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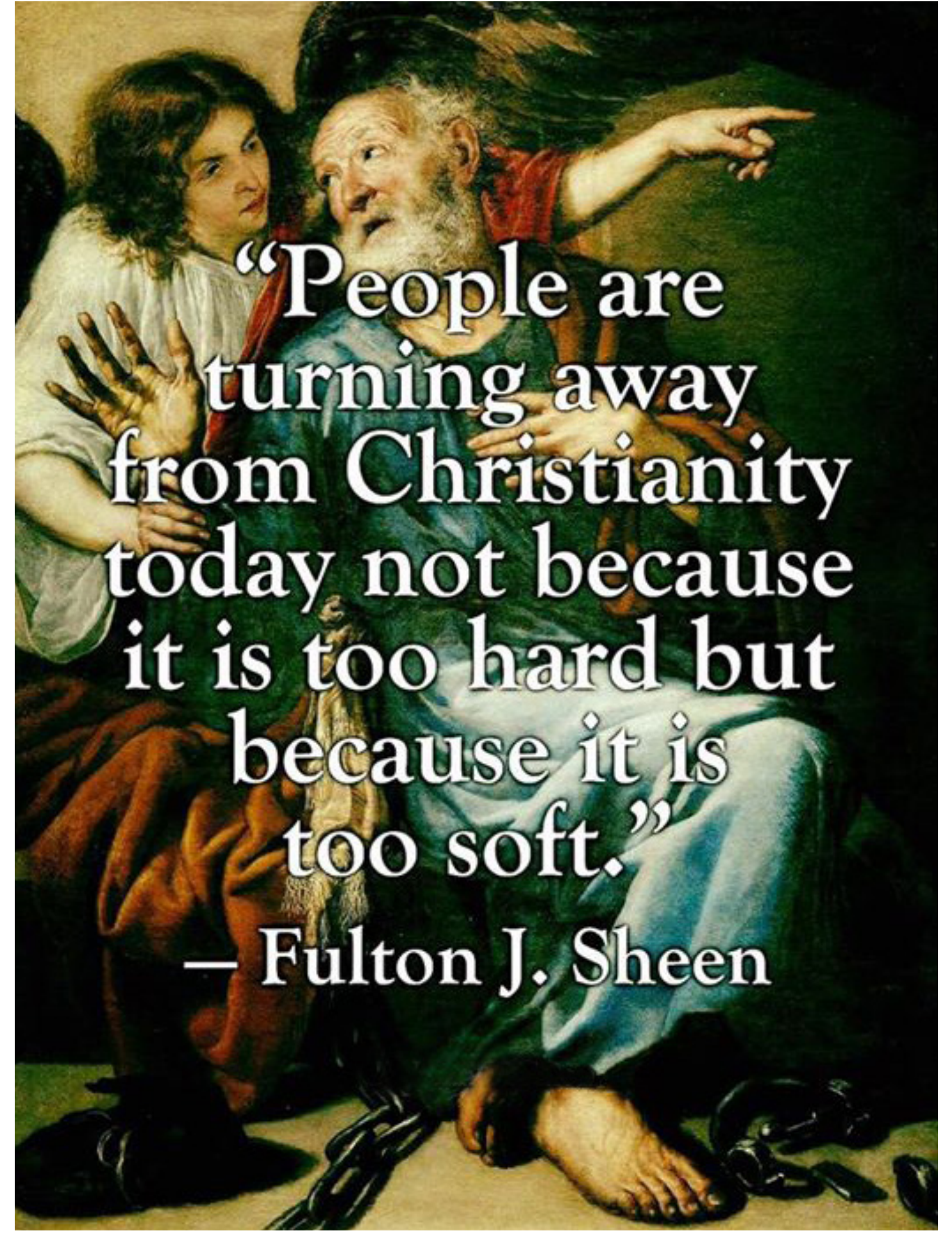
CHRONICLES

2019-2020

**Mother Mary is watching over
the Church and her children...
'the gates of hell shall not prevail.'**

***"In the end, My Immaculate Heart
will triumph."* – OUR LADY OF FATIMA**

CHASTITY AND RESTORATION OF TRADITIONAL FAMILY VALUES



“People are
turning away
from Christianity
today not because
it is too hard but
because it is
too soft.”

— Fulton J. Sheen



We will stand up for the unborn child in danger of abortion, for the old and the sick where calls for euthanasia are made, for the abused and the hurting in a society that does not care, for the innocents trafficked into the sex industry, for those who do not have their daily needs met and who are forgotten, for traditional marriage and against those who want to degrade it, for peace in the world, and justice for those who suffer and for the right to practice our faith! We will tell the truth where lies are flourishing. We will bring **light** into the darkness. **This is what a Christian Warrior is, and this is what we are all, in our ways, called to be!**



Feminism and Its Effects on Society

By Jim Fritz

One of the advantages of being old is you have a much greater knowledge of history than most others. My mother ingrained in us five boys that we must always respect women. As an example her instructions for riding the city bus: If a woman got on the bus and had to stand, we were to stand and offer our seat. My familiarity with the feminist movement does not go back as far as the fight for the right for women to vote; however, I am familiar with the fight for equal wages and jobs. As a young married man, I attended a trade school in the daytime and worked on an assembly line in the evening to support my family. I worked on the same line with women putting together components to be installed in the old vacuum tube-type computers. This is when I learned that women, doing the same job as I were paid about 10 percent less than the men. What made it worse was the women did a better job, being more patient than the men.

At that time it was also difficult for women to enter into the variety of jobs available to men.

Feminism, which began at the end of the 19th century, did need to correct these abuses. The history of the modern western feminist movement is divided into three periods. Each period dealt with different aspects of the same feminist issues. These periods are called “waves” by the historians and described in the following manner: The first wave comprised women’s suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, i.e., promoting a women’s right to vote. The second wave was associated with the ideas and actions of the women’s liberation movement beginning in the 1960s. This period campaigned for legal and social equality for women. The third wave is a continuation of, and a reaction to, the perceived failures of the second wave of feminism. It began in the 1990s.

The First-wave of feminism focused on the promotion of equal contract, marriage, parenting, and property rights for women. By the end of the 19th century,

activism focused primarily on gaining political power, particularly the right of women's suffrage, although some feminists were active in campaigning for women's sexual, reproductive, and economic rights as well. In the U.S., notable leaders of this movement were influenced by the Quaker theology of spiritual equality, which asserts that men and women are equal under God. In the United States, first-wave feminism is considered to have ended with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1919), granting women the right to vote in all states.

Second-wave of feminism is a feminist movement beginning in the early 1960s and continuing to the present; as such, it now coexists with third-wave feminism. Second-wave feminism is largely concerned with issues of equality beyond suffrage, such as ending gender discrimination. Second-wave feminists see women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encourage women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures.

Third-wave of feminism began in the 1990s as a response to perceived failures of the second wave and to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave. Third-wave feminism distinguished itself from the second wave around issues of sexuality, challenging female heterosexuality and celebrating sexuality as a means of female empowerment. Third-wave feminism also seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which, they argue, over-emphasize the experiences of upper middle-class white women. Third-wave feminism also contains internal debates between different types of feminists i.e., those who believe there are important differences between the sexes and those who believe there are no inherent differences between the sexes and contend that gender roles are due to social conditioning.

Even before the 1990s one could see the harm the feminists were doing to women. They were making themselves very unpopular, not only with men, but with other women. Many did not accept the killing of babies by abortion. Thousands of women joined the pro-life fight against abortion on the sidewalks and opened Pregnancy Centers to help women who wanted to keep their children. Many did not agree women must do everything men could do, nor did they want to do everything men did. The majority of women believed the feminist movement had greatly harmed women.

For example, the law allows women to abort their babies up to actual birth. I have been retired for some time and have spent the last 10 years as a sidewalk counselor at an abortion clinic in Maryland. We have had over 450 women who changed their minds and kept their babies. Every day I am in front of the clinic I talk to women being pushed and dragged into the clinic by their boyfriends,

husbands and even their parents. It is extremely disheartening to see a mother bringing her crying teenager to the clinic. In my estimation over two thirds of all women are forced into an abortion. Most of these women live a lifetime of regret for having aborted their child, and many suffer from drug abuse, grief, and guilt.

According to a very recent poll, only 18 percent of Americans consider themselves feminists, while 85 percent reported they believe in "equality for women."

Searching the Internet I found numerous articles on the number of ways feminism is destroying America. Phyllis Schlafly wrote that the 1960s "women's revolution" movement is ruining women and the country. Written with her niece, Suzanne Venker, *The Flipside of Feminism*, points out "Five Ways which Feminism Has Ruined America." These are:

1. It hurts marriage. Women want to delay marriage so as to keep their identities longer, and men are finding easy sex, taking away a big reason for marriage.
2. It undermines child rearing. More children are in childcare where discipline is lax, resulting in an "epidemic" of bad kids, childhood obesity, and bullies.
3. There is a two-income trap. With both husband and wife working it's hard to live without life's luxuries.
4. It undermines college sports. Title IX has ended many male-only sports at some colleges.
5. It emasculates men. It's better to be a wuss than speak up or mouth off and face charges of harassment or chauvinism. In a truly thriving society, we shouldn't need any feminists. Let's all be humanists instead.

There are numerous other authors who give anywhere from two to ten reasons why feminism has ruined America.

It's time for feminists to stop being oversensitive to potential victimization and start thinking about how women can help make the world better. Feminists are feeling sad and unloved. The world doesn't seem to like them anymore, and they don't know why. Let's suggest some changes.

FIRST: Feminist Should Stop Hating the Womb

Feminist seem to hate the womb. They'll do anything to save a woman from her own fertility.

- Feminists give her contraceptives, so she can have sterile sex to her heart's content! They give no consideration to the negative effects of contraceptives.
- Feminists make sure she is at liberty to kill her unborn children, at any time and for any reason she pleases!

- If she chooses to give birth, feminists make sure governmental institutions free her from the burdens of being with the children more than absolutely necessary.

Society does not need to kill unborn children as demanded by feminism. Feminists seem to be terrified of natural sex. They feel babies are burdensome. They fail to see fertility as an important and defining element of womanhood. They do not seem to realize women are naturally life-giving beings.

SECOND: Feminist Should Stop Pushing Independence

Feminists don't like to discuss the natural interdependence of the sexes. Feminists are so busy "empowering" women that it doesn't occur to them to ask whether maybe they've ended up encouraging a lot of selfishness and entitlement. The big problem is that women do need men. Men have an abundance of certain talents and abilities which are much rarer among women. Most women want protection and support from men, and especially from their fathers and the fathers of their children. Feminists fail to address this basic human reality.

Of course, this argument runs the other way, too. Men are healthier, happier and generally more productive when they have women in their lives. They want women to transform mere dwelling-places into real homes. They want them to love and nurture their children. Women also have the ability to civilize men, to bring them to God, to socialize them.

Women have obligations towards men and especially towards the particular men in their own lives. They need men and men need them. They should want to serve each other for their mutual benefit.

THIRD: Men and Women need to follow their natural instincts

Women need to be encouraged to be a role model in following their natural maternal instinct to protect the child in the womb.

Men need to be encouraged to be a role model in following their natural paternal instinct and responsibility to lead, protect, and provide for their children and the mother of their children, i.e. their families.

Parents must instill in their children the need to practice the virtue of chastity before and during marriage as the key to eliminating abortion, poverty, and STDs and bringing about a Culture of Life and restoring traditional family values.

Summary:

The trouble with feminists is they seem to reject the entire paradigm of mutual obligation.

Feminism should spend less time searching for wom-



en who are being victimized and think a little more about how women can make society better; worry less about equality, and more about happiness; listen more closely when people of both sexes talk about what they actually want and need; and, most importantly, encourage both women and men to follow their faith.

Society has declined drastically in the last few decades and a good part of it is due to feminization of our society. Society needs manly men and womanly women. Society does not need to kill their unborn children as demanded by feminism. Abortion as used by countries to control population has been a complete failure and has caused many problems.

Abortion also increases suicide and breast cancer in women. It certainly does not increase their happiness or safety.

Marital rates have declined. Children are moving back to their parents' homes. Church attendance has dropped. And the list goes on and on. Feminism has caused enumerable problems in society and is justifiably disliked. ♥



Fill your mind with God's Word
and you'll leave no room for
the enemies lies.

Ten Ways to Win the Battle for Purity

Fr. Ed Broom, OMV

Flashy billboards, provocative dress and apparel, Hollywood fashions spread far and wide, suggestive innuendos, off-colored jokes, indecent movies, and the ever-present danger of the internet to visit the numerous and poisonous websites — all of these and a plethora of other temptations can trap even the best of us into falling into the sin against the virtue of purity.

In a certain sense, the world can be depicted as a moral land-mine, where at every turn and corner in the road there is an immoral spiritual bomb that can be stepped on and explode! Let us be honest and to the point — we live in a society of dangerous and often pernicious images. We live in a pornographic society!

Almost 100 years ago Our Lady appeared in Fatima to three innocent Shepherd children —Blessed Jacinta, Blessed Francisco, and their cousin Lucia de los Santos. Our Lady appeared to the children six times — from May

13th up to October 13th on which the great miracle of the sun occurred witnessed by close to 80,000 people.

One of the subsequent messages of Our Lady to the world at large referred to the salvation as well as perdition of humanity. Our Lady stated in the year 1917 that most souls were lost to the fires of hell principally due to the sins against the sixth and ninth commandments — that is to say the sins of impurity.

This being the present danger we would like to offer a spiritual strategy that we can use; a plan applicable for parents, teens, and even children so that we can avoid the ever-present danger of the attacks against purity, and if we have fallen, to gently and confidently return to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, with all our hearts.

Spiritual Arms to Win the Battle for Purity

1. Weapons of Prayer

We are weak, very weak! Jesus reminded the Apos-

tles as well as the whole world in the Garden of Gethsemane with these precise words: “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Pray that you will not enter in the test.” (Mt 26:40-41) Instead of praying, the Apostles fell asleep and thereby failed the Lord.

The principal reason for falling into any sin, but especially that of impurity, is either lack of prayer or a very weak and anemic prayer. The Israelites were able to defeat their enemies only after Moses perched on the top of the hill, overlooking the battle field, lifted his arms to heaven. (Exodus 17:8-13) To conquer the imperious demands of the flesh and the constant insinuations of the world and the temptations of the devil, we must (like Moses) lift up our arms constantly in prayer.

Jesus invites us with these words: “Ask and you will receive... “(Mt. 7:7). Let us beg the Lord for the gift and virtue of purity.

2. Don't play with fire

A key reason why many fall into sins of impurity is a failure to avoid the near occasion of sin. Proverbs are not lacking: “He who plays with fire will get burnt”... and “He who walks on thin ice will fall in” ... once again... “He who walks on a slippery slope will fall.”

We have to use common sense and prudence. A simple example: a boyfriend and girlfriend, after having a nice meal together, the boy-friend invites his girlfriend to his condo to pray the Rosary together. Mind you, they will both forget their Rosaries and fall prey to the temptations of the devil and demands of the flesh!

3. Modesty

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that modesty is the guardian of the virtue purity. (CCC # 2521-2524) All must practice modesty. Through Baptism our bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit, still more, temples of the Blessed Trinity and after Holy Communion living Tabernacles of the Blessed Sacrament. Women should never be a provocation or occasion of sin to men. And men are not to be excused by a wandering eye.

Contemplate any noble statue or painting of Our Lady—Our Lady of Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima—and you will be struck by heavenly beauty, but also the virtue of modesty. May Our Lady be our model and guide especially in the practice of purity.

4. Penance

Jesus stated: “Some devils can be expelled only through prayer and fasting.” On one occasion I was taking a walk and in my path was a big black bird—a Crow. As I drew closer the bird did not take flight. Always

having a strong devotion to St. Francis, I thought that maybe I had a latent special gifts with animals. This was not the case at all. The reason for the lack of flight was the simple reason that the poor bird had a broken wing! The scene brought me to a spiritual reflection.

We are like the bird in our spiritual lives. We are called to be like eagles to fly high into the lofty heights, but we need two spiritual wings to fly on high—Prayer and Penance! To conquer the imperious demands of the flesh we must pray, pray and pray, but also learn the art of fasting and live a life of penance. All the saints have taught us this clear lesson!

5. Avoid Laziness

Another huge opening for the devil of impurity is the capital sin of sloth or call it laziness. Once again maxims are at our beck and call: “Idleness (laziness) is the workshop of the devil.”

The great saint and educator and patron of youth, Saint John Bosco experienced a mortal fear when vacations arrived for his young people. He called vacations the harvest ground of the devil. Why? The reason was clear—summer months free and nothing to do! In this state of affairs the devil enters in quickly to tempt in many ways and especially against the virtue of chastity.

One of the primary reasons why so many young people have serious problems with Internet porn and self-abuse is because of excessive free time, boredom and easy access to impure websites. Saint Bonaventure put it succinctly: “When one is working a devil might be there to tempt, but when you have nothing to do a multitude of devils are there to tempt.”

6. Improper Language

In all times and places and circumstances we should control our tongue. Saint James admonishes us: “We should be slow to speak and quick to listen,” (Read St. James 3—the sins of the tongue). But this is especially pertinent with respect to purity.

Never should it happen that issues from our lips dirty words, suggestive language and worse yet coarse, crude and impure jokes. Later on in his life as a mature priest, Saint John Bosco lamented that he could not expunge or erase from his mind an impure thing that a man had uttered in front of him when he was a mere boy. It was engraved in the memory back of the young Bosco and still there as an elderly priest.

Jesus warns us that we will be judged on all of the words that issue from our mouths. Never forget that we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus on our tongues; our tongues become the throne of Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Let us speak with such nobility!

7. Constant Vigilance—especially of the eyes

Pope Francis in his messages is constantly reminding us that we must keep vigilance over our persons. The Ignatian daily examen is key. This superb practice invites us to rewind the film of our day and see where God has been present and give thanks, but also to see where our hearts have wandered from our loving God. This we can easily apply to the virtue of purity.

In prayer and reflection observe and humbly admit when our eyes, mind affections and heart start to wander from God and start to toy with what is not of God—that of impurity. A noteworthy Biblical passage that can be of enormous advantage to us is the temptation, allurements and fall of the Holy King David. A holy man, a prayerful man, a gifted man, a man after the very heart of God—this was King David. However, he did not keep strict vigilance over his eyes, mind and heart and this resulted in a cataclysmic fall, a fall that cast him into the depths of lust and dishonesty. Giving in to lust terminated in adultery; then adultery led to murder and murder to the suppression of the conscience.

May the story of David be a warning to us! Jesus warns us: “Stay awake and pray; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.”

8. Confession & Renewed Hope

Human weakness does prevail over us and we can all fall. Worst of all, above and beyond the fall into any sin, is that of despair. The gravest fault of Judas was not his betrayal of Jesus, but his despair and failing to trust in the infinite mercy of Jesus. This being the case, we should never despair due to our human inclinations prone to sin and our sin itself. On the contrary. Saint Paul offers us these encouraging words: “Where weakness abounds the grace of God abounds all the more.”

The great Saint Augustine, who lived a life of slavery to lust and impurity into his early thirties, preaches the doctrine of “O happy fault”. God can allow an evil to bring even greater good out of it. Therefore, if we have the misfortune of falling into a sin against purity then we should have a boundless trust in God and have immediate recourse to the Sacrament of His mercy, the Sacrament of Confession. And let us relish words of the prophet Isaiah: “Though your sins be like scarlet they will become as white as snow.” (Is. 1:18)

A good confession can transform our souls into the beauty of freshly fallen white snow on the virgin ground!

9. Frequent Holy Communion

Of the greatest importance in safeguarding the virtue

of chastity is our relation to Jesus in the most Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is really, truly and substantially the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus, the Son of the living God.

When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion we receive all of the following—His totality! We receive the mind of Jesus, with His memory that purifies our possibly dirty thoughts. We receive Jesus’ Blood that circulates through our entire body, rushing through our veins and arteries. We receive the most Sacred Heart of Jesus with His most noble of sentiments; even more, we receive the absolute purity of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

If you like, every Holy Communion well-received results in receiving a spiritual heart-transplant. As Saint Paul says, “Put on the mind of Christ; then, you have the mind of Christ.” Then Paul abounds all the more in this most lofty expression: “It is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me.” Frequent and fervent and a passionate reception of Holy Communion is by far the most efficacious means to live a life of purity—It is Jesus Himself that takes possession of our entire lives and being!

10. Our Lady: Our model and intercessor for all virtues

Of course it would be far from complete our treatise on the virtue of purity if we did not invite Our Lady, the Mother of holy and pure love to be with us, pray for us, and intercede on our behalf. Experience shows in the lives of countless saints that it is through their great love of God and filial trust and love for Mary that they can live holy lives and lives of great purity.

Saint Faustina Kowalska had an encounter with the Lord Jesus. He drew close to the saint and wrapped a golden sash around her waist. This symbolized a gift that He generously bestowed upon the saint—the gift of perfect chastity. Her flesh would be totally submissive to her mind and spirit and no longer would she experience indecent thoughts. Jesus would be the center of her life, her all and all. However, there is an additional very important note.

