

[This chapter is from the book, *Premarital Sex and Love: In the Light of Human Experience and Following Jesus* by Paul Flaman. Copyright 1999 by Paul J. P. Flaman, St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada T6G 0B3. Any feedback you have can be emailed to: pflaman@ualberta.ca]

CONCLUSION

In this book, the topics of premarital sex and love, and a number of related issues, have been treated quite comprehensively, in the light of human experience and following Jesus. In concluding this book, I do not intend to repeat all of the conclusions presented in the book, but only to highlight a number of the main points.

In order to find real fulfillment, one needs to make good choices and act responsibly. Among other things, this involves learning to appreciate and respond properly to the important values involved in human love and sexuality.(see Ch. 1). According to the Christian heritage (cf. the Bible, some of the best theologians of the Christian tradition, and Catholic teachings - see Chs. 2-4), human sexual relations can only be a proper expression of love in marriage. All human persons, however, including those who will get married in the future or who will never get married, are called to grow in a properly ordered love of God, oneself and others. These conclusions are supported by human experience, a sound anthropology and an integral understanding of the Christian vision and vocation (see Ch. 5).

In Chapters 6 and 7 we considered a number of contemporary arguments raised both against and for premarital sexual intercourse. One of the conclusions presented is that this is a kind of behavior that is always wrong to choose. In the light of both human experience and Christian faith, there are many reasons for concluding that voluntary premarital sexual intercourse violates a properly ordered love of oneself, one's partner, other people and God. Deliberately engaging in

premarital sexual activity, including masturbation and premarital petting (see Ch. 8.A-B), is contrary to integral human fulfillment. There are also many real advantages to waiting until marriage to have sexual relations. Since the reality is that many people today have not waited until they are properly married to begin sexual relations, the themes and realities of forgiveness, healing, 'restored virginity', and hope are vitally important (see Ch. 6.K).

A healthy, balanced and holistic response to the many problems associated with premarital sex, however, involves much more than simply promoting premarital sexual abstinence. A proper response includes growing in love of God, oneself and others, and helping others to do the same, with the help of God who wants to fill our hearts more and more with his marvelous love (cf. Rm 5:5). To emphasize this point, I have included the word love in the title of this book. I have also treated a number of issues relevant to growing in love during the premarital stage of life: the proper expression of love and affection in premarital relationships; how to respond to sexual abuse and violence; friendship and dating; choosing a marriage partner; preparation for marriage; celibacy; and counseling, pastoral action, education in human sexuality and chastity, and spirituality (see Chs. VIII.B-IX.E). I ended the last chapter of this book with a section on spirituality, since among other things, I believe that "with God nothing will be impossible."(Lk 1:37 RSV)