father Caffarel. Chantilly Conference

And sexuality experience is that great means that God has put in our hands to love. Love language has the peculiarity of making communion, respecting our own differences and peculiarities.

3°.- A BIT OF MUSIC AND EROTIC DANCE

I was walking along a centric street in my hometown. Men and women stopped to hear a violin and cello duo. Both instruments guided by the same music, went up and down; they crossed and could be heard from the bottom of sentiments. The high notes of the violin were supported by the low ones of the cello. All was harmony. Sometimes they stopped at the same time, sometimes they played to chase each other, to start and to look at each other, according to the timing but always one aware of the other.

Even silence was music, beauty and understanding. Neither of them was the protagonist and both played and played and didn't get tired. They mingled their notes, they hid one under the other and tenderly one was silent while the other "showed". And this was in turns. Both felt equally important. People applauded. Both heard each other following the pentagram with which they played. There was no dominion, or dominated. No first or second. They talked to each other. Tell me what you feel, and what crosses your heart, the violin said. And the cello notes answered from the bottom of the music: I don't want you to tell me anything; I want you to talk to yourself. And in a duo they said: I want

your inner world rather than what is happening outside. I would like not to be invisible, and that you were not deaf to my cry!

When one is silent the other one flies and at times of illusion both press their arches on the cords to cry, in love, the cry out of love.

And seeing this beautiful scene I remembered Van de Velde³ (1873-1937) when he said: "You need two to tango". We are wife and husband and together we want to dance the love tango, a dance for two that was composed by God, for couples. This dance is a symbol of love between peers, of the tender hug and the joyful and whimsical company. And I thought: Dancing, making music and living the sexual experience is a game, is spontaneity, and is enjoying one step after another, not running, not overwhelming and not wanting to reach the end.

God, who is master of souls' dance, wants us to love and dance, to be free and love each other being different. At the end of this dance, we put together our bodies, make communion and are the best sign of God's love for us.

4°.-¿HOW DO WE CULTIVATE THIS DANCE?

- Playing in equality: We are both protagonists, we both provoke, we both initiate, we both do and let do and we both say what we feel and what we need.

-Living more frequently intimate experien-

3.- Van de Velde. Sexologist brought up in the Victorian sexual tradition. Influenced the sexual experience of one generation.

ces, convinced that in those encounters God keeps us company in tenderness and seeking the common joy. God wants that love dignifies us.

-Living the sexual experience in the love of joy. We cannot evangelize without humanizing. Let's read about the topic and stop thinking that years make us indifferent to sexuality. We never stop being sexed subjects.

-Not being spectators of life and engaging in living intensely. Let us stop criticizing those who don't think like us and let us not lose energies defending ourselves from those who attack us. Let us worry about learning reading, studying and above all, living and asking God for help so that our experiences are free from routine, creators of communion and cheered by surprises. This way our experience shall be richer, more mature and more autonomous.

Cultivating is equivalent to being abnegated. "There is no love without abnegation"⁴. This means facing the world so that we do not confuse "being faithful" with "being anchored"⁵. "What you don't achieve speaking, solve it by praying. What you don't solve on your feet, solve it on your knees. Think that beyond your strength is the power of God." Here is the energy to cultivate ourselves.

We have to understand that "sexuality ethics does not refer to what is prohibited or allowed. There are no rules. No true morality of sexuality may exist if there is no human quality of sexuality"⁶.

4.-P. Caffarel, Chantilly Conference

5.-Santos Beneti "Sexualidad creativa". Ed. San Pablo, 1994, introduction

6.-P. Caffarel, Chantilly Conference

Let's continue listening to Father Caffarel:

"Let's help the Church to review its anthropologic vision". "Sexual union shall incarnate love as long as it is integrated into a web of daily relationships where it has sense."⁷

"The World has trivialized sexuality" in two ways: 1- reaching a little human Angelism that denies the Eros we have inside and obsessed with procreation and 2- exclusively seeking pleasure in an excluding way. "We have to humanize more than moralize, Father Caffarel said as though he had heard Pope Francisco: "we have to be more experts and witnesses of humanity and less guardians of morality."

And Father Caffarel continues:⁸ "Morality in marriage is preached, it is said what is allowed and what is prohibited"... but we haven't properly cultivated Christian marriages so that they "make love well".

-There is no freedom without knowledge.

Freedom without knowledge is called domestication.

There is no knowledge without freedom.

