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**I**n our Diocese and beyond, many Catholics are concerned about doing what they can to bring the healing of Christ to the AIDS crisis. Insofar as these concerns respect and promote the dignity of the human person, which is the aim of true Catholic morality, I encourage and support them.

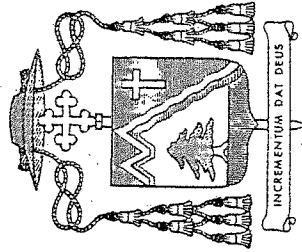
**F**inally, I remind you to pray for all who are in any way affected by this disease.

## PASTORAL LETTER

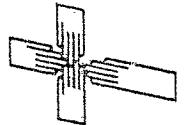
### CONCERNS ABOUT AIDS

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To All the Faithful of Hamilton Diocese,

The deadly disease known as AIDS is quickly becoming a global concern. It has now become clear that the disease is a very serious health problem, and is spreading in many parts of the world. So far there is no known medical cure, but research continues.

It is known that the most common way in which AIDS is transmitted is through sexual activity. Recently, suggestions have been made whereby the danger of transmitting AIDS through such activity may be lessened. For the guidance of the people of Hamilton Diocese, I wish to briefly review related Church teaching.

### CHURCH TEACHING

The Church has consistently taught that sexual activity takes place as an integral part of the communion of life which we call marriage. By their loving intimacy, the married couple express and deepen their love for each other. This love is the gift of the God who is love. As the love of God overflows and gives life, so too does the love of spouses. Children are born from their loving union. We believe that only by respecting the essential connection between love and life can husband and wife avoid self-centeredness in their union, and experience a God-given generosity.

Just as God is forever faithful in His love, and never ceases to create and support all that lives, we believe too that the union of husband and wife in marriage is intended to be faithful and permanent. The experience of centuries tells us that life-long commitment insures the stability necessary for the deepening of love and the nurturing of children. This basic Catholic position concerning the intimate relationship between God, marriage and sexuality forms the foundation for further moral reflection on sexual activity and its consequences.

### VIRTUE OF CHASTITY

We believe that sexual activity must properly take place within the dedicated communion of marriage, and we

reject any suggestion that extra-marital sexual activity can be justified. We also reject the idea that chastity outside marriage is an "impossible", or "often unrealistic" ideal, attainable only by a few. The loving God, who has gifted us with marriage, has also given us intellect and will. With the help of His grace, we can freely choose to practice the virtue of chastity. This practice of chastity, which assists spouses to remain faithful in true love to each other, and enables the single person to abstain from sexual activity, must be presented as a great challenge in our age. Our society, which has acknowledged the evil of world hunger, the threat of nuclear devastation, the injustice of human rights deprivation, and has bravely taken steps to counter them, must also be prepared to acknowledge that chastity, for married and unmarried alike, is the best way to prevent the spread of AIDS. With God's help, chastity is possible. This should be tirelessly preached and taught in a moral climate that often portrays sexual activity between unmarried men and women as uncontrollable or even inevitable, a climate which destroys the dignity of committed human sexuality.

### AIDS EDUCATION

Roman Catholic morality is passed on to succeeding generations in homes, parishes and schools. The tragedy of AIDS and its prevention have become a topic of intense discussion in all three. Television commercials have begun to come into the home, suggesting that the use of artificial contraception will help prevent the disease.

In the Province of Ontario, as elsewhere, there is an effort to provide information on AIDS. Programs are now being prepared in order that proper and effective information can be provided. This is a necessary response to the AIDS crisis. However, such programs, particularly in Catholic schools, must respect the sexual morality of the Church which I have outlined. It would be a serious disservice to the truth of Catholic faith and to the true dignity and well-being of the students entrusted to our schools if we were to suggest that the danger of AIDS can be reduced at the expense of our moral teaching. If we were to tell students that contraception is a viable alternative to chastity as a means of reducing the incidence of AIDS, we would actually be giving them the message,

perhaps not intentionally, that chastity for young people is basically an unrealistic ideal. Nothing could be further from the truth.

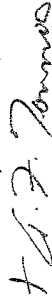
The AIDS crisis is a challenge to all. It demands that Catholic families renew even more strongly their witness to marriage. Despite the difficulties that often threaten today's family, a trusting faith in Jesus Christ - one that issues forth in charity, compassion, understanding and justice - can empower and energize a marriage made in the Lord. In parishes we can and should intensify our efforts to proclaim and support the greatness of the vocation of marriage, lived in accordance with the Church's faith and moral teaching. I call upon the clergy, religious, and laity of our Diocese to renew their commitment to this loving proclamation.

### COMPASSION AND CARE

The Church, imitating the healing work of Jesus Christ, continues to care for the sick. This mission includes our care of those who have AIDS, of those who love and support them, and of those who may contract the disease. In our Diocese and beyond, many Catholics are concerned about doing what they can to bring the healing of Christ to the AIDS crisis. Insofar as these concerns respect and promote the dignity of the human person, which is the aim of true Catholic morality, I encourage and support them. There may be more that we, as Catholics in the Diocese of Hamilton, can do in order to respond to and help relieve this growing crisis. Diocesan personnel will continue to study further possibilities and to consult with others concerning our response to AIDS.

Finally, I remind you to pray for all who are in any way affected by this disease. In a sense, it touches all of us as concerned Catholics. I ask you to pray particularly for those who actually have AIDS. Let us ask that God will support them and that they will find healing consolation in the compassion and care of those who truly follow Jesus Christ.

Yours sincerely in Christ,



BISHOP OF HAMILTON