

***What a Modern Catholic Believes about Sex.* Eugene C. Kennedy. Chicago: Thomas More Association, 1971.**

Introduction: What the Church meant to tell you about sex but never got around to it

Moral reference: "Sex is integral to man and must be seen in the light of his relationship to himself and to other persons."

"Listen to the Spirit as it speaks in the e4xperience of good people who constitute the Christian community and who want to do the right thing in their personal lives."

A reliable moral principle comes out of the interaction of people who are mature in the judgment of most men and who earnestly try, within the admittedly limited human condition, to make moral decisions which enlarge themselves as persons."

One's image of man is at the heart of his reflections about sexuality.

Presently there are two common inadequate models:

1. Superficial notion of man as a unity but with little depth in either his understanding or in his emotional life ('marathon weekend').
2. Behavior modification: man can be relieved of his hang-ups with no recourse to any kind of deep self-search.

"Morality that does not sense man's profound meaning is no morality at all and, if it seems liberating in one generation, it may be enslaving in the next."

The Christian vision of man sees human sexuality as integral to his full human presence in the world; it is linked with the religious dimension of personality which, when it is fully developed, gives man a viewpoint from which he can see himself and judge his behavior in terms of whether it contributes to his own growth and to that of his neighbor.

"Christian moral judgment leads men to life; the journey to new life is the journey to resurrection and there is no way to get there without facing the thousand deaths of love and life.

Chapter ONE: There Were No Good Old Days

"There is nothing, literally nothing new under the sun as far as sexual behavior goes. The big difference is that now it is in fact under the sun."

Healthy aspects of the present:

- More profound understanding of marriage as centered on the personal relationship between man and woman.
- Deeper understanding of sexuality.
- Deeper appreciation of women.

“... a movement away from sexuality as an animal activity confined to certain aspects of the body toward an understanding of sexuality as a human activity symbolizing and expressing the union of persons.”

There is at least a struggle toward a more informed Christian sexual ethic.

“We must see man’s struggle for sexual integrity in the context of his overall personal growth.”

“New expressions of Christian morality have moved away from the application of a grid of categorized decisions based on purely theoretical considerations of man’s behavior. The Christian community now carefully examines human experience with an effort to be sensitive to the individual’s concrete moral problems.

The morally concerned must work to understand his obligations in the ever-shifting real situations of his life.

Many of man’s sexual activities could better be understood as immature than as immoral – scales of growth rather than scales of right and wrong.

The difficulty lies in the temptation to rationalize away practically everything on psychological grounds.

For example, with regard to soldiers’ sexual activity: “A compassionate understanding of the ways that men adjust and try to make sense out of life when their days are full of death is far more important than applying a moral textbook’s categories to men at war.”

“Unless we assist man to work through the immature stages of growth, he can never really arrive at the fully developed moral choice that is possible only with psychological maturity.”

Two contemporary approaches to understanding man’s sexuality in a historical and psychological context:

1. Self-centered approaches to understanding man’s sexuality in a historical and psychological context:

This does not view man according to the dimensions of his growth potential.

2. Person-centered approach: tries to interpret all behavior in relationship to the ultimate meaning of the person.

Understands human growth as being rooted in relationships with other persons.

Love, involving responsibility for each other, becomes the real measure of morality.

“The present deepest moral choice is whether man will choose fullness of life, with all the intimate moral problems associated with concrete reality, or whether he will choose something less than this and, therefore, something less than what is appropriate for him as a human person. The Church’s task is to bring an essential understanding of the person and his destiny to man together with a determination to struggle compassionately with him as he makes these decisions about his future.”

Chapter TWO: Sex and the Growing Person

In order to re-integrate his sexuality as a living aspect of man in healthy relationship to himself and to his neighbor, one needs a fundamental sense of the Gospel values about man and an image of human personality that is sturdy and multidimensioned enough to reflect what he himself is truly like.

The essential concept is growth: "nothing is truer of man than that he is born to be on the move, to make his way through a series of increasingly demanding relationship to the fullness of his personality."

When we sense the stages of man's passage through life and see his sexuality veined into his personality at every moment, we are able to understand sexual difficulties in relationship to man's overall development and relate our Gospel values to this process rather than to any isolated moment in it.

Erikson's stages of psycho-social development which relate growth to important persons in one's life and to specific crises which the individual must meet and work through serve as helpful descriptions of the developing human context in which man's sexuality is challenged, develops, and is expressed.

1. First year of life:

The way the mother relates to the child will determine in many ways the child's whole attitude of trust or mistrust of the world around him.

This first stance of trust or mistrust will profoundly affect the person's ability to express sexuality in a healthy and appropriate manner.

2. Through the second year:

Child develops enough to control his own movements; if the parents do not allow the child to do what he can do, he may be dominated by shame/doubt instead of a healthy sense of autonomy.

Much that is essential for impulse control is learned at this level.

3. From three to six:

Related to basic family.

Achievement of a sense of initiative (freedom to move forward confidently) which will animate his attitude of direction and purpose in life.

Child's apprehension of what it means to set and achieve a goal.

4. From six to puberty:

Moves into the wider arena of the neighborhood and the school.

A sense of industry (*contra* inferiority).

Sense of confidence in himself.

5. Adolescence:

Develops either a sense of unique self, or experiences confusion because of the diffuse quality of self-understanding.

Peer groups and leadership figures become important.

Begins to deal with profound human values that touch on the way he presents himself to the world and to other persons.

Develops a sense of fidelity and devotion to others.

6. Early adult:

He must learn the meaning of intimacy as he moves either closer to others in friendship and love, or away from them in some kind of psychological isolation.

7. Young and middle adult:

Individual joins himself with another for the creative tasks of building a family and passing life and growth on to others.

Generativity versus self-absorption.

Active and genuine concern for the generations that follow.

8. Later adult:

Putting one's life together in a reflective way.

Viewing life with a sense of integrity, or a possible sense of despair.

Sex is integrally involved in this framework of human growth.

One's sexual activity cannot be understood unless you can see very deeply into the individual's life history.

Our fundamental moral concern must be with the setting of a person's life, with the circumstances in which he gets his first ideas about himself, life, and the whole set of moral values that will define his style of relating to other people.

"A Catholic's concern is with developing a world that lives by the Gospel values that, in the long run, alone can insure the human family of an environment in which it can achieve personal and moral maturity. And Christian sexual morality must be rooted in this human setting if it is to have any reliability and consistency."