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YOU.
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SEXUALITY AND AFFECTIVITY
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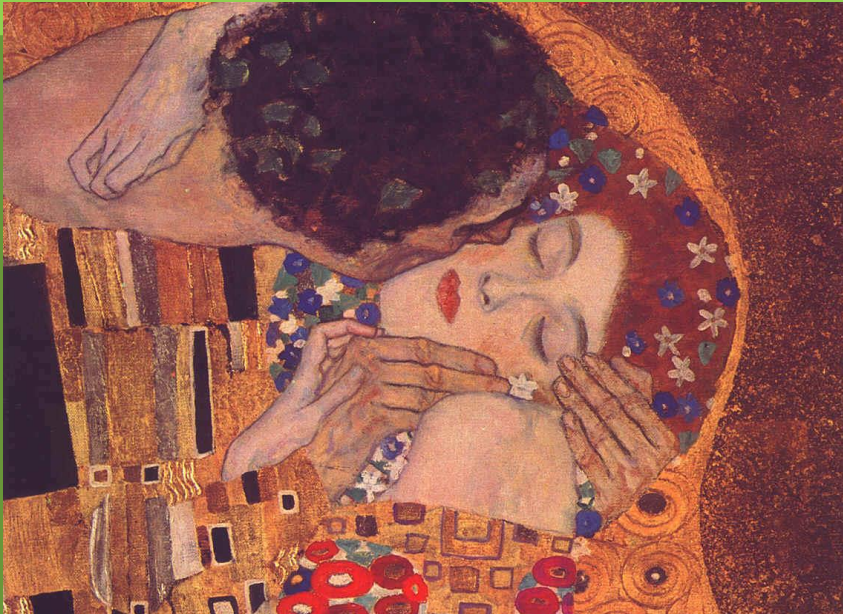
The meeting with the other, with “YOU”, helps our youth to get to know themselves better and to secure their identity.

They will learn to recognize that sexuality speaks of a difference: man and woman, which conditions the whole person.

Our affective dimension is also determined by sexuality. They will learn to recognize their affections and to direct them towards the order of love.

By getting to know my own identity (Me), I discover the difference between myself and the other (You). This difference speaks to me about sexuality. Man and woman are different in every aspect of the person: body, affections, intelligence, sociality and spirituality; this difference makes us complementary.

It is important to distinguish between the concepts of sex and sexuality. *Sex* makes reference to the organic condition of man and woman (genitality). *Sexuality* is a specific dimension of human beings, and it makes reference to the entire person. Sexuality speaks to us of complementarity.



Detail of the painting "The Kiss" by Gustav Klimt. the painting "The Kiss" by Gustav Klimt.

Sexual attraction responds to the difference that we discover in the other as a man or as a woman.

When I enter into a relationship with the other, feelings, emotions and affections arise, and it is important to recognize and learn to integrate them in an appropriate way. To do this, I must call upon all of the dimensions of my person: intelligence, will, freedom, and the social and moral dimension of my acts.

Modesty is the experience that helps us protect our intimacy and discover the beauty of love.

1. We Have Different Bodies

“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us”

(Rm 12:6).

- **Who am I?** Answering this question leads me to find my origin, my identity: I am a man or woman, I am the child of..., the sibling of..., friend of... ; this is what characterizes and defines me. On the other hand, this origin and identity makes me unique; we are unique and different. We see that the answer to this question is to be found in other people; I define myself in relation to others.
- **Two ways of existing as a person.** The body and soul constitute the unified corporeal-spiritual totality that is the human person (cfr. FC, 11). But this totality necessarily exists in the form of a man or of a woman. There is no other possibility than this for the existence of the human person. The spirit is united to a body that is necessarily masculine or feminine and, because of the substantial unity between body and spirit, the human being is, in its totality, masculine or feminine. The sexed dimension, namely masculinity or femininity, is inseparable from the person. It is not just an attribution. It is the way of being of the human person. It affects the intimate nucleus of the person as such. It is the person him/herself who feels and expresses him/herself through sexuality. Our very anatomical traits, as an objective expression of this masculinity or femininity, are endowed with an objectively transcendent significance: they are called to be a visible manifestation of the person (VAH, 20).
- **The duality of the sexes** affirms the axiological meaning of sexuality: man is *for* woman, woman is *for* man, and parents are *for* their children (cfr. CAH IX, 2, 14.XI.1979). The sexual difference indicates this reciprocal complementarity, and is oriented toward communication: toward feeling, expressing and living out human love, opening oneself to a greater fulfillment (cfr. OEAH, 4; VAH, 23).
- **The differences between man and woman** are physical, affective, etc....; they are manifested in every single dimension of the person. Are these differences a limitation, or an opportunity to complement one another? Sexual difference is a wealth that forms part of the person, which allows us to complement each other and, so doing, to arrive at communion. This is a richness that invites us to live out this gift, to give ourselves to the person of the opposite sex that we love, in a union that is open to fruitfulness.

