

# “KEEP THYSELF CHASTE”

— St. Paul to Timothy, I, chapter 5, verse 22 —

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication; That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour: Not in the passion of lust, like to Gentiles that know not God. (. . .) For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification. Therefore, he that despiseth these things, despiseth not man, but God, who also hath given his holy Spirit in us.”— Thess. 4. 3-5, 7, 8. —

## 1. OUR BODY MUST SERVE OUR SOUL AND GOD

Man is made of body and soul united to form one human person and so body and soul must work together in all human actions. The soul is superior to the body but it can only act by using the body as its instrument. If, for instance, a man desires to give an alms to a poor person, the desire is in his mind and will, which are powers of the soul; but the soul must use the hand, which is part of the body, to give the alms.

### **How the Body serves God**

To bring home to ourselves more clearly how necessary the body is for God's service, we may consider the various actions that we must perform to worship Him and sanctify our souls. We see at once what an important part the body plays in them. Even to think of God we must use our brain. To speak to God in prayer, we must use our lips and tongue. Our bodies enter into the reception of all the sacraments. In Baptism, the water is poured on our heads. In Confirmation, the chrism is applied to our foreheads. In Extreme Unction, the holy oil is applied to all our members. In Confession, we must speak our sins. In Matrimony, the bride and bridegroom must utter the words of consent. At Ordination, the Bishop lays his hands on the heads of those to be ordained and they touch the sacred vessels with their hands. Above all, in the sacrament of God's love, the Eucharist, the body has the supreme honour of receiving Our Lord's Body and Blood under the appearances of the Consecrated Host.

### **Temple of the Holy Ghost**

Not only does the body serve the soul in all these ways in the task of sanctifying itself but it is also the dwelling place of the soul thus sanctified and so may truly be called the dwelling place of God.

### **Duty to Preserve the Body**

Since, therefore, the body plays such a necessary part in all our actions for the service of God, we have the duty to preserve its life and health so that our service may be more perfect. Furthermore, if we have the duty to do this, we have also the right to do it and no-one else can interfere with that right.

## 2. SIXTH AND NINTH COMMANDMENTS

"Thou shalt not commit adultery"

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife"

Since the human body is so honoured by God, it follows that we must honour and respect our own bodies and those of others. The virtue which helps us to do this is called the Virtue of Chastity. It is also called the Virtue of Holy Purity. Another name for it is the Angelic Virtue because the Angels, by their very nature, are free from any temptation against it.

### **Purpose of the Sixth Commandment**

The purpose of the sixth and ninth Commandments is to secure this honour and respect for the human body. The sixth Commandment forbids any impure action whether committed alone (such as masturbation) or with another person as well as all looks and words contrary to the virtue of holy purity.

The sixth Commandment forbids especially adultery which is a serious sin against holy purity committed with

another's wife or husband. Married persons have a special obligation to observe holy purity because husband and wife belong to one another in soul and body by the sacred Sacrament of Matrimony.

The primary goal of marriage being the procreation and the education of children, it follows necessarily that "every action which, either in anticipation of the marriage act or in the accomplishment of that act, or, in the development of the natural consequences of that act, proposes, either as an end or as a means to make procreation impossible, is unlawful in itself. In other words, any such contraceptive act is wrong in itself." (Archbishop J. C. McQuaid)

Courtship means direct preparation for matrimony. You date because you want to get married. Of course, you cannot get married to someone you do not know. Therefore, you date to know someone you intend one day to marry.

Needless to say, courtship is dangerous for the soul. "The spirit is willing," said Jesus, "but the flesh is weak. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation." (St. Matthew, 26, 41.) It is already a mortal sin to expose oneself voluntarily to a near occasion of mortal sin. Therefore, according to the circumstances, dating may or may not be sinful. It is permissible when three conditions are fulfilled: 1) when both are mature enough to get married; 2) when the dating can lead to a future marriage; 3) when the man has the means to support a family.

Finally, the purpose of dating is to get to know each other but it is not a rehearsal of the married life. Behaviour between prospective partners must be limited to what is allowed between a brother and his sister. The certain sign of a future good marriage is a clean courtship.

Usually our conscience will tell us what actions are contrary to the virtue of holy purity but if we are uneasy about the matter, we should ask the advice of our parents or our confessor.

The sixth Commandment also forbids looks and words against the virtue of chastity because these also lessen the honour and respect which we should have for the human body and because they may lead on to actions against chastity.

"Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor liars with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 6, 9-10)

### **Purpose of the Ninth Commandment**

Since actions contrary to chastity are wrong, it follows that it is wrong to think of them or to desire them. God has made this clear by the ninth Commandment. We should, however, remember the difference between temptation and sin. Sometimes young people are worried by unchaste thoughts which keep troubling them. The Catechism tells us what a person should do when troubled in this way. We should pray for grace to resist the temptation, turn our thoughts to something good and occupy ourselves with some work or amusement which will distract us from the bad thoughts. It is also good to do some small penances, as Jesus said: "This kind of devil is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." (Mt. 17, 21) If the thoughts remain in spite of all efforts to get rid of them, there is no sin. Sin only occurs when the thoughts are deliberately consented to.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul." (1 Peter 2, 11.)

### **The Virtue of Chastity - Help to All Virtues.**

While we are young, we should try to form a great esteem for the virtue of chastity, or holy purity. Chastity is a wonderful help to all the other virtues. If we can conquer our passions when they tempt us to sins against this virtue, we shall find it easy to conquer our other passions. Our Lord gave special praise to chastity in His Sermon on the Mount when He said: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." (St. Matthew, 5, 8.)

### **Chastity gives Nobility to the Soul and is Esteemed by Men.**

Chastity does indeed give nobility to the soul. Those who practise it develop moral strength and their actions, words and thoughts are worthy of sons of God and brothers of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, those who sin against chastity degrade the human nature that God has given them.

In the esteem of men, those who are chaste are looked up to whilst those who are unchaste are despised. We may

notice this with regard to any of our companions who may indulge in bad conversation. They may, perhaps, cause a laugh by it or get a reputation for being more knowledgeable than others but secretly those who hear them have a feeling of disgust for them.

### **Chastity gives Joy to the Soul**

Chastity gives great joy to the soul. Those who are chaste know that they are fulfilling God's will by showing honour and respect to the body which is His temple. They realise that God sees them always and are happy in the knowledge that they never do or say anything that they would be ashamed of in His sight. On the contrary, sins against chastity are followed by a great sense of shame and sadness.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service." (Rom. 12, 1.)

### **MEANS OF GUARDING THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY**

#### **1. Natural means**

A. The chief natural means of guarding chastity is to avoid all dangers to that virtue, such as bad companions, improper dances, immodest dress, company-keeping (except with a view to marriage), and immodest books, plays and pictures.

B. Hard work. If we are diligent in our school work and any other work we may have to do, we shall have no time for temptations against chastity. Diligence in work also strengthens our will so that we can better resist temptation. Even when we are free, we should always try to have some occupation and not spend our time lazing, day-dreaming or just knocking about. We can help our parents in the home, enjoy some hobby or good reading, play games or go on excursions with good companions.

C. The Spirit of Mortification. Consider that if we conquer ourselves in other things, we shall find it easier to conquer temptations against chastity. So to conquer greed and the desire for comfort is a help in preserving the virtue of chastity.

#### **2. Supernatural means.**

##### **A. Prayer:**

(a) We need grace to resist all temptation and prayer is one of the great ways of obtaining grace.

(b) By prayer we fill our minds with holy thoughts and our hearts with holy desires.

B. Reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist: These are again great ways of obtaining grace.

(a) Penance: By going regularly to confession, we guard ourselves against carelessness in the matter of chastity. If we have the misfortune to fall into a sin against this virtue, the confession of it brings home to us the evil of it. We also receive a special sacramental grace to help us to avoid further sin. In confession, the penitent should be humble and sincere about sins against chastity and should not try, through false shame, to make less of them than they are in reality. Thus it would not be enough to say that one had had bad thoughts, if in reality some action had been done. On the other hand, there is no need to go into unnecessary details about such sins. It is enough to confess that one yielded to some thought, desire or action contrary to chastity and, if there was any such action, whether it was done in company with another or not.

(b) The Holy Eucharist: All the saints and Fathers of the Church teach that the reception of Holy Communion is one of the most powerful of all means for obtaining the virtue of chastity. In Holy Communion, we are united with Him who is all pure, the Son of the most pure Virgin Mary. It is only to be expected that, among the many graces which the Holy Eucharist gives us, there should be included a special grace to keep ourselves pure in mind and body.

##### **C. Reverence for the Body as Temple of the Holy Ghost:**

We have seen that when a soul receives sanctifying grace, the Holy Ghost comes to dwell in it in a special way. But the body is united to the soul to form one person and therefore the Holy Ghost dwells in it also. St. Paul speaks of our bodies as "temples of the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians, 6, 19.)

The thought of the presence of the Holy Ghost in both our soul and body should give us a great horror of sins of impurity which violate the temple in which He dwells. If tempted to commit such sins, we should pray to the Holy Ghost within us, that He may help us to preserve that temple undefiled.

#### D. Devotion to Our Lady:

Our Lady is our Mother. Every mother watches with loving care over her child and wishes to protect him from harm and help him to grow in health and beauty. So our Mother Mary wishes to preserve in us the beautiful virtue of chastity. If we ask her, especially through the Rosary, she will obtain from her Son the grace we need.

