14 July, 2000

To Members of the Society of the Holy Trinity, and to other Colleagues:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Holy Ministry,

Maybe you have heard me say that we ought not let our work and prayer be dominated by ecclesiastical "current events". However, some crises are so persistent and reach so deep into our common life that they require response. As the press continues in a number of Christian denominations to alter the Church's teaching concerning homosexual behavior, and especially in light of a number of recent assembly memorials in ELCA judicatories, I wish to speak to you about this in the spirit of our common commitments in the Rule (Chs. II:10, & Ch. IV), trying to fulfill my responsibility as the Senior (Rule, Ch. 9. 7). I have had to think on this topic more than I wish. I have been reading and thinking about it a long time, since late-night conversations with my gay roommate in college (in 1972!). Some, but not all, of what I have written here repeats what I have written before in the ALPB tract series on sexual ethics. The sections below do not form a linear argument. Rather, they come at the question from many sides. It is my experience that pastors are often not aware of the many-sided aspects of the questions. I hope my reflections help you to live and teach faithfully in the face of cultural pressures.

This letter is not primarily about strategies of "pastoral care" of Christians who call themselves "gay" or "lesbian," or who experience strong same-sex desire, or who are in illicit sexual relationships. It certainly is about pastoral care, however, if such care includes teaching and preaching the law and gospel of God. There is marvelous therapeutic power in the gospel to change lives and to heal us at last. Pastoral wisdom will seek every technique possible to apply this therapy. But we fall short of this radical therapy if erroneous teaching or ethical half-truths confirm us self-deceived sinners in our sins. This letter has to do primarily with ethical discernment and faithful teaching about sexual ethics.

I hope I have said nothing original—albeit these days the historical and ecumenical teaching of the Church will sound strangely novel to many. At the end there is a list of sources cited for those who want it. The biblical references throughout are not decoration. I have written with these texts sounding in my mind. I have written also with the crucifix before me since, after all, the immolation of the body of our Lord Jesus, and its resurrection with the marks of his passion, are the center of our baptismal ethic.

CONCERNING HOMO-GENITAL LOVE & SAME SEX "UNIONS"

A Darkened Eye? (Matt. 7:22-23)…

I am afraid that with regard to sexual ethics, within the Lutheran community and beyond, our vision is skewed. We are so compromised by our pastoral silence regarding sexual behavior, so embarrassed by our personal failures, so jaded by the general ethical chaos, that clarity or courage on the matter of homosexuality seems out of reach. I need not pile up too many examples. Pastors and bishops divorce and re-marry, while all seem to be in tacit agreement that this is simply a private matter unrelated to the health of Christ's Body the Church. Unmarried men and women in our parishes "live together" without benefit either of marriage or of pastoral or communal discipline. Confirmation students speak of

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sex as an activity unto itself on the assumption that marriage is but one of many contexts for "having sex". The "need" for sexual expression, the quasi-religious status granted to romantic love, the "right" to happiness, the shrinking of marriage down to the single dimension of mutual happiness, the general separation of sexual love from fecundity, the naturalization of lust: these cultural orthodoxies and influences hem us in. The call to chastity can be heard only as the imposing of a cruel and unusual punishment.

Our ethical disorientation cannot be blamed entirely on the libertinism of the 1960s. It goes farther back. In the 1940s, in a litany of confession that he recommended to the Lutheran churches of his time, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:

> The Church confesses that she has found no word of advice and assistance in the face of the dissolution of all order in the relation between the sexes. She has found no strong and effective answer to the contempt for chastity and to the proclamation of sexual libertinism. All she has achieved has been an occasional expression of moral indignation. She has thus rendered herself guilty of the loss of the purity and soundness of youth. She has failed to proclaim with sufficient emphasis that our bodies belong to the Body of Christ.

One of the perils of speaking against homosexual behavior is that people may think you have an interest in upholding the present heterosexual status quo. If you use words like chastity, self-restraint, or self-sacrifice in speaking about same-sex love, you will be accused of imposing a double standard. And, given the compromised state of pastoral guidance in sexual ethics, you *will* be doing so. For this reason, there can be no honest search for truth without the open acknowledgment of how far from a biblical and ecumenical ethic we have strayed all across the whole range of sexual ethics.