2. Sex or Sexuality?

“Male and female he created them”

(Gn 1:27).

- **Sexuality is much more than sex.** One way of inadequately understanding and living out sexuality is that which leads us to believe that sex is doing certain practices or activities. This leads us to reduce sexuality to genitality, and enclose ourselves within our individual selfishness, using the other in our quest for personal pleasure. The person, then, is not loved for who he/she is, but rather for the pleasure that he/she produces for me.
- **Sexuality is,** in the other sense referred to above, a “dimension” of the person; a certain way of being, of manifesting oneself, of communicating with others, of feeling, expressing and living out human love as a man or as a woman. Sexuality characterizes man and woman not only on a physical level, but also on a psychological and spiritual level, and consequently leaves its mark on all of their manifestations. Sexuality involves something more than the completion of genital acts. Every time that I have sexual relations, my entire person is involved (my body, my mind, my being). It is a profound way of communicating through which I hand over my entire person. This donation of my totality is characterized by being exclusive, faithful and fruitful. The relationship between two persons of the opposite sex must be based on affectivity, respect, generosity, faithfulness, and mutual donation (FSVMT, p.97).
- **What happens with the attempt to separate “sexuality” from the person?** If this were the case, we would no longer have a man and a woman: sex would be an anatomical fact without any anthropological relevance. The body would no longer speak of the person, or of the sexual complementarity which expresses the vocation to donate oneself, of the vocation to love. Everyone could choose to sexually shape themselves as they desired (cfr. VAH, 52).

- **Similarity and difference.** Sexuality has to do with the person. It determines his/her way of being. It is what makes a person be a man or be a woman. This difference facilitates and favors complementarity. Man and woman are identical in nature and dignity but, at the same time, we are also different.
 - **Identical in dignity.** God has granted to man and to woman the same identical dignity as persons, but this equality in dignity and in rights does not equal uniformity. The changes produced in our body and the way of being of boys and girls must be lived out with equal respect and dignity for both.
 - **A difference that complements.** Nevertheless, each one of us expresses our dignity in a different way. Being a man or a woman profoundly marks human beings; it is a different way of feeling, a different way of loving and of relating with children, a different walk of faith. This difference must be seen as a great richness: mutual complementarity. Moreover, it is oriented toward communication: toward feeling, expressing and living out human love, opening the person to greater fulfillment (VAH, 23).
- **The importance of desire for sexuality and affectivity.** “**Desire**” is what pushes us to try to attain the good that seduces us. The motor behind this desire is always a first love.
- **Sexual attraction.** The step before falling in love is feeling attracted to a person of the opposite sex. This first love begins to mature over time until it reaches, as the case may be, marital love. This attraction to another person has an initial physical component (their eyes, their face, their hair...), followed by an affective-psychological one (their way of being, of thinking...). What is different about the other, what could complement me, attracts me. Also in the sexual realm I discover in the other something that complements me. Men and women are, at one and the same time, the same and different. Being different enriches us, but it can also pit us against each other if the relationship that we establish with the other is not one of equality, but one of dominion.
- Affectivity and sexuality should “**build bridges**”, not “walls” that separate us: sexual difference is a source of wealth.
 - How should I live out my affectivity and my first dating relationships or experiences of falling in love? When someone falls in love they go through distinct, successive steps: a) “*Someone has affected me*”, something has changed within me and I can’t do anything to prevent it; b) “*As I get to know you I discover a harmony with you*, which I accept and consent to; c) Now “*my intention is to unite myself to you*”; d) I go beyond mere intention and I actually “*give myself to you*”.

