

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each of the following statements carefully, then place an "X" in the box following the word or phrase which best completes the statement. Mark only one box for each statement. Each correct answer is worth five points.

- Physiology and psychology teach us that the normal preliminary to sexual union is intimate _____.
drinking story-telling love-making conversation
- Pope Pius XI said that young couples should practice _____ from time to time in early marriage.
birth control music spirituality continence
- Love-making in marriage is an exercise of chastity, _____ and justice.
religion faith hope continence
- _____ is the ejection of a living, non-viable embryo or fetus from the womb.
contraception euthanasia abortion miscarriage
- Chastity is the virtue that moderates the desire for sex according to _____.
right reason the Bible the season the law
- Only _____ should husband and wife deprive one another of marital relations.
for punishment to avoid children during Lent by consent
- The purpose of the marital privileges are procreation of children, protection against _____, and fostering of mutual love.
disease divorce incontinence bigamy
- Love-making is not an action or group of actions; it is a _____.
physical technique language of love gymnastic continuous action
- If a couple uses the marital rights it has a duty to provide for the _____ of the human race.
limitation maximum extension mitigation conservation
- Love-experience is not only permitted to the married pair, its exercise in a Christian fashion is positively _____.
virtuous demanded limited sinful
- It is _____ that in marriage any and every sort of physical intimacy is permissible.
true not true sad good

POSSIBLE SCORE

55

SUB-SCORE I _____

MINUS ERRORS X 5 _____

SUB-SCORE II _____

SUB-SCORE II _____

TOTAL SCORE _____

CUT ON DOTTED LINE

CHASTITY IN MARRIAGE



The Meaning of Conjugal Chastity

A SPECIAL SECTION is devoted to the virtue of chastity, not because it is the most important virtue you will be expected to practice, but because you are very likely to have special problems in this area. It would be unwise to think that you may lightly neglect other virtues once you have married. Then, as now, you will be expected to be honest, truthful, just, patient, understanding, and loving both to God and neighbor. Neglect of these virtues can lead to much unhappiness in married life as well as in single life.

But the practice of chastity in married life will be a little different from the chastity you know and practice as single, unmarried persons. Because of this, young married couples often experience some anxiety regarding those actions which are regulated by chastity, namely, the exercise of married rights through sexual intercourse and love-making. So it should be especially helpful to consider just what married chastity is and how married people are expected to practice this virtue.

What is Conjugal Chastity. Chastity is the virtue that moderates the desire for sex according to right reason. It acts as a curb on excessive or sinful indulgence in the use of sexuality. But it is not a negative virtue. Chastity says to you, "Respect love, in the name of God. Do not turn against itself that love which is the source of human life and which is one of the most powerful energies of your personality." Reason, as well as revelation and the teaching authority of the Church, tells the unmarried that they may not deliberately engage in any sexual activity. For such people chastity implies total abstinence in the matter of sex. Premarital chastity teaches a man to possess himself in order to be able to give himself, not to have an inconstant soul, but to have the strength to be answerable for the pledge he will one day make when he will promise to have only one love for life. Marital chastity teaches a man that he may use the sexual function, but that in doing so he must be sure to use it in accordance with its nature and its purposes.

EXAMINATION

Chastity in Marriage

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each of the following statements carefully. If a statement is true, mark an "X" in the box at the left labelled "true." If it is false, mark an "X" in the box at the left labelled "false." Each correct answer is worth three points.

TRUE →
FALSE →

- 1. The essential object of the marriage contract is the right to bodily union and those actions which lead to it.
- 2. A special section of this course has been devoted to the virtue of chastity because it is the most important virtue.
- 3. Love-making indulged in for pleasure only is a mortal sin because we are not made for pleasure only.
- 4. The virtue of chastity which is practiced in marriage is the same as that practiced before marriage.
- 5. If a husband reaches orgasm before his wife does, it would be wrong and harmful for him to continue to stimulate her sexually.
- 6. Though Mary and Joseph's chastity was absolutely virginal, they were truly husband and wife with mutual bodily rights.
- 7. A faithful spouse has the right to refuse intercourse permanently to a partner who has committed adultery.
- 8. Fully deliberate orgasm not connected with bodily union, like artificial birth prevention, is a serious sin.
- 9. It is at all times and under all conditions sinful to refuse intercourse to one's spouse.
- 10. The Church teaches that every couple must have as many children as they possibly can.
- 11. The first mutual duty of husband and wife is fidelity.
- 12. Every sterilization of either man or woman is seriously forbidden by the law of God.
- 13. When contemplating the use of rhythm, a man and his wife should seek counsel from a priest whom they know.
- 14. Deliberate abortion is murder and anyone involved in abortion is automatically excommunicated.
- 15. Opposition to artificial birth control is not a human law, but the expression of a law which is natural and divine.

POSSIBLE SCORE

45

NAME _____

MINUS

ERRORS X 3 _____

ADDRESS _____

SUB-SCORE I _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

CUT ON DOTTED LINE

ever known to men, it went totally unremarked among their neighbors in the tiny community at Nazareth. Though your chastity in marriage will not be expected to be a virginal chastity, it will demand at least temporary continence from time to time and a love which is proved both by the expression of bodily love and by its sacrifice as need arises. For this, as for complete fidelity, you have as models St. Joseph and Our Lady—Perfect Spouses.