The darkening of the eye, the incapacity or the loss of will to discern light from darkness in ethical and spiritual matters, is a frightening and dehumanizing work of Sin. There is no rescue from this state apart from bearing the shame of the searchlight of God's judgment in honest repentance. The signs are not hopeful for such corporate confession, but we must pray for it, beginning in our own lives and in the congregations we serve.

Linguistic Slums, Conceptual Swamps…

We are crippled also in our public deliberation about homosexuality by the debasing of language, the emptying out of words, the tyranny of sloganism, the retreat into abstractions. It has to be said that the discussion within our churches of homogenital love has not reached a very high conceptual level. The proposal for change is not plainly spoken; it relies too much on undefined terms and a refusal to patiently entertain hard questions. No one seems to want to follow his or her own thoughts where they lead. Even clear disagreement is hard to come by.

We are awash in a lake of catch-phrases. Here are but a few. "Welcoming gay and lesbian Christians"— what do the words mean on the lips of homosexual advocates if they do not mean the approval of "self-affirmation" in homosexual love or the declaration that the matter is nobody else's business? "Committed monogamous relationships"—does the notion of monogamy hold together at all except in the context of the two sexes? "Sexual orientation"—how many might there be? What makes us so eager to grasp this unsubstantiated scientific theory as a conceptual "silver bullet" to slay an inconvenient ethical tradition? Does it not lead to entire nonsense, to conclusions no Christian wishes to draw, if we lump all "givens" together (skin color, left-handedness, the experience of same sex attraction, proneness to depression…) declare them "natural," and judge them all ethically neutral or even as unambiguous signs of God's creative intention? What do we mean when we call an action "natural" since the concept is notoriously slippery?

The forgiveness of sinners, the tireless love of God, reconciliation in Christ, justification by

grace: should we not recoil with disgust when these holy words are thrown about as slogans to short-cut honest ethical struggle and deliberation? The debasing of words is the debasing of truth itself. Words, said Abraham Heschel, are the fortress of the spirit, but we have made them slums.

Selective Compassion…

The compassion of God is salvation for us sinners. In compassion God pays the price for our sins and alleviates their temporal and eternal consequences. What God's compassion does not do is to change the *content* of God's law.

The compassion of one sinner for another is at the heart of our Christian ethic. A girl or boy, a man or woman, whose sexual desires lead to loneliness, conflict of conscience, or rejection, needs our compassion. However, the relationship between sexual ethics and the call to compassion is more complicated than the sexual revisionists perceive.

I have served for years among poor people in inner cities. I know of no ethical issue in our culture more relevant to the daily well-being of poor people than sexual behavior and the related matter of family relationships. In inner cities you have to be blind not to see that personal sexual ethics are a matter of life and death. My county has one of the highest per capita cases of AIDs in the country. Where I live the gay and lesbian cause has made great headway. For years I have watched the permissive, self-expressionist ethic of the elite trickle down into the lives of poor people, causing enormous suffering. Homosexual advocacy in our society and in our churches rides the wider wave of this sexual self-expressionism; there is no doubt about that. It changes very little when the revisionist, maybe with all honest intention, proposes to graft on to this ethic some tissue of Christian discipline. The logic of the ethic is inherently experiential, self-expressive, individualistic, and subjectivist. It makes for a world in which you are entitled to seek fulfillment based upon your experienced needs, where you are obligated to "be true to yourself," and where sexual desire is self-authenticating as long as you mean no harm. In this world your body is your own tool for your own happiness. This world is an attractive one to poor people too. But they cannot pay for their mistakes. It turns out to be a world of self-dissolution and misery. It is a bad sign when so well-funded a social liberation movement is so blind to the social implications of the "freedom" it seeks.

At any rate, in the end, compassion withers when it becomes a free-floating ethical injunction, an evasion of hard moral judgments. Specifically *Christian* compassion simply has no authority whatsoever to change the *content* (as opposed to the *use*) of the law of God. Can a Christian pastor ever regard it as compassionate to encourage another to disobey the law of God?

