

Are Catholics permitted to engage in sexual activity before marriage?

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Catholics are not permitted to engage in intimate sexual relationships before marriage and are responsible for ensuring their sexual relationship in marriage is chaste. God created sex for married couples so that they could continue the human race and enjoy intimacy as they "become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Sexual activity before marriage abuses God's gift of sexuality by reducing it to the pursuit of physical pleasure and was repeatedly condemned in the Old Testament as well as by Jesus and his apostles (Leviticus 21:9; Sirach 23:16-17; Matthew 15:19; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5).

"Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does" (1 Corinthians 7:1-4).

"Let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge the immoral and adulterers" (Hebrews 13:4).

Married Christians are challenged to keep their sexual relationship a holy one by using the gift of sex in the manner God intended. Sexual acts which serve only for physical gratification and are not open to the creation of life are immoral because they deny God his rights as Creator and are forms of artificial birth control. God intended for sexual intimacy to be pleasurable and fulfilling, but if we abuse this great gift, our marriage will suffer. True intimacy in marriage is impossible if the spouses do not respect each other's bodies and treat them as "temple[s] of the Holy Spirit."

"When the door was shut and the two were alone, Tobias got up from the bed and said, 'Sister, get up, and let us pray that the Lord may have mercy upon us.' And Tobias began to pray, 'Blessed art thou, O God of our fathers, and blessed by thy holy and glorious name for ever. Let the heavens and all thy creatures bless thee. Thou madest Adam and gavest him Eve his wife as a helper and support. From them the race of mankind has sprung. Thou didst say, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself.' And now, O Lord, I am not taking this sister of mine

because of lust, but with sincerity. Grant that I may find mercy and may grow old together with her.' And she said with him, 'Amen.' Then they both went to sleep for the night" (Tobit 8:4-9).

Christian spouses should regard each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord and should always bear in mind that though "one flesh" each of them still belongs to God. Spouses who have an intimate prayer life together will have the greatest intimacy in their sexual relationship, too, since sex is a union of the souls as well as the bodies.

The positive aspects of waiting until marriage are all too obvious in our times. The effects of the "sexual revolution" have been nothing less than catastrophic - legalized abortion, AIDS and other diseases, unwanted/unloved children, divorce, adultery... Being sexually active before marriage is a self-destructive lifestyle and will always lead to unhappiness, even if the present pleasure deceives us.

(Genesis 2:24; Leviticus 21:9; Tobit 8:4-9; Sirach 23:16-17; Matthew 15:19; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 19-20; 7:1-4; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; Hebrews 13:4)

Catholicism Frequently Asked Questions from the Transporter Information Services.

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