Cases for Discussion

We are expecting another baby and my wife is unhappy.

I'm in the doghouse again because my wife has just learned that she is pregnant again. We already have two children and she decided that was all there would be—at least for a while. Of course her present condition is all my fault! She will be difficult to live with for the next few months. What can a Catholic husband do? I'm willing and able to support a family, but I'm tired of having to pose as her victim! Doesn't she have some obligations, too!

After 10 childless years, this couple is considering artificial insemination.

"We want children so badly," Mrs. Wilton observed. "But we've been married 10 years now and haven't had a single one. "Why don't you try artificial insemination?" Dr. Thorpe, her family physician, inquired. "If you are fertile, there will be no doubt about the results."

How can Mrs. Farrar's dilemma be solved?

Mrs. Farrar does not agree with the Church's stand about birth control, at least in regard to all cases. "If a woman already has a family of three or four children," she argues, "and her physician warns her that will certainly lose her life if she becomes pregnant again, she should practice birth control. Does not her living family have the first claim on her life? The souls of her living children may be lost without a mother to instruct them. Does not the mother have a greater duty to her family than to an unborn child? If she refuses to give the marital right to her husband he may get a divorce and lose his soul, too."

to them that marriage is a license for lust! Neither of these ideas is correct. The true Christian attitude reminds us that it was God Himself Who gave us our sexual differences and Who implanted in us our sexual desires. From the very beginning, God created us male and female. He put into us a desire to be loved and gave us a capacity for love. This desire and capacity is realized in a unique way in marriage through the spiritual, physical, and emotional union of man and woman which we call sexual intercourse. Now, it stands to reason that God could not have done this if this union—or only one element in it, viz., the physical—were something evil. The Christian couple will accept bodily union as a part of marriage, as something good and desirable, as the deepest and most meaningful expression of marriage love, and as an opportunity to grow closer to each other and to God. In Christian teaching the proper use of sex affords the husband and wife the possibility of becoming partners with God and of cooperating with Him in the wonderful work of creation. On the other hand, though they will accept the passionate pleasures of this union with joy, they will not make of each other mere means of satisfying their grasping lust.

Indeed, the right to bodily union is the essential object of the marriage contract. When bride and groom exchange their marriage vows, they give to each other exclusively and forever the right to this act of union. The possession of this right makes the marriage contract different from all other contracts and married life different from all other companionships. Moreover, the actual use of the right is closely connected with all the purposes of marriage itself. Sexual intercourse is the only way of providing for the procreation of children; it is the principal way of safeguarding conjugal chastity and fostering conjugal love. By fostering love it helps to preserve the harmony between parents which is required for the proper rearing of children. Married people are practicing the chastity proper to their state in life when they accept and revere sexual intimacies as having a place in their married life and when they keep the enjoyment of these intimacies within the bounds set by the purposes of marriage.

SEXUAL INTIMACIES REGULATED BY CONJUGAL CHASTITY

Sexual Intercourse. In his encyclical, *On Chaste Wedlock*, Pope Pius XI remarks that "every use of the faculty given by God

for the procreation of new life is the right and privilege of the marriage state alone." Husbands and wives, then, have the right and the privilege of engaging in natural sexual intercourse. *Physically*, such intercourse includes two elements: the penetration of the male penis into the female vagina, and the ejaculation of the male seminal fluids within the vagina. *Psychically*, this act brings about the love-unity of two persons, one a man, the other a woman. *Creatively*, it eventually makes it possible for married people to share in the creative power of Almighty God, because by it they will provide the body into which God, by the creative act of His omnipotent will, infuses an immortal soul. Thus, together with God, they will bring into existence a human life made to the image and likeness of the Divine Creator.

Love-Making. But there are other uses of the generative faculty for the married. Physiology and psychology teach us that the normal preliminary to sexual union is intimate love-making because this is ordinarily necessary to prepare the organs for union and to bring the mental and emotional desire for such union to completion. Such love-making is certainly permissible. It is included in the right to intercourse. In addition, both Christian tradition and common sense teach us that husband and wife should live together on the closest terms. They should at least share the same house and, for the fullest attainment of all the purposes of marriage, they should share the same room and generally the same bed. All of this obviously supposes that they have a right to physical intimacies even at times when they do not intend to have intercourse.

What Is Permissible. Is it not true that in marriage any and every sort of physical intimacy is permissible? Not quite. Intercourse, love-making as a preparation for intercourse, and love-making apart from intercourse, all these are certainly permissible, since they are the special and exclusive privileges granted to husband and wife by their marriage contract. But these privileges are not without limits. They have purposes in married life: procreation of children, fostering of mutual love, and protection against incontinence. It follows, then, that what agrees with these purposes is lawful and permissible, but anything in opposition to these purposes is forbidden and sinful. The general rule regarding the limits of physical intimacies in marriage may be reduced to these three negative points: (1) do nothing to prevent

upon anyone who knowingly produces an abortion or even who encourages, approves, or assists anyone to procure an abortion. This excommunication is so serious that only the bishop or his delegate can lift it! Danger to a mother's life is never a reason for abortion (cf. YOUR BODY AND YOU).