Knowledge without freedom is repression.

There is no knowledge or freedom without creativity.

Knowledge and freedom without creativity is called illusion.

And it's time to go from domestication,

7.-P. Caffarel, Chantilly Conference

8.-P. Caffarel, Chantilly Conference

*From repression and sexual illusion,
To a free, fulfilling, aware,
Joyful and calmed experience of our sexuality”⁹*

5°.- WE SIT, READ AND DIALOGUE.

Cultivating is the opposite of the old sexual repression and modern sensualism that deny and trivialize women and sexuality. To cultivate it is to continue loving each other as sexed subjects, like men and women that change behaviors, signs and gestures when they become older because they have new experiences that lead to new growth phases. This helps us understanding that 1- There are no limits for intercourse; 2- that they are not a privilege of young people; 3- that the need for hugs, expressing our feelings and to love and be loved is something that doesn't disappear with time; 4- that sexuality is not centered in coitus but in love; and 5- that physiological changes should lead us to re-adapt our sexual experiences to age.

1st.- Which of the five previous points is more difficult for us to assume? And why?

2nd.- If we had or have difficulties in our sexual experiences, have we discussed them between us or with an expert? ¿Which has been the result?

3rd.- During all day, how do we create a positive, optimistic, intimate and opened and favorable environment, for pleasant intercourse?

4th.- To what extent are we signs of God's love in our sexual experiences? With which attitudes do we demonstrate that we are those signs?

9.- Santos Beneti "Sexualidad creativa". Ed. san Pablo, 1994, introducción

6°.- LET'S CULTIVATE OUR SEXUALITY PRAYING TOGETHER:

We make silence for a while and enjoy the following ideas: praying is communicating with God in intimacy. God is pure communication. And He communicates because He loves us. That is why God, when he looks at us, He does not weigh or measures us. "God's way of looking is not as men do. Man looks the appearances. God only looks our heart."¹⁰ When God communicates He loves, as he demonstrated it in the person of Jesus. And he communicated with us in the best possible way and with the maximum empathy: feeling what we feel and becoming like one of us.

We say together: Because we believe in you, oh Lord, we wish that our communication gets to the deepest of my couple, so that together, we reach you. We are convinced that communicating with you is the best way to communicate between us.

And God? Well, God is me

Me who is in the arms of my love, that is her.

Yes, and she is in my arms.

And God? He is in the embrace we give each other

Mingled in a whole, in the nothing of the other"¹¹.

Wife: We recognize you have given us a body to give and enjoy it. We bless you for it and we want to live in the "for you" attitude instead of "for me".

10.- Samuel 16, 6-7

11.- "Juan Ramón, Alberdi: dos poetas líricos", Edited by Diego Martínez Torrón. 2006

Husband: We declare before you that we want our bodies to be your temple, your hideaway and shelter. We know you desire so. Take us, occupy us so we become signs of your love.

Wife: You want us to cultivate our sexuality naturally, spontaneously, without looking for efficiency, achievements or goals. We ask you that we let ourselves be driven by love.

Husband: Because we look ourselves in a different way, because we feel differently and because I want to understand my wife and that she understands my masculinity; that is why we want you to be in the middle of us, so we may live our sexuality understanding us and valuating ourselves equally.

Wife: You are generous, understanding and confident.

Husband: And we know that you are a God that by means of Jesus you touch, heal, look and save with your eyes. That your look awakens our body to love, to our relationship and for life.¹²

Wife: You were the good news because you became opened and vulnerable word, respectful and free.

Together: Continue being good news for us and training us for love, friendship, affection and corporal pleasure. Accompany us in this trip to become man and woman, so that together we continue knowing and finding ourselves, getting organized and enjoying of our mutual donation.

¹².- Mercedes Navarro (Nun of the Mercy Order), "(7) palabras". Edi PPC. Madrid 1996.



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Sexuality and conyugal
SPIRITUALITY

An invitation to dialogue

11.

