

# Assessing Kenyan Catholics' Understanding of Human Sexuality on the Basis of Individuals Associated with Shalom Center in Mitunguu: A Theological-Pastoral Perspective

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**Abstract:** The aim of the article is to discuss the understanding of human sexuality evinced by a group of Kenyan Catholics from the methodological perspective of pastoral theology, pointing out certain conclusions and pastoral suggestions. The article comprises the following parts: theological-normative, sociological, and theological-postulating. The first synthetically presents human sexuality from the point of view of the teaching of the Catholic Church, the second discusses methodology and results of the conducted empirical research, while the third presents conclusions and suggestions for pastoral care of families. The research results show that the majority of respondents shared Catholic convictions on sexuality. However, less than half of the respondents believed that love of a man and a woman serves to transmit life to children and that true love of a man and woman requires an indissoluble marriage. A quite high percentage of respondents did not agree that sexual intercourse aims to forge a psychological and spiritual bond between the partners. Women more rarely than men shared Catholic convictions on human sexuality and more rarely than men believed that a human being should not be used as if he/she was an object. This may show women's lack of access to education as well as a strong impact of local traditional cultural models on their understanding of the role of women. These results point to some missionary-pastoral challenges, especially as regards education of youth, spouses, and spouses-to-be, as well as that of clergy, catechists, and lay employees of family ministry.

**Keywords:** human sexuality, aims of sexuality, understanding of sexuality, calling to love, convictions of Catholics in Kenya, pastoral care of families, empirical research in theology

The Catholic Church considers the enhancement of the family and its evangelization as one of its most important undertakings in Africa. The inhabitants of the continent face a two-fold task in this respect. On the one hand, they should accept positive virtues of other societies, while on the other steadfastly protecting the values present in their own culture and tradition.<sup>1</sup> This undertaking, pointed out by Pope John Paul II in his exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, should also be read as an admonition directed to all members of the Church to familiarize themselves with family values

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 80.

present in the experiences of Africans, so that the believers all over the world could benefit from these.

In light of this, we are offering a scholarly reflection within practical theology on family ministry with a view to pointing out directions and forms of the pastoral care of the Catholic Church for marriages and families.<sup>2</sup> The present article focuses on the understanding of human sexuality by a group of Kenyan Catholics from a theological-pastoral perspective.<sup>3</sup> The article makes use of results of empirical research for theological purposes, in accord with the methodological premises of pastoral theology.<sup>4</sup> Its goal is to verify how human sexuality is understood by the selected group of Kenyan Catholics with the help of empirical research and to offer a theological interpretation of the results as well as formulate conclusions and suggestions for pastoral care of families. As a result, the article comprises three parts: the first synthetically discusses human sexuality in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church, the second shows the methodology and results of the empirical research conducted, while the third presents the outcomes and pastoral suggestions.

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<sup>2</sup> See Goleń – Kamiński – Pyżlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry*.

<sup>3</sup> It needs to be pointed out that family and conjugal life in Africa has been a subject of a broadly conceived sociological, theological, and pastoral project Churches' Research on Marriage in Africa (CROMIA), carried out between 1973 and 1976 under the leadership of Benezeri Kisembo, Laurenti Magesa, and Aylward Shorter. At least 2 500 respondents from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Lesotho, and Southern Africa participated in the survey. The project was of an ecumenical character and studied, among others, sexuality and sex education. The following churches and church communities took part in the project: Anglican, Church of God, United Church of Zambia, Congregationalist, Dutch Reformed, Greek Orthodox, Lesotho Evangelical Church, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Moravian, Presbyterian, Catholic, Society of Friends, Vapostori Independent, and Zionist Independent Churches. The project studied the following areas: statistics of church marriages and other relationships, divorces and new relationships, polygamy and widowhood, relationships between the spouses, fatherhood and sexuality, parent-children relationships and sex education, mixed and interdenominational marriages, population growth and responsible parenting, as well as relationships between a married couple and a community. Cf. Benezeri – Laurenti – Aylward, *African Christian Marriage*, 11–18.