- For a healthy and balanced personal sexual development, it is important to understand and value the importance that the affective and spiritual dimensions, as well as ethical and social norms and principles, hold for the difference between men and women.
- **Called to love.** This call to love that resounds in my heart is not merely spiritual. Love contains the flavor of the whole person. Love prevents us from dividing our being into different, disconnected pieces: “It is neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves: it is man, the person (...) who loves” (DCE, 5).
- **Sexuality is guided by love.** Sexuality that is guided, elevated and integrated by love truly acquires a human quality (OEAH, n. 6). When this love is actualized in marriage, the gift of self expresses, through the body, the complementarity and totality of the gift; conjugal love becomes, then, a force that enriches and makes us grow, while at the same time contributing to the nourishment of the civilization of love. When, on the contrary, the meaning and significance of the gift of sexuality is lacking, “a civilization of ‘things’ and not of ‘persons’” is introduced, “a civilization in which persons are used in the same way as things are used” (GrS, 13). Nonetheless, does *any* type of love whatsoever guide, elevate and integrate sexuality?
- **False loves allow themselves to be guided by bad teachers:** Among these “teachers” we might refer to the “schools of thought” that we will allude to below, which greatly affect and influence the way that youth and adults alike live and think:
 - **Individualism.** Proposes an individualistic search for one’s own satisfaction. It results in great difficulties building an authentic communion of persons and leads to a false sense of autonomy that produces emptiness and frustration.
 - **Hedonism.** Principally founded itself on sexual pleasure. The search for pleasure becomes like a chain that binds you , weighs you down, and enslaves you. Ultimately, sex does not produce complete satisfaction and it must be continually repeated and/or substituted with other things.
 - **Materialism.** Leads to using one’s own intimacy as an object of casual exchange: this consists of giving your body to someone without first having given *yourself* to them, turning you into a person-object.
 - **Dualism.** Dualism separates the body from the spirit and leads to a dis-integrated perception of the subject. It leads to the construction of a weak, bland, devalued subject, without strength of will, at the mercy of manipulators.

▪ **Sentimentalism** profoundly weakens our ability to build up our own existence, since it hands the direction of our life over to our state of mind at any given moment, which it is unable to account for. It gives precedence to the emotional impulse within man *with no direction other than its intensity*, leading to a profound *fear of the future and of all enduring commitments*. This is the contradiction experienced by man when he allows himself to be guided only by his blind desires, without seeing their order or the truth of love on which they are founded (DPF, 19).

○ **Love is characterized as authentic and true because:**

- It is patient. It knows how to wait: it enjoys each moment, knowing that it is building up our life. It does not remain at the level of mere sensations, but rather seeks the truth contained within them, which is their most authentic value.
- It follows the path of maturation. All of the dimensions of the person begin to integrate themselves around it. It does not seek to repress tendencies, but it knows how to direct them. In order to follow this way, there is a need for learning and personal maturation: we must learn to love.
- It is prudent. It does not make hasty decisions without thinking about the consequences. It fosters self-control and self-esteem: it seeks the good for oneself and for the other person.
- It establishes a relationship based on communication, knowledge and mutual acceptance, and it tends toward exclusivity and eternity.

○ **Sexuality is an integral part of the capacity for love inscribed by God** in masculine and feminine humanity. Sexuality involves the ability to express love: precisely that love in which the person becomes a gift and – through this gift – fulfills the very meaning of his/her being and existence.

○ **Marriage in the unity of body and soul** expresses the capacity to love and to generate life. So, sexual difference and complementarity manifest the vocation to which man and woman have been called. This vocation is a call to the complete donation of oneself and to fruitfulness within marriage. For this reason, human sexuality demands exclusive and faithful love. Love consists in seeking the good of the beloved. Since marriage requires becoming “one flesh” with one’s spouse, in the donation of myself I discover the meaning of my being and existence.

3. Emotion or Affection?

“For Love is strong as Death”

(Sg 8:6)

- **What are passions?** Passions are sensible affections, emotions or impulses – natural components of human psychology -, which incline us to act or not to act, in light of what we perceive as good or bad. The principal passions are love and hate, desire and fear, joy, sadness, and anger. The fundamental passion is love, which is caused by an attraction to what is good. We only love what is truly, or apparently, good (CCE, 1762-1766-1771-1772).
- **Let’s look at the differences between a few concepts:**

- **AFFECTION:** Is the result of an action (as indicated by the Latin suffix ‘-to’), of something that acts near someone and affects him. It is an interactive process that involves two or more people, compared to emotion, which is an individual process (there is not a strict division according to all of the authors that examine this topic). Affection usually refers to the body, while emotions are more connected to the mind.

This is a general term that encompasses the whole affective phenomenon. The word comes from “being affected”, which is the initial step of the dynamism of affectivity.

- **PASSION:** Is an especially powerful affective experience that has the ability to drag the person along behind it. It is a very intense feeling that dominates the will and can disrupt our reason, for example love, hate, jealousy, and rage. A very intense feeling of love is sometimes manifested with great sexual desire.