TOPIC ELEVEN

**“Let us re-discover
our love”**



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1°. - REFERENCES:

1-1- A smart quote: P. Caffarel liked to quote Bernard Shaw "My tailor is the most intelligent person I have ever met in my life. Every time I visit him he takes my measurements, while the others have measured me once forever." ¹

1-2- Let us together blow our ashes to remove the dust that cover our old embers and discover our first love. Free from ashes, that first love shall shine will warm us and we shall be able to say:

Husband: "How beautiful you are, my beloved, how beautiful are you! Your eyes behind the veil are two doves" ... Your lips are like red ribbon; your words have bewitched me... Your breasts seem two fawns, two twin gazelles grazing among lilies" ²

And the wife: "My loved one is white and red, outstanding among ten thousand.... His eyes are as the eyes of doves by water streams,... his lips like lilies, distilling fragrant myrrh ... His hands are as rings of gold ornamented with beryl-stones; his body is as a smooth plate of ivory covered with sapphires.. Such is my loved one, such is my friend, oh maidens of Jerusalem" ³

1.- Bernard Shaw. (1856.1950) Irish, Author of "Misalliance "

2.- From the Song of Songs m 4, 1-5

3.- Ibid 5, 10-16

2°. - SOME IDEAS. LOVE IS ALWAYS NEW.

2-1- Love inaugurates us.

Love opens us. When we look at our eyes, we see our truth and novelty and make our love dynamic. That is the way to inaugurate ourselves every day. If we take our measurements we shall know where have we grown or diminished and where we have to accept ourselves again. That is the point, not saying "I know what you think" "You always do the same" or "I know what you are going to say". If we use the meter, we are open to new ideas, to new feeling and the desire of the moment. And love does our daily opening, it prevents us from thinking we are already learnt and think that we are already known. iLet's blow together the dust of routine, not closing the door to my novelty and your surprises! And when we feel the warmth of our bodies let's say to each other: I believe in you and believe in your skills to be new, because if I believed "only what science may evidence, I would lose real things such as life itself" 4. When taking your measurements I wish to accept an inaugurate you and I want my life to be impregnated of you. Let's think in the deep sense of the following verses of the Cuban poet Dulce Maria Loynaz:

"If you love me, love me as a whole, not by zones of light or shadow;

If you love me, love me black and white and grey and blond and brown.

4.- Félix Torán, "Mental ecology", Edt grupo Planeta , 2014 Barcelona

*Love by day and love me at night and at dawn
and in the open window.*

If you love me, do not cut me down.

Love me all or do not love me"

2-2-Love renews with communication.

Communication in intimacy is accepting ourselves and denying to say: "I love you but you have to change", because we would be deceiving ourselves.

A sincere "I love you" opens us and puts the tape measurer in our hands making our love alive so that it is supported on passion, intimacy and personal commitment" ⁵.

When we take measurements we can cry out "I'm here, can you see me? Although my body has changed I'm the same" and we shall measure ourselves, we shall satisfy the passion desire, we shall embrace the body that looks for love and shall caress the soul that needs understanding. And at other times, we shall plead: "Love me when I do not deserve it because it is when I need it most"⁶ because I want to laugh ... and abandon myself and surrender confidently.

Love is what may not be lost.

Love changes the past.

Love makes that two become one, without ceasing to be them.

5.- Esperanza Bosch and others, "La violencia contra las mujeres" Edt S. XXI. 2013-Barcelona

6.- Proverbio chino Chinese proverb.

Love fills all the spaces you create

Love speaks in silence.

Love allows seeing yourselves in times of difficulty.

2-3-Love is energy

Our coexistence crates knots that cut the energetic flow between us originating anxieties, negative moods, rejection, criticism, judgments, indifferences and the heavy load of guilt. All this stiffens our body. And all these elements are the stoppers with which the Ego, immaturity and lack of humility close the ways where energy of love circulates.

Only this renewed love and made true with tenderness gestures may clean the ways, transport empathy, remove fear, bring happiness and create compassion giving our bodies the capacity to be partners. Let us have gestures of tenderness, a warm smile or eyes full of promises so energy flows again. All the energy from us to the other shall return enriched. Let us not be afraid of being tender and lovable with the person we love and not be ashamed to ask for his/her body.

3°.- AN ANECDOTE: "THE CHINESE VASE

This is a newly married couple. One day they went to the market and saw a Chinese vase of beautiful colors. They imagined it at the entrance of their new house. Delirious with enthusiasm they put it in the car and very carefully took it home. They looked for a base, cleaned it and put the vase there.

Everything was without dust or without anything that might affect the vase's colors and charm. Each day they would gaze at their "acquisition" and would congratulate each other for the purchase. "It looks so well!, it was a very good choice!"