<sup>4</sup> Ryszard Kamiński argues: "Making use of the results from anthropology, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, and medicine, among other scientific disciplines, the researcher in the field of family ministry cannot content himself only with analyses based on these secular disciplines. He must also interpret them theologically because God speaks to people through many decisive events and situations that have pastoral significance. In this interpretation, the first question is theological; the sociological, psychological, anthropological, and pedagogical issues then follow. In this sense, we can talk about the use of theological-psychological, theological-sociological, theological-pedagogical, and theological-historical methods in the pastoral care of the family. Likewise, however, for the formulation of questions to be studied as well as for the assessment and interpretation of the research results, the theological criteria must be taken into consideration." Kamiński, "Pastoral Care," 34–35.

## 1. Human Sexuality from a Catholic Perspective

The post-conciliar teaching of the Catholic Church treats human sexuality in a positive and integral way, in the context of a gift given to human beings and their calling to love.<sup>5</sup> Pope John Paul II argued that human sexuality should be considered anew as an object of eternal admiration in accord with the Revelation (cf. Gen 2:23; Deut 4:9).<sup>6</sup> The Bible paints a picture of a human being as spiritually and corporeally integral. At the same time, the Bible perceives human corporeality in the context of creation and salvation, linking it to the dignity of the human body. The body reveals and expresses an individual and is the first of God's messages to a human being that carries information about their essence and calling.<sup>7</sup> A man and a woman, created in the image and likeness of God, are equal yet different so that they can create a mutual bond and unity in marriage.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of God's Revelation, the Church perceives sexuality as a resource of a person that is called to love and as an ability for a man and woman to actively cooperate in the world.<sup>9</sup>

Human sexuality, that is masculinity and femininity, constitutes an asset of the whole person. In the view of the Catholic Church, the body and sex determine in a basic way a person's calling to love.<sup>10</sup> Sexuality determines a man and a woman as persons on the physical, psychological, and spiritual level.<sup>11</sup> It is reflected not only in the body, but also in a different way of life, self-expression, communication, as well as feeling, expressing, and experiencing human love.<sup>12</sup> Sexuality is also related to a possibility of self-realization in and through love, which is the basic goal of every human being.<sup>13</sup> The fact of an individual's creation in the image and likeness of God results in their ability to be in a relationship: created on the basis of the unity of divine persons, a human being is essentially a relational being.<sup>14</sup>

On the one hand, a human being possesses a natural aspiration to a mutual relationship with a member of the opposite sex and to a creation of interpersonal communion. On account of their bodily-spiritual nature and determination by sex,

<sup>5</sup> The Church's current teaching on sexuality is considered as particularly valuable in uncovering the proper sense of human love and as worthy of wide dissemination. Semen, *Seksualność*, 15–16.

<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, *Gratissimam Sane*, no. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Nagórny, "Płciowość ludzka," 32–34.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Pontificia Commissione Biblica, "*Che cosa è l'uomo?*", no. 157.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Gratissimam Sane*, no. 19; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter Letter to the Bishops*, no. 1, 4, 12; Rybicki, *Od antropologii do duchowości*, 206.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Education Guidance in Human Love*, no. 22; Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning*, no. 21; John Paul II, *Gratissimam Sane*, no. 16.

<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 37; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Education Guidance in Human Love*, no. 4–5.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. John Paul II, "Objawienie i odkrycie," 52–54.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 11; John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, no. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Pontificia Commissione Biblica, "*Che cosa è l'uomo?*", no. 156–157.

