

## On Cohabitation II

In an appendix to a document on marriage preparation of the AOD regarding cohabitation, one finds the following quote: “The Church of Denver must be ready and willing to employ new methods and new approaches that convincingly demonstrate how the Church’s teaching on sexuality corresponds to the deepest desires of the human heart for love and intimate personal union.” I’m not sure what these new methods are; perhaps short video clips on the internet are just around the corner.

Or perhaps we could pay attention to someone like Aristotle, who thought that in order to have virtue in any society; the virtue must be identified, taught clearly, and then lived as an example. The teaching of virtue for the youth is primarily in stories and in music – in the wide sense of the word.

Clearly, the virtue at stake with the issue of cohabitation is love. It demands purity, humility, selflessness, honesty, trust and willingness to sacrifice that can only be established by embracing the virtue of chastity. If Aristotle is right, the way we will see that virtue lived in our parish, is by trying to identify love (cf. earlier inserts on that), and those things which are contradictory to married love, such as cohabitation or divorce. And we must try above all to be of good example.

I say “we,” because your priests must also strive to be pure, humble, selfless, honest, trusting in God, willing to sacrifice without personal gain, and constantly embracing the virtue of chastity. This embrace is just one way in which the priests can really help married couples, since the same virtue is needed both for the sacrament of Holy Orders and the sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

Now just as the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and as the fear of hell can stop someone from committing a serious sin, so has the possibility of pregnancy served as a check to keep sexual activity where it belongs, viz., marriage...and not just any marriage, but a marriage which remains open to life. Take that possibility away, and it’s like having the steering wheel fall off. Who knows where the car will go if that happens? In other words, separate sex from procreation and marriage, and sooner or later society will see the justification and even the legalization of man’s most base perversions, not the least of which is the murder of “unwanted” children in the womb.

A solid confirmation of this can be found in an unlikely source: the work of Sigmund Freud. I say unlikely because Freud was no friend of the Catholic Church. But he had enough brains to realize that, “The abandonment of the reproductive function is the common feature of all sexual perversions. We actually describe a sexual activity as perverse if it pursues the attainment of pleasure as an aim independent of reproduction.” You can see his logic. If sexual relations need not be related in any way to procreation, then there is no reason why sex should not be limited to normal intercourse between husband and wife. The logic which accepts contraception, if it is to remain consistent with itself, must end in the acceptance of virtually every imaginable form of sexual indulgence.

Sound reason rejects the notion that fornication and cohabitation are helpful in preparing for marriage. There are a number of reasons for this:

1. All non-marital sexual activity is always and everywhere a grave evil.
2. Since love is the desire to sacrifice oneself for the good of another, and since fornication is a grave evil, then to entice or even to permit one's fiancée to engage in such an evil is the very opposite of the love which should be practiced between the engaged couple.
3. Indulging in a sexual relationship which is dissoluble, uncommitted to life-long fidelity, and closed to life by contraception, cannot possibly prepare a couple for a sexual relationship (marriage) which demands indissolubility, life-long fidelity, and openness to life. By consistently choosing such behavior, the couple demonstrates that they are, in fact, poorly prepared for the commitment of marriage because they have been psychologically trained in its opposite.
4. Fornication in the time of engagement usually involves the consistent use of contraception. But even if a couple engaging in fornication were desirous of conceiving a child, they could not be "open to life" in the full sense of that expression. A proper openness to life is inherently marital. That is, it recognizes the right of the child to be conceived by parents who are already committed to marriage, to his upbringing in a stable, loving environment.
  - a. Contained within a contraceptive mentality are the seeds of a mentality open to abortion. "It is frequently asserted that contraception, if made safe and available to all, is the most effective remedy against abortion. It may be that many people use contraception with the view to excluding the subsequent temptation of abortion. But the negative values inherent in the contraceptive mentality are such that they in fact strengthen this temptation when an unwanted life is conceived." (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*)
  - b. Even the U.S. Supreme Court recognizes the inherent connection between contraception and abortion. "In some critical respects abortion is of the same character as the decision to use contraception. For two decades of economic and social developments, people have organized intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society, in reliance on the availability of abortion in the event that contraception should fail." (Planned Parenthood vs. Casey, 1993)