

A Breath of Fresh Air

Five Messages on Chastity

that will put a smile on your face!

Why is the Catholic Church's teaching on human sexuality a light in the darkness? The Church's teachings are a light in the darkness because the Church presents God's plan for authentic love and human fulfillment. Let us look at five key points about the good moral habit of chastity.

1. Chastity is about finding fulfillment in the gift of self (self-giving love) rather than selfishness.

In critiquing the culture, we are bombarded by images of sex that cheapen the God-given gift of sexuality and which set up our young people for heartbreak and misery. This misuse of sex is about selfishness and using other persons as objects for sexual pleasure. The opposite of selfishness is self-giving love. Fulfillment in life comes through giving of oneself to others through friendship, through serving those in need and through the life-long commitment of the Sacrament of Marriage.

2. Chastity is not about repression of sexual feelings and temptations but the integration of the gift.

Repression does not effectively address sexual feelings and temptations, but merely tries to deny them. If repressed, it is likely that these desires will eventually manifest themselves in a disordered way. To integrate the gift of sexuality means to make it subordinate to love and respect. This means that the gift of physical, spousal union is reserved for marriage alone. This integration is also preserved when a person foregoes earthly, spousal union for the sake of the total and willing gift of self to God in the priesthood or consecrated life.

3. Chastity is more about saying "yes" than about saying "no".

Chastity involves abstinence, which means saying no to sex outside of the life-long commitment of marriage. However, chastity is more about saying yes to Christ through proper respect for self and others by protecting and integrating God's gift of sexuality. This yes gives honor to God in guarding personal dignity and valuing every person as a child of God, which leads to a life of joy and peace. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of chastity.

4. Chastity is more about transformation than about information.

Information is power. It is important to give young people limited information on the terrible consequences that result from inappropriate sexual activity. However, we must begin on the positive side in forming young people to distinguish between the gift of self and selfishness. This involves formation in love, courage and self-control. Transformation comes through growth in the spiritual life, so that through supernatural grace received in the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, young people can face the biological development and impulses they begin to experience. They will be formed in a growing love for God and an ever-greater awareness of the dignity of each human person and his or her body as a Temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19).

5. Chastity is as much about parents as it is about young people.

Parents play a critical role in promoting chaste living with their children. Statistics prove that young people look, above all, to their parents for individualized formation in the meaning of life and self-giving love, setting boundaries and assistance in avoiding harmful situations.