an individual possesses an ability of spiritual and moral development.<sup>15</sup> In light of that, a human being may not achieve personal maturity overlooking their own sexuality, for they mature always as man or woman, while their sexuality enables them to be included in the human community.<sup>16</sup> As two ways of being a human being that enable complete personal development, masculinity and femininity refer as well to sanctity and salvation. On account of personal dispositions related to sexuality, sex education is inevitable as part of one's education for love; this would encompass the inculcation of a hierarchy of moral values and help in their interiorization.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the teaching of the Catholic Church takes into account human sinfulness, which constitutes a source of weakness and to some extent disrupts human aspirations.<sup>18</sup> This should not be overlooked in the perception of human sexuality and sexual behavior. Still, one should bear in mind that God's mercy is active and it enables overcoming the results of sinfulness in an individual and in interpersonal relationships. Christ's teaching proclaimed "good news" of faithfulness more powerful than sin. "The power of the resurrection makes possible the victory of faithfulness over weakness, over injuries and over the couple's sins. In the grace of Christ which renews their hearts, man and woman become capable of being freed from sin and of knowing the joy of mutual giving" (*LCMW* 11).<sup>19</sup>

Human sexuality is biologically determined and carries certain psychological dispositions that are conducive to the realization of an individual's calling to love. It includes natural purposefulness, that is orientation onto interpersonal dialogue, a gift of self in love, as well as fertility and the transmission of life.<sup>20</sup> However, the gift of sexuality is not given to an individual in a mature form, but rather together with a task of sexual integration. It lies in combining in a person all aspects related to genitals, sexual drive, sensuality and emotionality, and the inclusion of these in interpersonal love. According to Pope Francis, mature sexuality belongs to love, while sexual union should always be a personal, integral, and generous gift of oneself, combined with care, respect, communication, and other expressions of love.<sup>21</sup> Conceived of in close connection to love and fertility, sexuality construes in the world a genuine "culture of encounter" (*AL* 183) and becomes a symbol of "God's inner life" (*AL* 11). Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* clearly emphasizes conjugal and parental orientation

<sup>15</sup> Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning*, no. 12; cf. Troska, *Moralność*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *Education Guidance in Human Love*, no. 4; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana*, no. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 151, 280–286; Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning*, no. 122–123.

<sup>18</sup> See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter Letter to the Bishops*, no. 7–8.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Nagórny, "Płciowość ludzka," 22; Goleń, *Wychowanie seksualne*, 303.

<sup>20</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *Education Guidance in Human Love*, no. 32; cf. Kobak, "Anthropological Foundations," 115–116.

<sup>21</sup> Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 288.

of human sexuality. The former is expressed in conjugal friendship and passion,<sup>22</sup> spontaneity, admiration, healthy eroticism, and even search of pleasure, as long as these stem from unconditional respect for the spouse and from love understood as a complete gift of oneself.<sup>23</sup> What is more, Pope Francis's text stipulates that "sexual union, lovingly experienced and sanctified by the sacrament, is [...] a path of growth in the life of grace for the couple" (AL 74). At the same time, a mature realization of sexuality is expressed in accepting offspring. The creation of a man and a woman is strictly related to their capability of fertility and an invitation to cooperate in the love of the Creator and Savior (cf. Gen 1:28).<sup>24</sup> Parenting requires an ability to overcome crises related to fear, guilt, exhaustion, and situations that destabilize the relationship and put the man and the woman in opposition to each other.<sup>25</sup>

It should be emphasized that a proper understanding of human sexuality – masculinity or femininity – is now threatened. It was already Pope John Paul II who claimed that sexuality is a space of manipulation and exploitation as a result of neo-Manichean thinking.<sup>26</sup> He also pointed out the dangers posed by contemporary culture for the perception of human sexuality. He identified those as tendencies to regard the human body solely in material terms, as a result of which human sex is trivialized, that is deprived of a personal dimension and treated instrumentally as a space for the fulfilment of one's own desires and drives. Its understanding is thereby distorted.<sup>27</sup> This distortion affects both interpersonal and conjugal relations of a man and a woman, as well as procreation, which is sometimes treated inimically.<sup>28</sup> This happens on account of a malady of civilization which "has broken away from the full truth about man, from the truth about what man and woman really are as persons. Thus it cannot adequately comprehend the real meaning of the gift of persons in marriage, responsible love at the service of fatherhood and motherhood, and the true grandeur of procreation and education" (LGS 20). It should be added at this point that there is a crisis of sex education in accord with one's biological sex that would support one's acceptance of their sexuality and growth to love.<sup>29</sup> Thus, what

<sup>22</sup> Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 125.

