



COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

Office of the President

Dear Students,

We are now required by federal law to develop and disseminate a Policy on Sexual Assault. We have taken that as an opportunity for a broader reflection and discussion of our expectations regarding the use of one of our greatest gifts, our sexuality. Our intention was to develop a policy that would be situated within a broader context aimed at educating the whole person, rather than just a set of legal rules that define the minimum acceptable behavior, although that is itself very important and must be taken seriously.

This booklet is the product of extensive work on the part of a great many people. The documents contained herein offer a framework for beginning a life-long reflection about this most serious of topics: God's gift of human sexuality. Together, they represent the best thinking of many in the Holy Cross community and beyond. I hope that we use them widely: in classroom discussions, in the residence halls, in the Chapel. I also hope that the questions they evoke prompt us to examine more critically the moral and ethical implications of human sexuality.

In particular, I wish to thank the members of the Student Life Council and Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Jacqueline Peterson, for their tenacious and dedicated efforts in developing the booklet. We are most grateful.

Yours in Christ,

Michael C. McFarland, S.J.

President



COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

Office of the College Chaplain

My dear Sisters and Brothers,

As I write to you, it is a spectacular August afternoon in New England. The campus is quiet. It is the time of year when things are slow enough to stop and think. And that is exactly what I need right now. How to write to you whose faces are both dear and unknown to me, whose tastes and joys and pains are more diverse and intense than anyone but God could know?

In Christian terms, this is a pastoral letter. Following a tradition as old as the Church itself, I am writing to you- a particular community at a specific point in time, about a particular pastoral concern for this community. My dear sisters and brothers, I write to you about sex, about sexual decision-making, about intimacy, and about those practical and ethical questions which ought to concern each of us as Christians, particularly as Catholic Christians. I write as your College Chaplain, bearing the awesome responsibility of challenging you to integrate all of your actions, your choices, with your faith. It is a task that ought to daunt the most confident of pastors or ministers. It is certainly daunting to me, not because I doubt what I want to say but rather because I feel so passionately about it.

We have a problem at Holy Cross. Many of us are, more or less, comfortable with, amused by, or at least resigned to, the sexual mores of a society oriented toward self-gratification; a culture which bristles at the hint of restraint and which is unnerved by the thought of commitment. We are used to it. So used to it, in fact, that for many of us, sexual behavior is without moral character at all. It is simply a by-product of drinking, or a "private" matter between the individuals involved, or unintended and therefore acceptable. Of course, this is not to say that our community is devoid of men and women who authentically seek to integrate their sexuality with the core Christian values which inform and guide all of the ethical decisions they make. I am deeply inspired by the many women and men whose thoughtful reflection has led them to understand sexuality as an extraordinary gift from God- one among many- which stands at the heart of what it means to be human and which touches all of our human interactions. Indeed, their commitment to developing an informed Catholic sexual ethic is a profound witness to me and to our Holy Cross community.

Nevertheless, a common and seemingly acceptable way of relating to one another sexually on most college and university campuses across the country, including here at Holy Cross, is utterly divorced from the Gospel message of love, respect, dignity, generosity, commitment, selflessness. There is a sad kind of irony, I think, that we allow ourselves to feel passion, to make responsible, thoughtful choices, and to seek connections in almost every other part of our lives. We feel delight in reading a poem by Maya Angelou or a sonnet by Shakespeare. We feel our senses soar when we look at a piece of sculpture by Rodin or a painting by Caravaggio. We feel enormous satisfaction in thinking a problem through completely and arriving at the correct answer or a well-considered conclusion. Most of us allow ourselves to be moved profoundly by music, art, nature, beauty, or the thrill of pushing our bodies to the limits in sports. We treasure friendships and frequently search for ways to give of ourselves in generous service to others. In all of these arenas, we work hard, not sparing our minds or our bodies the limits of physical endurance or even the passions aroused by true beauty or love. In all of these ways, we make connections. We ask: what does it mean to work, to know, to suffer, to love, to sacrifice, to be a friend? The place where, too often, we fail to make any connections at all, is in the area of relationships, sexuality, intimacy.