Ecumenism & the New Sectarianism from the "Left"…

I speak and think about this as one under vows, as do you. The point is obvious enough, but these days it needs repeating. By my ordination vows, I am authorized to teach (on this or any other subject) from the perspective of the Bible, the Catholic Faith, and the Lutheran Confessions. I am not authorized to speak from any other perspective. The second term above, "Catholic Faith," is important. I take it that "catholic" means at least three things. (1) I am bound to learn, interpret Scripture, and speak in continuity with the Church across time and place. The voices of the past are not to be thoughtlessly mimicked, but they are part of the conversation. (2) I want to speak in patient conversation and fellowship with the wider Church on earth in the present—with Lutherans of other cultures, with Roman Catholics and Orthodox (who together make up the bulk of the baptized of the past and the present), and with Protestants of various heritages. (3) I am bound to seek a catholic "depth" in my learning and thinking. I must ask how it is that a given ethical injunction or proscription coheres or does not cohere with the center of Christian faith. Without this ecumenism of mind and heart, without this ecumenism of depth, official ecumenism changes only appearances.

A sectarian (1) is committed to the dominance over the past of present experience, interpretation, and insight. This means the sectarian is usually recasting the Faith uncritically in a current cultural mold (whether "conservative" or "liberal"). (2) A sectarian stands self-righteously in a largely enclosed circle over against the historic church, past and present, about which he remains largely ignorant, convinced of its essential corruption. (3) A sectarian clings to a simplistic system of reform, elevating this or that "truth" one-sidedly, without much sense of the wholeness of Christian teaching. Sectarians are "high" on half-truths.

Were a North American Lutheran denomination to publicly and unilaterally approve homosexual behaviors and "unions" it would be acting with a sectarian heart and mind, ignoring an unbroken exegetical and theological consensus reaching to the present moment. It would be knowingly scandalizing almost the entire Church of Christ in almost any of its expressions. It would be mistaking a small but noisy windstorm among a diminishing sector of Western "liberal" protestants for the breath of the Holy Spirit. It would be doing so at a time when throughout its own denominational ranks there is a desperate lack of catholic depth or coherence with regard to ethics. Of course, the sectarian heart is undisturbed by such a prospect.

Were an ordained Lutheran pastor to purport to bless or publicly approve homo-erotic love, he or she would have violated the ordination vows.

Exegesis…

Christian opposition to homosexual behavior is not primarily a matter of proof texts. If there were in the NT no explicit prohibition of homosexual acts, the historic stance of the Church would surely not be different. After all, the NT writings lack any explicit word against, say, bestiality or polygamy (since 1 Tim 3:2 likely deals with widowed elders). A biblical sexual ethic coheres in the doctrine of creation and the place of marriage in the created order.

As it happens however, there are clear biblical prohibitions against same sex genital activity in both the Old and New Testaments—no doubt because various forms of homosexual love were present in the ancient world. Since a lot of labor, and not a little exegetical slight of hand, has gone into neutralizing these prohibitions, it is important to keep repeating the obvious. "[W]e may take it for granted that the Bible and the Christian tradition following it unambiguously rejects genital sexual relations between people of the same gender as it was known to them in their day. Any attempt to deny that would be pure sophistry" (G. Forde, Lutheran Quarterly, Spring, 1995, p.16). The push for change, therefore, has to take the form of asserting that modern insights about "orientation" and modern experience of homosexuality teach us that these texts do not mean what everybody always thought they meant. If only Paul, for example, had had the knowledge we have, and had he known about "mature, committed, same-gender sexual love," his evaluation of homosexuality would have been different: so goes the now familiar argument. The question before the churches is whether this surmise is sufficient to alter the long-standing biblical tradition.

I will comment about this argument only briefly, and only in relation to Romans 1:24-27, the passage in the NT that is most sweeping in its condemnation of homosexuality and that most clearly sets this condemnation within a broad theological/ethical context. Nothing in the language or the argument indicates that Paul has in mind only pederasty or prostitution. Indeed, Paul's sweep is very wide. The very fact that it is not uncommon in the human community that men and women have given up "natural" sexual intercourse for same-sex passion, is a consequence of self-worship and the abandonment of the will of the creator. The words "nature" and "natural" in this text have a clear meaning. They do not mean: "what we find common in nature or in human experience." They mean simply: "according to the will and design of the Creator." No doubt, Paul was well aware that greed, covetousness, malice, and heterosexual lust also are "natural" in the sense that these sins are experientially common and compelling. But all are "unnatural" as far as the Creator's will is concerned. As is clear by his own

words, Paul is well aware that there are those who experience a consuming passion (v. 27) for another of the same gender. Would it in any way change his evaluation if he were faced with the possibility that some biological component or hereditary "orientation" lay at the base of this passion? Is it possible even to imagine St. Paul as a biological determinist? This is the one who wrote: "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you…seeing that you have put off the old *nature* with its practices and have put on the new *nature*, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of the its creator" (Col. 3:5, 10, my italics).