<sup>23</sup> Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 151; cf. Cozzoli, "Dall'Humanae vitae," 237–238.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1652.

<sup>25</sup> Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 239.

<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, *Gratissimam Sane*, no. 19.

<sup>27</sup> Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (no. 154, 280–282) explains that trivialization of human sexuality comes down to an obsession with genitals.

<sup>28</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 23; cf. Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 80.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2392–2393. There seems to be opposition towards one's sexual formation in accord with their biological sex, understood as helping one to accept their sexuality and grow to love. This is an outcome of the activity of groups that reject the laws of the Creator, try to sexualize youth and promote the so-called gender ideology and homosexuality. Cf. Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 56; Congregation for Catholic Education, "Male and female he created them," no. 2; Faggioni, "L'ideologia del 'Gender,'" 385–387; Kowalski, "Odrzucenie praw Stwórcy," 256–262.

seems to be now urgently needed is a shaping of a positive view of human sexuality and sexual behavior through love and integral procreation.

## 2. Characterization of the Respondent Group and Research Methodology

The present research project was carried out in Kenya in the summer of 2021, encompassing a group of 78 Catholics associated with Shalom Center in Mitunguu. Within this group 38 respondents (48.7%) were women, and 40 were men (51.3%). The majority of the respondents (38.5%) were aged between 21 and 25, one-third was over 25 (32.1%), and over one-fourth was under 20 (29.5%). The majority of the respondents lived in towns (55.1%), while 30.8% lived in the country, and 14.1% in the city. All the respondents were Roman Catholics, with the vast majority of them being actively religious. Half of the respondents (50.0%) declared themselves to be religious, and another 41.0% as very religious. Only 7 respondents (9.0%) identified themselves as weak believers or as religiously indifferent. The majority of the participants (61.5%) grew up in complete families, with both parents present, while the remaining part came from various types of incomplete, polygamous or other families. As many as 56.4% of respondents had four or more siblings, 14.1% had three, 14.1% had two, and 9.0% had one sibling. Only 6.4% of the respondents were only children. 84.6% of the respondents were single, one in ten lived in a Catholic or civil marriage, while 3.9% lived in informal relationships.

As Wioletta Szymczak rightly points out, “If the starting point of the research project is pastoral theology, an analysis containing all the elements of theological reflection is indispensable in order to maintain its specificity, autonomy and theological identity. Thus, the formulated indications remain in the theological sphere.”<sup>30</sup> In light of this, our research project in the form of a survey of a group of Kenyan Catholics made use of a specially construed research tool (questionnaire) to understand human sexuality from an ethical-theological perspective. The questionnaire was prepared by the authors (scholars at the Department of Family Ministry at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland) and contained 13 closed-ended questions (see Table 1). The questions were chosen on the basis of the teachings of the Catholic Church on anthropology and human sexuality, and then assessed by independent experts. Finally, the following questions on human sexuality were included in the questionnaire: 1) A human being is created and called by God to love; 2) Every man/woman is a person and has inviolable dignity; 3) Love is a rational decision of two people to live together in marriage; 4) A human being can never be used as if he/she was an object;

<sup>30</sup> Szymczak, “Interdisciplinarity in Pastoral Theology,” 523.

5) Love between a man and a woman equals mutual help and doing good to each other; 6) The human body is a dwelling of the soul; 7) Love is a selfless gift of oneself; 8) A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman aims to build a psychological and spiritual bond between them; 9) Mature human love is possible only in a relationship of one man and one woman; 10) Love of a man and a woman serves to give life to children; 11) A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman is acceptable only if they love each other and are responsible for each other; 12) Love is primarily a feeling; 13) True love of a man and a woman requires getting an indissoluble marriage. To assess the appropriateness and reliability of the survey and its internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was established at 0.825, with the average correlation between items was 0.293, indicating a strong internal consistency of the test.

