

SEX, MARRIAGE and HUMAN PROCREATION

A. THE PURPOSE OF SEX

1. God made the human race male and female. A man and a woman are different in such things as physical appearance, psychology, and capabilities. But the most obvious difference between them is in their genital organs.
2. The differentiation of the sexes - as manifested especially in the sexual organs - points to the important function of preserving the human species through reproduction. For this reason, it is appropriate that the genital organs are also called reproductive organs.
3. Because of the high importance of preserving the human race, God attached pleasure to sex. There is pleasure in sex in order to encourage the union between man and woman. Without pleasure, they may not engage in sex, and this would not be good for the human race.
4. So far, the above points can apply to humans as well as to animals. In animals, there is also sexual differentiation between male and female. Animals also mate in order to propagate the specie. And it would seem that animals also feel pleasure in the act of mating.

Since man is a rational being and therefore superior to animals, it follows that there must be more to the sexual act between a man and a woman than just union, reproduction and pleasure.

5. In fact, a man and a woman do not "reproduce". Rather, they "procreate". The word procreation is closely related to the word "creation". In the act of procreation, God shares his creative power with human beings. The husband and the wife, acting as God's instruments, would cooperate in the formation of a new human body, into which an immortal soul, directly created by God, would be infused.
6. To "procreate" is not enough. The result of procreation – the child – has to be cared for and educated. God has wanted that the care and education of children be done in a stable environment that results from the mutual love between the husband and the wife. This stable environment is the institution of marriage.

7. It is not necessary that every man and woman engage in sexual activity because the goal of preserving the human race can be achieved even if only a portion of the population have children. By extension, it is not necessary that everyone marry. Thus, **celibacy**, which is the state of total abstinence from sexual activity, is not contrary to nature. People remain celibates for a variety of good reasons:
 - to dedicate themselves to the service of God (as in the case of priests and nuns);
 - to dedicate themselves to care for the needs of other people (as in the case of a person who decides not to marry in order to care and support a sick or elderly parent);
 - or, quite simply, because a man or a woman is not able to find a suitable spouse.
8. ***To sum up***: Due to the sacred character of sex as the very wellspring of human life, God has set very well defined limits regulating the use of this generative power. It must be used in accordance with the purpose God willed for it – the *procreation of human life only within marriage*.

B. THE MORALITY OF SEX

1. Sex is morally licit if it is the union between a man and a woman who are married to each other, and open to the procreation of children.

The essential elements for sex to be licit are two:

- a) it is between a man and a woman who are married to each other
 - b) their union is open to the procreation of children.
2. *Sex should be between one man and one woman*. This means that
 - a) it should be between two persons of the opposite sex;
 - b) it should be monogamous, that is, faithful and exclusive.

Heterosexuality, or the differentiation of the sexes, is required because otherwise it would not be possible for the sexual act to be open to procreation of children.

It follows that it will not be morally licit if the sexual relationship is between:

- Persons of the same sex (**homosexuality**), either between two men (gay acts), or two women (lesbian acts).

- One man and several women (**polygamy**)¹, or one woman and several men (**polyandry**).

3. *Sex should be between persons who are married to each other.*

Marriage is a precondition for sex to be licit. The use of the sexual faculty outside of marriage is always immoral.

Sex should be within marriage because the fruit of sex -- the children -- need to be cared for and educated in a stable environment that results from the mutual love between the husband and the wife.

Because sex is licit only when it is performed within marriage, it follows that it will not be morally licit if the sexual relationship is between:

- An unmarried man and an unmarried woman (**fornication**)
- A married man (or woman) with a person who is not his (or her) spouse (**adultery**).

4. *Sex should be open to the procreation of new life.*

Sex is a God-given power given to human beings for the procreation of the human race. For this reason, God's law demands that every sexual act should be open to a new life. This does not mean that every sexual act should result in pregnancy. It means, rather, that there should be no artificial barrier that would make impossible the begetting of children.

The following acts are therefore immoral because they are not open to the procreation of new life:

- The use of artificial means of **contraception**, like the condom and the pill.
- **Sterilization**, which renders the procreative faculties infertile.

5. There are two essential aspects to the sexual act:

- a) the **unitive** aspect, which is the expression of the mutual love between the spouses; and
- b) the **procreative** aspect, i.e. the openness to the procreation of children.