They went to work, came back, enjoyed it and every time they left or came into the house they had the chance to enjoy looking at it. Days and months went by. Each time joy expressions, looks and satisfaction due to the decoration lessened. Just before Christmas general cleaning was necessary. They moved the furniture, put objects in the corners and the house was clean and ready for the party's fuss. One of the objects that was gathered was the vase to avoid breaking it. The colors disappeared and were replaced by the green of a plant that occupied the corner. Our couple continued coming in and out the house and days went by without them being aware of the absence of the vase.

4°.- TO DIALOGUE AS A COUPLE

We begin the dialogue remembering the following:

We want absolute confidence and this is achieved when we work on mutual acceptance. This makes us secure, takes away fears and opens the door to go into the other with all respect.

Love is respectful says R.Tagore. Respect is not tenderness. We are respectful when we recognize

that we have a life of our own and that we have illusion that the other person fully lives her/his life and develops his/her identity. "Those that wish that the beloved person turns into his/herself are the ones who love" says Lain Entralgo. Try to discover the mystery of your couple and be excited with all that has to do with him/her. This is the best way to be respectful with her. But, be aware if you are not yourself, so your couple may be what it is, and you are loving out of commitment. The best thing you can give when you love is your own self, your being, your wholesomeness ... if you resign to be part of you, you deny giving your couple the best you can give. It would be good to listen what lovers said to each other in a movie: "My wish is not that you love me, or that you give me your love, that you owe me, thank me or admire me. My wish is simply that you exist and grow". That is the best guarantee of love.

1^a. ¿Do we have intercourse because we believe that we have that commitment with our couple? Acting that way isn't disrespectful with ourselves? If we do not have confidence to say "yes" or "no" when facing sexual demands ¿what are the reasons for not having confidence?

2^a. - When Intercourse do we think: Am I at her/his level? Or "is it fear that doesn't allow us to be completely spontaneous during intercourse? If we undress our soul before our body, the second will be easy and pleasant.

3^a. - ¿Have we felt sometimes, that the habit, time and routine conduct our intercourse?

4^a. - Have we turned our couple into the colored and multi shaped vase, something already known and not wished? Why did it happen? ¿How can we improve?

4TH.-. LET US TAKE MEASUREMENTS IN OUR PRAYERS

Both: Oh Lord, we want this moment of silence to be a look to the deepest of ourselves. We know that only with the eyes of love we see what is really true. We wish our intercourse is immerse in your love that neither force nor violence, routine or boredom will hide the embers of our first love. We make silence for a while because from this silence we will get straight and sincere words...

Wife: We know that with physical contact we do not get completely in touch; we want that Eros spirituality and the remembrance of our first love make our encounters a celebration.

Husband: We know that "the need to be touched, taken by the arm and held with affection, are some of the deepest longings of our heart and are very concrete signs of our desire to merge with you"⁷ iTouch us! And teach us touch our bodies.

Both: Let us both cry without fear and trust: Touch me! Touch me, please! Because your caress heals me, expresses your respect for me and is a sign of your goodness, your joy and your commitment.

Husband: We are in danger of giving too much importance to the end of our intimate encounter. We want you to be present in the temple of our intimacy.

7.- Wunibald Müller. "Kissing is praying". *Sexuality as a source of spirituality*. Edt Sal terrae. 2005 Santander

Both: help us enjoy more the preparation, tenderness and the final pleasure so that the essence of egotism allow that you are present in this party.

Wife: Lord, we want you to be to our love, what the wind is to the sails of the boat.

Both: We will spread our love's sails so that you blow with your wind and make us sail with joy.

Both: We want all this to be not just words. Our intimacy has too many words. Like Dante, we want to convince ourselves that "little loves who can express in words how much he loves".



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Sexuality and conyugal **SPIRITUALITY**

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TESTIMONY FROM SPAIN:

Expressed by the woman

Above anything I want to say that in our sexual encounters and the preambles, the dialogue and communication are quite present and we like to make an assessment after our encounters.

First of all, I want to ask for forgiveness from my couple for the times I have given myself to him and I have not been able to give him the maximum pleasure because I focus more on my pleasure and joy.

I consider myself a simple person, who doesn't need "exceptional performances" as those on the movies. My curiosity does not go on that direction. Our encounters are mainly motivated by the desire of celebrating what we live in a concrete day, to satisfy a need for mutual pleasure and I have never, and I underline it, never have felt I have been humiliated, used ... on the contrary, I have felt loved, protected and I have seen my husband taking care of me and trying to satisfy our mutual desires. In general we speak and agree about it. I sometimes miss the spontaneity when we were sweethearts or the first years of marriage, but I know that the lack of illusion or enthusiasm has been transformed into tenderness and the need to mutually take care of ourselves.