The respondents were asked to express their attitude to the statements given by indicating to what extent they agree or disagree with a given statement. The survey made use of an ordinal scale, whereby the respondents' acceptance of a statement was established between -3 and 3, with the lowest number showing absolute disagreement and the highest – absolute agreement (-3 – I definitely disagree, -2 – I disagree to a large extent, -1 – I rather disagree, 0 – It is hard to say, 1 – I rather agree, 2 – I agree to a large extent, 3 – I definitely agree).

The data was then statistically processed. The average values were calculated on the basis of the answers given to capture the level of acceptance of a given statement using the same scale from -3 to 3. To analyze the results, statistical tests of Shapiro-Wilk, Mann-Whitney, and Kruskal-Wallis were used.<sup>31</sup> The differences between the results were deemed statistically significant when the value of p was <0.05.

### 3. The Respondents' Opinions on Human Sexuality and Sexual Activity

The respondent group of Kenyan Catholics, with the majority of them under 25 years of age, quite frequently evinced convictions that were in accord with the Catholic Church's teaching on selected anthropological issues, especially human sexuality and love. Approximately two-thirds fully agreed that a human being was created by God to love (70.8%), that the human body is the residence of the soul (66.7%), that a human being should not be used as if they were an object (65.3%), and that love is a rational decision of two people to live together as a married couple (65.3%). A small majority fully agreed that love of a man and a woman equals mutual help and doing good (61.1%), that a sexual intercourse should occur only when a couple is tied by

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Frankfort-Nachmias – Nachmias, *Metody badawcze*, 507–508; Francuz – Mackiewicz, *Liczby nie wiedzą, skąd pochodzą*, 435–436, 449–450.

love and responsibility for each other (61.1%), that every human being is a person and possesses inviolable dignity (59.7%), that a sexual intercourse has as its aim the forging of a psychological and spiritual union between the partners (52.8%), that love is an unconditional gift of oneself (51.4%), and that mature love is only possible in a relationship of one woman and one man (51.4%). Less than half of the respondents fully agreed that love between a man and a woman serves to pass on life to offspring (48.6%), while only over one-third fully agreed that true love between a man and a woman requires indissoluble marriage (36.1%). At the same time, a relatively high number of respondents shared a weakly justified conviction that love is primarily a feeling (44.4%). It is worthy of note that a significant number of respondents agreed with the above mentioned statements to a large extent (see Table 1).

What is also interesting to note is that almost one-third of the respondents at least partially disagreed with the statement that love between a man and a woman serves to give life to children (29.2%), while circa one-fifth tended to disagree that a true love of a man and a woman requires forging an indissoluble marriage (20.8%) and that sexual intercourse serves to shape a psychological and spiritual bond between a man and a woman (18.1%) – see Table 1.

Table 1. The respondents' understanding of human sexuality in numbers and percentages

Understanding of human sexuality	-3		-2		-1		0		1		2		3		Descriptive statistics		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	$\bar{x}$	SD	ME
A human being is created and called by God to love	1	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	4.2	3	4.2	20	27.8	51	70.8	2.47	0.98	3
Every man/woman is a person and has inviolable dignity	3	4.2	1	1.4	1	1.4	1	1.4	11	15.3	18	25.0	43	59.7	2.10	1.43	3
Love is a rational decision of two people to live together in marriage	2	2.8	1	1.4	0	0.0	4	5.6	6	8.3	18	25.0	47	65.3	2.24	1.30	3
A human being can never be used as if he/she was an object	3	4.2	2	2.8	4	5.6	6	8.3	2	2.8	14	19.4	47	65.3	1.97	1.67	3
Love between a man and a woman equals mutual help and doing good to each other	1	1.4	0	0.0	1	1.4	3	4.2	2	2.8	27	37.5	44	61.1	2.36	1.03	3
The human body is a dwelling of the soul	2	2.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	4.2	6	8.3	19	26.4	48	66.7	2.33	1.18	3
Love is a selfless gift of oneself	5	6.9	2	2.8	0	0.0	5	6.9	3	4.2	26	36.1	37	51.4	1.88	1.67	2



ASSESSING KENYAN CATHOLICS' UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