As a matter of fact, the death rate for mothers in childbirth (1958) is .8 per 100,000 insurance policy holders—much lower than the rate for accidents, 34.9, homicide, 2.9, and suicide, 5.7, or for any other cause of adult death!

Miscarriage. Few young couples go through marriage without facing, or actually experiencing, a miscarriage (also called spontaneous abortion). In this sad situation the young couple should know what to do. More important even than calling the doctor is the attempt to baptize the fetus. This is done (usually by the husband—the mother will frequently be in no condition to get about!) by slitting the sac and dipping the entire mass up and down in luke-warm water while saying the words: "If thou art living, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Certainly, too, the "mis" should be given burial in consecrated ground. If the miscarriage happens in a Catholic hospital, all will be cared for. In a secular hospital, instructions should be given to call a Catholic undertaker.

Sterilizing Operations. Direct sterilization of either man or woman is seriously forbidden by the law of God. It is a mutilation of the body and we do not have dominion over, but only the use of, our bodies. God alone has power over our life, death, and physical integrity.

CONCLUSION

The model, *par excellence*, of conjugal chastity and fidelity is that virginal chastity between Our Lady and St. Joseph which we have pictured on the cover of this booklet. True, their chastity was absolutely virginal, but they were truly husband and wife with mutual bodily rights. That they did not choose to use these rights was a result of the deep reverence that was in them at the gift of God and the miraculous conception achieved by the Holy Spirit in Mary. The angel said, "Do not be afraid, Joseph, son of David, to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 1:20.) Their fidelity was one which triumphed over poverty and sadness. So simple was their holy love that, despite the fact that it was the most perfect

extent which would have been thought impossible in days gone by. Why, then, should this heroism, if the circumstances really demand it, stop at borders established by the passions and inclinations of nature? The answer is clear. The man who does not want to dominate himself is incapable of so doing. He who believes he can do so, counting merely on his own strength without seeking sincerely and perseveringly help from God, will remain miserably disillusioned.

Note that the Pope does not say that married people are obliged to avoid the risk of pregnancy. Certainly there are some cases in which they might lead a normal married life and trust in divine providence. But a decision of this kind is very difficult and it should be made only after much prayer and sound spiritual guidance.

Artificial Insemination. Some couples who are unable to have children through natural intercourse seek to satisfy their yearning for a family by turning to artificial insemination. This practice is morally wrong. The marriage contract gives the husband and wife the right to “natural acts” capable of generating new life, it does not give them the right to have children. Marriage does not give the couple any right to artificial insemination. Artificial insemination is opposed to the dignity of the husband and wife and degrades the marital act. Pope Pius XII says:

In its natural structure, the conjugal act is a personal action, a simultaneous and immediate cooperation on the part of the husband and wife which, by the very nature of the agents and the propriety of the act, is the expression of the mutual gift which, according to Holy Scripture, brings about union ‘in one flesh only.’ This is something much more than the union of two seeds which may be brought about even artificially, without the natural action of husband and wife. The conjugal act, ordained and willed by nature, is a personal act of cooperation, the right to which husband and wife give each other when they marry.

Is it not strange that the Church, so often accused of being opposed to sex, is the only voice raised in defense of the sexual act against the artificial inseminators who are reducing the human being to an experimental breeding animal!

Abortion. Abortion is the ejection of a living, non-viable embryo or fetus from the womb. (“Non-viable” means the fetus could not live outside the womb. The inducing of labor after seven months of pregnancy when proper indications are present is *not* abortion! With proper care the child could live outside the womb.) Deliberate abortion is a terrible crime since it is murder. Because such murders are so frequently undiscovered and unpunished, the Church has placed an automatic excommunication

conception; (2) avoid *voluntary* orgasm outside of intercourse, and (3) do nothing that causes the other party unnecessary pain or distaste. If both husband and wife carefully observe these points, their mutual sexual conduct will be without sin and will conform to its God-given purposes.

Love-Making Positively Virtuous. Often chastity in marriage is expressed only negatively, but love-experience is not only *permitted* to the married pair, its exercise in a Christian fashion is *positively virtuous*. Love-making is an exercise of *justice* in giving to the partner the rights contracted for on the day of marriage. It is an exercise of *chastity* since chastity controls and directs sexual experience according to God’s law. It is an exercise of the virtue of *religion*, since the contract governing bodily rights is a sacrament—a channel of divine life! Moreover, St. Thomas teaches that, for those spouses in the state of grace, their marriage union is supernaturally meritorious! If this husband and wife love each other as they should—that is, in and for God—then their bodily expression of that love is an exercise of divine or *supernatural charity* for which God must store up for them an increase of glory in Heaven!