Our feelings are just underneath our skin and our encounters confirm that they remain pleasant for both of us and that we feel fulfilled and satisfied after living them. Affection demonstrations occur every day and although our sexual encounters are not as frequent as in the beginning, nowadays, they still satisfy both of us.

FROM COLOMBIA:

TESTIMONY

We married very young and madly in love, without any awareness of what the sacrament of matrimony meant. We started our life as a couple full of illusions and projects. With time children arrived to complete our happiness, life went by between labor, family and social commitments. Children demanded lots of our energy and our time, but that did not impede us to enjoy our love that kept us delighted and vibrant with passion.

We had the fortune of knowing about Our Lady's Teams; its meetings and encounters gave a new air to our relation, we started to encounter God in a different way: to have relations with couples and priests that gave our life a more transcendent touch, creating a support community; however, difficulties and problems also arrived. Labor stress, tensions and pressures of a society that demanded lots of energy and money to cover the requirements of school excursions of our children at school, social commitments, ups and downs in the studies of any of them caused friction in our relations; stressing economic difficulties. Our children in the teens gave a lot of activity and happiness to our home, which was usually crowded, with plans, parties, but also with tense moments; with concerns for any of them. Their girlfriends, drinking at parties, the ever present and latent

temptations, added to the illness of our parents that required time and dedication from us, and the daily stress undermined our relation and suddenly we were tired, tense, bored; routine was established in our home.

We had lost illusion.

Many nights we were alone because our children were partying and we were silent, with nothing much to say. Where had our dreams and plans gone? We even noticed that we had an unkind language, we reproached each other for unimportant things. The initial enchantment had been lost. We were destined to continue in that melancholic inertia that lead us to a profound demotivation, or else we dared to stop, intend to understand our situation and do the maximum effort to change. We belonged to a marriage spirituality movement, we had all the points of effort available, we profoundly believed in God... we had everything.

The change started with personal and matrimonial prayer so that our Good Lord was present in all this process of renewal and one day we dared, with lots of efforts to do the Duty of Sitting in the presence of God opening our hearts; expressing sincerely our disappointments, our criticisms, asking the other in a generous and humble way about our needs and one of them was the desire to be physically close again, to be sheltered in the arms of the other, feel once more the admiration

and the grace of the first times. We had to change our thoughts regarding the other; remember good old times, recover forgotten activities such as going for a walk holding hands, dancing in our living room listening to our preferred music, open a bottle of one and make a toast to life. Hug each other without reason, cry out loud forgotten sentences such as: I like you, I love you, I need you. And surprisingly we broke the ice, magic returned. We understood that the Lord always acts when we ask him, we understood that everything is in our mind. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12. 2).

The way of thinking determines our feelings, and they establish our form to act. Starting to think of the other in a positive and joyful way, admiring him for all his/her efforts and achievements, rediscovering the enchantment that joined us,

thanking for his/her presence, company, made that at nights we benefitted from the absence of the children to deliver our love without fear, without distractions, with total authenticity and today many years have gone by, our children left home, got married, built their own lives and we are here, old and with many health ailments but happy, enjoying ourselves, loving each other, less passionate probably but with more tenderness and love. We wish to think that when any of the two passes away, which will happen, the other thinks that it was fine, that we enjoyed the times and that we were not wasted, that we did what God saw since the beginning "and God saw it was good".

FROM FRANCE:

DENISE AND HENRY'S TESTIMONY

DENISE

We were married at 23, wishing to build our couple on the values of our Christian education. Together we discovered with joy and generosity our sexuality, the daily dialogue and the pleasure of reciprocally giving our bodies to each other. Two years later we had two children; I had to quit working and was overwhelmed by bottles and pampers! Later, tired and focused on the mother's role I ran away from marital relations, rejecting even a caress, frightened by another pregnancy. I love Henri very much but the anguish was too strong to please his multiple desires. I suffered and cried alone locking myself in silence.

HENRI

We knew a very happy beginning of marriage discovering each other in joy; afterwards Denise changed her attitude; when I got back home after few days of absence because of my profession, I found a truly dedicated mother but not the attractive and pleasant wife I knew. I did not understand that change; the lack of dialogue or that negative answer to any intimate relationship was very strong. I became irritable and we argued about foolish daily matters; it was not pleasant to go back home.