My goal in writing is not to provide you with a two page or a two-line summary of the church's teaching on sexuality. In fact, my aim is quite the opposite. As Catholic Christians, we possess a rich legacy of Catholic and Christian teaching on sexuality which we ought to understand fully and reflect upon prayerfully and soberly. To attempt a reduction of the collective inspired wisdom of the Church in an effort to provide quick and facile answers to complicated issues, is both to dishonor the development, the complexity, and the wisdom of a great body of Catholic theology and also to rob us of the context in which the Church teaches what she teaches. For example, I may state correctly that the Church teaches that the act of sex belongs within the context of a committed, loving relationship sanctified by the Sacrament of Marriage. This is true. Yet to leave it at that is a gross simplification of a much richer corpus of sexual theology which contains a great deal of wisdom, reveals an important developmental history in Catholic sexual ethics, and even now grapples with the complicated and interrelated questions of contemporary society. So often I hear students dismiss "what the Church teaches about sex" without having any real knowledge of what that teaching is. We know that committed membership in any community requires that we take seriously all that that community holds dear. My hope is to persuade you to reflect on this tremendously important topic seriously and prayerfully. Take a course in Catholic sexual ethics. Grapple with some of the sources cited in the bibliography. At the very least, consult a Chaplain or a Jesuit. Learn what the Church teaches in a thorough and informed way.

Sexuality is a gift from God. That is the absolute foundation of Catholic teaching. Like any of the gifts with which God has blessed us, then, it must be treated with reverence and care. It must be used with respect and love. Yet, often we trade it like it is the most expendable commodity we have, casually tossing it around like a Crusader card with no declining balance.

So today I write to challenge you. I beg you to consider your own behavior and your values. Are the sexual choices you make, in keeping with who God calls you to be? Are they integrated with all the other wonderful parts of you? Have you developed a responsible sexual ethic, which is informed by the Church and consistent with all of the other ethical values you hold? At the end of the day, the weekend, the night, can you go before God and your sisters and brothers and admit, frankly, that you've treated the men and women with whom you've interacted with dignity, respect, and kindness? Can you acknowledge to God that you valued them and valued your sexuality as the superb gift that it is- **from God?**

I believe that these are questions every Christian must answer and I ask you from the bottom of my heart, to reflect on them in relation to your own life. If you find that you are caught up in patterns that are unhealthy or repetitive or abusive or tied to alcohol, you can get help- from the Chaplains' Office, the Counseling Center, from all kinds of places. If you find that you know little about what the Church teaches, there are many resources available- faculty in Religious Studies, Jesuits, the Chaplains.

It is possible to make choices that are healthy and respectful and thoughtful. It is possible to develop a sexual ethic for yourself that is thoughtful, informed, and consistent with Church teaching. It is possible to experience intimacy that is integrated, life-giving and thoroughly Christian. My prayer for you, as we begin together, is that you may use all of your gifts, including sexuality, with the same spirit of love and wisdom that God has used in giving them to you. May God bless you abundantly in this academic year with every good blessing.

In the peace and love of Christ,

Katherine M. McElaney

Director, Office of the College Chaplains

Sexual Decision-Making and Human Values: A Call to Discernment and Dialogue

Authored by Rev. Brian Linnane, S.J., as commissioned and endorsed by the Student Life Council

The Mission Statement of the College reminds members of the Holy Cross community that to participate in the life of this College is "to accept an invitation to join in dialogue about basic human questions." It is a spirit of such dialogue that prompts this call for personal and communal reflection on sexual morality and humane gender relations. As an institution of higher learning in the Jesuit tradition, Holy Cross is committed to the values of free inquiry, respect for diversity, and civility in this community's attempt to discern and articulate norms for sexual decision-making. As a Roman Catholic institution the College would surely be remiss if it did not facilitate such a reflection in light of the rich resources of the Catholic moral tradition. This document, then, offers some guidelines for ethical reflection, discernment, and dialogue on human sexuality which draw upon the moral and religious traditions that have been central to the life of the College of the Holy Cross.