Saint Faustina said that she had been begging Our Lady for this gift for a long time! Therefore, it was through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary that Saint Faustina acquired this marvelous gift of perfect chastity. Let us all turn to the most pure and Immaculate Heart of Mary and beg for purity of mind, heart, body, soul and even intention.

Let us beg Mary most Holy for the grace to live out this sublime Beatitude that Jesus taught us: “Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God.” (Mt. 5:8) Let us live out purity in this life so as to contemplate the beauty of the Blessed Trinity—with Our Lady, the angels and saints—for all eternity! Amen.

Lust Kills... *the Soul!*

Kenneth Henderson



I'm sure that everyone reading this article knows someone, either a friend or family member who struggles with sexual impurity. This problem is widespread and in a society that is so preoccupied with sex and sexual pleasure, many people, even good Catholics, can become ensnared in the trap of slavery to sex... through addiction. Lust in all its forms, including masturbation, pornography, promiscuity or adulterous relationships, is all a part of the attack on our society in what I call the "Trinity of Evil." It includes abortion homosexuality and sexual lust. All of these are intrinsically linked to the preoccupation with sex and the selfish, contraceptive mindset of our modern society; a mindset that is destroying our culture at the very foundation.

We have been told by the spirit of the age, the Zeitgeist, predominately through the media, that it's what you "get," that makes you who you are. All human beings are born into this world with certain innate needs that are instilled in us at birth. However, because of the effect of Original Sin, our broken nature, these needs can become twisted and disordered. We seek to fulfill these disordered needs with "things." However, these things — money, material items, food or sex — are only an attempt to fill the emptiness in our hearts where God should be. Saint Augustine, who also struggled with promiscuity and lust before his conversion, understood this when he finally came to know the Lord and said "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless, until they rest in You."

Lust is a huge problem in our world and is probably the greatest contributor to the destruction of marriages and families. With the abundance of technological advances and media outlets, the selling of the human body has become big, big business and it feeds on the brokenness of men and women. Lust is an inordinate desire for sexual pleasure and involves engaging in the sexual act outside the context of God's intended purpose of marital communion. Saint Augustine teaches us that when we indulge in the sins of the flesh, as with any mortal sin, the intellect becomes darkened and God cannot be seen or recognized as Truth. In fact, the allure of lust will lead people to commit a wide variety of subsequent sins.

When a person is lost in lust, they become enslaved to this obsessive desire and their understanding of good becomes obscured. In his *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas said "this act (simple understanding) is hindered by lust, according to Daniel 13:56, 'Beauty hath deceived thee, and lust hath perverted thy heart.' In this respect we have 'blindness of mind.'" Because lust clouds even simple understanding, this blindness will affect every aspect of a person's life.

To illustrate this point, people often wonder how anyone could commit the sin of sexually abusing a child. But since lust cuts a person off from God and their intellect becomes blinded, that person loses their ability to correctly judge right and wrong. He (or she) acts out for one purpose — that of sexual pleasure. As in any addiction, the addict will often neglect family, job, and any other responsibility in order to pursue the distorted desire, even when

he recognizes the destructive nature of his compulsion. Simply put, lust destroys a person's humanity.

It is important to point out that a person enslaved to this sexual sin does not start out to become a sexual addict nor do all who lust become sexual predators. Yet, even a person who only indulges in lust occasionally can have his life and relationships negatively affected.

To quote Catholic Pro-life speaker, Barbara McGuigan, host of the show *Voices on Virtue* on EWTN, "Satan, the master deceiver, loves to feed himself on the hearts of children, as well as, the hearts of young people and adults. He knows the intensity of the sexual appetite, and how sexual impurity can prevent us from seeing the truth by clouding the intellect through sensuality. The deadly sin of lust is deadly because it kills our ability to truly love. How Satan loves to corrupt a soul by lust! He knows with his angelic intellect that lust causes a blindness of understanding. Fr. John Hardon explained, 'When man is brought down to the level of a brute beast, he no longer possesses a sense of law, or conscience, or honor, or gratitude, or fidelity or friendship. When lust quenches the light of the soul, any advice, counsel, warning, or authority of parents is disregarded. The heart becomes hardened. A person steeped in lust has a hatred of all spiritual things, such as, prayer, sacraments, the Word of God, Catholicism and all who teach how to be holy. A lustful person has a hatred of all that is holy, which leads him to infidelity. He no longer believes in the God who loves him, in Heaven and Hell, and eternity. There is no God to judge him'.

"It's not hard to understand that darkness of the mind, hardness of the heart, hatred of religion, and disbelief, lead to despair and sometimes to final impenitence, which of course, is a serious sin against the Holy Spirit. Could this be why our Blessed Mother at Fatima said that 'More souls go to hell for sins of the flesh than any other reason?'"

And I couldn't agree with more! The time is NOW for all True Knights to rise up and spread the saving message of Jesus Christ and His Church. Only the Catholic Church, as established by Jesus Christ himself, has the means that can truly save marriages and families from the clutches of the devil. There is only one thing that can fill the emptiness that resides in the hearts of all men and women who struggle with lust... Jesus Christ, the Truth that sets all men and women free.

Education is the key. We cannot just sit by quietly and do nothing. Each and every Catholic needs to do what they can to learn more about this issue and what we can do about it. Just some suggestions, take a class on "The Theology of the Body" or a class on how you can protect your family from internet pornography that your diocese may offer. If no class exists, suggest it to your pastor or bishop. You can also invite speakers who

specialize in this issue, like Jason Evert, Steve Wood, Christopher West or even me to come and speak to your parish, diocese, or conference. Ask your pastor to address this issue more often from the pulpit. I realize that many pastors may be uncomfortable with this, to which I would also suggest that they too seek education on the severity of this concern. Additionally, come to TrueKnights.org and learn of ways to get help. There are many articles, resources, and materials available to help educate you.

If you suffer from addiction to lust, the first thing you need to do is go to Confession... as soon as possible. Then find an accountability partner, someone you can call for help. At True Knights we have a recovery program available called Combat Training which is personal confidential purity coaching that includes accountability. However, space is limited for personal one-on-one purity coaching. To help reach even more people who suffer from this issue we have our Purity Corps recovery groups that are just in the beginning stages of being placed in parishes around the country. Perhaps you are called to form a group in your parish. Contact us to find out more.

The bottom line is that in this world of great darkness, it is imperative for all Christians to wake up, and by the grace of God, do what they can to bring the Truth of Christ to the world. We are called to intercede for and inform this world, a world that is so hungry for fulfillment, of God's divine and holy plan for human sexuality and destroy Satan's perverse and twisted grip on humanity. Lust is keeping many in the dark, perhaps even someone you know. We must shine the Light of Christ into this sick and dying world and send the devil running for cover into the pits of hell... like the nasty cockroach he is! The first move of any battle should always involve prayer. We are all called to pray, fast, offer up our sufferings and ask the communion of Saints to intercede for the lost souls of this world. Holy warriors, put on the Armor of God. Time is short and we have much work to do! Pray for God's grace, mercy and holy power in this War with eternal consequences!

(Kenneth Henderson is the founder of the True Knights apostolate which has the special mission of helping men and all people become free of addiction to pornography. He has appeared on EWTN's *Life on the Rock* and *The Journey Home* and is a regular guest on EWTN Radio's *Catholic Connection* with Teresa Tomeo. Ken is available to speak at your parish or conference on many topics such as the dangers of pornography, the authentic Catholic family life and Catholic apologetics. For more information visit TrueKnights.org, email Info@TrueKnights.org or call 800-950-2008.)

What is the link between LOVE and OXYTOCIN?



Michael Weber, MD

Oxytocin is a hormone and a neurotransmitter that is involved in childbirth and breast-feeding. It is also associated with empathy, trust, sexual activity, and relationship-building.

It is sometimes referred to as the “love hormone,” because levels of oxytocin increase during hugging and orgasm. It may also have benefits as a treatment for a number of conditions, including depression, anxiety, and intestinal problems.

Oxytocin is produced in the hypothalamus, a part of the brain. Females usually have higher levels than males.

Fast facts on oxytocin

- Oxytocin is produced in the hypothalamus and released during sex, childbirth, and lactation to aid reproductive functions.
- It has physical and psychological effects, including influencing social behavior and emotion.
- Oxytocin is prescribed as a drug for obstetric and gynecological reasons and can help in childbirth.
- Research shows that it may benefit people with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), anxiety, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

What is oxytocin?

Oxytocin is important during childbirth and breast-feeding. Oxytocin is important during childbirth and breast-feeding.

Oxytocin is a neurotransmitter and a hormone that

is produced in the hypothalamus. From there, it is transported to and secreted by the pituitary gland, at the base of the brain.

It plays a role in the female reproductive functions, from sexual activity to childbirth and breast feeding. Stimulation of the nipples triggers its release.

During labor, oxytocin increases uterine motility, causing contractions in the muscles of the uterus, or womb. As the cervix and vagina start to widen for labor, oxytocin is released. This widening increases as further contractions occur.

Oxytocin also has social functions. It impacts bonding behavior, the creation of group memories, social recognition, and other social functions.

Oxytocin as a drug

Oxytocin is used as a prescription drug under the brand name Pitocin. Under medical supervision, an oxytocin injection is sometimes used to start birth contractions or strengthen them during labor, and it helps reduce bleeding after delivery. Side effects include a rapid heartbeat and unusual bleeding.

If too much oxytocin is delivered too rapidly, it can lead to a rupture of the uterus.

Oxytocin can also be given to make the uterus contract and control bleeding after a delivery or a termination.

It can be used medically to induce a termination or complete a miscarriage.

The love hormone?

In 2012, researchers reported that people in the first stages of romantic attachment had higher levels of oxy-

tocin, compared with non-attached single people. These levels persisted for at least 6 months.

Sexual activity has been found to stimulate the release of oxytocin, and it appears to have a role in erection and orgasm. The reason for this is not fully understood, but, in women, it may be that the increased uterine motility may help sperm to reach their destination. Some have proposed a correlation between the concentration of oxytocin and the intensity of orgasm.

Oxytocin and emotion

Oxytocin appears to play a role in social interaction and relationships between people. Oxytocin appears to play a role in social interaction and relationships between people.

When oxytocin enters the bloodstream, it affects the uterus and lactation, but when it is released into certain parts of the brain, it can impact emotional, cognitive, and social behaviors.

One review of research into oxytocin states that the hormone's impact on "pro-social behaviors" and emotional responses contributes to relaxation, trust, and psychological stability.

Brain oxytocin also appears to reduce stress responses, including anxiety. These effects have been seen in a number of species.

The hormone has been described as "an important component of a complex neurochemical system that allows the body to adapt to highly emotive situations."

Is it that simple?

In 2006, investigators reported finding higher levels of oxytocin and cortisol among women who had "gaps in their social relationships" and more negative relations with their primary partner. The participants were all receiving hormone therapy (HT) following menopause.

Animal studies have found high levels of both stress and oxytocin in voles that were separated from other voles. However, when the voles were given doses of oxytocin, their levels of anxiety, cardiac stress, and depression fell, suggesting that stress increases internal production of the hormone, while externally supplied doses can help reduce stress.

Clearly, the action of oxytocin is not straightforward.

A review published in 2013 cautions that oxytocin is likely to have general rather than specific effects, and that oxytocin alone is unlikely to affect "complex, high-order mental processes that are specific to social cognition." The authors also point out that a willingness to collaborate is likely to be driven by anxiety in the first place.

Nevertheless, oxytocin does appear to be associated with social behavior, including maternal care, bonding between couples, sexual behavior, social memory, and trust.

Behavioral effects

Delivering oxytocin through a nasal spray has allowed researchers to observe its effects on behavior.

In 2011, research published in *Psychopharmacology*

found that intranasal oxytocin improved self-perception in social situations and increased personality traits such as warmth, trust, altruism, and openness.

In 2013, a study published in *PNAS* suggested that oxytocin may help keep men faithful to their partners, by activating the reward centers in the brain.

In 2014, researchers published findings in the journal *Emotion* suggesting that people saw facial expression of emotions in others more intensely after receiving oxytocin through a nasal spray.

Psychiatric therapy

Oxytocin has been proposed as a possible treatment for social phobia, autism, and postpartum depression.

Scientists have proposed that it might help improve interpersonal and individual wellbeing, and that it could have applications for people with some neuropsychiatric disorders.

They believe it could help people who avoid social interaction, and those who experience persistent fear and an inability to trust others.

Children with autism could benefit from oxytocin, say some researchers. In 2013, a small study suggested that oxytocin levels in the brain affected how 17 children perceived a series of social and non-social images.

Oxytocin may also play a role in anger management. Research has indicated that certain polymorphisms of the oxytocin receptor (OXTR) gene are associated with an increased tendency to react angrily to situations.

In particular, differences in OXTR gene expression appear to affect the regulation of the relationship between alcohol and aggressive behavior.

Uses

Oxytocin appears to increase the release of prostaglandin E2 (PGE2) in cells lining the intestine. This helps to encourage the repair of intestinal injury and to protect against such injury.

If this is confirmed, oxytocin could be a useful therapy for preventing chemo-radiotherapy-induced intestine injury, and it could be used to treat irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Risks

The role of oxytocin is complex and not easy to pin down.

While it appears to enhance bonding and the forming of communities, it may also encourage the formation of "in-groups" and "out-groups," giving rise to envy, prejudice, and possibly aggression.

Participants in a 2014 study were more likely to lie for the benefit of others in the same group after receiving oxytocin. The findings, said researchers, could help with "providing insight into when and why collaboration turns into corruption."

More investigation is needed to understand the complexity of oxytocin and what it does.

To the Girl Who Already Had Sex Before Marriage

Lindsey Maestas

One morning in college, I woke up, got ready and drove to a church to buy myself a purity ring. My heart ached a little bit at the thought of it, because even at that time, the last word that I would have used to define myself was “pure.”

Maybe regretful, ashamed, dirty, totally undeserving of an honorable man’s affections.

Sure.

But definitely not pure.

Here’s a little backstory: I had made many commitments to make drastic changes to my life before this day, but those empty words often resulted in nothing. I continued living my life the only way that I knew how.

I jumped from relationship to relationship because I was insecure and dependent. If I even felt that a relationship was on the rocks, I would make sure I had someone else waiting in the background. Sad, right? My heart was a torn-up piece of cloth and I kept trying to patch it with the wrong things.

There was one specific day when I found out that my on-and-off again boyfriend of three years was dating someone new. I had given everything to him and that physical and emotional connection meant double the heartbreak. It crushed me. My mind ran wild and my heart physically hurt for months.

But instead of healing in a healthy way, I decided to heal my broken heart by seeking more attention. I drank a lot and made bad decisions. I forced myself to date people who were never a good fit in the first place,

because “I just wanted to be happy.”

However, it made me feel the exact opposite. I often went home crying, depressed and broken after a night out. I asked myself: “Why do I keep going back to this lifestyle if it makes me so unhappy?” I couldn’t answer that. And yet, I still ensured that I had someone on speed dial to keep me company, just in case the feeling of brokenness began creeping back up on me. And it always did. It always does, doesn’t it? I was a wretched mess who couldn’t stand on my own two feet without fake love and empty affection.

But God.

I gave my life to Jesus when I was 19. I have loved Him and failed Him ever since that day, but He still loves me endlessly. If I’m honest, my surrender to Him was initially more of a moment of “nothing else is working, so I might as well try this.” But God is good and gave grace despite my selfishness. And after I surrendered it all to Him – the filth, the despair, the loneliness—I knew something was about to be different.

My desires were different. God was changing my present. And little did I know, He was drastically changing my future the moment that He led me to buy that ring.

I knew something new was coming. I was so ready and excited to destroy the life that made me feel undeserving and shameful and turn it into a distant memory.

After I purchased the ring that day, I got into my car and I shut the door. As soon as I placed it on my finger, I began to cry. I broke down into an overwhelming sob which led to a full-on ugly cry. I couldn't have even prepared myself for the beautiful emotions I felt or the thoughts that ran through my mind.

I kept hearing this verse: "If anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation. Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

And in that moment, I felt a lot of things. But more than anything, I felt free.

Free from the obligation to be someone I never really wanted to be.

Free from allowing myself to feel used, just because I was lonely.

Free from permitting someone who called only when he "felt like it" to define every ounce of my worth.

Free from seeking attention and praise for my looks or my body.

Free from the desire to give myself up to anyone, especially who wouldn't walk a mile for me—let alone 500.

I was free from the life that was so far from what was intended for me.

And that life is also so, so far from what is intended for you.

You are more than your mistakes. You are loved, precious and worthy. Whatever it is that you are dependent on or in bondage to, God is offering you a fresh start.

You may be married now and bear the burden of guilt

for your past decisions. Or you are in the midst of living out these mistakes today, seeking a way out without any direction. Either way: You are loved. You may not have deserved a second chance, but you are offered one. And today you have the choice to choose Him—over yourself—and begin afresh.

I've been married to my husband, Jesse, for five years now. He and I fought really hard to remain pure until we were finally married. And it was so worth it. Some people mocked it, but I didn't mind. I was secure in the belief that God created intimacy for my husband and him alone. I was content in waiting (even when it got really stinking hard).

Jesse loved God enough, and loved me enough, actively to show me that his priority was my heart and not my body. I had never been offered that kind of respect before. I had never even tried to earn it.

The closeness in our relationship was unmatched because we spent time talking and learning about one another rather than leaning on intimacy as a crutch.

He displayed an unconditional love for me that I had never once received in my life. He made me feel really, truly loved. He would have walked 500 miles for me without a second thought. And he made me feel like I was worth waiting for.

My story was no longer one of shame, but one of redemption. It's a story of ashes to beauty because of forgiveness and love.

It's never too late to start over. God moves in us. God heals us day after day from the brokenness we cause for ourselves. He fills our lives with a fullness that we can't even fathom without Him. And He loves you enough to set you on a new path.

Prayer for Purity

Jesus, Lover of chastity, Mary, Mother most pure, and Joseph, chaste guardian of the Virgin, to you I come at this hour, begging you to plead with God for me. I earnestly wish to be pure in thought, word and deed in imitation of your own holy purity.

Obtain for me, then, a deep sense of modesty which will be reflected in my external conduct. Protect my



eyes, the windows of my soul, from anything that might dim the luster of a heart that must mirror only Christlike purity.

And when the "Bread of Angels becomes the Bread of me" in my heart at Holy Communion, seal it forever against the suggestions of sinful pleasures.

Heart of Jesus, Fount of all purity, have mercy on us.

Talking to Your Children About Purity



“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10

God commands His people to be pure in thought and action. On our own there is little more we can do than fail in this simple command. But God has designed us for purity and given us the resources to live in a way that is honoring and pleasing to Him.

We want to encourage you and equip you as you engage with your children about the topic of purity as it relates to sexuality. Our goals are that you:

Give a vision for God-honoring thoughts and actions to your child.

Guide your child in dating, sexual identity, and purity.

Teach God’s design for marriage and intimacy.

Help your child protect, persevere, commit, and have a plan for staying pure.

Ready or not...

As parents it is difficult to reconcile our cherub-like view of our children with the fact that our children are indeed sexual beings. As they mature and develop into men and women, their natural desires awaken and prompt a curiosity about sexual activities.

The potential for becoming involved in sexual behavior exists. They will be confronted by those desires whether in relationships, what they see in media, or what you as a parent teach them.

One way to help your child is to discuss and commit to a decision about where their boundaries are. This isn’t something you can force your child to do, but it is an opportunity you can provide for your child.

Your child’s understanding of sexuality will be derived from somewhere, either from you or from culture.

We have to go beyond some trite explanation for why

sex is intended only within the boundaries of marriage. Our children need more than an explanation of the mechanics. We have to roll up our sleeves, dig into the Word of God, seek out resources, and answer our kids’ questions—they’re valid questions and deserve answers.

The topic of purity is not all about rules, or making it to the wedding night as a virgin. At the center of the purity message is a love and genuine passion for God. From this is born a lifestyle of purity.

Giving a positive message

As with our previous topics, our role as parent is to first model the behavior we wish our children to learn in our own marriage and relationships. There are several ways in which you can model healthy boundaries and relationship, and set an example for your child:

- Establish a date night with your spouse
- Display physical affection with your spouse (holding hands, hugging, kissing)
- Protect time for conversations the children aren’t privy to
- Affirm God’s delight in your child
- Participate in intentional relationship building activities

The loudest voice

Remember, you have the loudest voice in your child’s head, and your opinion weighs heavy on them. Set yourself up as an expert in this area so that when your child begins seeking answers, they come to you rather than pursuing alternative sources.

It’s easy to get caught up on the physical aspects of purity, but it’s crucial to address the holistic nature of purity, including the emotional and spiritual aspects.

God’s design for sex is a method of His love and protection for us and for future generations.

Set boundaries and include your child in the commitment to respect and honor those boundaries. We don’t want our children to believe that sex is dirty, but to understand that there is a time and place for everything, including sex.

What if boundaries have been crossed?

There is so much shame bonded to the crossing of sexual boundaries. If your child has done so, please communicate love and forgiveness, explaining that boundaries can be reset and a life of purity is not out of their reach.

