



Chapter 8

To Love and To Give Life

“Love is the greatest blessing in life”, the words of William Temple is full of meaning as he said so. Love is eternal and infinite. It is the symbol and key to eternity. Man is created by the God with the only message and privilege to love. We are born for love and it is our goal in life. Man is created and endowed with the power and desire to love and to be loved. 'Love is the very essence of everything in the world'. These words of the poet Kumaran Asan in *Nalini* highlight the force and power of human love. Love is the source of power and beauty in every sphere of life. Man is called to share His love among the creations.

God is love itself and the source of all goodness. God created man out of His great love. We are made to participate in the divine love and it is our vocation to share the spark of the eternal love with one another. We are not only created by God to love and to be loved but we are blessed with the potentiality to give life also. So the humans are endowed with the ability to beget their offspring. Having blessed the first parents, God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1, 28). They are given the ability to give life to the new human beings, which is of great importance and as such it is divine act.

Human Sexuality, Gift of God

Procreation, to give new life, is special capacity, given to all living beings. To a man, it is not merely a biological need but it is a very special gift and ability to participate in the power of creation of God. It is the sharing of love with one's life partner. As sexuality is an invaluable and wonderful gift of God, it is good and holy, indeed. Love has great deal to do with sex and with one's whole life. Sexuality is the expression of this love and out of intimate love a new life is reproduced in the society, for the glory of God. Sexuality is the sexual thoughts, desires and longings. This is the awareness of man or woman as male and female, the awareness of their capacity for procreation of new life.

Sexuality is a valuable gift of God. Therefore it is holy and good, indeed. Sexuality is an effective way to love, to give life and to contribute to the reconstruction towards welfare of society. Human sexuality is developed and matured by different stages of life, Such as, infancy, childhood, puberty, adolescence, youth, etc. When a person grows up and enters to the stage of puberty he notices and experiences changes in body and mind. It is at this stage, sexual emotions arise in a person. These changes are nothing but quite natural signals of sexual growth. We must be grateful to God for this great gift. Humans must try to become sexually responsible and mature also. Sexuality has far more profound roots in the heart and soul of every man and woman. In fact, sexuality is something that extends to the psychic life of a person, because God, the creator has willed it that way. Adult, male-female relationships imply certain maturity. The mark of maturity is an ability to govern oneself and the capacity to postpone immediate satisfaction of desires for the sake of long term purpose. By being grateful to God one must try to become a mature person for a graceful life.

Sexuality – A Creative Power

Sex is the means and binding force of procreation. It is the expression of love. Sexuality helps us to gather power for our mental as well as emotional activities. It enables us to love each other with devotion. Only, one who respect and value his own sex can do the same to other`s. This aptitude can make his life more creative. Sexuality is acknowledged as one of the factors which give to each individual's life the principal traits making him distinguish from others. It is from sex that a human person receives the characteristics which, on the biological, psychological and spiritual levels, make that person a man or a woman.

As Christians we realize that man has been created out of love and are made for love. We live because God loves us and we are also enabled to love. In our sexuality we find the biological, emotional and psychological grounding of our capacity to love. Sexuality is God's invitation for us into communion with others through our needs to reach out and touch emotionally, intellectually and physically. As such, sexuality is essential both to our human existence and to be fully human. God's creative and faithful love is the model for human love. Scripture endorses permanent and procreative marital relationship (1 Cor. 11. 3-8).

A marital act of love is noble and valuable. At the same time, conjugal love is related to the procreation and nurturing of children, who are the ultimate symbol of love. Children are supreme gift of conjugal love (GS 48). The document, *Gaudiam et Spes* urges that parents should regard their proper mission as that of the transmission of human life (GS 50).

So, no doubt, sexuality is a creative power invested in the humans by God. Human sexuality helps man to store energy for the mental and emotional activities. This power of sexuality enables a person to love with due dedication and commitment. Growth is the sign of any living organism and sexuality empowers the same growth.