Passions are highly intense inclinations or tendencies. They do not proceed from the will, and are thus experienced in a passive way, as though we were “seeing ourselves being pulled by them”, except when we actively try to fight against them. Passions are different from emotions and feelings because they have a greater, or at least an equal intensity, and because they last longer. They also give the person experiencing them the sensation of being driven or dominated. They have a more undifferentiated nature than

feelings. They are fundamentally oriented toward obtaining the object that triggers their appearance, and so they are usually projected toward the future. Emotions, on the other hand, are contained in the present.

- **EMOTION:** Is a type of affection that is sudden and intense, and which provokes a physiological and organic reaction (blushing, increased heart rate, sweating, etc.). Emotion exists in relation to an object that provokes and causes it. It is fleeting.

Emotion is a very strong type of feeling of joy, pleasure, sadness or pain. There is a highly intense affective reaction produced by one of these feelings. It is a type of affective change that appears in the individual in a sudden way, in the form of a more or less intense excitement, accompanied by an organic shock. Beyond a type of feeling, this term is also associated with the (brief and intense) emotional stimuli that can give way to feelings (states of mind that persist longer than emotions).

- **FEELING:** Is a state of mind: more than a reaction to something that happens to us. It is something more persistent, profound and spiritual than emotion, which is its weaker manifestation. It is produced by causes that leave an impression, whether they be joyful and happy, or painful and sad.
- **The importance of affections.** It is very important to recognize them as a path toward love, to integrate them into the person and to know how to direct them. All of this helps me to build up my personal life.
- **The role of freedom in affectivity and sexuality.** Authentic love knows the meaning of authentic freedom. It is not about doing whatever I feel like, but rather knowing how to manage my desires so that I can know whether or not it is in my best interest to follow them. Freedom is the capacity to express love and to walk toward an ever greater communion.
- Freedom, in its deepest sense, affects sex (elevating it) to a much greater extent than the other instincts inscribed in man.
- Freedom and the capacity to love form part of the greatest and most intimate aspect that makes up the human person.

- Freedom distinguishes and characterizes the person as such, which is why that which is most personal comes from the freest acts, and that which is least personal comes from the most instinctive or irrational, least free aspect of the person. Martyrdom, like that which Jesus Christ submitted himself to, proves to be the maximum expression of the Freedom of man, who voluntarily and completely hands himself over, fully “free”. Meanwhile, choosing evil, as a slave of vice, due to our fallen nature...demonstrates, contrary to popular belief, a lack of freedom which makes us “incapable of choosing the good”.
- **Assertiveness:** to act with freedom when faced with situations of pressure. Being able to manifest one’s own convictions and to defend his/her rights in situations of pressure and persuasion, without attacking or submitting to the will of others.
- It is necessary to make sure that in the different circumstances of their lives, when faced with situations of pressure and/or malicious persuasion the youth can act with freedom, handling these situations with **assertiveness** (able to manifest their own convictions and to defend their rights, without attacking or submitting to the will of others).
- Learn to say “no” without giving into pressure.
- **Modesty:** I must be conscious of the fact that my sexuality and my body can stir up the attraction of other people.
 - Based on what I express with my body, I can induce others to treat me as an object.
 - Modesty is the experience that helps us protect our intimacy and discover the beauty of love. It shows up in a natural way.
 - It refers not only to the intimacy of the body, but also to that of my feelings.
 - Modesty is expressed in the way I dress, in my language, in my behavior.
- **Life plan and risky situations.** It is imperative to put great effort into correcting those vices and passions that tend towards evil acts, which assail young people of every age. Navigating any stage of our lives despising the values of virtue and suffering constant failures entails the risk that we might reach the harbor devoid of any spiritual cargo (cfr. SH, 69).

4. My First Loves

**“And over all these put on love, that is, the
bond of perfection”
(Col 3:14).**

- **Relationships or hook-ups?** Today, people talk more about “hooking up”. It is understood that in these cases people almost always act on the basis of physical attraction; it’s not about a well-built affective attachment. There is no “risk” for either of the two people involved, as there is no obligation to call or to keep going out with the other person. The level of ties or bonds is minimal. Everything is so very “liquid”.
- **“Hook-up”, “fling”, “one-night stand” or “sleeping with someone”** are all a far cry from establishing a truly personal relationship; they are relationships that end up making the other person into a thing.
- **Where should I put the focus of my love?** Love is a tendency that moves us to desire the good of the beloved; it does not merely seek to satisfy oneself. It always places its focus on the other (“**you**”), rather than on “me”.
- **The feeling of love always accompanies love**, but it can trick us. There are different types of love, which translate into different types of interpersonal relationships: the **love of friendship** and the **love of possession**. If we dig deeply into the true meaning of love, we must distinguish between those who say that they act out of love and those who reduce it to the possession of something that they desire or that their selfishness takes pleasure in.
- **Love of friendship** exists when we love someone in such a way that we want what is good for them. In this case, we consider the other as a person with unique, inseparable, and unrepeatable dignity.
- **The love of possession**, on the other hand, doesn’t want what is good for the beloved, but rather desires their good to the extent that it will benefit him/herself. Living out this type of love, the other becomes a mere thing, an object, totally replaceable and dispensable.
- **To love is to “desire what is good for someone”**, and this is why the motion of love tends toward a twofold end: “*the good*” that we desire for someone (what is good for the person) and “*the person*” for whom we desire this good (the good that the person is).

