



## Presentation

of the Synodal Forum IV

“Life in succeeding relationships

- Living Love in Sexuality and Partnership”

for the First Reading

at the third Synodal Assembly (3-5 February 2022)

for the implementation text

“Magisterial statements on conjugal love”

[Voting result in the Forum: 20 Yes, 1 No]

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## Introduction

In order to further develop the magisterial statements on conjugal sexuality along the lines of the Second Vatican Council and to eliminate constrictions, the Synodal Assembly turns to the Pope, as in this case an understanding is to be reached on a universal Church level.

## Proposal

The Synodal Assembly recommends a magisterial clarification and re-evaluation of conjugal love in the following aspects to the Pope:

The mutual love of the married couple is shown in the realisation of the values of fidelity, respect for the dignity and self-determination of the other, responsibility for each other, the shaping of fruitfulness and loving devotion.

Marriage is clearly more than just a legitimate place of interpersonal sexuality. A one-sided consideration of genital sexuality is inappropriate. The concrete shaping of the sexual dimension of marriage within the framework opened up by the aforementioned basic norms is the responsibility of the married couple themselves. It is not a task of the Church.

Sexuality with its dimensions of fecundity and the experience of pleasure, the development of their relationship, the formation of their identity as well as the experience of transcendence is an expression of the relationship of the married couple. It changes in the course of a lifetime and realises its dimensions, which are valid for the duration of the marriage, to varying degrees.

Fruitfulness does not only refer to the procreation of children, but also includes a social and spiritual dimension.

The spouses decide responsibly on the time to become parents, on the number of their children as well as on the different methods of family planning. This is done in mutual respect and personal moral decision-making.

In this sense the following points should be changed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC):

2366 and 2367, 2396 (conjugal fecundity)

2368-2370, 2399 (regulation of procreation)

## Reasons

The Second Vatican Council teaches that marriage is a covenant (GS 48) - a community of life and love between two people in which God's irrevocable commitment to His people is reflected. God is the sustaining ground of a sacramental marriage. God's love becomes tangible and present in the love of the spouses.

The personal love of the spouses was emphasised and several marital goods and goals were formulated, including biological fecundity. This dimension of marriage was subsequently subjected to detailed regulations in magisterial texts, with regard to permissible and impermissible methods of contraception and the requirement that every sexual act be open to procreation.

The Church's recommendation of responsible parenthood is not in fundamental conflict with a married couple's openness to children. Nor does the free and responsible choice of the method of family planning have to lead to a fundamental rejection of procreation and conception. That the procreation of a child must and may never be judged as a misfortune remains the high value that the Church holds out of her view of humanity, even if she does not demand a commitment to certain methods of contraception. Conversely, the definition of methods also created the image of a one-sided fixation of the Church on genitility. On the one hand, this is a narrow view of sexuality, which is multidimensional (Basic Text B.3.1) and of marriage (Basic Text B.8.1 to B.8.3). On the other hand, a detailed standardisation of sexual acts by the Magisterium of the Church contradicts the freedom of God's children, who as married couples are to shape their lives and their relationship in mutual responsibility (Basic Text B.10). In addition, there are the not inconsiderable concrete consequences of unprotected sexuality and a lack of sex education. The risk of infectious, fertility-destroying or even fatal diseases arises from the non-use of condoms. Furthermore, pregnancies can cause high health risks for women and children, which is why self-determined contraception must be possible. Moreover, unwanted pregnancies often result in massive disruptions in the biographies of young women. In general, the social consequences of birth, pregnancy, breastfeeding and parenting time are much more drastic for

women in terms of their biography and economic provision. Therefore, responsible parenthood is indispensable for a life of self-determination.

The Church is called to form the consciences of spouses, but not to claim to replace them (AL 37 and Basic Text 9). She should therefore strengthen the values of love, fidelity, respect for the dignity and self-determination of the other, responsibility for each other, the shaping of fruitfulness and loving devotion and the unconditional acceptance of one's own children, and thus offer an orientation that can lead to responsible decisions appropriate to the situation.