Orgasm Aside from Intercourse. Physically orgasm is the climax of neural, muscular, and glandular processes that take place in the reproductive organs when they are stimulated to completion. In a man it is normally accompanied by the ejaculation of the seminal fluids; in a woman there is no such definite physical sign, and perhaps the best sign is complete satisfaction, relaxation, and release of all nervous tension. Psychologically and emotionally, orgasm is not capable of being defined or described. Of its nature, since it means full sexual satisfaction, the orgasm should be reached only in relation to intercourse. Generally, then, when they intend to have intercourse, husband and wife should see to it that bodily union itself begins before either has reached orgasm, though for a woman to reach orgasm beforehand is not at all sinful so long as the married love-union is completed. When they do not intend to have intercourse, their intimacies should be less passionate to avoid bringing either of them to the verge of orgasm—that is, to such a degree of excitement that avoiding orgasm is practically impossible. In fact, for emotional health, love-making outside the times for intercourse should not strongly excite the passions because, when strongly excited passions are left unsatisfied, ten-

sions and irritability arise. This is hardly the purpose of married intimacies!

Some Practical Situations. The question of orgasm outside of intercourse cannot be completely understood without considering some practical situations that may face married people. For instance, it is psychologically desirable that husband and wife achieve their orgasms simultaneously. Nevertheless, in the early months of marriage, and perhaps much longer than that, it may happen that the wife has not yet reached her climax when the husband reaches his. In this case, when the semen has been properly deposited in the vagina, it is perfectly legitimate and psychologically advisable to continue the stimulation of the wife until her orgasm is achieved, if this is possible. Orgasm thus induced is really a part of the intercourse, and not outside of it.

Involuntary Orgasm. In phrasing our second caution we purposely use the word *involuntary* because we have in mind situations in which orgasm occurs outside of intercourse even though neither husband nor wife intends or wants it to. In such cases the orgasm is not voluntary and there is no sin. The husband, particularly, might experience this difficulty during the early months of marriage. Gradually, however, the difficulty should disappear, and if it does not a doctor should be consulted. One should not be surprised, however, if unintentional orgasm occurs occasionally even after some years of married life, especially during love-making at times when intercourse should not be had (for example, for some weeks before and after childbirth). Here, again, there is no sin provided the orgasm is sincerely not wanted and that no foolish risk is taken. It is not easy to define just what is imprudent in this area because personalities and situations differ greatly. However, once the first adjustments of marriage are made, a fairly good practical rule for sincerity and prudence is this: when an unintended orgasm happens only occasionally, this is a good sign that it was sincerely not wanted and that there was no imprudent risk; when it happens frequently in the same circumstances, this may very likely indicate that a really sincere desire to avoid it is lacking and that one is acting imprudently (and therefore sinfully) by not practicing greater restraint.

Causing Unnecessary Pain or Repugnance. Each partner should avoid causing the other unnecessary pain or repugnance. It is possible that, for a short time after marriage, intercourse might

involved severe temptations against chastity for him or her which could not easily be overcome, and if there were no compelling reasons to struggle with the difficulty.

Counsel Advisable. Often a sincere and mature couple can readily answer the three questions and judge for themselves whether the use of rhythm would be permitted and advisable. But in most cases they need the help of a prudent counselor. It is often said that Catholics should consult their confessor. This should not be taken too literally, because the confessional has its limitations. In the confessional the priest talks to only one party, frequently does not know the person, and has too little time to question. For advice about using the rhythm method it would be much better for husband and wife to go together to a priest whom they know, and who understands them and the conditions in which they live. In this way they can obtain help not only in judging what they are permitted to do but also in making the proper adjustment to the difficulties they might face in carrying out their decisions.

Some Special Problems

A WIFE WHO has been advised by a doctor that she may die if she becomes pregnant and attempts to bring forth another child is not forbidden to have intercourse. Many have found such predictions false, the dangers over-stressed by some doctors. Moreover, the danger connected with any individual act of intercourse is quite remote since conception and the development of the fetus is so uncertain. This danger ought to be made even more remote by the use of rhythm.

But it may happen that childbirth will be truly dangerous to the mothers' life and the use of rhythm would not be effective. If the couple wishes to avoid the risk, the only morally permissible means is complete abstinence from intercourse. This is, admittedly, heroism. But it is not impossible when the couple is aided by God's grace. Rather than admit defeat too easily, listen to Pope Pius XII:

It is wronging men and women of our times to deem them incapable of continuous heroism. Today, for many reasons—perhaps with the goad of hard necessity or even sometimes in the service of injustice—heroism is exercised to a degree and to an

other reasons would usually be valid only for a temporary postponement of pregnancy or for the reasonable spacing of births. While the *use* of the marriage relationship can be suspended under certain conditions, its *right* can never be rejected, i.e., the husband and wife can, if they wish, ignore the reasons and exercise their basic right.

(2) *Can the rhythm method be tried without doing more harm than good?*

The first question was mainly concerned with the primary ends of marriage. But marital intercourse is also designed by God to foster love and safeguard chastity. These secondary ends of marriage are very important and no decision about using the rhythm method should ignore them. The use of rhythm can create tensions in married love and it can give rise to severe temptations against chastity which include the danger of self-abuse, of mutual fondling to the point of sinful orgasm, and even of infidelity. It can make marital intercourse itself distasteful to a woman because the one time of the month when she may have strong physical desire may be the time when rhythm calls for abstinence.

The degree of these and similar dangers differs greatly with different couples; and ability to adjust to them would differ, too. No doubt, a mature couple which has a good reason for avoiding conception can make the necessary adjustment and even deepen the spiritual quality of its love by using rhythm. But the adjustment must be made. Otherwise the harm resulting from trying the rhythm method might be so great as to nullify an otherwise good reason for avoiding conception. As for those who do not have good reasons, the attempt to use rhythm would rashly court these dangers.