The Iconic Role of Marriage…

In the Bible, and so in the Christian vision, marriage is not simply one item on a list of ethical issues. Rather, marriage has what may be called an "iconic" place in the doctrine of Creation and Redemption. The Bible has no doctrine of sexuality; it has rather a doctrine of marriage, apart from which human sexuality is demonic and idolatrous.

The Bible begins and ends with a marriage (Gen. 1:26ff; Rev. 21:2). The mystery of the male-female union is fundamental to the doctrine of creation and to a biblical understanding of the image of God in the human being. The biblical story reports the polygamy of the patriarchs and the kings. But the late and sophisticated creation texts in Genesis reflect Israel's rejection of polygamy. Jesus not only affirms this but interprets it with uncompromising rigor, granting marriage a dignity rooted in the Creator's purposes. Marriage is "from the beginning of creation" (Mk. 9: 6), prior to the Mosaic Law, prior to the advent of salvation history, prior to the "Fall". According to Jewish and Christian teaching, monogamous marriage does not belong to a peculiarly Jewish or Christian ethic. It is the universal gift for the universal good. It is no imposition of an arbitrary ethic on the human community, as any historical survey of the history of marriage in many cultures demonstrates.

There is no text in the Bible that grants even a hint of approval of sexual activity outside marriage. And no aspect of what Luther called the "civil use" of the Law is more fundamental to the biblical vision or its relevance to human well-being. Denis Prager is not the only one to argue powerfully that the biblical prohibition of non-marital sex "quite simply made the creation of Western civilization possible."

In this vision, marriage is unalterably "heterosexual". But that terminology is pale, inadequate to the biblical ethic. It is better to say that the created mystery of our humanity, our being created as male and female, defines marriage entirely. This is because (1) only this form of sexual coupling is fruitful for new life, giving human love a privileged place in God's creation of human life and in the care of the world; and (2) only this love "sacramentalizes" in the natural order the dynamic of "like-but-unlike" that is the mystery of communion. This teaching in one form or another has been recognized to demand the rejection of homosexual love from the Church Fathers to the present—including in recent years not only in official Roman Catholic teaching, but also in the teaching of Barth, Bonhoeffer, Pannenberg, Jenson, and many others.

I must make a point here that is so basic that it has remained largely an unspoken assumption and hardly ever comes to the front of our minds. *Outside of a "heterosexual" scheme, insistence on monogamy is at best a "cut flower" ethic and at worst a ruse*. The restriction to two in marriage is not a rule that stands independently. It derives from the fact that there are only two sexes (with the implication of this fact that every child can have, strictly speaking, only one mother and one father). In homosexual love, why would not a three-way "committed relationship" pass the revisionist standards of acceptance, especially if one or more of the partners claims a "bisexual orientation". Advocates within the Church, whether because of a conscious strategy or through a naïve failure to follow their own reasoning to its end, rarely draw such conclusions out loud. In the wider "gay community" there is more honesty about the inherent conflict between monogamous marriage and the experiential "logic" of homosexual love.

In the largest sectors of the Church, man-woman marriage is regarded as a sacrament. But one does not have to embrace the whole sacramental teaching of Rome or Eastern Orthodoxy to acknowledge the "sacramental" character of marriage. Gerhard Forde (hardly the most Rome-ward of Lutherans) has written that since sexual activity can never be valued only as an end in itself, or only as a means to individual happiness, it has to find its fuller value in a higher purpose. Sexual love

> can only signal participation in larger reality. One should say, I believe, that it is a symbolic activity in Paul Tillich's sense of symbol as participating in the reality which it symbolizes. The sexual activity [within marriage] itself symbolizes and participates in the great mystery of unity encompassed by the biblical calling that the 'two shall become one flesh.' It is even said to be a unity akin to that between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31-32).