The unitive and the procreative aspects of the sexual act should not be separated, much less opposed to each other.

6. *The sexual pleasure and the marital act should go together.* Sexual pleasure should not be sought outside the marital act². This is because

¹ If the sexual relationship is between one man and two women, it is called **bigamy**.

the pleasure in sex is meant to encourage the union between the man and the woman. Without pleasure, they may not engage in sex, and this would endanger the future existence of the human race.

7. Provided that the sexual power is used for the purpose God willed for it, then sex is something good, even holy. When sex is used for the right purpose, the pleasure that one feels during sex is also something good.
8. Most problems in sexual matters come about because of the desire to seek pleasure at all cost and for its own sake -- i.e. using the sexual faculties outside the context of sex within marriage.

Examples of this misuse of the sexual faculties include:

- **Masturbation**, which is the deliberate stimulation of the sexual organ to derive pleasure outside the marital act.
- Use of **pornography**, which also seeks pleasure outside the sexual union within marriage.

C. THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

1. **Marriage** is the act whereby a man and a woman give themselves to each other with the purpose of establishing a partnership for life. They express this mutual gift of self through the marital consent.
2. The **marital consent** is an act of the will by which a man and a woman by an irrevocable covenant mutually give and accept one another for the purpose of establishing a marriage.

The marital consent is expressed during the wedding ceremony. As soon as the couple gave their marital consent, the marriage bond is established.

3. The **marriage bond** is the permanent relationship of mutual and exclusive belonging of the husband and the wife to each other in all matters that is conjugal.

The marriage bond *institutionalizes* the total gift of self of the husband and wife to each other. The marriage bond acquires *an existence independent of the subsequent decision or subjective moods of the spouses*.

² The term marital act refers to the sexual act within marriage.

The marriage bond is indissoluble. It cannot be broken for as long as the husband and the wife are alive. Divorce is therefore immoral because it purports to break the marriage bond.

4. The marriage bond gives rise to the marital contract and its consequent rights and duties.
 - a. The **marital contract** is the giving to the other partner of the exclusive right over one's body with respect to those acts that have to do with the engendering of children.
 - b. The **marital right** is the right of either partner to ask for the sexual act (any time, any place) provided that it is reasonable.
 - c. The **marital duty** is the obligation of either partner to accede to the spouse's request for the exercise of the marital right, whenever it is reasonably requested (i.e. no violence, drunkenness, or contraception).
5. The purposes or **ends of marriage** are two:
 - a. the *procreation and education of children*
 - b. the *mutual help of the spouses*.

There should be no opposition between these two ends since they are complementary to each other, and therefore should go together. Marriage is designed to benefit *both* the children and the spouses.

6. The procreation and education of children is often referred to as the *primary end* of marriage, because the marriage love between the husband and the wife are meant to grow into family love, and this involves having children. It follows that children are not "optional extras" in marriage. The deliberate exclusion of children is not healthy for a marriage. Only in truly exceptional cases can marriage work well without the children that God wants for each individual marriage.
7. But it is not enough that marriage achieves the purpose of procreation. The subsequent education of the children is part of the purpose of marriage. This is because the physical and spiritual development of a child is an extremely slow process. Compared with irrational animals, the human being is a very fragile and delicate creature. The child's physical, emotional and psychological well-being demand continuous attention from the father and the mother, as well as the warmth and support of a stable family environment.

8. The enjoyment of mutual love between the spouses is often considered as the *secondary end* of marriage. The husband and the wife should complement and support each other and thereby enrich each other's personalities. Because they should complement each other through shared experiences, marriage demands that they live together in one roof.
9. The characteristics or **properties of marriage** are two: unity and indissolubility.
 - a. **Unity.** Unity (or monogamy) means that marriage is between only one man and only one woman. The love that the husband and wife have for each other should be faithful and exclusive.
 - b. **Indissolubility.** Indissolubility means that marriage, once entered into, is permanent, for as long as both spouses are living. The bond of marriage is dissolved only upon the death of one of the spouses.
10. These properties of marriage are derived from the natural law. And like the natural law, the properties of marriage are:
 - *universal*, because they apply to all human beings and go beyond differences of religion, race or upbringing;
 - *immutable*, because they will never change through time;
 - *absolute*, because human beings have no power to change it. A man and a woman can choose whether or not to marry, but they cannot choose what marriage is.
11. The properties of marriage are designed to protect the rights of the children. Marriage should be monogamous because the faithful and exclusive love between the husband and wife would be beneficial to the growth and education of the children. Similarly, marriage should be indissoluble because this would result in a stable environment that will be good for the children.