Sexual growth and maturity is an essential part of growth. At an early stage of growth, adolescent stage when a person begins to feel sexual emotions, he must be guided in to be balanced, disciplined and mature enough. An unbridled sexual energy shall mislead a person to the misuse of the same and destruction. If one is properly guided, and motivated to accept, and respect the gift of sexuality, he/she will grow gracefully, as healthy, and disciplined, to work towards the welfare of others with right conviction and mature vision of life.

A respectful and value oriented approach to sexuality will enable a person to make his life meaningful and creative. Sexuality has been a serious cause of perversion and crime. Lack of knowledge of sexuality and wrong notions on the same may lead persons astray and end up in ruins. Occasions are many to mislead and do wrong, such as bad company, porno literature, evocative films, misuse of media etc. They have contributed much sexual abuse, sinful activities and disorder, such as masturbation, homosexuality, prostitution etc.

One must be ever watchful not to be a victim to the sexual perversion, sexual abuse and other possible disorders. Sexuality is a very special gift of God. If this capability is misused it would be a grave violation of God's law. It is equally a grave sin, if a person allows him/her to be abused or surrenders into temptation leads others to be a victim.

One must realize that reckless behavior is one way ticket to unhappiness and failure in life. In the light devastating repercussions, the Christian teachings will help one to lead a life of dignity. One must be even careful to avoid unwelcome circumstances and possibilities to temptations. Proper education and respect to sexuality will enable us to handle any situation prudently. Learn to appreciate the gift of sexuality is the need of the hour.

One must understand that Sexuality affects all aspects of a person and his passions. It affects his/her capacity to love and his attitude for forming communion with others. Sexual deviations and exploitation are very serious issues. The dangers of considering sex as a source of irresponsible pleasure must be etched in the minds of the young.

Human Being: Male and Female

We read in the book of Genesis: "God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen.1. 27). He gave them grace to share his power of creation. Man and woman are created with difference in character, stature, passion and talents. The complete human being is a duality comprising the masculine and feminine together. At the sometime, they are equal in dignity as human persons. Both, male and female have freedom and dignity to take decisions on their own and they will be responsible in life confronting with day to day activities.

They are physically different and these differences can be identified in mental make up, in expression, view points etc. But these differences are not to be taken as contradictory, they are complimentary and they are together for life. Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his/her sexuality, identity, physical, moral or spiritual differences. They must be oriented towards marriage and prosperity in family life.

A man who lives only by his masculine creativity will never find total fulfillment. In order to be fully human, he must recognize feminine qualities also. A woman must realize and live the God given capacity in her, to be her true self. Love of self and of the other will complement as it unites. Both man and woman can enrich the sentiments of the spirit and their physical expression with unique sense of dignity.

Man is created to be a male and female to grow to the fullest possible by knowing each other and respecting each other. A human being is born as a male or female according to the will of God. God says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jer. 1:5). It is God who shaped our body with mind and soul. One must be proud of being born as a male/female and be grateful to God for being so. One must try to seek the will of God in everything and must find satisfaction accordingly. One's thoughts, words and act should uphold the dignity and sanctity as a person, a man and woman.

Marriage: Salvific Call of God

God invites man and woman by giving his grace to share his love and power of creation through the bond of marriage. By accepting the call of God they will be blessed abundantly.

In the light of the Christian teaching, marriage is not merely between a man and a woman to live together but it is a sacrament also. By this sacrament of marriage, they enter into an inseparable union of hearts. As Christ gave himself to the church, both husband and wife are obliged to offer themselves through marriage (Eph. 5. 22-25).

As it is God who joined them together, this married band is something special inseparable and permanent. Jesus tells us: "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mt. 19. 6). As long as the couples are alive, their married life remains inseparable. St. Paul himself compares the married relationship with the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Marriage is a contract by a man and woman in the presence of God. The very base of the mutual marriage consent is that it is taken with full freedom and knowledge of the responsibilities. It is a mutual consent of two mature persons. The Church teaches in the II Vatican Council document, namely, 'Church in the Modern World'; "The intimate partnership of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws; it is rooted in the contract of its partners, that is, in their irrevocable personal consent" (Gs. 48).