Understanding of human sexuality	-3		-2		-1		0		1		2		3		Descriptive statistics		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	$\bar{x}$	SD	ME
A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman aims to build a psychological and spiritual bond between them	8	11.1	1	1.4	4	5.6	6	8.3	6	8.3	15	20.8	38	52.8	1.54	1.98	2
Mature human love is possible only in a relationship of one man and one woman	1	1.4	3	4.2	4	5.6	6	8.3	12	16.7	15	20.8	37	51.4	1.79	1.52	2
Love of a man and a woman serves to give life to children	6	8.3	2	2.8	13	18.1	4	5.6	5	6.9	13	18.1	35	48.6	1.29	2.03	2
A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman is acceptable only if they love each other and are responsible for each other	5	6.9	2	2.8	2	2.8	5	6.9	6	8.3	14	19.4	44	61.1	1.86	1.78	3
Love is primarily a feeling	2	2.8	2	2.8	4	5.6	7	9.7	12	16.7	19	26.4	32	44.4	1.69	1.54	2
True love of a man and a woman requires getting an indissoluble marriage	5	6.9	6	8.3	4	5.6	17	23.6	6	8.3	14	19.4	26	36.1	1.04	1.92	2

$\bar{x}$  – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation; Me – median; possible answers: -3 – I definitely disagree, -2 – I disagree to a large extent, -1 – I rather disagree, 0 – It is hard to say, 1 – I rather agree, 2 – I agree to a large extent, 3 – I definitely agree.

Independent variables, such as age or place of residence, did not exert a significant statistical impact on the results of the study. There is, however, a substantial difference based on the respondents' sex. Men statistically more frequently than women share the conviction that a human being should not be used as if they were an object ( $p=0.031$ ) and that love is a selfless gift of oneself ( $p=0.028$ ). With reference to the remaining statements, the difference did not reach the level of statistical importance (when  $p<0.05$ ). The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Understanding of human sexuality and the respondents' sex.

Understanding of human sexuality	Sex	$\bar{x}$	SD	Me	$d\bar{x}$	Test result U	Value of p
A human being is created and called by God to love	Women	2.28	1.24	3.0	-0.41	-1.317	0.188
	Men	2.68	0.53	3.0			
Every man/woman is a person and has inviolable dignity	Women	1.85	1.69	2.5	-0.52	-1.332	0.183
	Men	2.37	1.05	3.0			

Understanding of human sexuality	Sex	$\bar{x}$	SD	Me	$d\bar{x}$	Test result U	Value of p
Love is a rational decision of two people to live together in marriage	Women	2.05	1.41	3.0	-0.40	-1.557	0.120
	Men	2.45	1.16	3.0			
A human being can never be used as if he/she was an object	Women	1.58	1.89	2.5	-0.82	-2.152	<b>0.031</b>
	Men	2.39	1.31	3.0			
Love between a man and a woman equals mutual help and doing good to each other	Women	2.23	1.29	3.0	-0.28	-0.283	0.777
	Men	2.50	0.65	3.0			
The human body is a dwelling of the soul	Women	2.03	1.51	3.0	-0.63	-1.787	0.074
	Men	2.66	0.53	3.0			
Love is a selfless gift of oneself	Women	1.58	1.81	2.0	-0.64	-2.199	<b>0.028</b>
	Men	2.21	1.47	3.0			
A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman aims to build a psychological and spiritual bond between them	Women	1.28	2.09	2.0	-0.54	-1.277	0.202
	Men	1.82	1.86	3.0			
Mature human love is possible only in a relationship of one man and one woman	Women	1.60	1.68	2.0	-0.40	-1.123	0.261
	Men	2.00	1.34	3.0			
Love of a man and a woman serves to give life to children	Women	1.33	1.99	2.0	0.06	-0.079	0.937
	Men	1.26	2.09	2.0			
A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman is acceptable only if they love each other and are responsible for each other	Women	1.85	1.70	3.0	-0.02	-0.460	0.646
	Men	1.87	1.88	3.0			
Love is primarily a feeling	Women	1.90	1.26	2.0	0.43	0.769	0.442
	Men	1.47	1.78	2.0			
True love of a man and a woman requires getting an indissoluble marriage	Women	0.73	1.88	0.5	-0.64	-1.701	0.089
	Men	1.37	1.94	2.0			
<b>Sum total</b>	Women	22.25	13.16	24.5	-4.80	-1.476	0.140
	Men	27.05	9.42	29.0			

$\bar{x}$  - arithmetic mean, SD - standard deviation, Me - median,  $d\bar{x}$  - difference between means N=78 (100%), U - Mann-Whitney test result.