Remember, we do not become impure as we grow up and encounter a depraved world. We were born into an inheritance of death and sin. The ultimate purity is not virginity, but the washing of Jesus’ blood that makes us whole and white as snow.

Children Are A Gift From God

The Bible tells us repeatedly in His Word how all children are a gift from God. Every single life, every single child, is a reward and blessing. Whether they're bringing parents pride and joy, or whether they are teaching us how to be more patient and forgiving, children are a gift from God and a source for the growth of His Kingdom here on Earth!

God knows that children can bring us closer to Him and help grow our Christian character. Be encouraged by the following Bible verses about children and how the Lord sees them!

3 John 1:4

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Genesis 1:28

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Isaiah 54:13

All your children will be taught by the LORD, and great will be their peace.

James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Job 16:21

On behalf of a man he pleads with God as one pleads for a friend.

Mark 9:37

Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not



welcome me but the one who sent me.

Mark 10:14

When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Matthew 18:10

See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

Proverbs 17:6

Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.

Proverbs 22:6

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Psalms 113:9

He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD.

Psalms 127:3-5

Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.

Psalms 139:13-16

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Battles with Temptation: **St. Gemma's Heroic Chastity** *and Purity*

Taken (with adaptations) from "The Life of Saint Gemma Galgani" by Venerable Father Germanus C.P.



Whoever wishes to follow Jesus and be perfect must deny self, that is, to renounce all things and take up the Cross, because without the Cross it is impossible to become like Jesus Christ; He who is God Crucified. . . . Therefore, it is impossible to become one

with Jesus without embracing the Cross. Furthermore, in order to become like Jesus and be transformed into a lover of the Cross, man oppressed by sin must subjugate all his wicked appetites of heart and sense. This cannot be effected without doing great violence to self by means of assiduous mortification and self sacrifice. Hence the Divine Master Himself has said: "...the Kingdom of Heaven," that is the sanctification of the soul- ...the Kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force." (Matt 11:12) These words became the rule of Gemma's whole spiritual life. She realized the power of the above doctrine. It moved her to the heroic practice of all the virtues, by the constant thought of Jesus Crucified, and hence her determination to overcome every obstacle to her self-mortification and likeness to Him.

Gemma wished to become like Jesus at any cost, having received this ardent desire as a young child while in her mother's arms. It went on increasing until it absorbed all others, and she no longer wished to know of anything else. Hence it was enough to look at her face or movements, or to hear her speak, in order to know

that she lived in this one desire: to become like Jesus, to please Him alone. It was then to be expected that this child of grace would set herself to employ every means to the desired end, particularly that of self-mortification.

The first thing she gave evidence of in this undertaking was her uninterrupted diligence in bridling her senses. From her infancy she had become mistress of her eyes, and kept them habitually lowered. When traveling to Church for Mass or on errands, she constantly kept her eyes downcast. As she advanced in years and in virtue, she became more firmly established in this practice, owing to a resolution she made, when one day in church she happened to look with curiosity, for a moment, at the dress of a little girl who sat next her. Her guardian Angel immediately showed his displeasure and Gemma resolved never more to turn her eyes to look willfully at anyone in this world. From that day forward those innocent eyes remained closed to exterior things and subject to her will. In order to make her look at you, a formal command was needed. She then obeyed but only for a few seconds and again, modestly blushing, lowered her eyes once again. On this account, whoever desired to observe the beauty of her soul that shone in her eyes was obliged to do so while she was in ecstasy, as then she generally kept them raised to Heaven.

The freezing water incident

One day when rising from the table after dinner, the Devil appeared to Gemma in an impure form and threatened to overcome her at any cost. Gemma turned pale and then immediately ran out the back door to a deep water tank in the back garden. It was winter and the water was icy cold. There and then, making the sign of the Cross, she threw herself in the freezing water and certainly would have quickly succumbed, had not some invisible hand drew her shivering from the water.

Although she was often tempted by the world, the Devil and the flesh, there reigned in the heart of this happy child a joy of paradise that could only be ruffled by the fear of offending her Lord, and the thought of His inscrutable judgments. Outside these limits nothing

caused her disquietude. And this was quite evident in her exterior, always so bright and affable, and in her perpetual smile, that so strangely contrasted with the dignity of her countenance and the gravity of her bearing.

Sin, which contaminates the soul, is the effect of the three great concupiscences that reign in man: pride, sensuality and love of earthly goods. Gemma knew too well how full of contagion the air is that we breathe, and how corrupt the world in which we live. Hence she was always afraid of herself, and, not content with what she had already done in bridling the disorderly appetites of nature, she wished to continue without ceasing the work of her perfection. In this meritorious exercise she gave the first place to the avoidance of dangerous occasions. Clear-sighted though she was, and of accurate judgment, notwithstanding her childlike simplicity, she was able to discern the danger of such occasions at any distance. "Here," she used to say, "Jesus is not to be found; then Gemma, let us fly." Without thinking evil of anyone she normally feared all company, and desired to remain alone, and if it had not been necessary to go out to church and sometimes to the city on errands, she would never have left the house. The same may be said of talking, mixing in the affairs of others, making friends, writing letters and suchlike. She used to say: "Gemma, don't trust yourself; remember that every occasion may be dangerous to you; outside Jesus all is deceit; keep with Him alone and go on with your duties without attending to anything else."

Yet the most beautiful fruit that Gemma gathered from the tree of the Cross and from mortification was chastity. Adorable virtue, how rare thou art in this depraved world! And yet thou should be the dowry of every Christian soul, whose vocation according to the words of the Apostle is to be holy and immaculate. Our angelic Gemma learned how precious was purity while yet a child from her saintly Mother, and as from those first moments she began to love her Jesus she became aware of this priceless jewel and strove with all her energy to keep it untarnished in her soul. Among the practices to this end suggested by her solicitous mother, one was to recite devoutly every evening while kneeling on her hands under her knees, three Hail Marys to the Queen of Heaven in honor of her Immaculate Conception. The innocent child, though knowing so little at that early age, took keenly to this devotion and never omitted it. Rising from this prayer and joining her little hands she added these words: "Blessed Mother, never allow me to lose holy purity. Place me under your mantle, guard this treasure for me, and I shall become more pleasing to Jesus." A few days before her death, finding herself alone, although she had lost all strength and could not stand, she rose, and taken by surprise by a visitor, was found kneeling with her hands beneath her knees, reciting her

usual 3 Hail Mary's for purity.

As she advanced in years, her love of the angelic virtue of purity and her desire to preserve it without spot grew with her. This was a special object of her mortifications, penances and the custody of her senses. It seemed to her that any liberty, however innocent and insignificant it may be, might discolor this beautiful flower, and so as to avoid this she took every precaution. She never went near a mirror, not even to do her hair or wipe away the stains of blood that flowed from her forehead when crowned with mystic thorns, or to wipe the blood from her eyes during her dolorous



First Holy Communion

contemplation. And when during impulses of Divine love, her heart took fire and burned the corresponding exterior part of her skin, and when by a dart of fire from the side of Jesus Crucified she felt a large wound open in her side; and when her heart itself by its mysterious throbbings greatly distorted and curved three of her ribs, although ignoring at first what such phenomena meant, she refrained from looking at or touching herself, and never did so on the frequent renewal of these various wonders.

We have seen already that from her earliest childhood she shrank from being touched by others, and from the most innocent caresses. In her childhood, she endeavored not even to allow her father to kiss her. When she lay on her deathbed and of her own accord she asked for Extreme Unction (Sacrament of the Sick -editor), great was her consternation at the thought of having to get her feet washed by someone else's hands. What was to be done? Her love of holy modesty gave her strength, and seizing on the first moment that she found herself alone, she put out her hand, took the basin, water and towel, and did all for herself; then full of joy, to those who came to do her the needful service

she was able to say: “Thank you, but I don’t need help; I have done all by myself.”

During her first grave illness in 1898-1899, her family demanded that she be examined by physicians on several occasions. In her great modesty and purity, concerning this in her Autobiography she wrote-

“I never wanted to obey when they wished a doctor to visit me (for I never wanted anyone to touch me or see me.) One evening a doctor came unannounced, examined me by force and found an abscess on my body which he feared was very serious because he thought it had affected my spine. For a long time I had felt pain in that part of my body but I did not want to touch or look at it because when I was a little girl I had heard a priest say: “Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.” Those words had struck me and led me to guard my body as closely as possible. After he had visited me the doctor called a consultant. What affliction it caused me, dear Father, to have to uncover myself. Every time the doctor touched me I cried. After the consultation I grew steadily worse and I was forced to go to bed and was not able to move. Every remedy was used on me but instead of helping me they made me worse. While I was in bed I was ill at ease and a source of annoyance to all. The second day I was in bed I was not at peace and I wrote to Monsignor telling him that I wanted to see him. He came at once and I made a general confession, not indeed because I was so bad off but to regain peace of conscience which I had lost. After confession my peace with Jesus returned and as a sign of this, on that same evening I experienced a very deep sorrow for my sins. Then, dear Father, the pain became worse and worse and the doctors decided to operate on me (in that part of which I have spoken). Three doctors came (and what I suffered from the pain was as nothing). I felt pain and suffering only when I found myself in their presence almost entirely unclothed. Dear Father, how much better it would have been for me to die! Finally the doctors saw that all remedies were useless and they gave me up entirely. After that they came to see me only now and then through courtesy, so to speak.”

Later, when Gemma was given the extraordinary grace of the Stigmata along with frequent ecstasies, her Confessor Monsignor Volpi requested that Doctors examine Gemma while in ecstasy, and also the stigmata, in hopes to document and authenticate their veracity. Concerning this, Gemma writes in her autobiography-

“Meanwhile the Friday occurrences continued and Monsignor thought it well to have a doctor visit me during one of them without my knowing it. But Jesus warned me saying: “Tell your confessor that in the presence of the doctor I will do none of the things that he desires.” Following the advice of Jesus I told my confessor about this but he did as he had planned, and events turned out as Jesus had said, as you already know.”

Concerning the Doctors examining Gemma’s extraordinary charisms, Gemma’s spiritual director, Father Germanus C.P. had a completely different opinion than Monsignor Volpi. He wrote to Cecilia Giannini stating:

“Please do not repeat the mistake of calling in the doctor. What would a doctor understand? He would say, ‘Hysteria, hysteria’ and that is all, and perhaps along with that a stupid laugh directed toward those who believe in the supernatural. And this ridicule the Catholic doctors know how to make even better than the unbelievers and freemasons. Therefore, absolutely no doctors! Tell Monsignor this in my name.”

Father Germanus also wrote several letters to Monsignor Volpi, respectfully making the same request.

Gemma and the odor of sanctity

The angelic purity of Gemma’s soul was reflected in her body, which in many ways presented quite unusual qualities. You would have said it was formed of some crystalline material. Although her body was neglected by her, it was resplendent in its exquisite regularity- not even during the trying maladies and illnesses that confined her to bed for such a long time did her body ever emit the least unpleasant exhalation. Some marvelled



St. Gemma in ecstasy receiving the stigmata.

at hearing of this, and to satisfy their curiosity proved it by visiting her often, and remaining near her night and day. More than that, on several occasions those near her remarked how her person and also what she touched exhaled a delicious fragrance that certainly was not of this earth, since Gemma did not use unguents or perfumes, or even soap for washing except when necessary. Moreover, that grateful fragrance came quite unexpectedly and moved all to devotion. "Don't you perceive a fragrance?" said the bystanders one to another. "Our dear Gemma! Assuredly Jesus, or the heavenly Mother, or her Guardian Angel is here with her."

Of course, such a fact is not new in Christian hagiology; nay, it is told of many Saints, for example St. Paul of the Cross and St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, whose body even now, three hundred years since her death, diffuses a delicious perfume.

Attacks from the Devil

A gift of such rare purity and chastity could not fail to be an object of hatred to the evil spirit, who certainly must have raged with fury against this angelic virgin so favored by God. An assault on so much virtue was a difficult undertaking, even for Hell. How was this simple dove to be assailed? She, so to speak, did not even know the name of vice. How then could this foul spirit insinuate his gross suggestions into a heart so pure and full of delicate sentiment? The wicked enemy himself foresaw from the start that he would have striven in vain, knowing for certain that God would not have given him power over her. Hence he employed all his guilty machinations in tormenting her externally. He represented lurid objects to her imagination and appeared to her himself, uttering vile words, and sometimes even coming to open violence. Although the saintly child quite often knew not what he meant by his wicked expressions, nevertheless through an instinctive sense of delicacy that penetrated her whole being, she felt that it was wrong. Accordingly, from the very outset she armed herself against her enemy and gave him determined resistance. And, although he found on trial the uselessness of his attempts, he nevertheless renewed his attacks merely to frighten and torment his innocent victim. Indeed it is impossible to express what a cruel torture it was for this angelic girl to see and hear such abominable things. Let her give us an idea of it herself in words spoken in tears at the feet of her spiritual Father-

"Oh Father, what terrible temptations these are! All temptations are painful, but these against holy purity torment me the most! What I undergo is known only to Jesus, who secretly guards me and"-note the sense of this expression-"He is pleased with me."

In order to avoid seeing those representations, the poor child, not knowing what else to do, used to shut her eyes and keep them so until the angel of impurity

had gone. She also seized her Crucifix, called for aid to her dear Guardian Angel, to her patron Saints and above all to her Heavenly Mother. By these means, after long hours of fighting, being left free, she returned immediately to her soul's peace, and full of joy exclaimed: "Let us thank Jesus, that today also things have passed in the way most pleasing to Him."

But Gemma was not satisfied with this. Having learned that the Saints in order to repress similar temptations had resort to scourges, hair shirts, plunging into frozen water, etc., and believing that she ought to imitate those servants of God, she made up her mind to do so. And so earnestly did she set about it, that if obedience had not interposed, she would have cut her innocent body into bits. But, for all that, so great at times was her fear of being led in those horrible moments to offend against purity and chastity, that she lost sight of all else, even of the necessity to ask her confessor for permission, she took to the lash, the hair shirt; the knotted cord with sharp points, with which she tightly girt herself; and at times the pain of those sharp points penetrating her flesh caused her to faint.

Now, in the face of such heroic examples, ought we not blush? -We who professing to follow Jesus Christ in the ways of sanctity, yet show ourselves so tender towards our bodies, and so adverse to curbing its unruly appetites. Has not our Divine Saviour said- "...the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force." (Matt 11:12).

"But to come to heaven requires purity of heart: give it to me, my Jesus....Yes, I so desire purity of heart!" -St Gemma Galgani

The Unique Love of A Mother

Michelle Bauman



“God combats evil through the power of a woman’s maternal love.” – St. Edith Stein

In the First Reading last weekend, we heard these words from the prophet Isaiah: “Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.” (Is. 49:15)

This passage uses the love of a mother as an example of unconditional love. Notice that it does not use the word “father” or the gender-neutral term “parent.” Fatherhood also involves unconditional love, but the image given here is a maternal one. There is something special about a mother’s love for her children, and it is being invoked in this passage.

Scientists explain the unique bond that exists between mother and child in terms of chemicals. According to studies, a woman’s body releases powerful hormones during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding, causing her to connect emotionally with her new baby. This special bond is apparent to anyone who sees a new mother holding her child – underneath her exhaustion is an unmistakable joy and radiance that cannot be denied.

Motherhood is a beautiful gift and an opportunity to

witness to the world. In the role of mother, women are called to express unconditional love to their children, reflecting the love that God has for his people. This special role of motherhood was once valued in society. Women were traditionally homemakers. Raising children was understood to be a respectable full-time job, stemming from the immense love that a mother had for her children.

Today, however, society has lost respect for motherhood. Women often have to work, and it is difficult for them to stay home with their children. Even when they are at home, they are often distracted from their children. Our culture tells us that our main priority in life should be to seek our own personal fulfillment and happiness. Children are secondary to this, and we should not allow them to conflict with our other ambitions. Those women who do choose to stay home and raise their children are often ridiculed for this decision. The role of homemaker has been degraded and is no longer viewed as an admirable pursuit.

Our society today attacks the role of the mother in other ways as well. Contraception treats motherhood as a disease to be prevented, and abortion treats it as a mistake to be fixed. Gay “marriage” disregards the need for both a mother and a father, undermining the distinctions that make them each unique. In vitro fertilization views motherhood as a “right” that a woman can demand, rather than a blessing for which she should be truly thankful.

Amid these threats coming from every direction, the words of Isaiah still ring true. Today, the need for devoted mothers is greater than ever. God is asking us as women to glorify Him by doing something that comes naturally to us. He is asking us to use our maternal ability to give tender,

unfailing love to our children in order to show His unfailing love to the world. Let us pray that all women who have been blessed with the gift of motherhood will take this calling seriously and respond to it generously, realizing the great dignity and value in what they are doing.

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What the Hook-up Culture Has Done to Women

Anne Maloney

A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things. – Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

A few months ago, a young woman at Stanford University was raped by a virtual stranger, and her rapist received a ridiculously light sentence. The story grabbed headlines everywhere, and caused a firestorm on social media. This “dumpster rape” is being blared about everywhere in the public square while a far more insidious and dangerous threat to women rages on directly under our noses, unacknowledged. This threat is systematically destroying an entire generation of our daughters, sisters, aunts, future mothers, and friends.

The young woman who was raped behind the dumpster has an advantage over most young women today: she knows she was raped. She is angry, and rightly so. She realizes that she has been violated, and she can try to find a way to heal. The young women I encounter every day on the campus of the university where I teach are worse off than this victim, because they do not know what has gone wrong in their lives. Nonetheless, something has gone terribly wrong, and on some level, they know it.

In thirty years of teaching, I have come to know thousands of women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six. These women are hurting. Badly. Consider these examples from “the front lines”: a young woman says to me with all earnestness, “This weekend I went to my first college party, and I hit it off with a guy so we went into

the back bedroom where the coats were and started kissing, but then he reached down, moved my panties aside and penetrated me, so I guess I’m not a virgin anymore.” Another young woman came to me in tears because her doctor told her that since she has genital warts, she may have trouble conceiving children in the future. She had always assumed she would get married and have a family someday. “And the worst part is,” she wailed, “I’m not even promiscuous. I’ve only had sex with six guys.” This young woman was nineteen when she said this to me.

Once, in a writing assignment about Socrates and the Allegory of the Cave, a student wrote that she decided to make better choices after she woke up one morning in a trailer, covered with scratches, naked, next to a man she didn’t remember meeting. At least she knew there was a problem. All too often, these women come to me in a state of bewilderment. Women have never been more “sexually liberated” than these women are, or so they are told. No more are they shackled by ridiculous bonds like commandments, moral rules, words like “chastity.” They shout: “We’re free!” Yet they whisper: “Why are we so miserable?”

It is no coincidence that the top two prescribed drugs at our state university’s health center are anti-depressants and the birth-control pill. Our young women are showing up

to a very different version of “college life” than that of the previous generation. One woman, while in her freshman year, went to her health center because she feared she had bronchitis. In perusing her “health history,” the physician said, “I see here that you are a virgin.” “Um, yes,” she responded, wondering what that fact might have to do with her persistent cough. “Would you like to be referred for counseling about that?” This student came to me to ask if I thought she should, in fact, consider her virginity—at the age of eighteen—a psychological issue. (I said no.)

In a seminar I teach every other year, we discuss the ways that addiction reveals certain truths about embodiment. One of the books we discuss is Caroline Knapp’s *Drinking: A Love Story*. The students adore this book, and we have fascinating conversations in class. The chapter that generates by far the most passion, however, is the chapter on drinking and sex. Knapp speaks honestly about the key role that alcohol played in her decisions to have sex, sex that she regretted and that made her feel terrible. My students resonate deeply with Knapp’s experiences, and I continue to be struck by how unfree these students feel. Once the culture embraced non-marital sex and made it the norm, women who do not want to have casual sex often feel like outcasts, like weirdos. College is the last place where one wants to feel like an utter misfit; couple that with the fact that first year students are away from home for the first time—lonely, vulnerable, insecure—and you have the recipe for meaningless sexual encounters followed by anxiety and depression.

Why don’t these women just stop it? Rather than get drunk in order to have casual sex, why don’t they put down the glass AND the condom? The world we have created for these young people is a world which welcomes every sort of sexual behavior except chastity. Anal sex? Okay! Threesomes? Yep. Sex upon the first meeting? Sure! Virginity until marriage? What the hell is wrong with you? I am going to go out on a limb here and suggest that the reason so many college-aged women binge-drink is so that they can bear their own closeted sorrow about what they are doing. The woman who got drunk and got raped behind the dumpster is the victim of a toxic culture. But my students are also the victims of a toxic culture. Small wonder that the number of women suffering from eating disorders, addiction, anxiety and depression is at an all-time high.