We should observe the familiar practice of saying every morning and every night, three Hail Marys; adding to each the aspiration: "O Mary, through thy Immaculate Conception, make my body pure and my soul holy." (300 days indulgence, morning and night.)

### 3. THE POPE SPEAKS

#### **Personal Courage**

"Do not be surprised, beloved Sons, if, in speaking of courage, We wish to emphasise precisely the word personal. To form a united group as compact as yours is, animated not by desires of violence but determined to defend properly and loyally the highest and the most sacred desires - this is certainly an excellent thing; everyone supports everyone else, mutually, fraternally and, in this way, daring becomes easier.

But this courage must be shown, even if, in some place or other, at a certain moment, because of particular circumstances, you should find yourselves in the minority, few in number, perhaps, even alone, faced with an adversary bolder and more numerous. Be ready to resist to the end, against them all, in your affirmation of the law of God, in the defense of the faith and of the Church - should we add today also, in the defense of order, of progress and of social peace, on every occasion that the common good requires your collaboration?

Look at the first martyr, St. Stephen: one against them all, to the very end. He surpassed, even in intelligence and wisdom, his cruel foes who were unable to answer his argument and his proofs. (Acts, 6, 10) It is men like that who are needed by the Church and by society. (Pope Pius XII to the Youth of Rome, Dec. 8, 1948.)

#### **Youth Believing, Living, Holy.**

"Your thoughts, your aspirations, your ideals, can be read on your faces; they resound in your acclamations. But nevertheless, since you expect a norm and a directive from the Father of Christendom, We intend to take it from the treasury of truth and virtue contained in the name which you bear: 'Catholic Youth,' that is to say, youth believing, living, holy.

1. Youth believing: it is youth which has noble aims - the reality, the power and the value of which it is thoroughly convinced. Youth which did not have such aims and such a conviction would, by that very fact, put itself outside the struggle; it would be dejected, scattered, reduced to powder by the strong and opposing pressures of contradictory ideas and movements.

You, on the contrary, have those noble aims; you wish to work for God's cause; you profess openly and in a virile fashion your faith in God; and you are reaching out with all your energy "like a torrent which a high spring thrusts" wherever the irreligion of the modern is to be conquered, wherever God is to be kept for your dear country. You wish to work for the cause of God and of his Church. (. . .)

Thus you have before you truly noble aims: the noblest that youth, with its thirst for the ideal, can propose to itself; the only ones which do not deceive and leave the souls disappointed; the only ones which carry with them the certainty of final victory.

#### **Living Youth**

2. Living youth: the Catholic faith, the Church, is life. Messenger and mistress of peace and of love, the Church for two thousand years has nonetheless found herself constrained against her will to defend herself against the ever-renewed assaults of her enemies, whether open or hidden. But she does not fear; she is old but she is also eternally

young; she has a history of inexhaustible richness, but she is not lost in that history; she is never solely of the past but always and primarily of the present; she lives in time because she is always for the here and now, for problems and their solutions, for the men who are today living on this earth. (. . .)

And you, too, wish to be a living youth, a youth which integrally and courageously translates its convictions into action. You will do this first of all in yourselves; then you will do it all together in the various sectors of life; so that the family may remain Christian; the school not act against the Church and the Christian family, but in harmony with them; (. . .) that all public life be ordered to promote the general good and not particular interests of one party. (. . .)

### **Holy Youth**

3. Holy youth: that is to say robust but humble, knowing that with its own unaided strength it cannot make the grade, cannot face up either to interior foes or exterior; consequently, a youth which prays daily, and draws with fervour upon those springs of supernatural life which stream so abundantly from the Church of Christ.

A holy youth that is to say pure. You wish to be a youth "without fear and without reproach." We can even say "without fear because without reproach." A pure heart and a spotless conscience give us the right to look every man in the eye with serenity, and every event too, even death and above all God, who knows all things.

A holy youth: that is to say a respectful youth - with respect for parents; respect for authorities, ecclesiastical and civil; respect for the experience of one's elders; respect for women and girls; respect for all who bear the human stamp. You can work toward your ends by every morally licit means which the law puts into your hands, but always respect the man, even when he is your adversary.

A holy youth: that is to say a youth full of Christ. Bear Christ in your mind by his teaching; in your will by the observance of his law; in your heart by the Holy Eucharist. Christ must always rule and dominate your will and your action. For Him no sacrifice is too much; with Him all is possible: "Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and the same forever." (Heb. 13, 8.)

(Pope Pius XII to a Youth Movement, Jan. 4, 1948.)

"I write unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one."

Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof: but he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever."

1 St. John 2, 14-17.

**THE VIRTUES OF PURITY AND CHASTITY ARE THE BEST PREVENTIVE MEANS TO FIGHT ABORTION.**

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