The natal family of the respondents was a more significant variable than sex in affecting their answers. The respondents raised in incomplete and other types of families more often than those raised in full families (with both parents) believed that mature human love is possible only in a relationship of one man and one woman (p=0.009), that a human being is created and called by God to love (p=0.028), that the human body is a dwelling of the soul (p=0.032), and that love of a man and a woman equals mutual help and doing good (p=0.038). In the case of the remaining statements, the differences were not statistically vital (when p<0.05). The results are presented in Table 3.

ASSESSING KENYAN CATHOLICS' UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

Table 3. Understanding of human sexuality and the respondents' natal family

Understanding of human sexuality	Natal family	$\bar{x}$	SD	Me	$d\bar{x}$	Test result U	Value of p
A human being is created and called by God to love	Complete family	2.29	1.15	3.0	-0.48	-2.204	<b>0.028</b>
	Other family situations	2.77	0.50	3.0			
Every man/woman is a person and has inviolable dignity	Complete family	1.90	1.55	2.0	-0.54	-2.204	0.340
	Other family situations	2.43	1.17	3.0			
Love is a rational decision of two people to live together in marriage	Complete family	2.10	1.49	3.0	-0.36	-0.955	0.235
	Other family situations	2.47	0.90	3.0			
A human being can never be used as if he/she was an object	Complete family	1.75	1.88	3.0	-0.58	-1.161	0.244
	Other family situations	2.33	1.21	3.0			
Love between a man and a woman equals mutual help and doing good to each other	Complete family	2.23	1.19	3.0	-0.34	-1.187	<b>0.038</b>
	Other family situations	2.57	0.68	3.0			
The human body is a dwelling of the soul	Complete family	2.17	1.19	3.0	-0.43	-2.315	<b>0.032</b>
	Other family situations	2.60	1.13	3.0			
Love is a selfless gift of oneself	Complete family	1.90	1.48	2.0	0.03	-1.166	0.530
	Other family situations	1.87	1.98	3.0			
A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman aims to build a psychological and spiritual bond between them	Complete family	1.40	1.93	2.0	-0.37	-1.707	0.314
	Other family situations	1.77	2.08	3.0			
Mature human love is possible only in a relationship of one man and one woman	Complete family	1.54	1.61	2.0	-0.66	-2.072	<b>0.009</b>
	Other family situations	2.20	1.30	3.0			
Love of a man and a woman serves to give life to children	Complete family	1.19	1.89	2.0	-0.28	-1.261	0.832
	Other family situations	1.47	2.26	3.0			
A sexual intercourse of a man and a woman is acceptable only if they love each other and are responsible for each other	Complete family	1.73	1.66	2.0	-0.34	-2.146	0.379
	Other family situations	2.07	1.96	3.0			
Love is primarily a feeling	Complete family	1.69	1.52	2.0	-0.01	-0.247	0.067
	Other family situations	1.70	1.60	2.0			
True love of a man and a woman requires getting an indissoluble marriage	Complete family	0.96	1.92	2.0	-0.21	-0.628	0.142
	Other family situations	1.17	1.95	1.5			
<b>Sum total</b>	Complete family	22.83	13.15	24.5	-4.57	-1.244	0.513
	Other family situations	27.40	8.25	29.0			

$\bar{x}$  - arithmetic mean, SD - standard deviation, Me - median,  $d\bar{x}$  - difference between means  
 N=78 (100%), U - Mann-Whitney test result

#### 4. Conclusions and Pastoral Suggestions

The research results outlined above make it possible to formulate a few conclusions geared especially towards family ministry that would be useful in planning pastoral care for families and practically serving the needs of spouses and spouses-to-be and parents as well as the formation of pastors and catechists.

