

# PASTORAL LETTER

(BRIEF VERSION)

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BISHOP OF GOZO

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY INTO HEAVEN

2014



## Beautiful Love

(The Gospel of Sexuality)

**Although everyone wants to be happy, not everyone seeks contentment in the same way. The ways we choose to be happy are varied. This explains why in the world some are happy and others are not.**

Among those persons that are not happy there are those who had some bad experience related to sexuality. I felt that I should say something about this subject because the Church has what I call " the Gospel of Sexuality". But I am aware of the anguished cry of a number of adolescents and youths who, despite their belief that in their search for happiness they have a license to experiment in their personal relationship, are experiencing a kind of emptiness. I hear also the pain of diverse married couples who found that their sexual relations were causing them to drift apart from each other, rather than helping them to grow closer in their intimacy. I am also conscious of the fact that sexuality bothers also unmarried people, not excluding those who have chosen celibacy for the sake of God's Kingdom.

### **Sexuality as the language of love.**

It is a well-known fact that man cannot live without love. Sexuality is one of the languages of love. No sexual activity can be genuine if love is not its driving force. In fact, there is no trace of love in rape, prostitution and paedophilia. Even the business of pornography, such as the services sold through electronic sites, makes a parody of love.

As we say for all the words we use, the language of love can be false also. This language becomes a fraudulent and a lie when the sentiments it communicates are not genuine. Jesus did not scold Judas because he "sold" him but because, in order to betray him, Judas used the language of love (the kiss) empty of its true meaning, and so a travesty of communication. Therefore, a couple that seeks to unite

physically without the context of love would be denuding sexuality of its genuine significance.

Love and sexuality are noble and beautiful aspects of mankind. Perhaps we need to discover more about this link between "beautiful love" and sexuality.

### **Sexuality based on relationships and values**

According to a national study recently conducted by Dar Guzeppa Debono, it appears that in general disordered sexual behaviour among our adolescents is a symptom of lack of love they experience in the family, the school and the society, in a general sense. In a society that takes advantage of their suffering by offering them falsely facile solutions, they end up descending into sexual activity which not only puts their health at risk, but is of psychological and sentimental harm to themselves and to others.

The study mentioned above shows that the majority of our sons and daughters associate important values with sexual activity. Many of our teenagers determine that they would not indulge in sexual activity before they meet that person they wish to live with or marry. It is on these values that the good news of the Gospel needs to be spread for the beauty of human sexuality to flourish.

### **Christ saved the whole man**

We should help our sons and daughters to ensure that their good desires become a reality in their lives. We must tell them that true love is possible because Christ became man, assumed human sexuality and redeemed it. With his help we can truly love each other, and a man and a woman are capable of loving each other for ever.

### **Sexual Education**

We need to be protagonists in the sexual education of our

children. From the above-mentioned study, the value of the efforts of the educators in our schools is evident. However, it is a fact that our adolescents acquire a lot of information about sex from friends and the communication media, including the internet. One can understand the difficulty of parents to live up to their calling as the main educators of their offspring.

Genuine education in sexuality and love demands formation for chastity. Although nowadays, chastity is not a subject for discussion in the town square, I know of some youths and engaged or married couples that practise it. Chastity does not mean that one abstains from having a sexual relation, or that one abhors sexual love, but that one "controls one's passions and enjoy peace". It is true that chastity demands sacrifice, but the sacrifice is a way leading to happiness.

In the commitment for our children to receive valid education regarding sexuality

and love, I cannot omit to praise the initiatives that Dar Guzeppa Debono, together with the schools in our island, are taking in this subject. Our children expect us to educate them about true and responsible love. It is important that in dealing with so delicate a subject we must avoid lies or half truths. The educational proposal should include the complete truth about human sexuality. When sexual education offers only scientific and technical knowledge about sex, the psychological, affective, social and spiritual aspects of the person are being ignored, and teaching is incomplete.

### **The Grammar of Sexuality**

Since sexuality is the language of love, it has, like every other language, a grammar of its own, that is, the moral rules. It is necessary for us to be very prudent when we talk about the moral responsibility of the person, because although one cannot ignore the moral

principles that help us live this dimension of sexuality in an authentic way, each person responds morally according to how much that person has managed to make his/her own the said grammar. Therefore, for those who, for some reason or other, have not embraced this grammar - while one remains hopeful that eventually they convince themselves and apply these rules - it is necessary that, at the same time, there will be personalised accompaniment so that the gravity of the mistakes they make is minimised.

I appeal to the People of God to feel the pressure of the responsibility we have to inform ourselves more to spread the Gospel of Sexuality to the man of this age. It is important that the word of Truth is

accompanied by a word of Mercy, so that the teaching of the Church about human sexuality is delivered truly as the Good News, more than a string of condemnations that discourage man who struggles daily with his weakness.

During the solemnity of Saint Mary, our eyes rest on the Virgin Mary Assumed into Heaven soul and body, on Her who is the Mother of Beautiful Love (Sir 24:18), that is Jesus Christ. We pray through the intercession of the Assumed so that, enchanted by this Beautiful Love, as a Church we confront the challenges of our time and spread with Christian optimism the love of God for every person, that Love that makes him capable of living the beauty of human sexuality.

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*This is a summary of the Pastoral Letter which will be delivered in homes and will be available on the Diocesan Website.*

*The frontispiece: <http://catholicexchange.com/eucharist-and-theology-of-the-body>.*