I have not been raped, and I did not engage in non-marital intercourse. I did have an encounter early in my life, however, that gives me a glimpse of the shame experienced by women who “hook up.” When I was sixteen years old, my sister took me to a bar near her college campus. The bar was one designated by students as the “easy in” place, because I.D.’s were checked cursorily if at all. Once we were inside the bar, my sister was swept away by a phalanx of her friends, and I lost her in the crowd. A “college man” at the bar noticed me, and came over to ask me if I

would like something to drink. I had no idea what to order or how, as I had never been to a bar before. He reassured me that he would take good care of me, and went over to the bartender. When he came back with a Tequila Sunrise, he said it would taste great, like Hawaiian Punch. He was right; it was delicious, and I gladly accepted three more from him. The next thing I remember, I was doing some very intensive French-kissing with this fellow, and he was murmuring a suggestion that we “take this somewhere else.” By the grace of God, my sister’s boyfriend had just entered the bar, saw me, pulled me away from the man, and dragged me to the back of the bar and my sister. That was my first kiss. The next morning, I experienced my first true hangover. As awful as I felt physically, though, my shame was much, much worse. A romantic through-and-through, I had dreamed for years of my first kiss. A drunken slobber with a stranger was the brutal reality I would never be able to undo.

And yet, whenever I tell people this story, they are shocked that I am making “such a big deal” about that night. People drink. They kiss. But for the grace of God and a sister’s boyfriend, they end up in a stranger’s bed with a bad headache, a dry mouth, and an incalculable emptiness. I am often told, “Lighten up!” “You had fun. Big deal!” “Why are you so hard on yourself?” I kept speaking the truth of that awful experience, but my culture could not absorb that truth. I had no words for my sadness; it was only later in my life when I was a stronger person that I was able to say, “You know what? It was a big deal. It wasn’t fun. I did feel ashamed.”

A few years ago, I was online and saw that man’s name come up on a blog that I read. He graduated from the college and became a respected and award-winning journalist. When I told some friends I had found him and he was now famous, they suggested that I “network” and re-introduce myself to him online. I was horrified at the thought of doing any such thing; after more than thirty-five years, I was still deeply ashamed of that night. It was years before I realized how very ashamed he should have been. In fact, given my age and obvious vulnerability, his behavior was predatory and vicious. The fact that he ought to have been ashamed, however, did not mean that I needn’t have been. Had this fellow succeeded in taking me somewhere to do what he intended, I would have felt degraded. The culture of “Sex and the City” and “Girls” would have insisted that I was fine, I was a modern woman, I was “free.” I knew better. Yes, I was sixteen, but I knew I wasn’t supposed to be in a bar that night. I knew I was not of legal age to drink. I knew that accepting drinks from complete strangers is a very bad idea. I never told my mother about that night, but if I had, she would have said, “Anne, you know better.” To say that I had no choices that night is to rob me of the moral agency that I, in fact, had. At sixteen, I may not have

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Chastity Before Marriage: A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

There are many young couples who sincerely believe in the Church's teachings forbidding sexual intercourse before marriage. They know that fornication is intrinsically wrong, and are more or less well-versed in the numerous good reasons to back up this claim, based in both Revelation and the Natural Law, reasons that will not be rehearsed in this article. Such young people want to be chaste and fully intend to be chaste.

And yet, even such admirable young couples with the best of intentions find themselves in situations of grave temptation. Some yield to that temptation, sometimes with pregnancy as a result. One reason this occurs is a faulty attitude toward the Church's condemnation of fornication. It is seen as something to avoid, and to avoid for very good reasons. But it is still seen as a negative phenomenon: "We don't get to have this great expression of our love for another how many years."

Once it is viewed as a primarily negative phenomenon, it is all too easy — especially given the fierceness of passion between two people very much in love — to rationalize: we're mature enough to handle just one taste of it now. We want so badly to be a real married couple now, we'll act just a little older than our age. We can handle it. It's not quite entirely fair that we have to wait.

An entirely different attitude is needed. The experience of chastity as a negative phenomenon must be replaced with an experience of chastity as an entirely positive phenomenon. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2350) wonderfully contains this positive



message: "Those who are engaged to marry are called to live chastity in continence. They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity, and the hope of receiving one another from God. They should reserve for marriage the expression of affection that belongs to married love. They will help each other grow in chastity." What follows is a meditation on, an unraveling of, that message.

You cannot have a healthy marriage without chastity — that virtue by which we are in control of our sexual appetite rather than it being in control of us. And chastity is a tough virtue to develop. If it is not in full development before marriage, it is going to be very hard to develop after marriage. So, before marriage is the time to accomplish this very positive thing, the virtue of chastity.

This is a courageous thing to do, a positive thing to do. Males need to see it as the ultimate manly thing to do, and they need to take the lead in the couple's mutual accomplishment of moral toughness. Note the complete change in perspective: abstaining before marriage is not a matter of "sticking it out" — for with that attitude, what real difference does it make if you don't quite make it? Rather, it is a matter of accomplishing, finishing, a great task. It is an "apprenticeship in fidelity."

Consider some concrete steps for accomplishing this great task — and remember that no matter how far you've gone in the opposite direction you can turn around now.

1. Avoid the near occasions of sin. Today this idea is often looked upon as quaint and prudishly out-of-touch with reality. In fact, it is a gem of practical wisdom and will go a long way in helping young couples with their special project. Concretely, it boils down to this: when spending time alone together, do not spend it on your own. Be together publicly — parks, malls, other social settings. This is not prudish, it is realistic. You will have more fun and will be free that terrible accusation “they’re so exclusive.”
 2. The next point is really an addendum to #1: Given there are some occasions when you are invariably alone together, be very sure they do not occur while using alcohol. St. Thomas put it best: Through excessive use of alcohol people willingly and knowingly deprive themselves of the use of reason which enables them to act virtuously and avoid sin (S.T., II-II, 150, 2).
 3. Do not develop an inappropriate emotional dependency on each other. This may sound strange — after all, you are in love, are you not? Yes, but with a kind of “all-out dependency,” that love quickly degenerates into a sentimental attachment that actually prevents you from really getting to know each other. Signs of such dependency: you talk for hours on the phone, and cannot wait till the next call; if the call does not come you go into a crisis, thinking your friend does not love you; you think you must do everything, including studying, together; you plan your daily schedules to be in near constant contact. The logical extension of this immature dependency is undue sexual intimacy. You end up as two beings turned inward on each other in every respect.
 4. This navel-gazing is just the opposite of what you want to accomplish as a couple considering marriage: you want to be outward looking, focused on making a contribution together to the world. Some married couples who succeed in developing this attitude do not even want to take a honeymoon — they want to get on right away with their contribution to the community. They take a vacation a year later to renew their commitment.
 5. Avoiding a sentimental emotional dependency also helps you to see each other with some clarity, both in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Respective strengths are not over-glamorized. You can objectively discern whether you think you could live with the other’s weaknesses, and simultaneously work on your own faults in light of the other’s observations. You can truly develop the “hope of receiving one another from God.”
 6. As noted, the logical extension of an immature emotional dependency is undue sexual intimacy. Here is a good test to check whether a selfish preoccupation with your own passions (masqueraded as love) has crept into your friendship. Take one of those evenings together when some unforeseen circumstance causes a premature ending to your time together, and as a result there was no physical intimacy. Be honest: did you feel cheated, as if it were a wasted evening? If so, passion has eclipsed the friendship, the physical has eclipsed the personal. See #1 above to avoid this trap.
 7. Alongside the virtue of chastity, you can develop that virtue so closely allied to it, the virtue of purity by which the mind and heart are made clean of lust. Through patient practice, cooperating with God’s grace, and with the help of the sacraments, young people can get their minds “out of the gutter” as it were. There is an enormous freedom in not being bound to impure thoughts. One is free to treat others as persons, for their own sake, not as objects of passion. And with the development of the twin virtues of chastity and purity, those who still have lingering habits of solitary sexual acts left over from a possible weakness in adolescence can quickly and effectively surmount them. (In the next issue, watch for a practical set of guidelines for working on the virtue of purity.)
 8. Unmarried couples who have fallen into the habit of engaging in varying types of genital activity can likewise do an about-face. Essential to the great project of developing chastity and purity is a turning away from a preoccupation with genital stimulation, so that one is left free to treat others as persons, not objects for self-gratification. Any intentional genital stimulation prior to the marital commitment is a selfish preoccupation with one’s own passions. In black and white: keep your clothes on, your feet on the floor, and no French kissing. Put otherwise, avoid anything that arouses you to the point where you almost desperately want to go one step further. Avoid the trap of the slippery slope.
- Too many couples who have the best intentions easily get caught in that trap — and with one step after another, their resolve gradually vanishes. A direct about-face in attitude is required. The time prior to marriage is a time of preparation, a time to accomplish a great task: demonstrating to each of and to the world that you are not ruled by your passions. It is not “kind of unfair” to have to wait right at the time when sexual passion is so pronounced; rather it is eminently fair that so challenging a task be given right at that time. There exists an inherent commensurability between the difficulty of the task of preparation and

the gravity of that which one is preparing for. If sexual passion can be mastered now, when that passion is at a certain height, it is mastered for a lifetime, a lifetime that will provide challenges of all sorts and intensities.

Encouraging such attitudes is also enormously important for helping young people discern whether their vocation is to marry or to remain celibate (entering religious life or the priesthood). Too often, young people think that if they have a good dose of libido, they probably aren't called to celibacy. But in point of fact, everyone is called to master sexual passion, in preparation for either the married state or the celibate state.

Only when sexual passion is under control is one fit to make a mature decision about either marriage or celibacy. With this attitude, there will be many more vocations to priesthood and religious life, many marriages with more stability and happiness, and many pre-married couples with much happier courtships.

One final suggestion for the "apprenticeship in fidelity." John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* 52 notes that "...there are kinds of behavior which can never, in any situation, be a proper response — a response which is in conformity with the dignity of the person." This article has focused on those acts incompatible with the apprenticeship in fidelity. The pope goes on to make a startling and profound exhortation: "Finally, it is always possible that man, as the result of coercion or other circumstances, can be hindered from doing certain good actions; but he can never be hindered from not doing certain actions, especially if he is prepared to die rather than to do evil" (emphasis added). One way to express this point is to say "I'd rather die than violate a moral norm." This is a good motto for the apprenticeship in fidelity. Say it every day.

HOOK-UP CULTURE, FROM PAGE 24

known how to articulate that fact, but I do now.

An entire generation of women is wounded yet unable to find the source of the bleeding. There is, indeed, an "unconscious despair" behind their "games and amusements." They "hook up," feel awful and have no idea why. It's hard to heal when you don't know you've been damaged. And the despair and shame that these women who hook up feel is real. Contemporary sexual culture is toxic for young women, and until women stand up and acknowledge that fact, despair, sadness and regret are going to be the underlying chord structure of their very lives. We fail an entire generation when we withhold from them the "wisdom not to do desperate things."



How Contraception Destroys Love

The following is based on Dr. Sri's book, *Men, Women and the Mystery of Love*

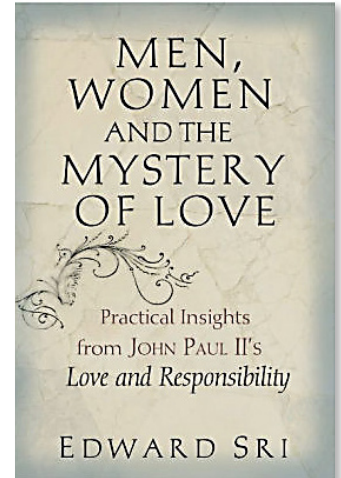


First, Wojtyla stresses that for sexual relations to become a true union of persons, they must be accompanied in the mind and will by the acceptance of the possibility of parenthood. Sexual union itself does not automatically bring about a true union of love. A couple may have physical intimacy without having a deep personal intimacy based on total love, trust, and commitment to the other person. One of the key ingredients needed to make the bodily union between a man and woman a means of building an even deeper personal union of love is a willingness to accept the possibility that through the sexual act, “I may become a father” or “I may become a mother” (p. 228).

Approaching one's spouse with a genuine openness to the possibility of parenthood represents one of the most profound expressions of love and total acceptance of the other person in marriage. When a husband and wife are truly open to life in their marital relations, it is as if they are looking each other in the eye and saying, “I love you so much that I am even willing to embark on the adventure of parenthood with you! . . . I entrust myself to you so much that I am willing to become a partner with you in serving any new life that may come from this act.”

In this light, we can see how openness to life actually increases the love between spouses and can even represent one of the highest levels of selflessness in a marriage. When a husband and wife accept the possibility of becoming parents together, not only do they merely stand

face-to-face enthralled with each other and the good of their relationship, but they also stand shoulder-to-shoulder looking outward together toward the potential new life that may come from their love. And side-by-side, they stand committed not only to each other's own good, but also to working together to serve this potential new life. Here we see that “the relationship between the husband and the wife is not limited to themselves, but necessarily extends to the new person, which their union may (pro-)create” (p. 227).



Rejecting Parenthood, Rejecting One's Spouse

As Wojtyla explains, “When the idea that ‘I may become a father’/‘I may become a mother’ is totally rejected in the mind and will of husband and wife nothing is left of the marital relationship, objectively speaking, except mere sexual enjoyment. One person becomes an object of use for the other” (p. 239).

Second, Wojtyla shows how contraceptive sex is not just a rejection of the possibility of parenthood, but in the end, a certain rejection of the other person. It prevents the physical union of marital intercourse from blossoming into a personal union of love (p. 228). Ultimately, any sexual relationship that rejects the possibility of parenthood will be based on the sexual values of the other person those aspects of the person that bring me physical or emotional pleasure and not on the value of the person as she is in herself.

And that's the great damage contraceptive sex inflicts upon a marriage. According to Wojtyla, when spouses deliberately reject the possibility of parenthood through the means of artificial birth control, the fundamental character of their sexual relationship changes dramatically. Instead of being a union of love, in which the spouses are at least open to expanding their love by becoming partners in parenthood together, contraceptive sex moves their marital relations in the direction of becoming mere-

ly a bilateral relationship of enjoyment, with no other purpose than to be used as a means to pleasure (p. 228). Instead of being viewed as a co-creator of love, the spouse now is seen primarily as a partner in a pleasurable experience.

For example, when a man rejects the possibility of becoming a parent with his wife in the marital act, the focus of his experience in sexual intercourse becomes centered on sexual pleasure. The value of the woman as a person and the opportunity for their marital bond to deepen fades into the background, as the woman becomes predominantly a means to sexual pleasure instead of being a potential partner in parenthood. It's as if the man is saying, "I want the sensual pleasure from this act, but I reject the possibility of becoming a parent with you."

When a man and a woman who have marital intercourse decisively preclude the possibility of paternity and maternity, their intentions are thereby diverted from the person and directed to mere enjoyment: "the person as co-creator of love" disappears and there remains only the "partner in an erotic experience." Nothing could be more incompatible with the act of love (p. 234).

That's why openness to life in the sexual act is "an indispensable condition of love" (p. 236). As Wojtyla explains, "When the idea that 'I may become a father'/'I may become a mother' is totally rejected in the mind and will of husband and wife nothing is left of the marital relationship, objectively speaking, except mere sexual enjoyment. One person becomes an object of use for the other" (p. 239).

Periodic Continence

Third, while couples should never reject the possibility of parenthood in sexual intercourse, Wojtyla teaches that they do not need to "positively desire to procreate on every occasion when they have intercourse" (p. 233). Sexual intercourse is needed for the good of deepening the marital relationship, not just for procreation.

Thus, as a wise pastor, Wojtyla explains how couples should be open to the possibility of new life coming from sexual relations, but that they do not have to enter into sexual relations with the specific intention of having a child each time. He says it would be enough for couples to say that "in performing this act we know that we may become parents and we are willing for that to happen" (p. 234).

Furthermore, couples may face certain situations in which they desire to avoid the conception of a child. In those cases, couples may choose to abstain from having sexual relations, especially in those periods in which the woman is most likely to be fertile. Wojtyla calls this practice "periodic continence." (Today, many Catholics practice periodic continence using the method known as Natural Family Planning). By refraining from the sexual act in the fertile periods of a woman's cycle, couples may avoid conception without in any way distorting the fundamental meaning of marital relations. As Wojtyla explains, "A man and a woman moved by true concern for the good of their family and a mature sense of responsibility for the birth, maintenance and upbringing

of their children, will then limit intercourse, and abstain from it in periods in which this might result in another pregnancy undesirable in the particular conditions of their married and family life" (p. 243).

Still Open to Life

Finally, while periodic abstinence is a viable option for Christian spouses, Wojtyla explains that it is permissible "only with certain qualifications" (p. 240).

First, he says the most important point to consider involves the couple's attitude toward procreation. Periodic continence may be used to help regulate conception, but it should not be used to avoid having family. "We cannot therefore speak of continence as a virtue where the spouses take advantage of the periods of biological infertility exclusively for the purpose of avoiding parenthood altogether" (p. 242).

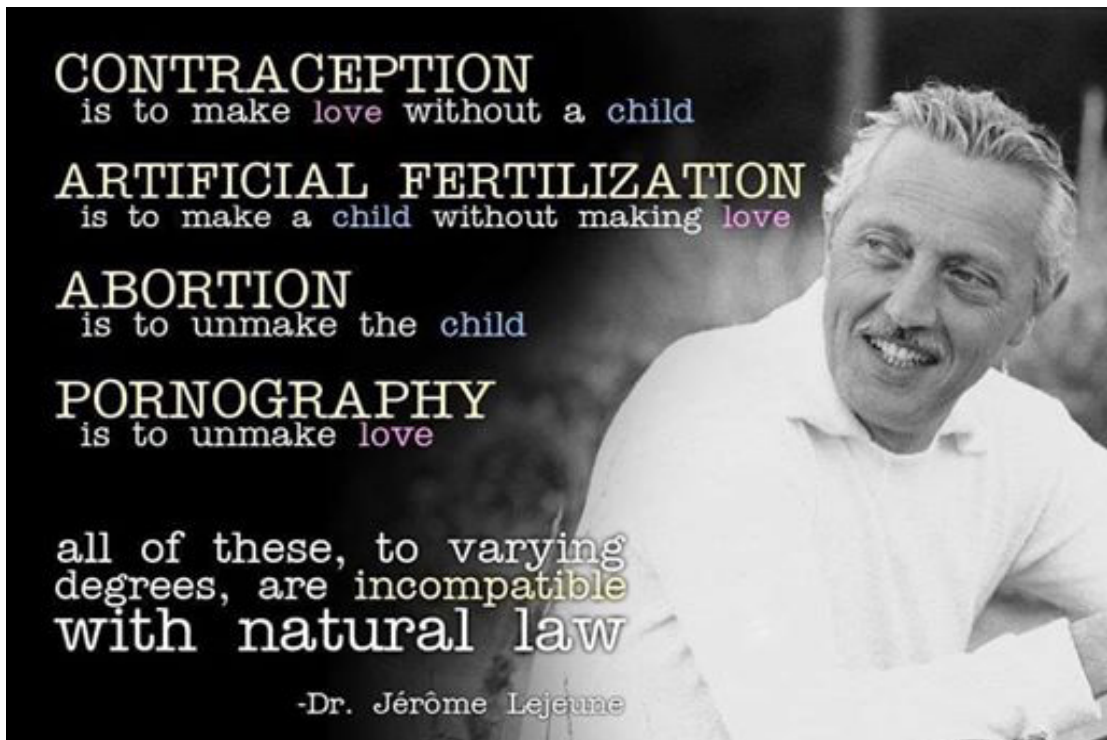
Second, Wojtyla points out that the good of the family should be weighed seriously before practicing periodic continence. He notes how giving children siblings can contribute in an important way to a child's education and upbringing, since brothers and sisters form a natural community that helps shape the child. In fact, in one intriguing statement, Wojtyla seems to indicate that the ideal minimum number of children for a family is at least three.

It is very important that this human being [a child] should not be alone, but surrounded by a natural community. We are sometimes told that it is easier to bring up several children together than an only child, and also that two children are not a community they are two only children. It is the role of parents to direct their children's upbringing, but under their direction the children educate themselves, because they develop within the framework of a community of children, a collective of siblings (pp. 242-3).

Wojtyla certainly is not saying that parents who have only one or two children are not able to raise children well. But he does seem to suggest that having at least three children forms a more ideal environment for the children to be raised in a family. Why would he say that?

He notes how giving children siblings can contribute in an important way to a child's education and upbringing, since brothers and sisters form a natural community that helps shape the child. In fact, in one intriguing statement, Wojtyla seems to indicate that the ideal minimum number of children for a family is at least three.

At first glance, this number seems somewhat arbitrary, and he does not give much of an explanation for this point. However, in light of what he has said elsewhere about love, he might be in part drawing upon the theme of "the bond of the common good" how love is meant to unite two persons around a common aim that they are striving toward together (see pp. 28-9). This is clearly the case in marriage, in which two spouses are united around the common good of deepening their own union and serving any children they may have. But it may also be the case with the children themselves as they have the opportunity to strive together toward the common good of serving other siblings in the family.



For example, when my wife and I had our second child, it was fascinating to watch our firstborn, Madeleine, grow in love for her younger brother, Paul. She wanted to make him smile. She wanted to feed him. She wanted to serve him. And as Paul grew older, it was a joy to watch his own love for Madeleine develop and to see them playing with each other, enjoying each other and serving each other. While, like most kids, they certainly had many “less-than-virtuous moments” in their relationship, Paul and Madeleine nevertheless were steadily growing in a personal relationship of love as siblings.