D. DIGNITY OF HUMAN PROCREATION

1. Because the fruit of human procreation – the child – is a human person, he deserves the dignity enjoyed by every human being. The child has the right to be respected as a person from the moment of conception.
2. Each child has rights, which should not be denied to him. These rights include:
 - the right to be born through an act by which two persons give themselves to one another (that is, through a sexual act within marriage)

- the right to be conceived, carried in the womb, brought into the world, and brought up by his own parents
 - the right to be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage.
3. The child cannot be desired or conceived as the product of an intervention of medical or biological techniques because that would be equivalent to reducing him to an object of scientific technology, as if he is an object or a thing. Because the child is a rational being, he should not be the result of means or procedures that are demeaning to him, even if these procedures are licit in the transmission of life of plants and animals.
 4. Nevertheless, the children engendered through artificial means enjoy the rights proper to every human being. They should not suffer discrimination on account of the way they were brought to life.
 5. No one has a right to a child, because the child is not a piece of property that can be rightly owned by anyone. *Every child is a gift*, and not something owed to someone.
 6. The husband and wife “make love,” they do not “make babies”. They give expression of their love for one another and a child may or may not be engendered by that act of love. The marital act is not a manufacturing process, and children are not products.
 7. With regard to the proper relationship between sex and procreation, God has arranged that children should be the result of the sexual love between a man and a woman who are married to each other. In short: *“marital sex resulting in babies.”*

Against this are two sets of errors: a) “sex not resulting in babies”, and b) “babies resulting without sex”.

With regard to the first error (“*sex not resulting in babies*”), this is done through the intentional use of artificial means that would make fertilization impossible, such as contraception, sterilization, and the use of abortifacient drugs.

With regard to the second error (“*babies resulting without sex*”), this is done through the various artificial means of human procreation, like artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization, embryo transfer, and cloning.

8. Artificial means of human procreation are procedures that replace the marital act in order to engender life. They are immoral because they do

violence to the dignity of the human person and to the institution of marriage and the true purpose of sex.

- a. They *do violence to the dignity of the human person* because they demean the children brought into life using these procedures. The new life brought into being through artificial means is not engendered through the act of love between husband and wife, but by a laboratory procedure performed by doctors and technicians.
 - b. They *do violence to the institution of marriage and the true purpose of sex* because they eliminate the sexual act as the means of generating a new human life. The husband and the wife become merely the sources of “raw materials” of sperm and egg, which are later manipulated by a technician to achieve fertilization.
9. Couples who have difficulty conceiving a child deserve sympathy. For them, infertility is a grave suffering. It would be licit for them to avail of medical procedures to help them have a child, provided that the means chosen do not offend the moral law.
10. How does one know when a reproductive technology aimed at overcoming infertility is morally right?

The rule of thumb is:

- The marital act should take place. Reproductive procedures could be morally licit if they simply assist the marital intercourse in reaching its procreative potential.
 - Procedures which add a "third party" into the act of procreation, or which substitute a laboratory procedure for intercourse, are not acceptable.
11. An assisted reproductive procedure must meet the following criteria in order to maintain the procreative and unitive aspects of the marital act, as well as to avoid other grave sins:
- a) All assisted reproductive procedures should be performed upon married couples only.
 - b) The wife must contribute the egg and the husband must contribute the sperm. No other person must be involved, as this constitutes "technological adultery."

- c) Masturbation must not be required.
- d) Fertilization must take place inside the woman's body.
- e) "Spare" embryos must not be discarded, frozen, or experimented upon, and procedures such as "selective abortion" (pregnancy reduction) must not be used.