As we have seen, marriage is an institution, confirmed by the divine law and receiving its stability even in the eyes of the society, from the human act by which the partners mutually offer themselves to each other. By safeguarding the unitive and procreative aspects, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness towards a sense of true mutual love and orientation towards man's exalted vocation to parenthood (*Humane Vite* 12).

Through the sacred bond of marriage, the couples surrender themselves to each other. Their conjugal relationship is the powerful expression of their deep commitment and it is the divine plan of experiencing love and transmission of life. It strengthens their love relationship also. Sexual relationship before lawful marriage and extra marital relationships are violations of the divine law and grave sin because it defeats the very purpose of sexuality and responsible parenthood. Illegal relationship is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons. Human sexuality is naturally ordered to the good of the spouses. Therefore marriage is to be taken as a vocation and it should be ended with proper preparations with due seriousness. A man and woman must see that he/ she can contact each other with mind and body unstained and stay related so to strengthen their bonds as a happy experience.

Celibate Life

Just as married life is a vocation to salvation, the unmarried or celibate life is also another vocation for salvation. This is a special call of God to holiness. A person, who entered into a life of chastity, has made a life-long commitment to God and for the cause of His kingdom, with an undivided mind. He/she responds to the call of God with full freedom, surrendering lawful sexual powers. It is the practice of non-marriage or choice of commitment to lead a consecrated life. God empowers them with special grace to remain chaste and committed. Jesus tells us: "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given" (Mt. 19:11). St. Paul exhorts that one who is a celibate must be a person of undivided heart and he/she is fully committed his/her life to the service of the Lord (1 Cor. 7:34-35). A celibate person is the one who lives in the world but he is not of the world.

Pope John Paul II underlines consecrated chastity as a means by which one dedicates oneself exclusively to God. In this context, consecrated chastity is a radical way to live according to the gospel. Priests, the religious and other consecrated persons have accepted challenges to lead a chaste life. They become God's own people in a special way by leading a life with their undivided mind and life-long commitments. God blesses, protects and strengthens the people of God through these specially committed men and women.

The Church considers the virtue of chastity as an outstanding token of heavenly riches and also a most suitable way for religious to spend themselves readily available in God's service, in works of the apostolate. Celibacy does not, in any way undermine sexuality but it is a sublime virtue. Psychological or physiological factors do not invalidate a commitment to celibacy but rather confirm the level of mortification that enhances one's freedom for higher motive. It is indeed, a way of life called to lead a life, after the heart of Jesus.

Sexuality is a divine gift. It is a creative power given to him/her to lead and to the transmission of life. It is very important. To be aware of the sanctity of sexuality, a person may lead his life fruitfully, fully committed to his responsibilities with due personal freedom and dignity. All are obliged to be chaste, according to the state of their life.

Let us be thankful to God, the creator at the source of all goodness for this great gift of sexuality, which enables us to participate in love and creative activity of God. We shall glorify God by living a life, worthy of our divine call.

I. Let us Discuss

1. Sexuality is a creative power, affecting every action of a person.
2. What would be the right attitude of a Christian to certain ideologies, circumstances, organizations, that promote liberalization and abuse of sexuality?

II. Let us find out the Answers

1. Sexuality is God-given gift? Substantiate?
2. What is your understanding of sexuality?
3. Sexuality is an all-embracing creative power of a human being. Clarify?
4. What do you mean by the sacrament of matrimony is a divine call to salvation?
5. Celibacy or virginity is sublime resplendent aspect of sexuality. Explain?

III. Activity

1. Collect news clippings, write-ups on the dignity and sanctity of Family life. Please present them in the Class for further discussion and enlightenment.

IV. Let us Read and Reflect

Mathew 19: 3-12.