(3) *Are both willing to try the rhythm method?*

Unless one partner has the right to refuse the marital act (cf. p. 10), as a general rule the use of rhythm should be by mutual consent. It would be a serious violation of the marriage contract for one party to insist on it against the reasonable opposition of the other. In some cases, of course, opposition to the use of rhythm would involve a real danger to a mother's life. But in many cases the judgment of reasonable opposition would have to take into account many personal factors such as those mentioned in the explanation to the second question. In general, it would be reasonable for one party to object to the use of rhythm if it in-

be painful, especially for the bride. Premarital consultation with a good doctor might prevent this to a great extent, if not entirely. When discomfort cannot be prevented entirely, mutual consideration can diminish it until the proper adjustment is made. Also, at the beginning of marriage, especially among those who are still learning the proper Christian attitudes, even the ordinary intimacies may cause some repugnance. Here again, mutual consideration will solve the problem and the distaste will disappear. In no case should pain or repugnance be caused unnecessarily.

It is well for married people to realize that people differ greatly in their ways of expressing their love and that what pleases one might be distasteful to the other. Also, men ordinarily differ greatly from women in their sexual reactions, being generally more passionate and concerned with the physical, whereas women seem more concerned with the meaningfulness of the union. Some mutual compromise may be needed. Certainly, one who refuses to make such a compromise (and who, through the seeking of physical pleasure more than the expression of real affection would insist on methods of love-making that offend the sensibilities of the other), would be uncharitable and would be using marital privileges contrary to their purpose of fostering mutual love.

Thought and Desire. So far we have spoken only of actions. But it is quite natural that husband and wife will also think of their love-making, that they will look forward to intercourse and think about it afterwards with pleasure. Such thoughts of and desires for each other are part of married life. Like love-making outside of intercourse, they further the purpose of marriage by fostering mutual love; hence, they are in accord with chastity as long as they are not dwelled on to the extent of risking orgasm.

Just how sinful is the failure to observe the cautions explained in this section? *The one clear point is that fully deliberate orgasm outside of intercourse, like artificial birth prevention, is a serious sin.* Imprudence in rashly permitting the danger of orgasm and inconsideration of one's partner depends much on circumstances. Gross imprudence which practically amounts to wanting orgasm and inconsideration which deeply hurts the partner would be serious; aside from these, the sins would be venial.

Venial Sin. Love-making, complete or incomplete, which is indulged in *for pleasure only* is a venial sin because we are not made for pleasure only. (Of course, we exclude here any danger

of orgasm outside of intercourse.) Further, pleasure-seeking is essentially selfish. Mutual selfishness makes it no less a selfishness. Since selfishness and love are incompatible, the use of each other's bodies for mere mutual self-satisfaction is venially sinful and bears the seeds of marital disaster. As Tobias said, "We come of holy lineage; not for us to mate blindly, like the heathen that have no knowledge of God." (Tobias 8:5.) Yet if not for pleasure only, (and pleasure is good, and a good motive so long as it is not the only motive) what other reasons are there? How sad a commentary on moderns that we must even ask the question. Sympathy, tenderness, love, sorrow, apology, forgiveness, encouragement, sadness, joy, desire for a child, desire to cooperate with God and his plan—every emotion or desire that is good can be expressed in this physical intimacy. Remember, love-making is not an action, or a group of actions, a set of physical techniques, or a gymnastic. It is a *language* of action. It should always express meaning!

Asceticism. Because this physical appetite, like all our appetites, may easily grow out of proportion to our own good and possibly even destroy us, it is wise for the husband and wife, by agreement, to restrain their natural desire for the marital experience periodically in order to prove to themselves that it is not mutual lust that unites them but love. This does not mean that love experience is to be despised. We do not despise food during Lent! We merely make certain our appetites are under the control of our wills!

St. Paul gives this advice, "Do not deprive each other (of the marital relation) except perhaps by consent, for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer; and return together again lest Satan tempt you because you lack self-control." (I Cor. 7:5-6.) Notice the conditions—temporary agreement—for a spiritual reason!

Pope Pius XI brings this up to date when he says that young couples should practice continence from time to time, especially in early marriage, so that, if continence becomes necessary, custom will have made it possible.

Much self-control is necessary in marriage. Modern obstetricians sometimes demand continence for six weeks before and six weeks after the birth of a child—sometimes longer. Again, illness, danger to a child in the womb, absence due to business or service

Pope Pius XII gives no concrete examples that justify the use of rhythm, but he gives us the key to such examples by referring to the "so-called indications." This statement refers to the reasons often suggested by doctors and sociologists to justify artificial birth prevention practices. The Church cannot admit these or any other reasons as justification of *contraception* which is intrinsically evil; but She can and does admit that these are justifying reasons for practicing continence, whether absolute or periodic. Contraception is unnatural, artificial; rhythm is not. Artificial birth control deliberately frustrates the natural power of the marriage act to generate life; rhythm does nothing to avoid a conception from the act of love. Because of this, it might be helpful to illustrate the reasons by some concrete examples.