E. ACTIONS THAT ARE CONTRARY TO THE PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE, SEX, AND HUMAN PROCREATION

Sins that go against the sacredness of marriage

- **Adultery.** Adultery is the sexual relationship of a married person with another person who is not his or her spouse. Adultery violates the property of unity, which demands that the husband and the wife should have a faithful and exclusive love for each other. It is not only a sin against chastity, but also against justice, for it is a serious injustice towards the spouse of the married person.
- **Fornication.** Fornication is the sexual relationship of two unmarried persons. Even couples planning to get married later would commit the sin of fornication if they have sex before marriage (pre-marital sex). Fornication is sinful because it does not respect God's law, which mandates that sex should be used only within marriage.
- **Divorce.** Divorce is the breaking of the marital bond, usually with the intention of permitting the spouses to re-marry. It is against the property of indissolubility, which demands that a validly entered marriage is for life.
- **Polygamy and polyandry.** Polygamy is the situation of one man having more than one wife, while polyandry is the situation of one woman having more than one husband. Both are against the unity of marriage, which requires that marriage be between only one man and only one woman.
- **Concubinage.** The stable arrangement whereby a man keeps a concubine (or a mistress) while he is married to another woman is immoral because it violates the unitive property of marriage. Concubinage, properly speaking, involves adultery.

- **Cohabitation of unmarried persons.** The stable arrangement whereby two unmarried persons live with each other and engage in sexual acts without bothering to get married is also immoral. This arrangement, properly speaking, involves fornication.

Sexual acts which are not open to life

- **Contraception**, which consists in directly and unlawfully preventing conception through means employed by either spouse, is seriously against natural law and therefore gravely sinful. It is against one of the ends of marriage, i.e., that the marital act should be open to the procreation of children.
- **Sterilization.** Sterilization is the making inactive of a man or a woman's fertility. Sterilization takes the form of tubal *ligation* in the case of the woman, or *vasectomy* in the case of the man. Sterilization is immoral because the marital act between spouses who are sterilized would not be open to life.
- **Homosexual acts.** Both gay acts (i.e. sexual relations between two men) and lesbian acts (i.e. sexual relations between two women) are sinful, first, because they are against the property of unity, which requires differentiation of the sexes. Second, they are not open to the transmission of life.

Sins that go against the purpose of sex

Aside from sins against marriage and openness to procreation, the moral law also forbids all impure actions, whether committed alone or with others. Very often, these are due to the desire to enjoy the sexual pleasure contrary to the purpose of sex.

The common sins of this type are:

- **Masturbation.** Masturbation is the deliberate stimulation of the genital organs in order to derive pleasure outside the sexual act. It is immoral because the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside the marital act is essentially contrary to the purpose of sex.
- **Pornography**, either by way of indecent publications, movies, or the internet. Pornography consists in removing real or simulated acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them to third parties. It is immoral because it perverts the marital act. It also does grave injury to

the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others.

Sins against the dignity of human procreation

Artificial means of human procreation that replace the marital act as the means of engendering babies are immoral. These include artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization, embryo transfer, and cloning.

- **Artificial insemination.** Artificial insemination involves the injection of semen directly to the reproductive tract of the woman. It is immoral because it separates the reproductive act from the sexual act. Also, the semen (sperm cells) is almost always collected through masturbation, which is immoral.

There are two types of artificial insemination: 1) artificial insemination – husband (AIH) involves the use of semen taken from the husband, and 2) artificial insemination – donor (AID) involves the use of semen taken from a donor.³ Both are immoral because in both cases the reproductive act is separated from the sexual act.

But artificial insemination – donor (AID) is more gravely immoral because:

- it is against the unity of marriage (i.e., it constitutes “technological adultery”)
 - it betrays the spouses’ right and duty to be father and mother only through each other
 - it violates the right of the child to be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage.
 - the identity of the sperm donor may never be known, depriving the child of an awareness of his or her own lineage.
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- **In-vitro fertilization.** In-vitro fertilization (IVF) is the process whereby the sperm cell fertilizes the egg cell “in the glass” (in vitro), i.e. outside the body of the woman. Ordinarily, the woman is treated with hormones to make her superovulate. The ova are harvested and incubated in the laboratory with the semen (sperm cells) to allow fertilization. This results in the fertilization of several embryos. These embryos are implanted into the womb of the mother. Usually, not all embryos are used, resulting in excess embryos (called “spare embryos”) that are

³ Technically, artificial insemination is called *homologous* if the sperm of the husband is used; it is called *heterologous* if the sperm of a donor is used.

usually destroyed. In this sense, in-vitro fertilization almost always involves abortion.

