

Session 4

God's body Talk



AIM

To appreciate that being created by the God of love our bodies reflect their origin in his loving purpose. This purpose informs what is the right and wrong use of our bodies

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning and purpose God has given sexual love
- State why contraception and IVF contradict the meaning of marital love
- State why the marriage vows of unity, indissolubility, faithfulness and openness to life are vital to the success of a marriage
- Explain why the Church advocates natural fertility awareness

“The human person: with our openness to truth and beauty, our sense of moral goodness, our freedom and the voice of our conscience, with our longings for the infinite and for happiness, we question ourselves about God’s existence. In all this we discern signs of our spiritual soul. The soul, the “seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material” can have its origin only in God.”

(CCC 33)



Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones. Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; your cries are continually before me.

(Isaiah 49:13, 15-16)

Made in the image of God

Read the statements below and decide as a couple whether or not you agree with them and why. (Take about 10 minutes). We will then discuss the questions as a group.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Depends	Agree	Strongly Agree
Humans are just like the other animals, nothing more.					
The order and beauty of the world and the universe show us everything has been created by God.					
Sex is primarily for pleasure.					
People can do selfless things for love of others.					

Why contraception and IVF are wrong? True or false

Read the statements below and decide as a couple whether they are true or false, giving reasons. (Take about 5 minutes).¹

We will then discuss the questions as a group.

Statement	True	False
1. The Church is against contraception because sex is something bad and dirty.		
2. The Church is against contraception because it wants every act of sexual love to result in a baby.		
3. The Church is against contraception because it makes a lie out of God's language of love.		
4. The Church is for couples spacing the number of children using Natural Fertility Awareness.		
5. The Church allows couples to use Natural Fertility Awareness to permanently avoid pregnancy.		
6. The Church is against IVF because children conceived in a test tube are not really human.		
7. The Church is against IVF because she doesn't want the marriage bed to be replaced by the laboratory.		
8. The Church is against IVF because she doesn't care about the suffering of infertile couples.		

Natural Fertility Awareness is a method of working out the natural periods of fertility and infertility that are present in every woman's monthly cycle. This is not to be confused with older, less reliable methods such as the Rhythm Method, but is based on observations of natural changes to the woman's body.

¹ This activity is based on Dr C O'Donnell's *Questions & Answers on Sex and Marriage*.



God created human beings to be a union of body and soul. The fact that human beings are created as a union of body and soul means the body is never ‘something’ but always ‘someone’ who shares in the dignity of the ‘image of God’.

One of the reasons why God made us a union of body and soul is so we could form loving relationships with each other, create children to love, and could be capable of knowing and loving him.

We can see signs of God’s design and purpose in nature.

The Church teaches that we can come to know God in two ways:

- through our reason observing nature and ourselves, and
- through God’s Word in the Bible and the life of the Church.

The signs of purpose and order in the universe are positive indications that God is the origin and end of everything. The Church doesn’t accept extreme theories of evolution that believe that human beings are the random products of chance and accidents. Instead, it holds that there is a purpose and direction to evolution, which is the emergence of self-conscious beings capable of reason and love.

God created masculinity and femininity to reveal our spiritual nature and share in his creation of new life. The Church teaches that sexual love expresses in a profound way our nature as beings created to be a union of body and soul, made in the image of God. The ‘body language’ of sexual love in marriage says, ‘You’re the most important person in my life’; ‘I love you so much I give you my body’. ‘I love every aspect of you so much that I want to have a child with you, who will be part of both of us’.

Jesus reveals and heals our capacity for self-giving love. The Church teaches that we can only know our true dignity and the depth of our ability to love through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ in his perfect love shows us what it means to be fully human.

Are you ready to accept children lovingly from God?

As a couple take a few minutes to discuss the following questions: (say 5 mins)

- What do we mean when we say that children are a gift from God?
- Would you want your children to be brought up in the Catholic faith? Why?

- The Church understands that ‘new life is not the result of each and every act of sexual intercourse’ due to the woman’s God-given, natural cycle of monthly fertility and infertility. Furthermore, the Church also teaches that were there are ‘well-grounded reasons for spacing births, arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances’ (Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*), married couples may then take advantage of Natural Fertility Awareness to abstain from sexual relations during the woman’s fertile period, and have sexual intercourse during the infertile period. This does not go against God’s will for our fertility because the couple are using the natural, God-given cycles for their correct purpose.
- God, in his wisdom, has given us a natural, simple way of being responsible parents that involves our intelligence, self-control and loving consideration. However, the couple must ensure that their motivation is the good of the family and not some selfish desire.



A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfilment... called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God... they are co-operating with the love of God the Creator.

(CCC 2366-7)

However, the Church is against both contraception and IVF as they artificially break the inseparable bond between the act of sexual love and openness to fertility. In addition, contraception also makes the act of love a ‘lie’ by withholding one of the essential qualities of marriage: openness to fertility. The most important and special message that the body language between wife and husband communicates is, “I love every aspect of you so much” – it does not add “except for your fertility”.

Action Planning

As a couple consider what you will do as a result of this session. You might like to consider the following:

- Discuss together God’s meaning and purpose for sexual love and your approach to having children.
- Find out about Natural Fertility Awareness. Practitioner teachers of the ‘ovulation method’ or ‘multiple-indicators’ can be found on the web.