These guidelines do not claim to represent Roman Catholic teaching on sexual morality in its fullness. Nonetheless, the principles enunciated here find wide acceptance among Catholics and other persons committed to humane sexual relations. It should be emphasized that these principles inform the vast literature of moral reflection including persons on both sides of the deep divisions over specific moral evaluations which exist within and beyond the Christian community. In keeping with the College Mission Statement, the Catholic moral tradition regularly finds expression in classroom discussion, preaching, and in the life of the community. Those persons who wish to explore this tradition in greater depth are encouraged to consult the Catholic theologians in the Department of Religious Studies, the College Chaplains, and the members of the Society of Jesus who help to staff the College. As a pluralistic community with strong Catholic roots, the College acknowledges its dependence upon the principles of Catholic moral theology as it attempts to articulate an ethic for this community, while affirming that any discussion of sexual morality can only be enriched by attending to the contributions of other cultural and religious traditions.

Ethical reflection in the Catholic and Jesuit traditions necessarily begins with an account of human persons. From the Catholic perspective, every human person possesses an inviolable dignity and is worthy of respect because he or she is created in the image of God. Any actions that fail to take account of the dignity of persons, that is, actions which harm persons, that allow persons to be treated as objects, or that fail to *promote* the legitimate self-direction of others, are proscribed. In this light, a criterion for moral evaluation is proposed: an action is morally acceptable insofar as it is beneficial to the person fully considered and to his or her relations (with other individuals, with communities, and with God). This criterion suggests that actions are morally problematic not because they are contrary to the wishes of an external authority, but because human experience and moral reflection suggest that such actions have the potential to undermine personal and communal well-being.

Human sexuality is a core dimension of human experience, in which we experience our deepest longing for interpersonal intimacy and union. Contemporary Christians reject any suggestion that human sexuality is sinful or shameful in itself. Human sexuality as part of God's design sustains multiple human goods, including committed love, embodied pleasure, and the potential for new life. Yet it is also true that the realm of human sexuality is susceptible to manipulation, betrayal, and violence. So then, while a sexually intimate relationship can be the most affirming and profound of life's experiences, such relationships also can create genuine harm when they fail to respect the dignity of persons and the relational meaning of human sexuality. Because of the potential for harm in even consensual sexual activity, effective consent cannot provide a full moral justification for sexual activity. In this light, the following basic values for sexual relations are affirmed: free consent, commitment, mutuality, equality, fruitfulness/respect for the procreative potential of sexuality, justice. If a sexual relationship is a relationship that truly respects the dignity *and* vulnerability of both partners as well as the demands of the common good *none* of these basic values can be ignored or dispensed with.

Free and effective consent is an absolute moral and legal minimum standard for sexual relations. All members of the Holy Cross community are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the definition of effective consent offered in the discussion of Sexual Misconduct I in the Student Guide. This is the juridical standard of the College and will serve as a central determinant in adjudicating cases of sexual misconduct. In addition to the conditions which limit the possibility of effective consent listed there, it is important to note that inequities of power or status tend to undermine the equality that effective consent presumes.

Insofar as sexual activity involves intimate interpersonal sharing at the deepest levels of human vulnerability, ethical sexual relations require a high level of commitment and trust on the part of both parties. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, concern for this value has been expressed as a requirement for a permanently committed, monogamous relationship based on mutual love, as having the greatest potential to safeguard the vulnerabilities of the persons who enter into a sexual relationship. Jewish and Christian communities have traditionally argued that only marriage provides the appropriate context for sexual intimacy. In contemporary society it is frequently claimed that the feeling of mutual love alone provides a sufficient moral justification for a sexual relationship. Human experience suggests, however, that such love—especially among young persons—can be ephemeral; thus it sometimes happens that what was thought to be an expression of profound and lasting love reflects a less intense relationship. In such cases one or both partners can feel hurt, betrayed, or even exploited.

A concern for mutuality follows from both effective consent and commitment and serves to safeguard the dignity of persons *within* their sexual relations. Sexual relations should affirm the dignity and affective commitments of both partners in a relationship. Consent to a sexual relationship does not permit sexual activity that

one partner finds demeaning or that satisfies one partner alone. Mutuality in a sexual relationship must reflect an essential equality within the relationship. The requirement of equality suggests that neither partner is dominant in the relationship; that neither partner must *necessarily* subordinate her or his needs and aspirations to those of the other.