However, something significant changed in their relationship when our third child came along. Suddenly, Madeleine and Paul’s days were filled not simply with each one enjoying playing with the other. Now they were fascinated together with the new baby in the home. As sister and brother, Madeleine and Paul began to turn their attention not just to themselves, but together toward their new little sister, Teresa. Together they would sing songs to her. Together they wanted to feed her. Together they tried to make her laugh. Madeleine and Paul were learning to become not just playmates who enjoyed each other’s company, but partners in serving a new life outside of themselves their new baby sister. That could be one reason why Wojtyla says three is the ideal minimum number of children in a family: With at least three children, two can work together to serve another, and thus their opportunities to grow in love, friendship, and virtue as a community are deepened even more.

In conclusion, Wojtyla reminds us that if we are considering periodic continence, we must weigh not just our own financial security or our own comfort and lifestyle preferences when desiring to regulate conception. We must seriously weigh the blessing additional siblings can be for the well-be-

ing of our own individual children, for our family life as a whole and even for all of society. Wojtyla warns that parents who decide to limit the size of their family without considering these wider goods outside themselves can cause serious harm to the family and society.

Parents themselves must be careful, when they limit conception, not to harm their families or society at large, which has an interest of its own in the optimum size of the family. A determination on the part of husband and wife to have as few children as possible, to make their own lives easy, is bound to inflict moral damage both on their family and on society at large (p. 243).

Again, there certainly may be circumstances when regulating the number of children through periodic abstinence is necessary and indeed part of parental duty (p. 243). But the intention to limit the number of conceptions should never be a renunciation of parenthood itself. “Periodic continence as a method of regulating conception is permissible in so far as it does not conflict with a sincere disposition to procreate” (p. 243).

Therefore, in periodic continence, spouses should not be seeking to “avoid pregnancy at all costs” (p. 243). Two things must be kept in mind. On one hand, couples who are only having sexual intercourse during the times when the woman is not fertile should still approach the sexual act with a willingness to accept the possibility of becoming a mother or father, even if they do not desire a pregnancy and are practicing periodic continence in order to avoid a pregnancy. On the other hand, in addition to keeping their individual sexual acts open to life, they should also have “a general disposition” toward becoming parents in the broader scope of their marriage as a whole, since siblings are a good for children, for the family, and for society as a whole (p. 243).

Love and Responsibility: Beyond the Sexual Urge

The following is based on Dr. Sri's book, *Men, Women and the Mystery of Love*



In particular, we saw how utilitarianism weakens our relationships by getting us to value people primarily in terms of some pleasure or benefit we receive from our relationships with them.

Yet the sophisticated utilitarian may argue that there is nothing wrong with two people “using” each other as long as they mutually consent and mutually receive some advantage from the relationship. In fact, some may say that a relationship that brings together the egoism (self-interest) of the man and the egoism of the woman in a mutually beneficial way, actually is a relationship of love.

For example, what is wrong with Bill and Sally having sex outside of marriage if each person consents and each person derives some pleasure from it? Since in the sexual act, Bill’s desire for pleasure harmonizes with Sally’s desire for pleasure, such an act does not appear to be selfish. They each give pleasure to each other and not just to themselves.

Pope John Paul II points out one serious problem with such a relationship: “The moment they cease to match and to be of advantage to each other, nothing at all is left of the harmony. Love will be no more, in either of the persons or between them . . .”(p. 39).

Since this kind of relationship is still dependent on what I get out of the other person, it prevents me from truly being in communion with her and being committed

to her as person. I’m “committed” to the person only in so far as and as long as I receive pleasure or advantage from the relationship. In fact, Pope John Paul II likens such relationships of mutual use to prostitution.

Like Prostitution

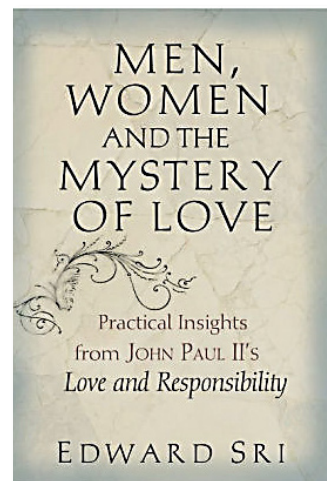
...how many young women give up their virginity and sleep with a man for the emotional security of having a boyfriend or for fear that if they don’t do this, the man may break up with her?

How many men just want a good-looking girl to sleep with for the physical pleasure he may derive from the relationship? ... these are simply more socially acceptable forms of mutual use similar to prostitution.

Consider a businessman who has a relationship with a prostitute on a certain night every week. The man desires the sexual pleasure she can give him, and the woman desires the money he can give her. They each have self-serving aims that come together in the sexual act and benefit the other person. They each get what they want, and in the process they meet the other person’s desires.

However, the moment the couple ceases to be mutually advantageous to each other, what will happen to this relationship? If the prostitute can get paid more by a richer man on that particular night of the week, she likely will leave the first businessman for the wealthier one. On the other hand, if the businessman no longer finds the prostitute pleasurable and meets a younger, more attractive prostitute, he likely will leave the first for the younger one.

This may seem like an extreme example, but how many malefemale relationships today are not much better than this? How many relationships are based more on a mutual use than on a committed love and a true communion of persons? For example, how many young women give up their virginity and sleep with a man for the emotional security of having a boyfriend or for fear



that if they don't do this, the man may break up with her? How many men just want a good-looking girl to sleep with for the physical pleasure he may derive from the relationship? These are not relationships of authentic love that bring persons in communion with one another. Rather, these are simply more socially acceptable forms of mutual use similar to prostitution.

Insecurity, Not Love

Pope John Paul II notes how utilitarian relationships breed fear and insecurity in one or both of the persons. A warning sign that one might be in a utilitarian relationship is when one person is afraid to bring up difficult topics or fears addressing problems in the relationship with their beloved.

One reason many couples (whether they be dating, engaged, or married) never confront each other with difficulties is that deep down they know there is not much of a foundation for the relationship to stand on just the mutual pleasure or benefit. One fears that if the relationship becomes challenging, demanding, or difficult for the other person, the other may leave. The only way the relationship can survive is to cover up problems and pretend things aren't as bad as they really are. "Therefore love so understood is self-evidently merely a pretense which has to be carefully cultivated to keep the underlying reality hidden: the reality of egoism, and the greediest kind of egoism at that, exploiting another person to obtain for itself its own 'maximum pleasure'"(p. 39).

The Pope then shows how people in these kinds of relationships sometimes even allow themselves to be used by the other in order to get what they want out of the relationship: "Each of the persons is mainly concerned with gratifying his or her own egoism, but at the same time consents to serve someone else's egoism, because this can provide the opportunity for such gratification and just as long as it does so"(p. 39).

In this case, the person willingly lowers himself to be used as a tool for the other person's selfish intentions. "If I treat someone else as a means and a tool in relation to myself I cannot help regarding myself in the same light. We

have here something like the opposite of the commandment to love"(p. 39).

The Sexual Urge

Sexuality is one of the main areas where we can fall into using other people. Pope John Paul II thus spends much time reflecting on the nature of the sexual urge.

First, he discusses how the sexual urge manifests itself in the tendency for human persons to seek the opposite sex. He says the sexual urge orients a man toward the physical and psychological characteristics of a woman her body, her femininity which are the very attributes that are most complementary to the man. And the woman, in turn, is oriented toward the physical and psychological attributes of a man his body and his masculinity as the properties that are naturally complementary to the woman. Hence, the sexual urge itself is experienced as a bodily (physical) and emotional (psychological) attraction to a person of the other sex.

Nevertheless, the sexual urge is not an attraction to the physical or psychological qualities of the opposite sex in the abstract. Pope John Paul II emphasizes that these attributes only exist in a concrete human person. For example, no man is attracted to "blonde" or "brunette" in the abstract. Rather, he is attracted to a woman a particular person who may have blonde or brunette hair. A woman is not primarily attracted to "masculinity" as a theoretical concept, but she may be very attracted to a particular man who exhibits certain traditionally masculine traits, such as courage, decisiveness, strength, and chivalry.

The Pope emphasizes this point to show how the sexual urge ultimately is directed toward a human person. Therefore, the sexual urge is not bad in itself. In fact,

since it is meant to orient us toward another person, the sexual urge can provide a framework for authentic love to develop.

This is not to say that the sexual urge is to be equated with love itself. Love involves a lot more than the spontaneous sensual or emotional reactions that are produced by the sexual urge; authentic love requires acts of the will directed toward



the good of the other person. Still, the Pope says that the sexual urge can provide the “raw material” from which acts of love may arise if it is guided by a great sense of responsibility for the other person.

More than Animal Instinct

It is important to note that the sexual urge in human persons is not the same as the sexual instinct found in animals. Pope John Paul II explains that in animals, the sexual instinct is a reflex mode of action, which is not dependent on conscious thought. For example, a female cat in heat does not reflect on what is the best time, place, or circumstance for her to mate, and she does not ponder which male cat in the neighborhood would make the ideal partner. Cats simply act reflexively according to their instincts.

Human persons, however, do not have to be enslaved to what is stirring within them in the sexual sphere. In the end, the person is in control of the sexual urge not the other way around. The person can choose how he or she wants to use it (p. 50).

A man, for example, may experience a sexual attraction to a woman. He may sometimes even experience this attraction as something happening to him something that begins to take place in his sensual or emotional life without any initiative on his part. However, that attraction can and should be subordinated to his intellect and will. While a person may not always be responsible for what spontaneously happens to him in the arena of sexual attraction, he is responsible for what he decides to do in response to those interior stirrings (pp. 46-47).

Loving or Using?

Remember, the sexual urge draws us to the physical and psychological attributes of a person of the opposite sex. But, ultimately, it is meant to orient us toward another person who possesses those attributes not just the attributes themselves. Manifestations of the sexual urge thus present us with a choice between loving the person and using them for their attributes.

For example, let’s say Bill meets Sally at work and is quickly attracted to her good looks and her charming personality. Bill can choose to rise above this initial sexual reaction and see in her more than just her body or her femininity. By looking beyond the physical and psychological attributes that give him pleasure, he has the possibility of seeing her as a person and responding to her with selfless acts of love.

“For this very reason, manifestations of the sexual urge in man must be evaluated on the plane of love, and any act which originates from it forms a link in the chain of responsibility, responsibility for love”

On the other hand, Bill may experience sexual attraction and choose to dwell on the physical and psycholog-

ical qualities that give him pleasure. By focusing on her good looks and her feminine charm and the pleasure he derives from them he is distracted from seeing Sally as she truly is and remains incapable of truly loving her as a person. He may be kind to her, but he is, at least to some significant degree, doing this so he may receive some sensual or emotional pleasure from his association with her. In the end, therefore, Bill is using her as a source of pleasure for himself.

The Pope says if the interaction between a man and a woman remains at the level of these initial reactions produced by the sexual urge, the relationship is not able to grow into a true communion of persons. “Inevitably, then, the sexual urge in a human being is always in the natural course of things directed toward another human being. If it is directed toward the sexual attributes as such this must be recognized as an impoverishment or even a perversion of the urge” (p. 49).

This is an important point for our daily encounters with persons of the opposite sex. Following the personalist principle, the Pope reminds us how careful we must be in order to avoid treating others as potential objects to enjoy for our own sensual or emotional pleasure. Along these lines, we must ask ourselves a crucial question: What will we do when we experience the stirring of sexual attraction to a particular person of the opposite sex? What will a man choose to do when he notices the physical beauty of a woman? What will a woman choose to do when she finds herself attracted to a man?

In these pivotal moments, we can choose to focus on the sensual or emotional pleasure we receive from another person’s body or from their masculinity or femininity. And in so doing, we would be viewing the person as an object to enjoy and thus fall into utilitarianism. Or, we can seek to cultivate authentic love for the person himself or herself by directing our attention to the whole person. By looking beyond the physical and psychological attributes and seeing the actual person, we open the door to at least the possibility of willing the good of the other person as in the virtuous friendship and of performing truly selfless acts of kindness which are not dependent on the amount of pleasure we receive from the relationship.

With these insights, Pope John Paul II reminds us that our delicate interactions with persons of the opposite sex demand great responsibility. “For this very reason, manifestations of the sexual urge in man must be evaluated on the plane of love, and any act which originates from it forms a link in the chain of responsibility, responsibility for love”(p. 50).

In forthcoming reflections, we will explore the Pope’s insights on how practically we can direct our attention to the person, not just their sexual attributes, in order to embrace authentic love and responsibility for those around us.

BLESSED MARGARET OF CASTELLO

PROBABLY THE most unlikely — and yet most significant — patroness for this day and age would be Blessed Margaret of Castello. If her parents had lived today and the doctors had been able to anticipate with accuracy the little unborn infant's handicaps (as is claimed will be routine in just a few years) there is no doubt that an abortion would have been recommended.

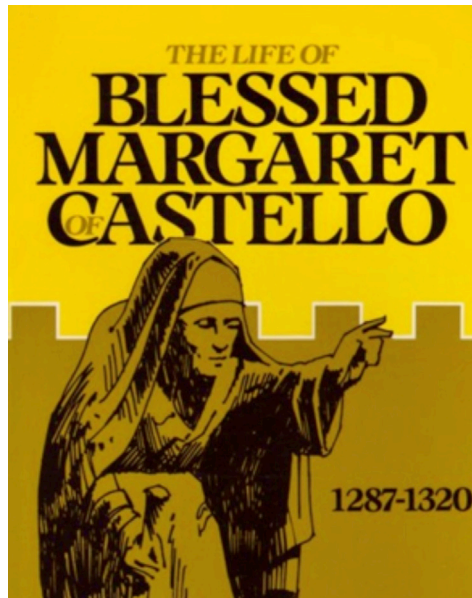
A recent parish bulletin published a description of the Red Rose symbol adopted by some of the pro-life groups. It was written by a high school senior: "The rose's beauty and perfection is evident while still just a tiny bud, which gradually matures to be the most beautiful of all flowers. Every human being was once a tiny bud within its mother's womb, unseen but nevertheless the wondrous work of God. Every child, like the rose, is an autograph from the Hand of God."

Margaret is more than a symbol, much more. She is a candidate for God's roster of saints — a 'balance and sanity' for today's topsy-turvy world where beauty is merely a cosmetic quality and a separate entity from goodness and truth. She could be for millions a consolation, an inspiration, and an advocate.

When any evil or sin is mentioned today, it is usually explained that it is inevitable, given the inner-city syndrome as the basic cause of all ills. But, traditionally, we know that sins, either against the natural or supernatural law, are by no means limited to the poor and the cities, despite the insistence of the modern social activists.

Margaret's case is to the point. She was born in a castle in Italy in 1270 to "wealthy parents of noble ancestry,"¹ and yet one would have to look far to find a pair more cruel and evil than her father and mother. Her birth took place in The Thirteenth, the Greatest of Centuries,² which produced glorious literature and poetry, beautiful music, art and architecture. But little Margareta was ugly, hunchbacked, lame, blind, and a dwarf — and so handicapped — why should she live?

Father Bonnewell tells us that as soon as Margaret could speak, the priest chaplain at the castle taught her her prayers. By the time she was five years old she showed such intelligence that he talked to her daily about God, about His love, and His reason for creating us. In her earliest years she seemed completely unaware of being at all different from



other children her age. She was told by the kindly priest that God has special reasons for creating each one of us. Margareta means "pearl" and when Our Lord seemed to be whispering, "Be my Margareta, just for Me"; she took Him quite literally. And perhaps that is one of the subtle differences between this Little Pearl and the rest of us — for isn't He saying, "Be yourself just for Me" to all of us? Her physical differences were far more obvious. But what is beauty and where can we find it?

You may ask, "Where were her parents and what were they doing for her?" Well, that's the sad part of the story. Her parents' names were Emilia and Parisio. (As if in shame no record reveals their surnames.) Parisio was the Governor of the military garrison at Metola, a city high up on the side of a mountain about twenty miles from Florence. Her 'noble' parents were ashamed of her; their pride was hurt. How could God do this to them — the most important and affluent family for miles around? They couldn't face 'what people would say' or 'what people would think,' so they determined to keep Margaret out of sight. She was placed in the charge of an old peasant woman and a small cell was built for the six-year-old next to their chapel in the forest. If she were housed in or near the castle she would have been seen by visitors. Parisio wouldn't permit that. He didn't want to see her himself. After she was cast into the cell, her father ordered a mason to seal the doorway. It was her father's intention that she be kept there till she died.

Apparently no one had the courage to voice protests at the fort, but in their homes the soldiers and their wives were furious at this treatment. Nevertheless, one man dared to speak up in her behalf to the Governor himself — the otherwise mild, hitherto timorous little priest. But his courage only enraged the evil Parisio and his weak-kneed wife.

Imagine a little six-year-old child so deprived of her parents' love and attention that their only interest, where their child was concerned, was to keep her concealed in the little cell next to the forest chapel.

As we said earlier, Margaret had no idea that she was different from other children, no idea of her handicaps. But her parents could not keep their shame and the blow to their ego hidden from the dear little girl, who was so cheerful and devout, and whose joyful disposition was a stab at their own consciences. What did they do? They told her she was a



The room where Blessed Margaret was held prisoner from the age of 6.

freak, that other children were not midgets or lame or hunchbacked or blind, and that she was as ugly as sin! (their sin?)

Most of those at the garrison thought it would have been better had she died at birth. But Margaret became the living refutation of that kind of neopagan philosophy. Pre-Christian paganism had, at least, some natural goodness; but post-Christian paganism has become increasingly satanic, as witnessed by the contempt for life evident all around us. We are so used to the grim statistics of abortions, for instance, that we have become immune to the moral shock where they are concerned. We are shocked when we learn of a little Margaret of Castello treated cruelly, but as a matter of fact, she lived on this earth for as many years as Our Lord, and given the chance to work out her salvation, increased in grace and wisdom until, at thirty-three years of age, she died a glorious death. She has been the inspiration of thousands and their intercessor ever since.

The aborted infant, however, has not only been deprived of life in this world, but of the Beatific Vision for all eternity. This writer, in full acceptance of the infallible teachings of the Church, is not implying that the souls of these unbaptized infants will suffer the fires of Hell, but recognizes also the infallible teaching that without the saving waters of Baptism they can enjoy only a natural state of happiness for all eternity.³

What a deprivation! And since a single soul is so precious in the eyes of God, imagine the decadence of our society manifested by the literally millions murdered with the 'advice and consent' of recognized organizations, government agencies, and the law of the land! The cruelty and evil of Margaret's parents was limited at any rate to this side of eternity.

A Mother and Father know, [or should] with an overwhelming sense of humble gratitude, that the soul which gives life to their infant, spiritual and immortal, reaching out to the ends of the universe and beyond to garner truth, soaring to the heights of God Himself to fill the cup of love—this soul was none of their making. They know and stand in silenced awe that they were not even the instruments of

the production of this soul, not playing even so humble a part as that of a hammer or saw in the making of a bench. For a spirit such as this soul is not made OUT of anything, it has no parts, it is not produced in slow stages; not even God Himself could give an instrument a part to play in the wondrous work of creating a soul. . . . [Catholic] parents know that their child is much more God's than their own and in that knowledge come close to the joy in the hearts of Mary and Joseph on the first Christmas night.⁴

When God's special saints die, the theme of their lives seems to manifest itself sometimes more clearly than when they are among us. Blessed Margaret is no exception. Like all the saints, her primary virtue was her faith and Margaret's was so great that it filled her with a joy that affected many of those around her. She trusted God's wisdom as well as His love and she was convinced that He had some special reasons for her afflictions. By accepting them willingly she showed Him how conformed she was to His will in serving Him here on earth to the ultimate limits just as she was. She was not going to become embittered or fret that she was lame or humpbacked, 'ugly' and blind, for these were, for her, her spiritual tools.

After studying the life of this dear little girl, in addition to her faith, another characteristic stands out: her purity. Purity does not mean merely an absence of impurity in thoughts and words and actions. It means more than that, much more. It means singleness of purpose, keeping our eyes fixed on our spiritual goal; not being carried away by worldliness, or superficial whims, on our journey to the forever of our hopes, our dreams, our eternal happiness.

And if we seek a third outstanding quality that shone through Margaret's unlikely exterior, it was her nobility — not achieved through birth alone from noble ancestry, but through Baptism and prayer and contemplation of the King of kings and His most Queenly Mother and King David's descendant, Saint Joseph, to whom the Blessed Margaret was especially devoted. This praise of her virtues may seem a pious exaggeration, but the startling disclosures upon examination of her body, years after her death, prove the truth of every affirmation. The facts are infinitely more amazing and magnified than the written description. But more of those details later.

Getting back to Margaret's life at Metola: Her modern biographer notes that her mind was luminous, which explains why she understood so well that possessing God is worth any price that we can pay. Our saint received abundant graces to patiently carry her cross, but beyond that she developed an intensely intimate prayer life during the nine years that she was locked away. Although the visits of her mother were all too infrequent, Margareta loved her still and her father also. She had learned from her confessor that all love must be sanctified; so despite everything, she loved her

parents in God as His representatives.