A church that would attempt to set up some sort of parallel structure to heterosexual marriage for sexual "union" would have simply lost this "thick description" of the meaning of marriage.

In the light of the clear biblical prohibitions, and what I have called the "iconic" place of male-female marriage in the Bible, it is hard to side-step W. Pannenberg's plain-spoken conclusion:

> Those who would press the Church to change the norm of her teaching in this question must understand that they press the Church toward schism. For a Church which allows itself to be pushed to regard homosexual activity as no longer a departure from the biblical norm and to recognize homosexual partnerships as a form of personal relationships equivalent to marriage would no longer stand on the foundation of the Scripture but rather in opposition to its unanimous witness. A church that takes such a step has thereby ceased to be an evangelical church in the tradition of the Lutheran Reformation.

The Destiny of the Baptized Body, the Challenge of Consecrated Chastity…

The Christian sexual ethic it not determined entirely by the Law, even God's law concerning marriage. It is determined also by the gospel. Baptism has radical ethical implications for our bodies. This includes much more than sexual behavior, but it does include it.

Belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ may be confessed in several short-hand sentences. One of them is: "I believe in the resurrection of the body". The whole end of redemption, the glory which forgiveness makes sure, the glory that is our destiny, can be summarily characterized in this way by Paul: "the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:23). This proclamation is providentially relevant to our culture's preoccupation with the human body. It is also a place where modern philosophical and scientific insights meet on friendly terms with biblical anthropology and the world evoked by the sacramental life and worship of the Church. The Bible assumes what modern learning also insists upon: the complete integration of the body in a person's identity.

Not only in the resurrection narratives, where attention to the bodily aspects is so intentional (Lk. 24:39-43; John 20:17, 24ff), but in many NT texts, it is promised that the human body "participates" in the Redemption wrought by Christ (Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:42ff; Phil. 3:21). There is, of course, the obverse side of this mystery. The cure assumes the diagnosis that the body (speaking collectively and individually) is profoundly implicated in the work of sin. We are "captive to the law of sin which dwells in [our] members" (Romans 7: 23). The Christian knows that "my experience of my body" is profoundly faulty. The body also comes under judgment "so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil" (1 Cor. 5:1)).

This explains the urgency in certain biblical passages about bodily discipline (Matt. 10:28; 2 Cor 9:27). The urgency of the baptismal ethic in Romans 6:12 and 12:1 is but the reflection of the body's high destiny through the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" (1 Cor. 6:15).

The promise of the glorification of the body involves one very radical implication, one absolutely new thing in comparison with the OT ethic. With the gospel destiny of the body comes the eschatological relativizing of the command of God "to be fruitful and multiply" and the whole matter of sexual coupling that goes with it. In other words, it is assumed by the apostolic witness that even our need and desire for sexual love, even the sacred duty to propagate new life may be freely given up for the sake of the coming kingdom. Because, after all, "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Matt. 22:30). Further, this offering of the self does not compromise the fulfillment of the bodily life or one's vocation as human person. This ethic brings radical social and relational implications, especially for women.

Any view of the human person that implies that "having sex" is fundamental to the individual's ultimate well-being, or that regards sexual renunciation as dehumanizing, has lost the grandeur of the gospel's promise concerning the human body (and the radical ethic that goes with that promise).

Of course, this radical disciplining of the body in anticipation of the eschatological redemption is to be lived out in its own way also *within* the created good of marriage. Chastity within the bond of marriage also calls for new circumscriptions and freedoms—most obviously in the indissolubility of the vow, in Jesus' prohibition of divorce and absolute proscription of remarriage after divorce, but also in the "enrollment" of widows (1 Tim. 5:9ff) and in the pastoral rule that presbyters or bishops are not to re-marry after the death of a spouse (1Tim. 3:2). Not only this, but Jesus, whose Word raises so high the created dignity of marriage, also makes clear that even loyalty to a spouse must not supersede fidelity to the coming kingdom (Lk. 18:29-30).

Even so high a gift as sexual love in marriage and the founding of a family—perhaps the highest of *created* goods in the biblical vision—is not the ultimate fulfillment of our bodily life. The absence of such love (by circumstance or by choice) may cause great suffering in our lives, but it is no threat to one's true destiny and fulfillment in God or to one's human worth or baptismal vocation in the present life. Where we can, we ought to do our best to alleviate such suffering and loneliness. But we must not compromise the prayer, "your will be done…" for the sake of even a great temporal good.

The gospel promises that consecrated loneliness can bear joyful spiritual fruit (Lk. 18:29-30). It can be (or can become) even a "gift" for the sake of the gospel and the church (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:7). Pastors must not withhold this promise of the gospel from those who are called to remain celibate by the circumstances of their lives—by illness, physical mutilation, mental handicap, a miserable marriage, divorce, unattractiveness, bad luck in relationships, or sexual "orientation". After all, many men and women will come under your pastoral care who for one reason or another cannot or ought not to marry or re-marry. We fail them as pastors and spiritual directors, we abandon them to the dominating screams of their loneliness, we sell their baptismal vocation short, if we withhold from them the promise and challenge of such consecrated singleness.

The Body of Jesus…

Especially we must not withhold from the lonely the sacrificial offering of the body of Jesus! In Christian history, virginity has sometimes been honored to the detriment of the dignity of marriage. Luther's defense of marriage and his exposure of the excesses of "holy virginity" once served well the cause of gospel freedom. But what has rendered large sectors of the contemporary church insensitive, even blind, to the ethical and vocational relevance of the celibacy of Jesus? What sort of faith in the Incarnation is it that takes the chastity of Jesus as an uninteresting "accident"? The body born of Mary, the body whose physical presence was sheer joy to Peter, John, Mary and the others, never experienced sexual love. The body that hung on the cross was the body of a virgin. The risen and ascended body, to whose glory our present "body of humiliation" will soon be conformed (Phil. 3:21), was never "sexually fulfilled," nor was it ever the instrument of another's sexual "fulfillment." Shall we withhold from those

who are barred from sexual love the consecrating and creative solidarity with the chastity of their Lord?

By grace, no experiential poverty, no physical inadequacy or disqualification or unfulfilled psycho-somatic longing can finally compromise the fullness of the *bodily life* which is our destiny in Christ. The joys of a completed human communion—of which sexual love is a high but temporal anticipation, is the heritage of all the baptized. Only when our hope for happiness is set on *nothing less* than this glorious fulfillment of our bodily natures, can we joyfully submit to the life-saving surgical and therapeutic rigors of the gospel ethic (Matt. 6:29).

In our common work and prayer:

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Ps. On the reverence for language and truthful speech: Abraham Heschel's "The Jewish Notion of God and Christian Renewal" in *Theology of Renewal, Herder and Herder, 1968*; Joseph Pieper's profound analysis of sophistry in *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power*, Ignatius Press; and D. Bonhoeffer's "Telling the Truth" in his *Ethics*, Collier Books edition, 1986, pp. 363ff. For the quote from Bonhoeffer on page 2: *Ethics*, p. 117. On the relation of compassion and the "uses" of the law of God, and the extended quote from G. Forde: "Law and Sexual Behavior" in *Lutheran Quarterly*, Spring, 1995. On the theology of marriage and its place in the Christian ethical vision of life, its inherently male/female structure, and its relation to the "image of God"—Edward Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, Sheed and Ward, 1965; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2 and Barth's *Ethics*, Seabury Press, 1981, pp. 182-83; Robert W. Jensen's *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, Oxford U. Press, 1981, pp.88-89; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Section II, Article 6, "The Sixth Commandment". On the schismatic implications and exegetical considerations—W. Pannenberg, "You May Not Lie with a Male" in *Lutheran Forum*, February, 1996, pp. 28-29. For my brief ethical evaluation of the notion of sexual orientation—"Is This the Way God Made Me?" ALPB, 2000. For an over-all and accessible treatment of the moral issue in a contemporary context: Thomas E. Schmidt, *Strait & Narrow*: *Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*, Intervarsity Press, 1995. For a traditional but highly engaging treatment of the role of consecrated virginity as a witness to the coming Kingdom of Christ: Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life, Ignatius Press, 1983, pp.183-364.* To read this book in conversation with William Lazareth's *Luther on the Christian Home*, Fortress, 1960, takes you deep into the relation of human sexuality to Christian vocation. On the profound respect for the human body and the ethical implications of its eschatological redemption: Chapter IV in Bonhoeffer's *Ethics*.