- 1) Firstly, from approximately half to two-thirds of respondents share the Catholic Church's teaching on human sexuality and sexual behavior. In light of the missionary context, these numbers seem high and satisfactory. However, since the majority of the respondents considered themselves to be religious or very religious, the lack of consistency in the remaining respondents between their personal convictions and their professed religion seems puzzling. It seems, therefore, that attitudes inconsistent with the declared religiousness should be perceived as a pastoral challenge in shaping and strengthening Catholic convictions, as corroborated also by other authors.<sup>32</sup>
- 2) Secondly, less than half of the respondents fully share the belief that is important from the Catholic point of view, namely that love of a man and a woman should serve procreation, while only one in three respondents fully agrees that genuine love of a man and a woman requires getting an indissoluble marriage. It seems, then, that the majority of the respondents fully or partially disagree with the Catholic Church's teaching on the inward directedness (purpose) of human sexuality as a gift of oneself in conjugal love that serves procreation. It may be related to lack of knowledge concerning the Church's teaching on human sexuality or to a strong impact of traditional cultural paradigms. It is also possible that the respondents' opinions are affected by the aggressive promotion of contraception and global depopulation agenda, possibly accompanied by overlooking the Church's suggestions. In any case, conveying anthropological-ethical content on the essence and purpose of human sexuality as a gift of oneself in love and procreation seems a pastoral challenge.<sup>33</sup> This requires not only the education of clergy but also of competent lay workers in the pastoral care of families.<sup>34</sup>
- 3) Thirdly, a relatively high percentage of the respondents do not agree that sexual intercourse serves to shape a psychological and spiritual bond between the partners. This may suggest that the respondents do not see value in forging a psychological and spiritual bond within the couple or that they treat sex as an experience not necessarily related to marriage. It is worth pointing out that Pope Francis in his exhortation *Amoris laetitia* emphasized the significance of strengthening

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Barbara, "Pastoral Care," 81.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Benezeri – Laurenti – Aylward, *African Christian Marriage*, 195–199.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Churu, "Foreword," 14; see *KENYA: Catechists*.

the bond of mutual love in a married couple.<sup>35</sup> In light of this, Kenyan Catholics should be reminded that the sexual bond of the spouses serves to strengthen their psychological and spiritual bond, implying the need for their constant engagement in the building of their mutual love.<sup>36</sup>

- 4) What is more, with reference to some statements men statistically more often than women shared opinions on human sexuality that are in accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church. It is vital to note that women more rarely than men believed that a human being may not be used as if he/she was an object, which may imply their understanding of a woman's role as that of an inferior partner in a relationship. Undoubtedly, this requires urgent education of women in this respect. Supporting women's participation in initiatives aimed at shaping the Christian worldview and deepening their anthropological, ethical, and religious knowledge is linked at the same time to eradicating inequality in the access of both sexes to education.<sup>37</sup>
- 5) Finally, individuals raised in incomplete families (for a number of reasons) more often than those raised in complete families (with both parents) shared the Catholic Church's teaching on human sexuality and calling to love. These results may be explained by the fact that the respondents from incomplete families, especially orphans, were raised in orphanages run by the Catholic Church. It is likely that their opinions stem from the education they received there. This would mean that such institutions effectively compensate for the absence of familial teaching on sexuality, love, and family. At the same time, there remains a missionary-pastoral challenge of forming ethical attitudes with regard to sexuality in members of Catholic families in accord with their professed faith. It should be added here that there is a clear need for the Church communities to support especially single parents who may feel overwhelmed by their parental duties.<sup>38</sup>

*Translated by Izabella Kimak*

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<sup>35</sup> See Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 89–164, 313–325.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Goleń, "Rola," 434–436; Benezeri – Laurenti – Aylward, *African Christian Marriage*, 138–141.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Bujo, *Plea for Change*, 49–54.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Churu, "Foreword," 15–16.

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