She remained there in the forest chapel cell for nine years; but when she was fifteen years old, the garrison was threatened with an invasion by Montefeltro, a rival general and a strong opponent of her father, Parisio. Fearing that she would be discovered, her father ordered her mother to place a dark veil over Margaret's head and face, and flee with her to his city castle at Mercatello. There her lot became much worse. She was incarcerated in a vault-like cubicle, where the sole furnishings consisted of "a miserable pallet and an old bench" and nothing else.

As if she were a common criminal, she was informed of the new regulations there: She would be given food twice a day, and she was not to call out under any circumstances. When the rules had been stated, the bolts were drawn and Margaret was again alone. But her sufferings were worse than before. During her long imprisonment she was deprived of Mass and the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist, as well as the visits and encouragement of the chaplain in whom she had confided at Metola. These were her great spiritual agonies. Her faith and her courage persisted, but only the grace of God could sustain her through the tragedies to come.

Two years after Montefeltro's attack on the garrison, news of many miracles taking place spread throughout the town of Mercatello. It seems that the cause of these miracles was the powerful intercession of a recently deceased member of the Franciscan Third Order, Fra Giacomo, whose tomb was in the city of Castello. Her mother, Emilia, in the telling of the ordinary events and gossip of the day, mentioned these wonders to Parisio. She even timidly suggested taking Margaret to the Tertiary's tomb. Much to her surprise, he showed interest, and abruptly replied: "We have nothing to lose. Be ready to leave with Margaret heavily veiled the day after tomorrow." Then in the same brusque tone of voice he added, "Emilia, this pilgrimage is going to solve our problem." Emilia didn't understand his meaning entirely but she knew Parisio, and for some reason she shuddered as if with a presentiment of evil.

The very next day preparations for the journey were begun and completed. Parisio even had a mounted escort of twelve soldiers for his carriage as protection against bandits and other dangers en route. Their journey across the Apennine Mountains had begun by six in the morning, and after many hours of arduous traveling, the entourage entered the city, which was surrounded by a high stone wall. Parisio engaged accommodations at the best inn, just inside the outer gate, and while the womenfolk rested, he strolled about the city making inquiries concerning the stories he had heard. And, sure enough, he met and talked to three persons who had been miraculously cured by the Franciscan Tertiary when prayers were directed to him after his recent death. (It irked Parisio that Fra Giacomo was dead; such cures would imply 'miracles,' but he was willing to risk such thoughts to restore Margaret to an appearance he considered appropriate for parents of their position by whatever name given to these 'cures.')

He returned to the inn, picked up his wife and daughter,



Finding Margaret outside the Church of San Francesco.

and brought them to the shrine. He instructed Margareta to pray hard, and pretended that he and Emilia were going to confession and Holy Communion. But Mass and the sacraments are signs of the True Faith, which her father didn't believe in, and which neither her father nor her mother practiced — although they didn't hesitate to make their demands at the shrine.

Parisio remarked to his wife that, after

looking over the 'rabble' present, he thought that even though it might take God some time for Margaret's cure, he was sure it would take place, despite God's possible difficulties. Certainly, people of their standing and rank deserved special consideration! It was only right!

Being an obedient daughter, Margaret prayed, but she added with her whole heart that she wanted only what God willed for her — whatever that might be. When after many hours her parents returned to the Church and saw there was no miracle for Margaret, they abandoned her without even telling her, and she remained praying until the sexton came to lock up the church that night. She then spent the entire night in the doorway.

The poor little teenager did not learn until the following morning from the guards at the city gate that her parents had actually left to return to Metola without her. The little blind girl now realized that they not only did not love her but that they hated the very sight of her. Even then she did not blame them. But to know that they would never again be near her was an agonizing loneliness. Now she was alone and without any means of support in an unknown foreign city. Add to this her blindness, the refinement of her nature, and her former isolation in a castle, and the prospect was more than bleak. It was her greatest trial so far.

Beggars in those days, frequenting the churches and other public places, were so much a part of the town that each group had its own territory and any stranger was resented as an intruder. The beggars were out early that morning and the first few of them were startled to find someone ahead of them huddled in the church doorway. At first they were furious, but when she told her sad tale of her parents' disappearance, and they found out that the little cripple was not a beggar, they saw that she offered no competition, and were completely disarmed.

First they decided they ought to try to find her parents at one of the nearby inns. One of the innkeepers told them that the group of people they were seeking had left the day before, and suggested they check with the guards at the city

gate. Here the innkeeper's traumatic news of her parents' departure was confirmed; Margaret seemed to go into shock. However, she turned to God in her prayers and asked for His direction after accepting this latest and greatest cross.

Her new companions, the poverty-stricken and beggars of the city, took her as their own. When the first wild snowstorm of the winter not only blanketed the nearby mountains but forced its way even into the doorways where Margaret sought shelter, a young girl who had befriended her that first morning obtained permission from one of the town's carpenters for the two of them to sleep in his stable. The idea filled Margaret with wonder and she explained to her companion her joy at the goodness of God, Who provided a shelter for



Little Margaret of Costello

them so comparable to Our Lord's! Her companion was almost struck dumb by Margaret's reaction!

When Margaret had lived as a beggar for about a year or more, everyone she met marvelled at her joy despite all her hardships, and at her tremendous sympathy for those whom she considered far less fortunate than herself. Her faith and confidence in the goodness and love of God

radiated from her very person, and all who had even a few words with her had to admit that this was indeed no 'pious fraud' who was in their midst. She was deeply spiritual — not because she talked about it — but because the Way, the Truth and the Life of Our Lord Himself dwelt within her soul. She lived this life as a loving, joyful member of His Mystical Body. Her sufferings did not dampen her spirits; they were her soul's medication and assured her of her share and part in that Mystical Body, and united her in a special way with all who suffered.

The town marvelled, too, at the tremendous amount of good she was constantly doing for them. She was, however, no humanitarian. She proved her love for other creatures by loving first and foremost the Creator and Source of all Love. She wasn't a 'do-gooder' as we say in these times, for no community action was apart from her charity (which term Saint Thomas Aquinas explains as "the love of God"), nor did she enter upon any project because it made her 'feel good.' Her love for all rested on a far firmer foundation.

Everyone admired her holiness, and news of it reached into the convent of cloistered nuns in Castello, who invited her to join the community. The Dominican author and scholar, Father Bonnewell, who found the original medieval manuscript of an account of her life, points out that research has proved conclusively that the order was not Dominican. The convent had been founded long before the Dominicans

went to Castello. Strangely enough, the Dominican Sisters did take over the convent, but that was many years after Margaret's death.

Because so little was known about Margaret's background (she mentioned nothing of her past history to anyone), the decision to accept her was left up to the Bishop who, "after due deliberation," sanctioned her reception. This seemed like a 'lived happily ever after' ending, but this was far from the actuality.

Margaret believed that all girls who entered a religious order wanted to become saints. She certainly did. But, in the convent she entered, a spirit of laxity had entered in. The nuns at the convent at Castello were annoyed that Margaret wanted to keep the rules as they were written by the saintly founders. It was explained to her that the 'times were different' from the time of the founders and things change with the times.

In regard to the silence that the Rule called for, the Novice Mistress explained that 'charity was more important.' Father Bonnewell points out that Margaret found it difficult to understand why it was not possible to be charitable and at the same time observe the Rule.

Margaret, too, had to make a choice — or rather, the Order made it for her. The Sisters were hostile to her and the prioress soon told Margaret: "We follow custom as a principle; you must conform to the other Sisters in your everyday life." Margaret, of course, took the matter up with her confessor and he told her to continue as she had been doing — to obey the Rule — and that she was pleasing God by so doing. On the other hand, the proud prioress was adamant and Margaret was asked to leave. They put her out, and the people of the town were shocked — an "exnun" in their town! False rumors about her were spread both from within the convent and without, all of which fashioned for her an even more humiliating trial. After several months, the contempt and derision ceased. No word of criticism of the convent was ever voiced by Margaret, but that could not be said of the nuns in their talk about her with the lay people. Most of the latter, however, were fair enough to judge the holy outcast on what they observed themselves, and all of them seemed to agree that she had strong faith, courage, and an extraordinary peace of soul. The criticism of the nuns who maligned her seemed entirely a defense mechanism of their own lax ways.

Margaret attended daily Mass at the Church of Charity. The Dominican Fathers were in charge, and it was the headquarters of the Mantellate, the original Third Order of Saint Dominic. This was an organization for laywomen who wished to live a spiritual life, although for some reason or other did not wish to, or could not, enter a convent. At that time (in the fourteenth century) all members of this Order of Penance, as it was known later on, wore the Dominican habit. It included a white tunic, a long white veil, and a leather belt. Over the tunic the members wore a long black coat or mantella — from which they derived their name.

Several members believed Margaret would be a great addition to their Third Order, but the Rule stated that only widows of a mature age were eligible; and very rarely, an

elderly married woman, provided the husband gave his consent publicly. This was the Rule. A half century later this rule prevented Saint Catherine of Sienna from becoming a Mantellate.⁵ Finally Margaret's friends, pointing out her physical handicaps and afflictions, prevailed upon the Director, Fra Luigi, to accept her. To her great joy, she made her profession shortly after. It was the first time a young unmarried woman was accepted into this Order.

Margaret's apostolate embraced the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy to the sick, the dying, and to all who were in need of such assistance.

Her heroic self-sacrifice was like a benediction to the whole city. Because she loved God so very much, so genuinely, her love — like a mother's love — was multiplied, not divided, to include His children both young and old.

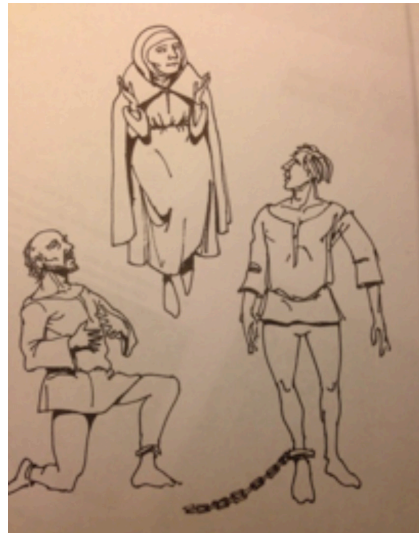
After Margaret became a Mantellate, several families offered to have her stay with them. She accepted the offer of the Offrenduccio family and stayed with them until one of the latter died and the household was broken up.

Not long after this, Margaret lived with a family named Venturino. She remained with them till her death in 1320. What a mystical circumstance it was that she was born in a castle and that now her last residence was also a castle. None of her friends knew of her noble birth because, after she had been abandoned by her parents, Margaret was deliberately vague about her origins. She was convinced that her parents would have preferred it that way.

Even though blind, she sensed the luxurious atmosphere of the Venturino's residence and begged the head of the house, Messer Venturino, to allow her to sleep in the attic. He was at first horrified at her request and had his wife assign her to the best guest room in the palace, but he was also a man of faith and, apparently, of discernment in spiritual matters. When he learned from his wife that Margaret was tutoring his sons in logic, astronomy, Latin grammar, and music, even though she was untutored herself and completely blind, he realized that their guest was an extraordinary person and one of God's specially chosen ones. He gave her his permission to have the little closet-like garret room, or any other place she wanted. There she could spend her time in contemplation when she was not engaged in her active apostolate in the town. Messer Venturino and his whole household believed Margaret was a blessing for themselves and their residence. And they were right. She attended daily Mass, sometimes two or three Masses a day, and was rewarded, though blind, with the actual sight of Christ Incarnate on the altar.

Margaret was very generous in her prayers for those who begged for help. Her contemplation was so exalted that she often levitated from the ground. This phenomenon greatly affected a prisoner incarcerated in a most vile prison and tortured for a crime that he had not committed. Upon witnessing her raised above the ground as she prayed in his cell, he repented for his resentment and many blasphemies against God.

One time when Messer Venturino and the children were away, a raging fire started on the ground floor of the palace. Despite the brigade of firefighters that was formed, the fire



Margaret levitates during prayer while visiting prisoners.

was getting completely out of control. Lady Gregoria was told that her palace was doomed. Suddenly she remembered that Margaret had not yet left for her charitable rounds, and was still in the garret. No one would let Lady Venturino enter the burning building, but she called out frantically to Margaret to hurry out. Calmly Margaret called down to Lady Gregoria telling her not to be afraid, to trust in God, and

threw her Mantellate cloak into the flames. As she did so, the raging fire was instantly extinguished.

Margaret worked many other miracles. For a glowing and dramatic account of them all, this writer enthusiastically urges you to get hold of a copy of the scholarly and dramatic biography by Father Bonnewell. Before closing with what may certainly be the most dramatic miracle of all, let me urge our readers to go to Blessed Margaret if you are in need of her help, particularly if only a miracle can supply the answer.

To quote the learned Dominican Father again, "As she drew closer and closer to God, the flames of Divine Love burned more and more fiercely in her heart" and he, in turn, quotes that beautiful truth of St. Augustine: "When one loves, one does not suffer; or if one does suffer the very suffering is loved."

Many miracles occurred during Margaret's lifetime, but hundreds more since her death. On the day of her funeral, the parents of a little girl carried her in their arms to reach the pallet where the body of Margaret lay. The child was not only a mute, but was crippled since birth because of a severe curvature of the spine. She had never been able to walk. They placed the little one on the ground next to Margaret's body. All joined the tearfully beseeching parents in their appeal for a cure. The crowd thought it was witnessing an optical illusion — but no, there was Margaret's left arm rising and reaching over to touch the little cripple beside her. As it did, the little girl immediately stood up and called out in a loud voice, "I have been cured through Margaret." Witnesses signed documents testifying to the cure of the two ailments of the child.

Margaret was given the simplest herbal form of embalming that might preserve a body for a week or so, but no longer. She was buried in one of the chapels of the Dominican Church, where the people who knew and loved her might visit her tomb. This they did in droves. There are many medieval documents testifying to cures at this tomb, with each one sworn to before a notary. For example, ta here



Margaret cures the young Sister who was going blind.

bears, and a little boy, already dead from drowning. Everything belonging to Margaret, her few personal possessions, became relics for the people who loved her so much and who had so much confidence in her intercession with God.

Although there were so many miracles, Margaret's cause for beatification (and canonization) was delayed. Wars, the plague, even political intrigues, and general neglect on the part of officials were contributing causes, but on June 9, 1558, a large committee was appointed to witness the exhumation of her remains. After two hundred and thirty-eight years her body was found incorrupt! Even her left arm, which had lifted to cure the little crippled mute, was still slightly raised without any support.

On October 19, 1609, after another thorough examination, the results of which went to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, the Church declared her "Blessed." At least three miracles are required for all candidates for canonization. Well, there are hundreds for Margaret. What then have we

was Bernardina, who had cancer of the face which had destroyed the sight in one of her eyes. On the eighth day of her prayers the cancer completely disappeared and her sight was instantly restored.

Many children, crippled from birth, whose physicians had declared to be hopeless cases, were likewise cured. And adults too; even the dead were brought back to life, including a hunter who was mangled by

been holding back in the true legend of this Little Pearl? The miracles after her death were so great and so numerous that the Dominican Fathers decided to open a sealed urn in which her heart had been preserved. But this, as well, is not a singular procedure. Several saints' hearts have been put in such reliquaries for veneration of the faithful.

However, when the seal was broken in the presence of many well-known priests and laymen there were three little pearl-like pellets found in Margareta's heart! Was this not unique?

You will remember that a few pages back we mentioned three outstanding virtues of this dear Little Pearl of God: Faith, Purity, and Nobility. The first was Faith, and on one of the little pellets found there was the Manger scene, originally a manifestation for the beautiful childlike Faith of the shepherds.

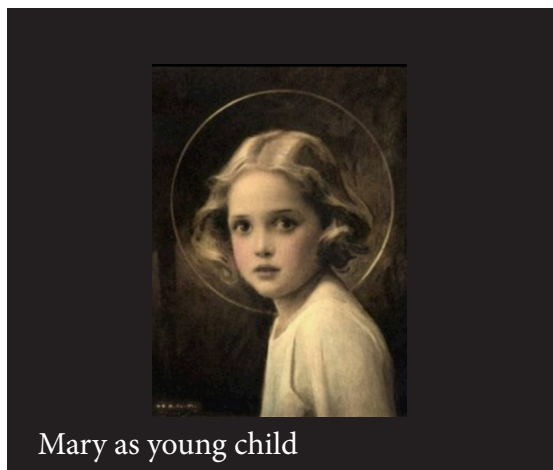
The second pearl pictured Our Lady who is Purity personified. And the third was a picture of Margareta and St. Joseph — the noble scion of King David.

Margaret had once proclaimed: "Oh, if you only knew what I carried in my heart, you would marvel!"

This was, indeed, a prophecy spoken by her more than six centuries ago. And this was the little baby about whom someone said, "Wouldn't it be better if she had died at birth?"

1. Rev. William Bonnewell, O.P., author of the definitive biography.
2. A Study by James J. Walsh.
3. If anyone says that Baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation, let him be anathema. (Denzinger 861) If anyone says that true and natural water is not necessary in Baptism, and therefore interprets metaphorically the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost" [John 3:5] let him be anathema. (ibid 858)
4. My Way of Life by Rev. Walter Farrell, O.P., Master of Sacred Theology.
5. Margaret of Metola-Rev. William Bonnewell, O.P.

THE GREAT HEART OF MARY



Mary as young child

The great heart of the child Mary is, after the Heart of Jesus, the holiest of all hearts; it has loved, and it loves God more than the whole court of heaven, more than all the angels and saints, past, present, and to come. Desire, then, to love God like the heart of this sublime child, and to this end place yourself in this beautiful heart, and love God through it, with the intention of practicing all the virtues of which it has given us the example. ~ St. Paul of the Cross

24 Quotes About Purity

That Every Young & Old Catholic Should Know



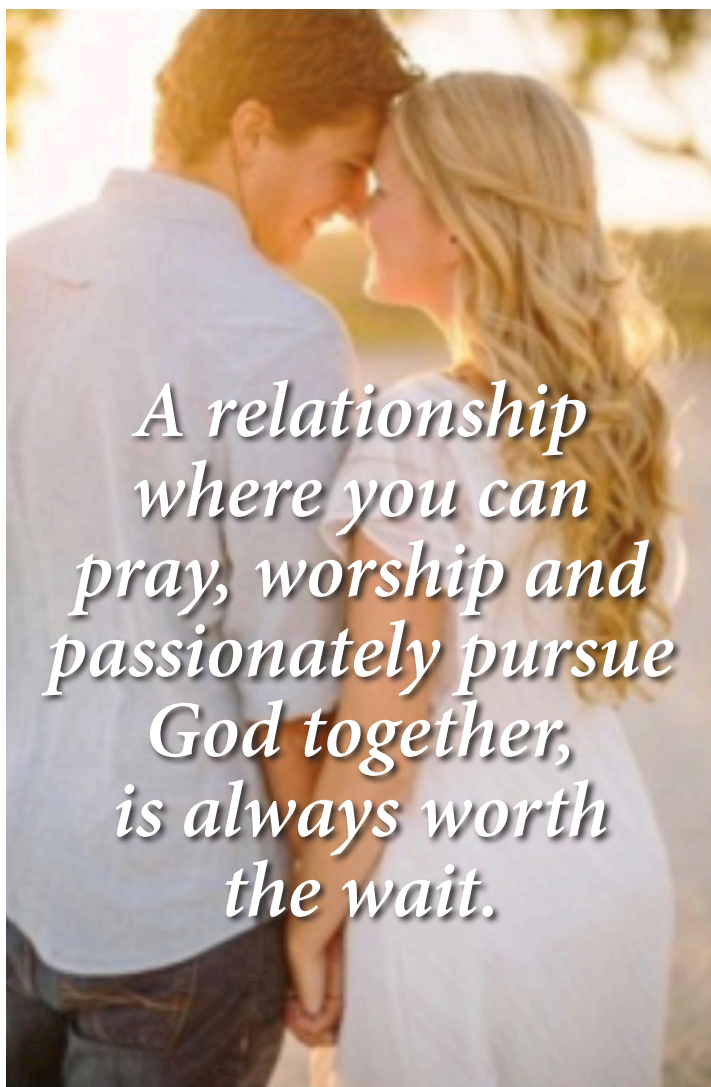
FIGHT BACK

Purity is the answer. The virtue of purity is the answer.

Impurity is plastered everywhere today: Movies, TV, billboards, music, entertainment, books, and magazines.

WE MUST FIGHT BACK.

To that end the following collection of quotes — many of which are authored by Doctors of the Church -- will provide you with the support and encouragement you need to stand your ground and fight for purity.



