

Chastity is a beautiful and necessary virtue for those who are:

- **Single, Married, Separated & Divorced**
- **Young and Old**
- **Heterosexual and Homosexual**

It is a virtue that purifies the hearts of all.

"There is need for a crusade of manliness and purity to counteract and nullify the savage work of those who think man beast. And that crusade is your work." -St. Josemaria Escriva

"Chastity is a difficult, long term matter; one must wait patiently for it to fruit, for the happiness of loving kindness which it must bring. But at the same time, chastity is the sure way to happiness." - Pope John Paul II

"To be pure, to remain pure, can only come at a price, the price of knowing God and loving him enough to do his will. He will always give us the strength we need to keep purity as something as beautiful for him. Purity is the fruit of prayer." - Mother Teresa

"Those who love chastity, whose consciences are completely clear, keep their hearts pure. No other virtue is so necessary in order to see God." St John Chrysostom

There is Healing & Forgiveness after unchaste living and Strength to Live Purely:

- **Prayer**
- **Reception of the Sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation**
- **Honest and Pure Communication**



chas·ti·ty: \ˈchas-tə-tē\ 1(c): purity in conduct and intention; 2: personal integrity

"The Forgotten Virtue" by Theresa Notare, March 22, 1995

Back in January I read a surprising Op Ed piece in the *Washington Times*--surprising because it paved an opening through the dense underbrush of contemporary politically correct notions of sexual freedom. Entitled "Love's Priceless Gift," it examined the failure of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, especially as expressed in approaches to adolescent sex education programs. Author Suzanne Fields sharply challenged the popular assumption that most people want "sexual freedom," that is, the liberation of sex from structures (marriage) and responsibilities (children). This she did from a thoroughly secular viewpoint. "We've asked the wrong question," Fields said. "We ask, 'Why not use a condom?' when we ought to be asking, 'Why are you bestowing the priceless gift of intimacy on this person?'" It is Fields' opinion that today's youth "want more than a drive-by night encounter"--they want authentic human intimacy.

Human intimacy involves the mutual understanding of persons. It does not necessarily involve genital sexual expression. Although Fields stopped short of lobbying for a return to sexual abstinence before marriage, her insight about the human need for intimacy and the shallow solutions which society offers is thought provoking. One only needs to peruse the magazines in the check-out lines of our grocery stores to see bold headlines proclaiming that the passionate embrace yields instant intimacy. If we are to believe this trivia, people will be content and satisfied, if only they are sexually active. But here and there, as in Fields' column, an honest voice can be found.

Another such voice is that of sociologist Lillian Rubin, whose book *Intimate Strangers*, backs up what Fields is saying. Rubin states the situation plainly:

Perhaps never in history have we expected so much and so little at the same time; never before have we seen such an odd conjunction of heightened expectations about the possibilities in human relationships and disillusion, if not despair.(p. 8)

Despite the pervasive awareness of the need for intimacy in today's world, there are very few means to obtain it. With sex so readily available in our permissive age, why is intimacy a rare experience? I dare say the answer lies in the loss of a foundational virtue--the loss of a chaste vision of life.

Chastity, the forgotten virtue, is a misunderstood staple of human life. It is the virtue which provides the framework through which true human freedom moves and authentic intimacy can be attained. All of our relationships should be shaped by chastity. Yet, we often don't understand or appreciate the centrality of this virtue in human relationships because people restrict chastity to the morality of sexual expression.

Certainly, chastity is one moral gauge used to indicate what is appropriate sexual behavior. But, in exclusively linking chastity to this one part of life, we have allowed it to fall out of vogue. It has acquired a "bad rep," being perceived as a form of repression, or oppression, in some circles. Leaders in the more radical sections of the woman's movement sneer at chastity as a form of Victorian prudishness or of masculine control over women. Given today's preoccupation with non-conformism--"do what you will"--chastity is suspected of signaling a return to someone else's standards. Such misguided reactions have robbed us of our human nobility and kept an entire generation in an arrested stage of psycho-sexual development.

Chastity is a multidimensional virtue. As a moral virtue, it challenges us to love fully and selflessly--as Christ loved. Chastity provides a unique window through which to view our world, other people, and ourselves. A person who strives to live chastely, whether married, single, or celibate, is conscious of trying to approach every aspect of life without covetousness, domination, grasping, or groping. There is no room for greed and exploitation when one lives chastely, because chastity consists in the long-term integration of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions in a way that values, esteems, and respects the dignity of the created order, others, and oneself.

As applied to human relationships, **chastity frees us from the tendency to act in manipulative or selfish manners.** It enables us to understand a person's state in life and to offer a fitting response of love for that person. In other words, chastity enables us to show true friendship. In speaking of chastity as applied to relationships, the Holy Father has said that "by no means" does it signify the "rejection of human sexuality or lack of esteem for it: rather it signifies spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it towards its full realization" (*Familiaris consortio*, #33). With this disposition of mind, body, and heart, intimacy is chastity's natural fruit. Another wise person, Catherine Doherty, once said, "chastity demands purity of heart." It leaves no room for small-mindedness or priggishness, because it actually "involves seeing each other and our world as our God sees us." This could be what Christ himself meant when he said "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Chastity, the forgotten virtue, must be reclaimed, understood in all its fullness, and brought back to center to ensure that mature human intimacy and reverence for life endures.

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