In vitro fertilization is wrong because it separates the reproductive act from the sexual act, and the fertilization is achieved outside the body of the woman.

Sometimes, the egg of the wife is fertilized by the sperm of that is not from the husband. Conversely, the sperm of the husband fertilizes an egg that is not that of the wife.⁴ In either case, it is immoral because:

- it is against the unity of marriage (i.e. it constitutes “technological adultery”)
 - it betrays the spouses’ right and duty to be father and mother only through each other
 - it violates the right of the child to be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage.
 - the identity of the “donor”, whether of the egg or the sperm, may never be known, depriving the child of an awareness of his or her own lineage.
- **Embryo transfer.** This procedure usually accompanies in-vitro fertilization. After the embryos are fertilized in-vitro, they are implanted into the womb of the woman. Usually, at least two embryos are implanted into the womb. In some cases, as many as four are implanted with the hope of getting at least one live baby. At times, three or four embryos thrive. Some clinics then offer the mother “embryo reduction” to allow only one or two fetuses to develop further. Embryo reduction is abortion because it involves the killing of one or more viable embryos or fetuses.
 - **Surrogate motherhood.** This procedure is associated with embryo transfer. Surrogate motherhood is the implantation of the embryo into the womb of a woman who is not the wife. It is equivalent to “renting a womb.” Surrogate motherhood is immoral because:
 - it is against the unity of marriage (it constitutes “technological adultery”).
 - it is against the right of the child to be conceived, carried in the womb, brought into the world and brought up by its own parents.
 - it represents a failure to meet the demands of maternal love and responsible motherhood.
 - it poses problems on who is the real mother.

⁴ If the sperm of the husband fertilizes the egg of the wife, then the procedure is technically called *homologous in-vitro fertilization*. But if either a donor sperm or a donor egg is involved, then the procedure is called *heterologous in-vitro fertilization*.

- **Cloning.** Cloning, which has been successful in animals, is a complex procedure by which scientists take a body cell (somatic cell) such as a skin cell and render the cell's nucleus into a primitive state so it is capable of guiding the development of another human being under the right conditions. The nucleus of an egg is removed and replaced by the nucleus of the somatic cell. The egg is then given an electric charge, and new life begins to grow.

Cloning is immoral because it is a manner of procreation that bypasses the sexual act altogether. It is completely asexual since there is no need for the sperm to fertilize the egg to generate a new life.

Other immoral actions related to sex

- **Rape.** Rape is the act of sexual violence on either a man or a woman. Rape is demeaning to the victim, who is treated as a mere object of pleasure.
- **Incest.** Incest is the improper sexual relationship between blood relatives or in-laws within a degree that prohibits marriage between them. Incest corrupts family relationships.
- **Pedophilia and Pederasty.** Pedophilia is the improper sexual relationship with children. Pederasty is the improper sexual relationship with a minor (usually an adolescent).⁵

These sins are compounded by the scandalous harm done to the physical and moral integrity of the young, who will remain scarred by it all their lives.

- **Prostitution.** Prostitution involves engaging in sexual acts as a form of trade. Prostitution does injury to the dignity of the person who engages in it, reducing the person to an instrument of sexual pleasure.
- **Others.** Aside from impure actions, impure speech and looks are also forbidden. Dirty jokes and lustful looks are therefore also sinful.

Impure thoughts and desires

⁵ The person who commits pedophilia is called a *pedophile*, while a person who commits pederasty is called a *pederast*.

It should be remembered that morality applies to human acts, which is any act that involves knowledge of the intellect and consent of the will. Thoughts and desires too are human acts if both the intellect and the will are involved.

According to the objective moral law, everything that has to do with sex, marriage and human procreation is a grave matter. Thus, impure thoughts and desires, if known and consented to, are also grave sins.