*A relationship
where you can
pray, worship and
passionately pursue
God together,
is always worth
the wait.*

1. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." – Matthew 5:8
2. "Holy Purity, the queen of virtues, the angelic virtue, is a jewel so precious that those who possess it become like the angels of God in heaven, even though clothed in mortal flesh." – Saint John Bosco
3. "We must be pure. I do not speak merely of the purity of the senses. We must observe great purity in our will, in our intentions, in all our actions." – Saint Peter Julian Eymard
4. "Those whose hearts are pure are the temples of the Holy Spirit." – Saint Lucy
5. "We must practice modesty, not only in our looks, but also in our whole deportment, and particularly in our dress, our walk, our conversation, and all similar actions." – Saint Alphonsus Liguori
6. "In the realm of evil thoughts none induces to sin as much as do thoughts that concern the pleasure of the flesh." – Saint Thomas Aquinas
7. "In temptations against chastity, the spiritual masters advise us, not so much to contend with the bad thought, as to turn the mind to some spiritual, or, at least, indifferent object. It is useful to combat other bad thoughts face to face, but not thoughts of impurity." – Saint Alphonsus Liguori
8. "Lust indulged became habit, and habit unresisted became necessity." – Saint Augustine
9. "More souls go to hell because of sins of the flesh than for any other reason." – Our Lady of Fatima
10. "Filthy talk makes us feel comfortable with filthy action. But the one who knows how to control the tongue is prepared to resist the attacks of lust." – Saint Clement of Alexandria
11. "The man of impure speech is a person whose lips are but an opening and a supply pipe which hell uses to vomit its impurities upon the earth." – Saint John Vianney
12. "Either we must speak as we dress, or dress as we speak. Why do we profess one thing and display another? The tongue talks of chastity, but the whole body reveals impurity." – Saint Jerome
13. "A pure soul is like a fine pearl. As long as it is hidden in the shell, at the bottom of the sea, no one thinks of admiring it. But if you bring it into the sunshine, this pearl will shine and attract all eyes. Thus the pure soul, which is hidden from the eyes of the world, will one day shine before the Angels in the sunshine of eternity." – Saint John Vianney
14. "The pure soul is a beautiful rose, and the Three Divine Persons descend from Heaven to inhale its fragrance." – Saint John Vianney
15. "Chastity is the lily of virtues, and makes men almost equal to Angels. Everything is beautiful in accordance with its purity. Now the purity of man is chastity, which is called honesty, and the observance of it, honor and also integrity; and its contrary is called corruption; in short, it has this peculiar excellence above the other virtues, that it preserves both soul and body fair and unspotted." – Saint Francis de Sales
16. "Humility is the safeguard of chastity. In the matter of purity, there is no greater danger than not fearing the danger. For my part, when I find a man secure of himself and without fear, I give him up for lost. I am less alarmed for one who is tempted and who resists by avoiding the occasions, than for one who is not tempted and is not careful to avoid occasions. When a person puts himself in an occasion, saying, I shall not fall, it is

an almost infallible sign that he will fall, and with great injury to his soul.” – Saint Philip Neri

17. “Your good resolutions must not make you proud, but humble and diffident; you carry a large sum of gold about you, take care not to meet any highwaymen. In this life there is nothing certain: we are in a continual warfare, and, therefore, ought to be on our guard day and night. We sail in a tempestuous sea that threatens us on every side, and in a poor leaky vessel: the devil, who aims at nothing less than our destruction, never ceases to increase the storm, to overwhelm us thereby, if he can; hence it was that the Apostle gave this precaution, even to the virtuous: ‘Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall’ (1 Cor. x.12).” – Saint Jerome, Epistle to Saint Eustochium
18. “The state of grace is nothing other than purity, and it gives heaven to those who clothe themselves in it. Holiness, therefore, is simply the state of grace purified, illuminated, beautified by the most perfect purity, exempt not only from mortal sin but also from the smallest faults; purity will make saints of you! Everything lies in this!” – Saint Peter Julian Eymard
19. “Chastity, or cleanness of heart, holds a glorious and distinguished place among the virtues, because she, alone, enables man to see God; hence Truth itself said, ‘Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.’” – Saint Augustine
20. “There is no remedy so powerful against the heat of concupiscence as the remembrance of our Savior’s Passion. In all my difficulties I never found anything so efficacious as the wounds of Christ: In them I sleep secure; from them I derive new life.” – Saint Augustine
21. “God bestows more consideration on the purity of the intention with which our actions are performed than on the actions themselves.” – Saint Augustine
22. “He alone loves the Creator perfectly who manifests a pure love for his neighbor.” – Saint Bede the Venerable
23. “You carry your snare everywhere and spread your nets in all places. You allege that you never invited others to sin. You did not indeed, by your words, but you have done so by your dress and your deportment.” – Saint John Chrysostom
24. “Let your modesty be a sufficient incitement, yea, an exhortation to everyone to be at peace on their merely looking at you.” – Saint Ignatius of Loyola

BIBLE VERSES ON SEXUAL PURITY

Bill Gaultiere



Today we are desperate for God's wisdom on our sexuality. These Bible verses on sexual purity will get the conversation started on the right track.

You don't need me to tell you that our world today is really messed up in its understanding of sex. "Sex sells" so it's used everywhere in our society from selling fast food hamburgers to enticing people into pornography.

As our three children were growing up we taught them what the Bible teaches about sex. We've also taught this material in a seminar for parents and teenage children. These Bible verses (from the NLT unless indicated otherwise) on sexual purity are also

helpful for single and married adults too.

Save Sex for Marriage

"Do not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14)

"Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery." (Hebrews 13:4)

Spouses are to Share Love, Respect, and Sex

"So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." (Ephesians 5:33)

"So do not deprive each other of sexual relations. The only exception to this rule would be the agreement of both husband and wife to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time, so they can give themselves more completely to prayer." (1 Corinthians 7:5)

Don't Cultivate Lust for Anyone Besides Your Spouse

"You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28)

Don't Participate in Immoral Conversations and Shows

"It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret." (Ephesians 5:12)

Don't Use Divorce as a Way to Marry Someone Else

"Anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery." (Matthew 5:32, NIV)

Don't Give in to Immoral Lifestyles that Exclude People from God's Kingdom

"Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, who are idol worshipers, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, abusers, and swindlers—none of these will have a share in the Kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9b-10; See also Proverbs 2:16-19)

APPRECIATE THE BENEFITS OF KEEPING SEX IN MARRIAGE

Stay Free of Guilt and Sexually Transmitted Diseases

“Don’t go near the door of her [immoral woman’s] house! If you do, you will lose your honor and hand over to merciless people everything you have achieved in life. Afterward you will groan in anguish when disease consumes your body.” (Proverbs 5: 8-9)

Protect your Heart from Severing “One Flesh” Sexual Unions

“This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” (Genesis 2:24)

Maintain Objectivity to Intelligently Evaluate Dating Relationships

“My son, pay attention to my wisdom; listen carefully to my wise counsel. Then you will learn to be discreet and will store up knowledge. The lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey... Run from her! Don’t go near the door of her house! If you do... you will say, ‘How I hated discipline! If only I had not demanded my own way! Oh, why didn’t I listen to my teachers?’” (Proverbs 5:1-3, 8, 12-13)

Sexual Purity Honors God, Yourself, and Others

“No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Or don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

Enjoy Married Sex as a Blessing from God

“May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer- may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love.” (Proverbs 5:18-19)

HOW TO KEEP SEX IN MARRIAGE

Run Away from Sexual Temptation!

“Run away from sexual sin!” (1 Corinthians 6:18; See also Genesis 39:2-12, Proverbs 5:3-8, 7:1-5, Ephesians 5:3)

Set Godly Limits; Don’t Awaken Sexual Desire with Anyone Besides your Spouse

“Promise me, O women of Jerusalem, by the swift gazelles and the deer of the wild, not to awaken love until the time is right.” (Song of Solomon 2:7, repeated in 3:5 and 8:4)
 “God wants you to be holy, so you should keep clear of all sexual sin. Then each of you will control your body and live in holiness and honor—not in lustful passion as the pagans do, in their ignorance of God and his ways.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; See also Proverbs 5:15-21, 6:24-25, Acts 15:20, Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 6:12-13)

Be Modest and Focus on Inner Beauty; Don’t be a Lust

Object

“Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.” (1 Peter 3:3-4; See also 1 Samuel 16:7 and Matthew 6:25-34)

Realize that Sexual Sin is Exciting for a Moment but Painful for a Lifetime

“The lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But the result is as bitter as poison, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave... To those without good judgment, she says, ‘Stolen water is refreshing; food eaten in secret tastes the best!’ But the men don’t realize that her former guests are now in the grave.” (Proverbs 5:3-5, 9:17-18)

Avoid Alcohol and Drugs Because they Weaken Your Boundaries

“Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.” (Proverbs 20:1)

Deny Sinful Sexual Desires and Meet Relational Needs Instead

“So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience... Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love... For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful.” (Colossians 3:5, 12-15)

IT’S NEVER TOO LATE FOR A SECOND CHANCE

Confess your Sins to God and to a Friend to Receive Forgiveness and Healing

“But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.” (1 John 1:9)
 “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” (James 5:16)

Receive God’s Grace and Truth which Sets you Free and Empowers Morality

“The teachers of religious law and Pharisees... said to Jesus, ‘this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?’... They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, ‘All right, stone her. But let those who have never sinned throw the first stones!’... Then Jesus stood up again and said to her, ‘Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?’ ‘No, Lord,’ she said. And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I. Go and sin no more.’” (John 8:3-4,7,10-11)



CHASTITY: WHAT ARE YOU SAYING YES TO?

CHASTITY IS A VIRTUE THAT DIRECTS ALL OUR SEXUAL DESIRES, EMOTIONS, AND ATTRACTIONS TOWARD THE DIGNITY OF THE PERSON AND THE REAL MEANING OF LOVE.

Nicole Nuhlenkamp

Chastity is a virtue that each baptized person is called to live no matter what his or her vocation. Chastity is more about what you are doing than about what you aren't doing. It is SO MUCH MORE than merely abstaining from sex and remaining a "technical virgin." Chastity is actually at the heart of a good marriage. So if chastity is lived even after marriage, then it has to be more than just saying NO to sex.

Chastity defined: Chastity is a virtue that directs all our sexual desires, emotions, and attractions toward the dignity of the person and the real meaning of love.

That means that all of our sexual desires, emotions, and attractions to others are supposed to be at the service of the dignity of the other person and the real meaning of love—not at the service of what we want! Chastity is a deep respect and admiration for the person AND for the gifts of our sexuality and sex. As John Paul II puts it, chastity is the readiness to affirm and love the person in every situation. You know what you are saying no to by living chastity, but what are you saying YES to?

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING YES TO?

1. **Chastity is saying YES to AUTHENTIC real love.** Sex does not equal love, and love does not equal sex. Love is not just a happy feeling or something that comes and goes. Love is a deep desire to do what is good for another. It involves sacrifice. Think of the love Christ has for you—a love that led Him to lay down His life on the cross. When compared to this kind of love, do you really want to date or marry somebody who rests his or her entire idea of a good relationship on mere feelings?
2. **Chastity is saying YES to you.** Chastity says, “I believe that I am worth waiting for. I am a unique unrepeatable person who has a unique unrepeatable gift to offer.” By living chastity, you are saying YES to your own dignity and honoring the person God made you to be.
3. **Chastity is saying YES to the person.** To every person you meet—especially those of the opposite sex—chastity says, “I will not put you in a position where I may use or hurt you. I will respect who you are, including your body. I will govern my eyes and thoughts so that they honor you.” Since sex is “saying your wedding vows with your body instead of your voice,” a commitment to chastity is a promise to never tell a lie with your body.
4. **Chastity is saying YES to the “it is very good” kind of sex.** The Catholic Church says sex is SO great and SO good that when you take it out of marriage you cheapen it. You reduce it, and it’s no longer something great. God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply; then He looked at His creation and said “It is very good.” Adam and Eve were the first married couple.
5. **Chastity is saying YES to your future spouse.** Whether you are called to marriage, the priesthood, or religious life, by living chastity, you are preparing yourself for your future vocation by loving even when it’s not easy or doesn’t feel good. You are being faithful to your spouse (whether a man or woman, the Church, or Christ Himself) now. Can you imagine a more powerful and beautiful gift to present to God and your spouse on your wedding day? How awesome it would be to look him or her in the eyes and say, “I have prepared myself for you!” There is no way you will regret giving this gift to God and your future spouse! If you have made mistakes in the past, go to confession and open yourself to the HEALING power of God and His MERCY, and begin living chastity from this very moment.
6. **Chastity is saying YES to a great future.** Popular opinion would have you believe that your life will be perfect after you begin having sex, but the stats show just the opposite. Chaste teens avoid unintended pregnancy and STDs (many of which are incurable and cause infertility). They are also less likely to be depressed and commit suicide,³ have a marriage that ends in divorce, experience poverty, have an abortion,⁴ and use contraception. Oral contraceptives (estrogen and progestin combination) lead to an increased risk of several kinds of cancer.⁵ A woman’s risk for breast cancer increases by 44% when the Pill is taken prior to her first pregnancy.⁶ Don’t mess with your future and the happiness the Lord longs for you to enjoy!
7. **Chastity is saying YES to God.** God is the Author of romance. He intended it from the beginning. God’s plans are not shallow and mediocre. They are GREAT! He has set the bar high because He wants what is truly best for us and knows the deepest desires of our hearts. Chastity says YES to the fullness of God’s plans for you. Give your life to Christ and live daily for Him; you will have more adventure than you know what to do with!

Practical Things You Can Do To Start Living Chastity Now



1. PRAY!!

Mother Teresa said “Purity is the fruit of prayer.” Chastity cannot be lived by one’s own strength, but requires the help of Christ and the graces He gives through the Sacraments. Pick a saint—St. Joseph, St. Anne, St. Maria Goretti, St. Philomena, and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati are some suggestions—and ask them to pray for you specifically in the area of purity. Pray for strength to always do what’s right, for your future vocation and spouse, and for all people to know the joy that comes from living a chaste life for the Lord.

2. Start loving now.

Chastity isn’t about waiting to love; it’s about authentically loving NOW. Find ways to renounce your will and sacrifice for the good of others. Act in such a way that all you do reflects your own dignity and helps others to realize their true worth as well. Learn to give of yourself and receive the gift of others.

3. Be yourself.

Never change who you are or water down your beliefs and moral convictions in hopes that others will like you more. You will be respected for your authenticity, and people will know where you stand by the example of your life. Find friends who will encourage you in living a chaste life rather than pressuring you to conform to the world’s standards.

4. Practice self-discipline.

Challenge yourself in the little things: not hitting the snooze button, skipping dessert, avoiding gossip, etc. By renouncing yourself in the little things, you are training yourself to renounce yourself in the big things. Then, when temptation comes your way, you’ll be ready. Be faithful to your commitments; set goals and stick with them.

5. Control your thoughts and imagination.

Once you go to a place mentally, it is easier to go there in reality. Some of what we hear and watch in the media sabotages our longings for real love by training us to use people. If you have romance novels, pornography, explicit songs, or anything else that tempts you, trash them. It might be hard, but you will experience the freedom that comes from rejecting sin and addiction, and Satan will no longer have these tools to use against you.

6. Think about how you advertise yourself.

The things you do and say, your friends, the way you dress, etc., all tell the world something about you. Dress in a way that accents your beauty rather than just your body. Modesty is about respecting yourself and helping your brothers and sisters in Christ to live chastity as well. Archbishop Fulton Sheen said, “No one ever becomes truly beautiful until he stops trying to make himself beautiful, and begins making himself good. Mary was not ‘full of grace’ because she was beautiful; she was beautiful because she was full of grace.”

7. Be alert!

Don’t drink alcohol or do drugs. Be aware of your surroundings (watch your drink!), and keep full possession of the capacity to think clearly, which is so compromised by drugs and alcohol.

8. Know Yourself.

It’s not just about saying NO when you’re in a bad situation, but about avoiding these situations to begin with. If certain situations, things, or people are a source of temptation to you, have the wisdom and strength to stay away. If you are ever in a situation where you may be tempted beyond your strength, 1) speak up, 2) stand up, and 3) walk out.

9. Have a reminder.

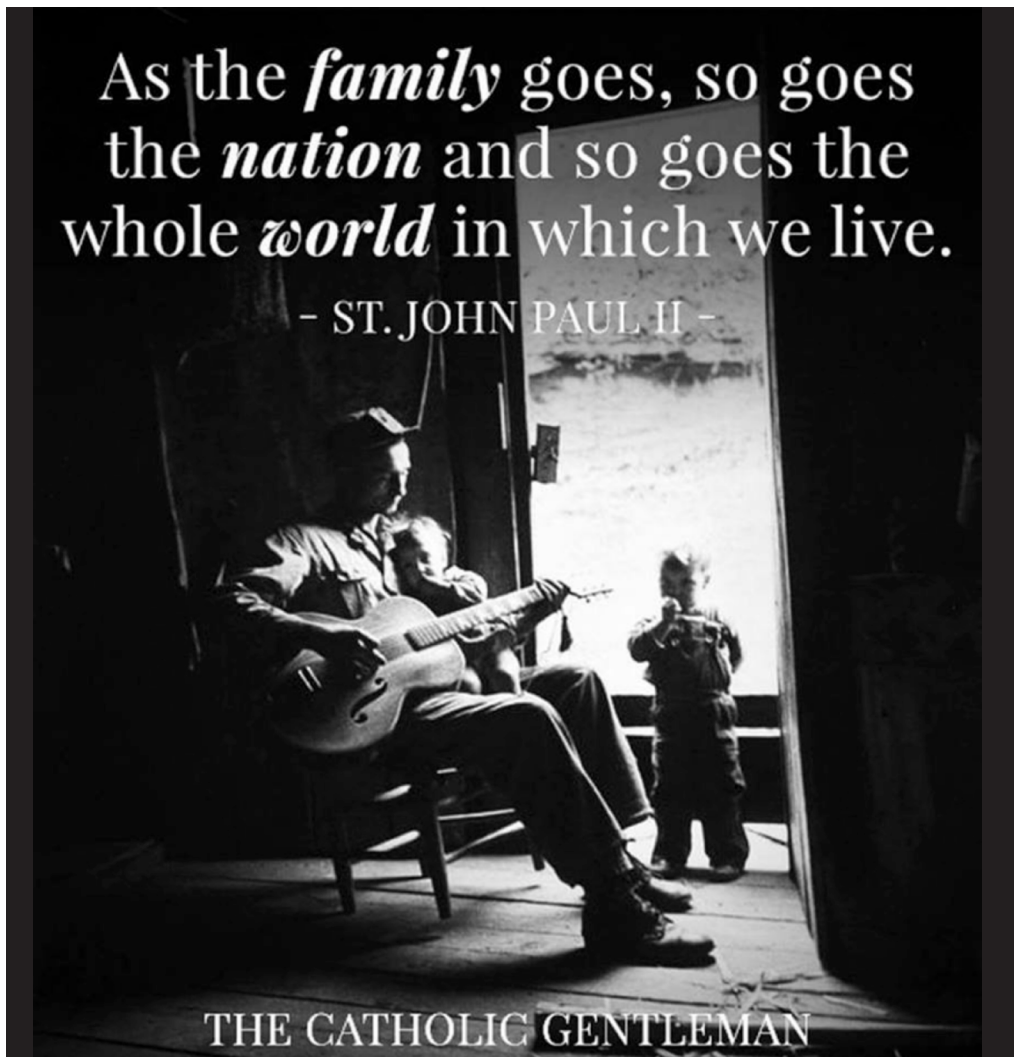
Wear a chastity ring/necklace or say a certain special prayer daily. Do something that reminds you of your commitment to true love.

10. Grou date.

Go out with a guy/girl in a group of people. It will be more fun, and you will get to see how this person interacts with your friends. Be up-front and honest so he or she knows that chastity is essential in your relationship. If your date doesn’t respect your choice to live chastely, what else won’t they respect?

What Women Really Want Is THE PATRIARCHY

Women have blindly followed the feminist mantra and now find themselves lonely and confused. It's time to welcome back the patriarchy.



The masculine American male is a dying breed. We have been told for far too long that violence is never the answer. We've been told that it's cruel to kill our own food. We've been conditioned to believe that there is no place in modern society for the man who refuses to shave his chest or wear skinny jeans. As a man... you are a protector. As a man... you are a provider. As a man... you are solely responsible for the safety and well being of your family. How can you be a good husband if you can't defend your wife? How can you be a good father if you can't protect your children? Remember... the eyes of the children are fixed upon you. You serve as an example of what young men should grow up to be... and of what young women should seek out in a partner. So... grow your beard, wear your boots, eat your steak, carry a knife, own a gun, protect your woman, fight for what is right and just. Be strong. Be of courage. Long live the masculine American male.

Nicole Russell

In today's enlightened age, women think they know what kind of man they want, but in reality, most don't. In fact, many women, unwittingly confused by the myriad feminist mantras bombarding them daily, seek the type of committed, romantic relationship with a man that will ultimately leave both her and him inherently dissatisfied.

This is as much due to the ideology behind feminism's flawed ideas as the men who have been, over the years, subconsciously programmed to behave according to its dictates. It's never too late to figure out that men need to own their patriarchal prowess. If they did so, they'd soon discover this is what women really want.

What Women Are Told

Women are now told from basically grade school through early adulthood that they can do anything, be anything, have anything—with a woman or a man, with anyone or no one—as long as they work hard, lean on girl power, and berate or at least eschew any notions of patriarchal reverence. See Gloria Steinem's famous "women need men like a fish needs a bicycle."*

Many women still crave a stable, mutual, satiating romantic relationship with an assertive, authentic, direct man.