Any adequate moral evaluation of our choices and actions must take account of their social dimension. Even our most intimate activities are not simply private. All authentically human sexual relationships should assist the partners in being more loving in all of their relationships. On the most obvious level, the Judeo-Christian tradition has expressed a fundamental concern for the birth and nurturing of offspring within heterosexual relationships. The procreative power of these relationships generates a requirement of responsibility in sexual decision-making, not only to oneself and to one's partner but also for the reproductive implications of sexual activity. But social responsibility is not limited to questions of human procreation. Committed and loving relationships which are not in themselves open to biological reproduction nonetheless share the general ethical requirement of fruitfulness and social responsibility. The Catholic tradition suggests that genuine interpersonal love is never selfishly turned in on itself, but also serves the family, the local community, and human society.

Concerns about social responsibility necessarily raise questions of justice. All human relations ought to be regulated by a general norm of the social virtue of justice. At the most basic level, justice requires that we render to each person his or her due. With regard to sexual relations, such a norm generates an absolute requirement to respect and promote the dignity and integrity of persons with whom we are in relationship. A concern for justice also raises questions about the ways in which our personal choices help to shape our community and its particular moral climate. A community ethos which legitimates random, uncommitted sexual relationships marked by consent alone may generate a community atmosphere that harms its most vulnerable members.

Many members of this community desire an enduring and committed love relationship as the basis for a fulfilling personal life. In evaluating a compelling ethic for intimate personal relationships, account should be taken of the virtues and character required to sustain such relationships. Free consent, commitment, equality, mutuality, fruitfulness and justice are not only markers for evaluating particular actions but qualities which reflect the moral maturity and generosity of spirit which almost always seem to accompany successful and lifelong love relationships.

These principles are offered to the members of the Holy Cross community to encourage personal reflection and communal discussion on matters of sexual morality. While the policy on sexual misconduct will serve as the basis for adjudicating the cases of those persons who are accused of violating community standards by violating norms of effective consent, this document calls all members of the College community to a standard of sexual morality that truly respects *and* promotes the intrinsic dignity of all persons.

For Further Reading

ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHING ON SEXUAL MORALITY

Official Teaching

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994). Part III of the Catechism deals with the moral life; Chapter 2, article 6 of this section addresses questions of human sexuality.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics," (1975). This document is available in *Origins* 5:1 (January 22, 1976).

Paul VI, "Of Human Life" [*Humanae Vitae*] (1968), especially sections 7-12.

"Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" [*Gaudium et Spes*] (1965), especially sections 47-52. *The Documents of Vatican II* (W. Abbott, ed., New York: America Press, 1966).

Commentary and Theological Development

Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Vincent Genovesi, S.J., *In Pursuit of Love: Catholic Morality and Human Sexuality*, 2nd ed., (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996).

Christine Gudorf, *Reconstructing Christian Sexual Ethics: Body, Sex and Pleasure as Grace and Gift*, (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1994).

Anthony Kosnick et al, *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*, A Study Commissioned by The Catholic Theological Society of America. (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

Ronald Lawler, O.F.M. Cap. et al, *Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary, Explanation, & Defense*, (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1985)

Gareth Moore, O.P., *The Body in Context: Sex and Catholicism*, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1992).

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUAL COERCION AND VIOLENCE

Marie Marshall Fortune, *Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin*, (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1983).

Karen Lebacqz, "Love Your Enemies: Sex, Power, and Christian Ethics," Presidential Address, *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, (1990).

Summary of the official Church teaching on sexuality

Excerpted from: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Image Books pub. by Doubleday, New York, 1997

For complete text, please see:

Part Three: "Life in Christ", Section Two, Chapter Two,

Article 6: The Sixth Commandment"

#2331-#2400

IN BRIEF

- 2392 "Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being" (FC11)
- 2393 By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity.
- 2394 Christ is the model of chastity. Every baptized person is called to lead a chaste life, each according to his particular state of life.
- 2395 Chastity means the integration of sexuality within the person. It includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery.
- 2396 Among the sins gravely contrary to chastity are masturbation, fornication, pornography and homosexual practices.
- 2397 The covenant which spouses have freely entered into entails faithful love. It imposes on them the obligation to keep their marriage indissoluble.
- 2398 Fecundity is a good, a gift and an end of marriage. By giving life, spouses participate in God's fatherhood.

Part Three

- 2399 The regulation of births represents one of the aspects of responsible fatherhood and motherhood. Legitimate intentions on the part of the spouses do not justify recourse to morally unacceptable means (for example, direct sterilization or contraception).
- 2400 Adultery, divorce, polygamy, and free union are grave offenses against the dignity of marriage.