A priest with whom I had spoken suggested me to take a holiday with Denise leaving the children with the grandparents.

DENISE

It was hard to leave my two children with my parents... But I did it trying to save our couple. We spent three days without any duties but the dialogue was not easy. Henri tried to tame me with tenderness, softly but I was mute, I could not say a word. We prayed together and decided to ask for help from a marriage counseling bureau.

HENRI

With the help of a professional and thanks to him, we learned to put words to our feelings. Denise was able to express her anguish about another pregnancy and I told her how much I needed her love. We asked each other for forgiveness for not understanding and later we were able to think with serenity and knowledge about the values we had chosen. We searched what we were able to accept from each other, to control our fecundity and fully live our sexuality with happiness and honesty, in the context of that time of our life.

Since that painful period, we pray together to thank God after our sexual encounter and we take a two day holiday at least, every year On a "wedding trip" leaving our 5 children very happy to see their parents in love at 48 ...

FROM BRASIL:

LIVING OF THE MARITAL ENCOUNTER

(We decided to give a testimony as a couple, taking into consideration that we agree on our needs and feelings and how we live our marital encounters.

We only speak about our life experiences. We give this testimony to transmit that our sexual encounters are highly satisfactory and make us happy. And if in any case it may help any other couple we would be even happier.)

Since the beginning of our relationship (from the very first kiss, which was the starting point of getting in love, forty years ago) there is an enormous sexual attraction between us that has covered us for almost half a century. There has always been a very intense mutual physical attraction. For us our sexual encounters, from the beginning until today are a very positive demonstration of our sexuality, a very strong one if not the strongest that makes our relation very easy. We were never distrust to give ourselves completely to one another (free from previous concepts, taboos or any other kind of prevention), with total transparency regarding our feelings. We always had a sincere, open, reliable, light, delightful, courageous and joyful dialogue. We always felt to be in the arms of the other. We always revealed our bodies and our souls, one for the other. Always without limitations of time we desired each other. We were always ready to give our love because of the initiative of either one.

1. What do we need in our sexual encounters?

We need intimacy and privacy of the “marital being”.

We are highly requested by our family (two children and five grandchildren), our relatives, our profession, the church and the Movement. It is natural we diversify our attention focus. From time to time, we need to concentrate on both of us, we need time only for us, which allows us to remember, dream, be in love and return to the enchantment of one for the other. The highest point of “being alone” is to live a full sexual encounter that allows us a subsequent, sound, tender and rejuvenating sleep. All this brings, from the bottom of our hearts, a very big feeling of gratitude with one another, and in relation with God, in whose plans we believe.

2. What do we feel while living our sexual encounters?

We feel pleasure, tenderness, and respect.

We feel more intensely the reality of being “one sole flesh”. We have the feeling that one is the prolongation of the other (no longer two). We feel the need to have each other (we would not know how to live without the other)

We feel valuable, strong, brave and loved.

We perceive that life with all its contradictions, absurd suffering has sense, has a reason to be.

We feel the delicacy of God that enriches us.

We feel happy.

TESTIMONY - LETTERS

We leave you the best example of forgiveness regarding sexuality that we have ever known: quoted from "la Presencia de Dios, 100 cartas sobre la oracion" by Father Caffarel

"I had been married for 5 years, mother of 2 children, and I was unfaithful. However I loved him. And I was careful he would not suspect anything because I did not want to destroy his happiness.

His deep love for me grew every day. One night, I remember as if it was yesterday, he spoke, in terms that touched my heart, about his tenderness, his affection and admiration for me. It was too much. And spontaneously the word "If you new!" escaped from my mouth. "I know" he answered. These words made me burst into a violent and unjust indignation: "Then what is this horrendous comedy about? Either you don't suffer because of what you know and that is the evidence that you don't love me, or you are crooked and your calm is only a lie"! I was out of myself, aggressive, mocking and offensive. He waited for the storm to calm down. Then calmly, seriously and tenderly he said:

"Understand! I have been suffering during six months, I could bear my suffering and it didn't ruin me; whilst my love could not see you sinking... I clearly saw what I had to do, it was the only way out: loving you even more than before so that you could resurrect to love, a new love that would not only destroy your illness with its flame, but gave you a new, pure heart with a radiant beauty". And in fact Serge's love from that same instant made me a new being."



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