You've seen this happen in real life, and if you look at the statistics, women are actually putting this into practice: Over the past few decades, more women than men are going to college and getting higher degrees. Then they're purchasing homes and putting off marriage and babies. Guess what: They're miserable. (As Donald Trump would say, "Sad!")

In an interview with Maclean's Camilla Paglia confirmed this: "[W]e don't know what we want. We don't know if we want children or not. My generation produced the sexual revolution and your generation is stuck figuring out how it's going to work."

Turns out: All that stuff is just stuff. As much as stuff is nice, many women still crave a stable, mutual, satiating romantic relationship with an assertive, authentic, direct man. This is normal. (If you don't, keep perusing *The Federalist*—this particular column just isn't for you.)

Problem is, the kind of men feminist padawans tend to attract are—how do I say this politely?—not really men. Studies even show contraception users are attracted to more passive, feminine men. I mean, they have man parts, but they are defensive, irresponsible, and passive-aggressive. Some people call them betas, and they are a lot like those cute lap dogs: They do what you want but they're needy and boring and growl or whine to get their way. Sad!

How Men Perceive This

Many men, having been on the receiving end of this feminist mantra that repeatedly says man parts are gross, male minds are stupid, male character is lacking (false rape charges anyone?), and male personalities are domineering, overbearing, and disrespectful of women, have slowly shriveled to mere shells of themselves in an effort to avoid the witchy brigade of feminist diehards. Germaine Greer said, "Women's liberation, if it abolishes the patriarchal family, will abolish a necessary substructure of the authoritarian state and once that withers away Marx will have come true willy-nilly—so let's get on with it." Get on with it they did, and they nearly succeeded.

They have discovered that the easy-to-please, passive-aggressive, 'Mr. Nice Guy' offers devastating disappointment.

As post-sexual-revolution women have been released to explore their own sexuality, they have discovered that the easy-to-please, passive-aggressive, "Mr. Nice Guy" offers devastating disappointment. Just consider the confused, bored sex people are navigating after campuses and California passed "affirmative consent" regulations. Or in other words, women are experiencing a kind of sexual frustration that surpasses that of their female predecessors. Who knew?

Many men who encounter a true feminist basically cower, act indifferent, shrug, butter up, charm, demean, ignore, or attempt to flirt. This is true if the woman is a friend, lover, or coworker. This is the opposite of what women really crave, though they are hard-pressed to admit it to—especially in a feminist-soaked society like ours. In fact, researchers studying how to create happy marriages find that people need, not anything-goes sexuality, but social scripts to follow so both partners know what to expect and how to act.

How Men Should React

Deep down in the confines of her soul where she hasn't even bothered to look, much less understand, a woman wants a man who exudes masculinity, who remains a steady rock in her current-filled stream of emotions and hormones. Instead of a man who says he'll eat at the restaurant of her choice for the fifteenth time that month, she wants a man who cooks a meal she's never tried before.

Instead of a man who says "Hey wanna?" she really craves a man who starts kissing her at the front door and before you know it she is begging, "Can we do that again. . . . tonight?" Instead of a man who complains his co-workers are annoying, his kids are messy, and he doesn't feel great about himself, she craves a man who knows his calling in life, takes responsibility, and makes it his mission to fulfill his purpose with clarity, courage, and hard work—and thus a man who cares for his mind, body, and soul to that end.

What Women Can Do

I'm not saying all women should ditch their careers, put on an Amish dress, and bear 10 children for a misogynist man who grunts demands all day long. Not by a long shot. There is a spectrum of responses to this conundrum, and each woman may find herself in a different place, even at different times in her life. Of course, not every laid-back man is a disappointment and not every assertive man is mature and kind.

Throw out the hallmarks of feminism that claim men are domineering, stupid, misogynist authoritarians who will make us miserable.

Two women I know took entirely different paths and responded differently on this spectrum: The first bought into the feminist mantra hook, line, and sinker, scoffed at strong alpha males who were opinionated, direct—even demanding. She married a softer, but more romantic man who would do whatever she wanted at the drop of a hat.

The second dutifully married a more direct, straightforward man, however demanding and borderline-misogynist he was. Fast-forward a few years; both women had two kids. Guess which one is happier? The former's husband has become so passive-aggressive that the family's finances are in disarray and their sex life is nonexistent. The latter found a synergy with her husband most of my friends hardly recognize: They're working towards familial goals, have hot, regular sex, and he's compromised and become less of a demanding jerk. Guess that patriarchy thing works out sometimes?

Women can have careers, be independent, strong, and happy, but if they want to do all this and attract the kind of man they really crave, they need to throw out the hallmarks of feminism that claim their male peers are domineering, stupid, misogynist authoritarians who will make their lives miserable. If anything, the opposite is true. The direct, honest, responsible, hard-working man many a woman desires can be just the type she'll find, once she ditches the ideology that told her she didn't need that to be happy in the first place.

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Chastity *Before* Marriage Fosters Chastity In Marriage

Katie Hartfiel

Chastity in marriage? Wait. What?

Let's back up and clear up some misconceptions about chastity...

The word "chastity" isn't synonymous with the word "abstinence":

Within this context, abstinence is defined as refraining from sexual intercourse. Abstinence is an aspect of pre-marital chastity but isn't the endgame. Chastity runs much deeper by giving us a deep reverence and respect for both our eternal souls and the heart of God. Loving someone never means sinning with them. Whether you are single, married or ordained you too are called to honor God through your body.

Therefore, the word "chastity" isn't synonymous with the word "no":

When I told my husband I would marry him, my

"yes" to him was an implied "no" to every other man on the planet. This was a reality, but wasn't at the forefront of my decision to spend my life with him. Similarly, chastity, at its very core, isn't a "no", but a "yes". Chastity is a virtue; in other words it is a good habit that unites us with the Lord. Virtues propel us to what we truly want—God's plan and Will in our lives! Clearly this means that chastity is a resounding and passionate YES! This "yes" has different applications and meanings at every stage of our life and is essential in every vocation.

Because of this, we can't escape the c-word, and we would never want to! Chastity is the key to a successful marriage because it allows us to keep the Lord primary and our physical desires secondary. Married persons are still called to respect one another's bodies and souls—which means never using your spouse for purely selfish fulfillment.

So how does chastity before marriage foster chaste marriages?

1. Fidelity insurance:

When you have sex with someone outside of marriage, you learn that they are willing to have sex with someone they aren't married to. Chastity in dating conditions us to avoid tempting situations not just in the moment but in the future as well. This is one reason why a man who is married as a virgin, has a divorce rate that is 63 percent lower than a non-virgin. For women, it's 76 percent lower.[1]

2. It makes it easier to practice Natural Family Planning (NFP):

Natural Family Planning is an amazing practice that helps couples use women's God-given cycle to determine windows of fertility. If, through prayer and discussion, a couple determines they should avoid pregnancy, NFP helps them to know when to abstain from intercourse. Chastity before marriage conditions a couple to work with God after marriage in order to make decisions about

when to engage in or abstain from sexual relations.

3. Virtue breeds virtue:

A person who practices chastity learns temperance and moderation. It seems obvious that this would produce self-control in communication, finances, parenting and life decisions in marriage. Chastity has a positive ripple effect and when started early on, the ripple will be even wider!

4. Chastity helps us carry Christ from our dating relationship to our marriage:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church makes it clear that all who are baptized are called to chastity at every stage of life. It goes on to say that the Christian has "put on Christ" who is our perfect model for chastity. A marriage takes three people: a man, a woman and the Lord. Having a Christ-centered dating relationship is great, but having a Christ centered marriage is sacramental. When

Jesus is present prior to marriage He is able to bring about His full plan for his presence from the first day of matrimony on into Happily Ever After.

Let's remember that just because a relationship is chaste, this doesn't make it bullet-proof. All relationships are subject to temptation, which is why practicing chastity early on helps us build strength. Imagine your soul as a spiritual weight-lifter. The more you condition your spiritual muscles to grow, the more you will be equipped to handle heavier burdens in the future. When we say yes to God through chastity, in every stage of life, we find that He is never outdone in generosity.



THE FAMILY

Msgr. Philip J. Reilly
Helpers of God's Precious Infants
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Reflecting on the encyclical letter promulgated by Blessed Pope Paul VI 50 years ago this June in 1968, *Humane Vitae*. At the time before this encyclical was written, many people felt that Pope Paul would ease restrictions on artificial birth control, especially since the Anglican Lambeth Conference of 1930 endorsed it for married couples in particularly trying circumstances. Paul VI had convened a panel of bishops and experts to advise him on this issue before writing the letter, and some on the panel advised him to abandon the Church's traditional teaching, particularly with the birth control pill becoming then widely available. Instead Blessed Paul VI reaffirmed the Church's constant teaching that artificial means of birth control is intrinsically evil and should be avoided by all people of good will. He predicted that if contraception became widely used, there would be far reaching consequences for all mankind, and none of them to be desired. He prophetically foresaw that wide spread acceptance and use of artificial birth control would lead to the degradation of woman, increased sexual abuse and molestation of the same, increased efforts to control population and, of course, and great increase in abortions since contraception methods are not 100% effective. The family, the first protectors and educators of the young would be weakened and sexual immorality would be increasingly accepted. In the 50 years since *Humane Vitae* was written, in vast areas of the world we have seen what Pope St. John Paul II described as the Culture of Death. Rejection of *Humane Vitae* has led to a rejection of life through sterilization and abortion. Had more people heeded Blessed Pope Paul's teachings we would not have the Culture of Death that is so prevalent today. Once you separate the conjugal act from procreation anything is possible. Life will be suppressed at conception, and finally in old age or disability. The Helpers are there to "stand in the breach" and to try to help all those caught up in the Culture of Death. We are out on the sidewalks of over 40 countries in the world pleading with men and women to reject death and embrace life. I thank you for everything that you are doing to promote the Culture of Life.



The two parent, mother, father and children are the building block of society. Without the family inculcating culture, there can be no civilization. Any deviation from this model invites chaos. There are indeed many single parent families that have and continue to contribute to society, and many single parents are heroically raising their children in loving homes, but it the single parent family is very difficult to maintain. A quick look at history will confirm this. Before the time of Christ, although the family did exist, the patriarch of the family was supreme in all decisions including who would live and who would die, particularly his own offspring. The Israelites, the first to hear and accept the word of God were unique in forswearing killing and welcoming all children as a gift from God. However, women still did not have many rights and divorce for any reason was tolerated. Civilizations from the Greek, Egyptian, Roman and other cultures did exist, but these civilizations were often quite brutal and the place of the family was subordinated to the good of the State. Women had no role other than helper and mate of the male and had no rights whatsoever. It was Christianity, following the teachings of Jesus Christ that elevated the status of both women and the family. The wife was now seen as a partner of her husband, and a daughter of God, as her husband was a son. Together they would raise whatever children God granted them. The family was seen as a "domestic church", with the father properly at the head, but with the mother making most of the decisions for and about her children.

Obviously this was not the case in every marriage, but this was the ideal held up to Christian families. At the beginnings of Christendom arranged marriages were the norm, but as time went on the idea of marrying for love gradually took hold. This is why the Church placed such emphasis on preparation of married couples. Couples were to meet with a priest to learn all that they needed to know to be ready to live their lives together with all the ups and downs of married life. Divorce was not allowed and the Church emphasized, what “God joined, no man should put asunder”. This, too, elevated the status of women, as they now knew that they could not simply be thrown aside whenever her husband wished. Husband and wife were to help each other to attain heaven and teach their children the value of following Our Lord Jesus Christ. Since the “Enlightenment” of the 17th and 18th centuries, the family has been under attack. Many philosophers condemned the nuclear family as a stale, lifeless cauldron of conformity. They felt that for man to flourish one had to break away from one’s family and learn to express oneself in any manner one saw fit. Selfishness was applauded. “Bourgeois” values of piety, thrift and sacrifice were scoffed at. This has led to a general coarsening of social life and been very detrimental to families and women in particular. Although women have made great strides in the professions and particularly in voting rights, they have been demeaned in the way they are treated and have in many cases lost the respect of men. Many openly brag about their abortions. This is supposedly empowering. Is this progress? I don’t think so. Contraception and abortion do not create an atmosphere for true love to grow. Never in history has there been more material prosperity and moral poverty.

HARDHEARTENNESS

This breakdown of the family has produced an indifferent society which is interested for the most part, only in its own cares and worries. Some people I meet on the streets today are very hardhearted and only interested in themselves. It only stands to reason in a culture that is pushing self-reliance and self-gratification. One can see why so many abortions are performed in this country and throughout the world. In the Old Testament, God spoke to the Israelites telling them that “even if a mother should forget her child, I will never forget you” (Isiah 49:15). The idea that a mother would forget her child was almost unthinkable for the people of that time. Now abortion has become so acceptable to so many people that the elimination of abortion has become unthinkable. There have been and will continue to be difficult circumstances in which abortion seems like a good option and of course, there were abortions performed even in Biblical times, but in today’s world carrying to term an unwanted child is considered foolish. Merle Hoffman, the

owner of Choices abortion facility in Jamaica, New York has referred to pro-lifers as “the American Taliban” and has stated that the act of abortion empowers women and that is why pro-lifers are against it. The vast majority of abortion businesses are there to sell abortions, not to help their clients with a difficult decision. Abortion facilities are pushing abortion and any young woman who wishes to keep her child is considered by them hopelessly naïve. Despite encountering many difficulties, the Helpers have actually increased their efforts in saving mothers and babies from abortion. In some areas, escorts have virtual carte blanche permission to deter sidewalk counselors from talking to pregnant women. Some cities and countries have “bubble zone” laws to keep the Helpers as far away from the clinics as possible. The Helpers are there nonetheless praying and sidewalk counselling to the best of their abilities. I am sure God is very pleased with all your efforts on behalf of life.

CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTERS

I would like to add a word here about crisis pregnancy centers. They have become increasingly under attack from pro-abortion organizations. These groups have lobbied city councils and some state legislatures to pass laws forcing these centers to display in a prominent area that they do not offer abortion services or birth control pills, and do not have a medical staff (although many do, just not every day of the week). In the state of California, the legislature passed a law requiring pregnancy centers to refer for abortions. These laws are obviously unconstitutional on free speech and freedom of religion grounds as most crisis pregnancy centers are operated by Christians. California’s law is being challenged before the Supreme Court this term. Please pray for these centers that they may continue to operate without any restrictions. We need to have a place for women in difficult situations to go to, and these clinics are there to help them. Running a crisis pregnancy center is difficult enough without being harassed by the likes of Planned Parenthood with the police in tow. Abortion businesses often send women in their employ posing as pregnant women to these centers to find out what they are doing. The abortionists are all for choice until it affects their bottom line. The abortion cartel claims that pro-lifers are lying and spreading disinformation to the woman and men they meet. Recently at the trial in New York State of some sidewalk counselors (not Helpers), a witness for the prosecution stated in court that she had set up a false Facebook page to befriend one of the sidewalk counselors being charged with harassment. It turns out that the witness was an escort for Choices abortion facility. I am imploring all Helpers to be very careful of whom they befriend on Facebook.

HUNGARY SEES ABORTION NUMBERS PLUNGE WITH RISE OF PRO-FAMILY POLICIES

Katalin Novák

Hungary's ever increasing support for families by the government is creating an environment where marriages and families are flourishing and abortion numbers are dropping, one of the country's ministers advised a recent international conference on life and family.

The support has caused abortion numbers to plunge by more than a third of what they were in 2010 (40,449 to 28,500). It has also caused a plunge in the number of divorces (23,873 in 2010 to 18,600 in 2017) and a surge in the number of marriages (35,520 in 2010 to 50,600 in 2017).

"A precondition of the medium and long-term social development and the sustainability of Hungary is a lasting turn in demographic trends," Katalin Novák, Hungarian Minister of State for the Family, Youth and International Affairs, said.

"The objective can be achieved with a stable, complex, targeted and flexible family policy that is capable of adapting to changing needs and conditions," she added.

Novák's office is responsible for the management of the central European country's family policy. Titled "Hungarian Family Policy in the Spirit of *Humanae Vitae* and *Veritatis Splendor*," Novák's address was delivered to a May 21 conference in Rome on the topic of "Human Life, the Family, and the Splendor of Truth: Gifts of God."

The conference was convened by the John Paul II Academy for Human Life and the Family (JAHLF) and concerned the key Church encyclicals *Humanae Vitae* and *Veritatis Splendor* on their 50th and 25 anniversaries, respectively.

Christine de Marcellus Vollmer read Novák's re-



marks for the conference. Vollmer is president of Provoke and a former member of the Pontifical Academy for Life, and has been a member as well of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

"The Fundamental Law (Hungary's constitution) attaches special importance to the family, protects the institution of marriage, and states that the foundation of family lies in marriage and in parent-child relationship. It declares that Hungary shall encourage the commitment to have children," Novák said.

Hungary's approach includes assisting families with reconciling of work and family obligations. Considering this "of key importance," current Hungarian family policy has comprehensive programs to offer this help to families.

Helping families includes maternity support, paid childcare leave, family tax benefits and housing allowance, tax allowances that encourage young couples to marry, encourage young couples to marry, vacation benefits, no-charge holiday camps for children, subsidized textbooks, and decreased utility costs. Families have seen significant financial gains, including a 63.8% increase since 2010 in the net average earnings of the Hungarian families due to the family tax reduction alone.

Statistics on demographic and economic developments in Hungary between 2010 and 2017 indicate an increase in the number of live births and the overall fertility rate, according to Novák's report, and the number of abortions and divorces has decreased, while marriages have increased.

Novák's address was one of several offered at the inaugural official meeting of the JP II Academy for Life.

NIGERIAN WOMAN TAKES ON MELINDA GATES

Commentary by Susan Brinkmann, OCDS

The announcement that the Gates Foundation is contributing \$375 million for family planning efforts in Africa has sparked the ire of a Nigerian pro-life leader who is irked by the idea of a billionaire telling African women what to do with their bodies.

Townhall.com is reporting on the rebuke by Obianuju Ekeocha, a Nigerian-born biomedical scientist and the founder of Culture of Life Africa, a U.K.-based pro-life group which took place during an appearance on the BBC's Sunday Morning Live show.

During the interview, Ekeocha said the Gates Foundation's push for contraception in Africa might be "an insidious way of moving the agenda of population control" since in many African countries the desired number of children by African women "is actually quite high."

In other words, African women don't want contraception.

Ekeocha was responding to an announcement made last week by Melinda Gates that her Foundation would contribute an additional \$375 million to global family planning programs after President Donald J. Trump expanded a policy that bans taxpayer funds from going to overseas organizations that perform or promote abortion.

"When a woman has access to contraceptives, she tends to have fewer children. Families can devote more resources to each child's nutrition, health, and education, setting them up for a better future," Gates said at the time.

Ekeocha was not impressed with Gates' reasoning.

"... [T]here is a real problem with a multi-billionaire from a Western country coming in to tell African governments what to do or how to control populations," she said.

"I'm sure Melinda Gates means well, but you see the problem is there is an arrogance..." in her approach to African women.

Gates' arrogance was on full display last week when she intimated that Pope Francis might one day realize why Church teaching on contraception should change to fit her point-of-view that the way to lift women out of poverty is to prevent them from having children.

But this is not what African want! As Ekeocha pointed out, the question not being asked in these discussions is what do African women want?



In most of the African countries, research has continually shown that the number of children African women want is actually quite high. In their culture, people value children and big families, she said.

"... [W]hat are you saying to the women if you continue to push their governments towards the so-called family planning projects?"

It's saying that what African women want doesn't matter. It's what the Gates Foundation thinks they want that counts.

In a recent blog, Ekeocha said she would like to see the Gates Foundation use their money to pay for what African women really want: good healthcare, especially prenatal, neonatal and pediatric care; food programs for young children; good higher education programs; chastity programs; support for micro-business opportunities for women; and help for organizations who are protecting women from sex-trafficking, forced marriage, child labor and domestic violence.

Putting so much money into contraceptives is just buying misery for African women, she wrote.

"I see it buying us unfaithful husbands. I see it buying us streets devoid of the innocent chatter of children. I see it buying us disease and untimely death. I see it buying us a retirement without the tender loving care of our children.

"Please Melinda, listen to the heart-felt cry of an African woman and mercifully channel your funds to pay for what we REALLY need."

COMPLIMENTS RECEIVED!

As a result of our first *WAKEUP Chronicles on Chastity, 2012*, we have received many compliments which reflect the need for this type of information among our youth and parents with teenagers. An excellent example is this letter recently received from a church member, Terry Adams, having received a copy of the magazine:

“Oh Missy, I have been meaning to tell you how much I enjoyed reading your magazine: It truly is spreading God’s Word and the Church’s teachings. God bless you!”

This is exactly our goal with the first as well as this second issue of the *WAKEUP Chronicles on Chastity*. We hope you will enjoy the experience of reading this second issue and will spread the word to others who are in need of hearing God’s word on the issue of purity and chastity and also heed the words of Our Lady of America.

Missy Reilly Smith



W . A . K . E . U . P .

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