- **Loving people** (for who they are) is essentially different from **loving things**. In reality, properly speaking, we do not love things; we value them to the extent that they are useful to us. While we tend to share our goods with the people that we love, when it comes to things we tend to acquire what we are lacking.
- **Different feelings**. The love of friendship is accompanied by positive feelings that lead us to an authentic coexistence or interpersonal relationship. On the other hand, the love of possession is accompanied by selfish feelings in the context of essentially utilitarian social behaviors.
- **First, we choose our friend**. In order for this love of friendship to be a true friendship, three elements are needed: wanting what is good for the other, being loved back (reciprocity), and the existence of an affective union between both people. When we love, it is no longer enough for us to seem like a being-with-another, but we must be a *being-for-another*. Friendship, as a mutual and free gift, is not possession but donation.
- **There are clear risks when we seek a possessive relationship**. Individualism leads to a false sense of autonomy that creates emptiness and frustration, with the following consequences for the person:
 - **They become materialistic** and distance themselves from interpersonal relationships, leading to loneliness and disorientation.
 - **They treat their body like an object to be used**. They pervert their own vision of the body, which no longer has a place in the definition of their identity as a subject.
 - **They do not accept responsibilities** with their partner, and so they are free to determine their own lives, thinking only about themselves. The consequences stemming from this are obvious: selfishness, egocentricity, the instrumentalization of human beings, skepticism, and fear in the face of permanent commitments, etc.
 - **They tend toward infidelity** since they are incapable of connecting with or giving themselves to the other person.
 - **They are afraid of making decisions**, above all when they involve commitment, fidelity, and a shared life plan.
 - **They always believe that others owe them something**, but never that they owe something to others.
 - **They have a negative vision of marriage and the family**.
- **Reducing sexuality to an object of pleasure and consumption**. Immaturity regarding love almost always reveals and signals a broader form of immaturity. A *dis-integrated* sexual life does not favor this growth in maturity: it leads to confusion about the difference between desiring and loving, between loving a lot and loving intensely. The sexual dimension of love needs to be

governed by the other dimensions of love; otherwise it will cause boredom, and require the need for change and complicated quests for satisfaction.

- **When sexuality is only valued according to the pleasure that it offers**, happiness becomes confused with the greatest amount and duration of pleasures. This interpretation makes it impossible to understand the authentically human value of sexuality, since it reduces it to an object to be used according to how much pleasure it provides. In these cases, relationships become centered around just one dimension, the physical one, leaving out the others. It's not by chance, then, that according to today's pansexual point of view, sexuality is based exclusively on pleasure. This gives rise to sexuality being seen as something that can be manipulated, something to which everyone can ascribe the ends that they want. Consequently, there is a loss of intimacy; the sexual reality is reduced to sexual arousal and a search for the greatest pleasure, which ultimately satisfies no one.
- **Human sexuality is more than just sex**, because sexuality in man and in woman is more than just pleasure. The sexual experience, which refers to a promise of communion, implies that pleasure enters into the perspective and comes to hold an intrinsically symbolic and figurative value. It will be the symbol of the fullness of life brought about by fruitful conjugal communion. In this way, pleasure reflects the subjective richness contained in this way of life. It will become a source of delight, and not just a sexual pleasure.
- **My own intimacy is a "gift to be opened"; it is "my treasure"**. Sexuality itself reveals my personal intimacy. There is a more or less conscious experience of the seduction that the other exerts over me which reveals to me the internal current of his/her desire. We reveal ourselves to ourselves through desire. It is the other ("you") who reveals to me my own "I"; this "you", through our difference, calls me to something greater.
- **A presence within me**. There is a whole world of reactions taking place within me before love even enters my consciousness. The importance of this is rooted in the fact that it occurs prior to my choice and our encounter: even before this there is an invitation to love the other person. For this reason, "its presence in me" arises even before I decide to go and seek it out. This allows me to understand my love as the response to a first love. I learn to love in the measure in which I am loved.