

Total Number of Pages: 4

Suggested Title: "A Proposal to Replace Paragraph 161.G, *Human Sexuality*"

Discipline Paragraph: *Discipline* ¶161.G

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Delete current paragraph ¶161.G *Human Sexuality*, and substitute the following:

161.G Human Sexuality - Because the Sexual Revolution is now undermining Christian teaching on human sexuality and harming countless unsuspecting people, the Church is compelled to propose its teaching with Biblical clarity.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus speaks about marriage: "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." (Mark 10:6-9, also see Mathew 19:4-6, and NRSV here and below)

In His statement on marriage, Jesus is guided by "the beginning of creation." (Mark 10:6) He draws twice from Genesis. First, from Genesis 1:27c: "male and female he created them." And second, from Genesis 2:24: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh." To teach on marriage, Jesus reaches back to God's creation of humanity as male and female, and to what God intends for humanity (which is "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness").

Furthermore, Genesis asserts: "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful

and multiply...." (Genesis 1:28) And "God saw everything he had made, and indeed, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31a)

In His statement, Jesus indicates (among other things) the covenantal context -- the marriage of a man and a woman -- for sexual relations. In marriage, two people are united by God to become one. The gift of unity God gives is embodied in the marital act; that is, the union of souls is reflected in the union of bodies. This one-flesh union is so powerful and creative that it can beget a child (or children), whom the mother and father can welcome, protect, and raise.

In his Letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul claims the union of husband and wife is a reflection of the union of Christ and His Church. Paul writes: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church." (5:31-32)

Therefore, the Christian understanding of marriage and sexuality is established at creation. It is revealed in Genesis, reinforced by Jesus Christ, and depicted in Gospel terms by St. Paul. This Biblical witness to marriage, which runs throughout the canon, grounds the Church's understanding of human sexuality.

Because of this Scriptural witness, the Church through the ages preached, taught, and practiced that sexual expression is reserved for husband and wife within the covenant of marriage. For 2,000 years, this teaching, proposed and observed with God's grace, has

been essential in helping sustain Christians in discipleship, holiness, and true freedom. This teaching has assisted Christians in rightly loving God and neighbor. The Church through the ages has also preached, taught, and practiced that sexual activities outside the marital covenant -- for example, adultery, pre-marital sex, pornography-related sex, homosexual practice, and others -- are indeed sins (and "incompatible with Christian teaching"); they are sins (among all other sins) for which Christ died, and for which forgiveness and freedom are available through the Gospel.

The Church's sexual morality is considered too rigorous and even mean-spirited by many in some contemporary societies. This is not new. This has been the case since the apostolic era of the Church. However, often in spite of great cultural opposition, the Church has lovingly proposed its sexual morality to its members as a witness to the world. The Church through the ages has persisted in this difficult task because she considers this teaching to be not only faithful to the word of God, but also good for the people challenged by it and transformed by it. When this teaching is observed, marriages are strengthened; children are welcomed and nurtured; the weak are protected; the strong restrained; and all tend to flourish. When not observed, marriages are threatened and destroyed; marriage as an institution suffers; children are neglected; and the powerful generally have their way with the less powerful.

God's faithfulness is known by God's people through the ages and throughout the world. Because of God's faithfulness, our faithfulness to the covenants we make -- baptismal and, for many, marital -- is possible.

Date: 6/19/18

Signature of the Petitioner:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. T. Stallsworth". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font. The letters are dark and clearly legible against the white background.

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