Medical Reasons for Using Rhythm. The use of rhythm might be medically advisable when pregnancy would be dangerous, when either parent is too ill to take proper care of children, or when experience has shown that conception usually results in miscarriage or stillbirth.

Eugenic Reasons. There is a eugenic reason when there is real probability that children will be mentally defective, that they would have some other serious hereditary defect, or when the mental illness of one of the parents would seriously affect the rearing of the children.

Economic Reasons. There is an economic reason, not only when parents suffer from dire poverty, but also when they are financially unable to provide for children according to the standards of decent living frequently outlined by the popes and our hierarchy. These standards include frugal comfort in living conditions, the possibility of properly educating the children, and the possibility of saving reasonably for the future.

A Social Reason. Finally, social reasons for using rhythm would be a lack of proper housing conditions, over-population, employment that is not conducive to proper child-rearing, e.g. military service.

These are merely examples of the general reasons suggested by the pope. You will note immediately that, though all these reasons are to some degree serious, they vary greatly in their seriousness. The eugenic reasons or a medical reason such as danger to life in pregnancy might justify the use of rhythm (or absolute continence) throughout the whole of married life, but most of the

even obligatory to use some means to avoid or postpone conception. But the only morally sound means is continence, either continuous or periodic. A husband and wife practicing periodic continence have marriage relations during the times of the month when ovulation is not likely to take place. They abstain from intercourse at ovulation time—for some days before and after ovulation. This method of avoiding conception has come to be known popularly as rhythm.

MORALITY OF RHYTHM

Catholics sometimes say that they are much confused by what they read about the morality of using the rhythm method. One reason is the attitude that rhythm is just “the Catholic method of birth control.” This is a gross misunderstanding of Catholic teaching. The Church does not “approve” or “advocate” the use of rhythm, nor does She allow it indiscriminately regardless of circumstances. It would be nearer the truth to say that rhythm is regarded by the Church as a last resort. It is permissible, not whenever a husband or a wife wishes to use it, but only if certain conditions are met.

Any honest decision about using rhythm must be based on the careful consideration of three questions: (1) Is there a sufficient reason for avoiding conception? (2) Can the rhythm method be tried without doing more harm than good? (3) Are both parties willing to try it?

(1) *Is there sufficient reason for avoiding conception?*

If a couple uses the marital rights it has a duty to provide for the conservation of the human race. This duty, like other duties to do good, is limited by circumstances. There can be sound reasons freeing married people from the duty, either for a time or permanently. The following statement of Pope Pius XII makes this clear:

There are serious motives, such as those often mentioned in the so-called medical, eugenic, economic and social “indications,” that can exempt for a long time, perhaps even for the whole duration of the marriage, from the positive and obligatory carrying out of the act. From this it follows that observing the non-fertile periods alone can be lawful only under a moral aspect. Under the conditions mentioned it really is so. But if, according to a rational and just judgment, there are no similar grave reasons of a personal nature or deriving from external circumstances, then the determination to avoid habitually the fecundity of the union, while at the same time to continue fully satisfying their sensuality, can be derived only from a false appreciation of life and from reasons having nothing to do with proper ethical laws.

in the armed forces may demand prolonged continence. This will be almost impossible for a couple that has never deliberately controlled or denied even the most legitimate desires.

MUTUAL DUTIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

The previous section outlined the privileges which husband and wife may use if they wish. A further question concerns their obligation to use these privileges. This may be considered from the point of view of their duty to each other or to society. In this section we shall consider the duty to each other.

The Obligation of Fidelity. The first mutual duty of husband and wife is fidelity. The privileges of marital love-experience are exclusively their own; to give these intimacies to others is a serious violation of the marriage contract—the sin of adultery, which includes a violation of both chastity and justice (and obviously a denial of love).

Duty Involved in the Marriage Right. As for their duty to grant these privileges to each other, young couples who are deeply and tenderly in love would say that love itself will take care of this. To some extent this is true because genuine conjugal love is considerate and self-giving. Nevertheless, through the inspired words of St. Paul, God Himself has seen fit to warn married people of their mutual duty, and it would be unwise not to consider it. “Let the husband render to the wife her due,” said St. Paul, “and likewise the wife to the husband. The wife has not authority over her body, but the husband; the husband likewise has not authority over his body, but the wife. Do not deprive each other, except perhaps by consent. . . .” (I Cor. 7:3-5.)

An Obligation in Justice. St. Paul here points out a duty in strict justice that both husband and wife assume when they contract marriage. As regards intercourse, this duty means that each is strictly obliged to grant the other’s reasonable and serious requests. The rule is easily stated but it is not always easily applied. Many circumstances enter into determining when a request is really serious and completely reasonable. These circumstances must be left largely to the prudent judgment of the married parties. When is a request serious? Their own intimate knowledge of each other will indicate when a request is really serious, when it is more or less playful, and when it is more a suggestion than a request.

A serious request for intercourse is certainly reasonable when it is made, for example, by a husband who is considerate and moderate in his demands at a time when a wife could easily grant it. To refuse such a request, even once, would be a serious violation of the marriage contract and a mortal sin. But, when requests are fairly frequent, an occasional refusal would hardly be a mortal sin unless it would expose the other party to the near danger of sinning against chastity.