F. FORMATION IN CHASTITY

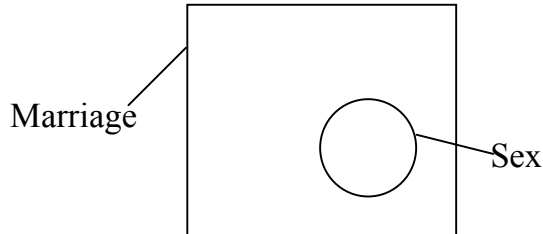
1. Chastity involves the proper use of the procreative power, as God and nature intended it.
2. For those who are married, chastity involves the performance of the sexual act in a manner that respects the purpose of sex: namely, within marriage and open to procreation.
3. For those who are unmarried and those who are widowed, chastity involves the total abstinence from any sexual activity.
4. Formation in chastity involves controlling the sexual appetite in relation to all the senses. Specifically, it involves
 - controlling the imagination, memory and the five external senses,
 - removing oneself from dangerous occasions and circumstances that would make the living of the virtue of chastity more difficult,
 - avoiding idleness,
 - keeping oneself busy with work and other occupations, and making good use of time, and
 - denying the body some legitimate comforts, in order that it could more easily resist temptations related to the improper use of the sexual faculties.

SUMMARY

1. Sex and marriage

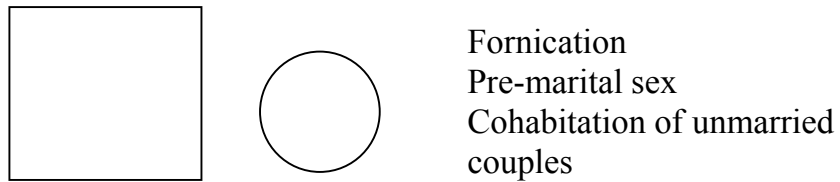
For sex to be morally licit, it should be within marriage.

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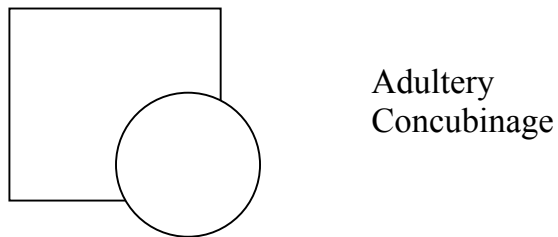


It follows that the following are immoral:

a) Sex outside marriage



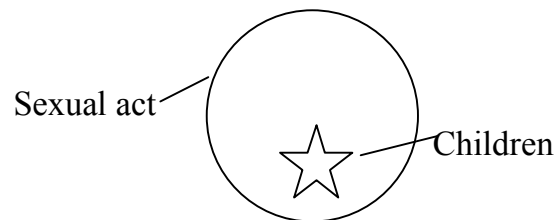
b) Sex not exclusively within marriage



2. Sex and procreation

The sexual act should be open to the procreation of a new human life. Conversely, human procreation should be the result of the sexual act.

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It follows that the following are immoral:

a) Children resulting not from the sexual act



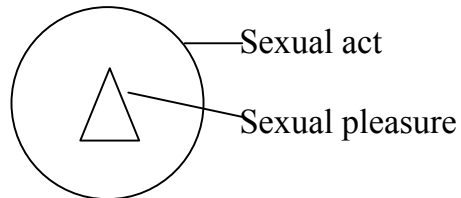
b) Placing artificial barriers so that the sexual act does not produce children

Contraception
Sterilization

3. Sex and pleasure

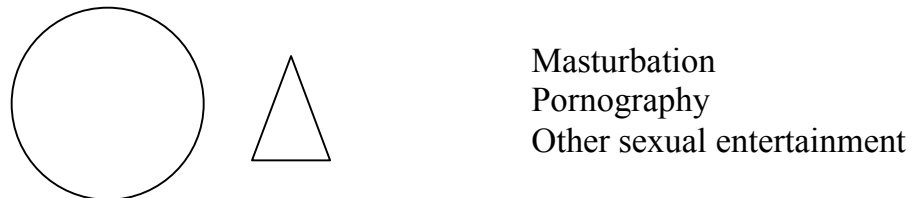
The enjoyment of the sexual pleasure is morally licit only within the sexual act.

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The enjoyment of the sexual pleasure outside the sexual act is therefore immoral.

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To sum up: the relationship between marriage, sex, procreation and sexual pleasure can be expressed as follows:

