

July 24, 2022

Dear Friends,

One of the identifying characteristics of us as human beings is that we are people who ask questions. It is how we gain understanding and then knowledge and even wisdom. We ask so many questions and when we ask a question that another person doesn't like we often tend to push a little harder through their uncomfotability. I have personally asked more than my fair share of questions. Way more.

But there is another side to us in our humanity. It is the arena of the unasked question. Sometimes we sense that if we ask a particular question it will lead us into a realm that may be overwhelming to us, an arena that is beyond our ability to cope, a dimension of life that will present us with issues too difficult to deal with or beyond our ability to handle. And often enough, sensing the danger of the unexpected and the unanticipated, we choose not to ask the question. We may not like what we learn. It may force us to face what we would rather not face.

So a couple of question that I believe are just not ever asked. One is at the high end and rather profound. The other is at the level of the intensely personal. Is it a moral thing, a good thing, to split the atom? Huh? You know, when we split the atom and released power that devastated two entire cities at the end of World War II. There is debate about whether the bombs should have ever been dropped. The farther we get away from the actual event the greater is the agreement that they should not have been dropped. But that is not my question. My question is whether it is ever a moral or good thing to split the atom? Splitting the atom is not something that ever happens in nature, in the world of creation. The fusion of atoms happens. Witness the power and energy of our sun. But the splitting of the atom? Yes, we can do it. Yes, we have done it. But is it ever a good thing to do this? Is not all of our nuclear energy somehow based on this technology? I believe this is a very important question to be asked and debated and researched. And decided upon before we move further into technologies reliant on this.

Question number two. Is it ever a good thing, a moral thing to separate the interrelationship of the unitive and procreative aspects of human sexuality? Catholic teaching is that these two mutually interrelated aspects of our sexuality belong best together. That if we separate them from each other or eliminate one of the aspects of this dynamic intertwining that both dimensions—unitive and procreative—of our sexuality will be lost.

Since around 1960 when the birth control pill first received approval from the FDA and on into the early 1970's when the Sexual Revolution with its myriad ways of separating the conception of life issue from the sexual expression and conjugal activity, burst into full bloom around the world it is possible, with relative ease, to separate the unitive and the procreative dimensions of our sexuality. What has been the overall effect? Not just the contraceptive effect? Has marriage and family life blossomed into a much better and more caring reality? Are there fewer or more broken homes? Fewer or more children with learning and behavioral issues? More divorces or fewer divorces? More abortions or fewer abortions?

It has been sixty years now for the widespread use of contraceptives which in effect do separate the unitive and procreative dimensions of our sexual lives. And it has been over seventy-five years since the atom was split. I am not even staking out a moral position on either one although I have done my share of researching and reflecting and discussing. But it seems to me that as a whole, our society has decided that these are two questions better left unasked. And I challenge that. Especially right now. Let's not be afraid. Let us pray and then dive in. After all, we seek the truth. And it is only the truth that sets us free.

**In the peace of Christ,
Msgr. McHenry**