When Is a Request Unreasonable. A request is unreasonable when it is made at a time when it would be extraordinarily difficult or even sinful to grant it. For example, when one is too ill to cooperate; when there would be danger to a child in the womb; when there would be a real danger of infection, or when the one who makes the request is intoxicated or intends to practice contraception. These are clear cases of unreasonable requests. Not only would there be no sin in refusing them, in some cases refusal would be obligatory. In case of doubt about an unreasonable request, a confessor should be consulted.

Seek a Happy Compromise. Between these clear extremes of reasonableness and unreasonableness there are many situations in which there may be a little unreasonableness in the request, as well as a little unreasonableness in the refusal. To understand this, recall that the marriage debt is not exactly the same as other debts. A wife certainly cannot excuse herself from paying the grocery bill simply because she feels irritable; feelings make absolutely no difference in paying such debts. But feelings do play a part in marital relations. Though a wife who feels somewhat indisposed or irritable is not completely justified in refusing intercourse, yet the husband is hardly justified in simply urging his right without regard for her feelings. In a case like this, mutual consideration should bring about a happy compromise.

Infidelity and the Marriage Right. A faithful spouse has the right to refuse intercourse permanently to one who has committed adultery, and even to separate. Yet, though justice here allows separation and refusal, this might not be the wise solution to the problem. Certainly there are many cases in which charity would suggest forgiveness and the continuance of normal married life, even though emotionally this might be very difficult. In such a sad situation, adequate counsel should be sought.

marriage—which fits best His plan for marriage and the human race. Consequently, the large family is the ideal—an ideal which is held up by the Church as something desirable and good, not, however, as an obligation or a duty binding under pain of sin.

A large family not only continues the human race, it also provides members for Christ's Mystical Body and citizens for the Father's heavenly kingdom. Children add to the happiness of the home and contribute to the welfare of the community and the nation. In addition, they have a good effect on one another for, other things being equal, character formation is better achieved in the large family than in the small. Think of all the opportunities for loving and being loved in the large family!

This does not mean, however, that every couple must have as many children as they possibly can. Nor does it mean that they may never under any circumstances limit their families or attempt to space their children. But it does mean that, if they are going to use their conjugal rights, they must sincerely and honestly be willing to accept the office and duties of parenthood. It does mean also that, granting the proper conditions for bearing and rearing children, it is better to have children than not to have them, and it is better to have many than a few.

Child-Bearing, A Duty. Having a family is not only an ideal, it is also to some extent a duty. The duty of a couple is stated by Pope Pius XII.

Marriage obliges to a state of life which, while conferring certain rights, also imposes the fulfillment of a positive work in regard to the married state itself . . . The marriage contract, which confers upon husband and wife the right to satisfy the inclinations of nature, sets them up in a certain state of life, the married state. But upon couples who perform the act peculiar to their state, nature and the Creator impose the function of helping the conservation of the human race. The characteristic activity which gives their state its value is the *bonum proles* ("the good of the offspring"). The individual and society, the people and the state, the Church itself depend for their existence in the order established by God on fruitful marriage. Therefore, to embrace the married state, continuously to make use of the faculty proper to it and lawful to it alone, and, on the other hand, to withdraw always and deliberately with no serious reason from its primary obligation, would be a sin against the very meaning of conjugal life.

Legitimate Continence in Marriage. Nevertheless, despite the beauty of the Catholic ideal and the importance of the social duty, there are situations in which it is permissible, advisable, or perhaps

Husbands and wives, you cannot serve God and mammon; you cannot be loyal both to Christ and to the contraceptionists. Be not fretful over your future baby's life, what the child shall eat, or for its body what you shall put on it. Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they do not work neither do they spin. But I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these. Now if God so clothe the grass of the field which is today and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more you and your little ones, who are His little ones too! Be not solicitous therefore, saying what shall we eat if we have children; or what shall we drink; or wherewith shall we be clothed; or how shall we educate them—for after all these things do the heathen run. Your heavenly Father knows that you and your family have need of all these things. Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice; and all these other things shall be added unto you.

Notice that Christ does not say we may not seek earthly things within reason, in the second or third place, but He does tell us to seek *first* the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven for married couples is their *Christian marriage*.

When One Party Is Sinned Against. Sometimes, tragically, one party insists on practicing contraception against the real opposition of the other. Pope Pius XI referred to this when he said:

“Holy Church knows well that not infrequently one of the parties is sinned against rather than sinning, when for a grave cause he or she reluctantly allows the perversion of right order. In such a case there is no sin, provided that, mindful of the law of charity, he or she does not neglect to seek to dissuade and deter the partner from sin.”

This problem can take many different forms and can cause much anguish of conscience. It is impossible to give rules of conduct which would fit every case. However, when one partner wishes to practice contraception, the other is obliged to object and to resist. For those who find themselves in this unfortunate situation, it is most necessary to consult a confessor. The cases can become greatly involved and only the skillful confessor can unravel the problem and point out the right manner of action.

The Use of Rhythm

GOD MADE men and women so that, in marriage, they could become fathers and mothers. Parenthood is the task to which married people are called by God. God expects the couple which enters marriage and makes use of the marital privileges to have a family. It is, then, the fruitful marriage—and not the sterile

The Obligation of Love-Making. What we have said about the duty of granting requests for intercourse applies also to love-making both within and outside of intercourse. Since each party has a right to this in moderation, the other has a duty to agree and not make this ordinary means of expression and fostering affection difficult. Moreover, for both intercourse and love-making, even when no requests are made, love suggests that each should try to anticipate the other's wishes, especially when shyness is probably the reason why a request is not made.

Absence from Home. Sometimes absence from home is necessary, as when a husband has to work away from home or is called into military service. But apart from cases of necessity, absences should not be frequent or lengthy, without mutual agreement. Vacations from each other are seldom if ever advisable and might even lead to utter disaster.

Artificial Birth Control

THE BIBLE tells us that Onan, the son of Judah, wished to have no children by his wife, Thamar. Accordingly, he interrupted the marital act and “wasted his seed on the ground. . . .” And this was “evil in the sight of the Lord, and he killed him also.” (Genesis 38:9-10.) Some writers think that Onan was slain because he refused to fulfill the Levirate Law, a Jewish law according to which, if a man died without offspring, his brother or next-of-kin was supposed to marry the widow and raise up children for the deceased brother. But we do not accept this interpretation, for the Bible itself states the punishment for the violation of the Levirate Law and it is not so extreme as death. The Catholic Church, the divinely appointed interpreter of the Word of God, says that the evil thing for which the Lord slew Onan was the wasting of his seed on the ground. St. Augustine, writing in the fourth century sums up the Apostolic tradition on the point: “Marital relations even with a lawful wife, are unlawful and degrading when the conception of a child is deliberately frustrated. This was the sin of Onan, and God struck him dead because of it.”

Means of Artificial Birth Control. Today science offers many varieties of the same evil thing. There are instruments to prevent the natural completion of the marital act, chemicals to kill the

sperm cells, instruments to prevent the union of sperm and ovum, surgical operations, pills, and other procedures to induce sterility. It is most important that all people correctly understand the teaching of the Church regarding these things. For all Catholics who marry and for all non-Catholics who marry Catholics, it is especially necessary to know this teaching.

Position of the Catholic Church. Today, every American is well aware of the main points of the Catholic Church's position on artificial birth control. The Church teaches that the use of artificial means to prevent conception is seriously wrong. It does not matter what means are used—interrupted intercourse, instruments, chemicals, or sterilization. All these means are contrary to the Word of God (as illustrated in the story of Onan) and are against the law of nature itself. Every reasonable person can see that it is morally wrong to frustrate the principal purpose of a natural power or faculty—to distort its use for one's own personal advantage or pleasure so that the power is prevented from achieving the primary purpose intended by nature and nature's God. (For instance, to use the power of speech not to communicate ideas to one's fellowmen, thus spreading truth and knowledge, but to utter falsehood and to deceive; or to use the digestive faculty not to nourish and preserve the body, but exclusively for self-gratification by eating or drinking excessively to the point of sickness or drunkenness.) The abuse of marriage relations by the practice of contraception is just such a positive frustration of the principal purpose of the sexual function. Hence, it is wrong, just as lying and drunkenness are morally wrong.

We must emphasize that our opposition to artificial birth control does not come from the law of the Church, binding *only* Catholics. The Church's position on this subject states the law of God which binds all human beings, whether they are members of the Catholic Church or not. No matter what religion a person professes, if he uses contraceptive practices, he degrades his human nature and does something that is morally wrong, whether he fully realizes it or not. Euthanasia, a pretty term for killing the sick or aged, is murder no matter who says otherwise. Birth control, a pretty name for contraception, is impurity no matter how it is camouflaged. Since this teaching is not a law made by the Church, it can never be changed. It is not a human law, but "the expression of a law which is natural and divine."

The Official Teaching of the Church. This teaching has been solemnly stated in the encyclical of Pope Pius XI *On Christian Marriage (Casti Connubii or On Chaste Wedlock)*:

Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of grave sin.

A Hard Saying. This teaching of the Catholic Church on artificial birth prevention seems to many a "hard saying." In some situations of married life the temptation to resort to birth control is very strong. Our society does not give public approval to families of size. Financial pressures are heavy. The constant resistance to temptation can be genuine heroism. If so, the heroism is required, just as it is required of the martyrs who face denying their faith or enduring torture and death. No priest, bishop, or pope could tell these martyrs that it is all right to deny Christ just this one time; and no priest, bishop, or pope can tell any person, Catholic or not, that it is all right to practice artificial birth prevention just this once. All they can say is that it is never permitted, no matter how pathetic the situation may seem. There are no circumstances, however sad and trying, which will justify committing a serious sin. If living up to this law of God requires heroism, then heroism is possible for that couple. God never asks the impossible. He Himself will give the necessary help to all who are willing to do their part.

Generally, married couples do not face the need for heroism so much as a willingness to put up with inconveniences. Some couples are tempted to use contraception because they do not want to wait for material possessions such as a new car or a television set. Others are not willing to face the challenge of rearing a family. Catholic husbands and wives who worry excessively about the financial burden of having another child could listen to this paraphrase of the words of Christ's Sermon on the Mount: