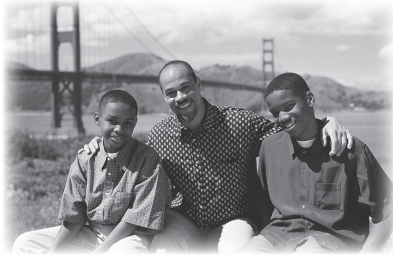




Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For all parents
with young adults.



In answering children's questions, parents should offer well-reasoned arguments about the great value of chastity and show the intellectual and human weakness of theories that inspire permissive and hedonistic behavior.

~Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality # 96

When parents of young adults are asked if they prefer to become grandparents before their child is married or after the wedding, nearly all parents say that they prefer to wait until after the marriage. In fact, most parents will express grave concern that teen parenting is harmful for everyone involved; the young adult, the child, the family and society. And, if parents are asked if they prefer their children to marry for life or to marry for a while and then divorce, nearly all parents will again say they want to avoid divorce. There is consensus among parents that babies should be conceived within marriage and that youth should marry for a lifetime.

What is very interesting is that the same group of parents will hesitate before answering another question on the same topic. When the same parents are asked if they want their children to wait until they are married to engage in sexual activity, most will respond that they are unsure of how to answer this question. Many parents will admit that they don't want their children to become sexually active. However they will quickly add that they do not believe that their child has the ability to wait until the wedding night.

Why do so few parents believe that their young adults can wait? The most frequent answer is that most parents know that they didn't marry as virgins either. So, if they couldn't make it, why should they expect something more from their offspring? Another reason is that parents think that sexual activity is nothing more than a rite of passage into adulthood. It is something that you do to prove you have matured. But the most damaging reason given by parents is that kids today can engage in sexual activity without getting pregnant because of contraceptives. Parents believe that if the fear of creating a baby is eliminated, then it really doesn't matter if the kids engage in extramarital sexual activity or not.

Isn't it interesting that what parents want can be so different from what they expect? In the case of sexual activity, parents want their children to freely express themselves in ways that are loving, lasting and fruitful. But, they waver on supporting behaviors that lead to sexual restraint. This lack of expectation for actions that lead to what one wants results in a lack of direction for the young adult and that lack of focus can be deadly.

To understand this, it is necessary to look at current research which shows that sexual activity affects more than just the ability to become pregnant. It impacts the emotional, social, educational and psychological parts of a person as well. Youth who are

sexually active have higher levels of depression, more risk of being abused or being abusive, a higher likelihood of dropping out of school or underperforming, and a greater chance of contracting a sexually transmitted disease. Conversely, youth who remain abstinent avoid the physical risks of sexual diseases, perform better in school, experience lower anxiety and report more happiness. Clearly, sexual abstinence before marriage leads to a better outcome.

Sexual abstinence before marriage can be expected by parents if they are willing to teach their children about the virtue of chastity. Chastity allows us to do what is right, good and loving in the area of sexuality and relationships. It is more than just "abstaining" from sexual activity. It is the ordering of one's sexual desires towards what God intends. In this case, God intends all sexual expression to happen within marriage. People who are chaste know that sexual expression is a way to bond spouses to one another and to create new life. Persons who are chaste value these purposes by waiting to become sexually active until they are married. They also seek these purposes in marriage by practicing respectful self restraint when necessary. They also understand that chaste behavior will help them find the right person to marry because it is the clearest way to differentiate love from lust before marriage.

Even though a message of chastity is challenging, it is not impossible. Parents can set expectations for their young adult that remaining a virgin until marriage is realistic. They can send a constant message that sex is beautiful and should be shared with only one person within marriage. Parents can share that sex means much more than physical pleasure; sex speaks a language of love and life. They can make themselves available to listen and guide when the culture tries to pull their kids away. Parents can elevate chastity as an important standard for the family and remain constant in their unwavering support of sexual purity.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) tells us that chastity is an apprenticeship in mastery and a training in human freedom. Either we are governed by our passions and find peace, or we let ourselves be dominated by them and become unhappy. (CCC 2339) Authentic sexual freedom results from the ability to discipline one's mind and heart, not from the unrestricted use of the power to love. Chastity is long and exacting work (CCC 2342) for anyone, but especially for youth who are living in a culture steeped with sexual promiscuity. Youth can embrace chastity when their parents commit to vital discussions about this very important matter.

From the DVD (WATCH THE CLIP THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THIS SEGMENT.)

Lay the groundwork for a proper understanding of _____ and _____.

God designed sexual expression as a right and good of _____, not as a _____ activity for two people.

Become aware of _____ moments to begin a dialogue with your youth.

Sexual discipline does not result in _____, _____, or a broken _____. It is _____, and without _____.

Continue the Discussion

Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.

1. Think about everything that you have seen, heard or read in the past week. What messages did you receive that promoted chastity? What messages did you receive that did not promote sexual discipline?
2. Society is intentionally sending a message to youth that sex is recreational and without consequence. What impact does that have on youth today?
3. Sex outside of marriage does have consequences. What do you think are the most devastating for youth? For the family? For society?
4. Chastity helps a person differentiate between love and lust. What does this mean?
5. Why do youth need their parents to discuss the benefits of chastity over and over and over again?

Make a Plan

For The Parent

Chastity (sexual self-discipline) as a virtue is developed over time. One can never consider that it is learned once and for all. That is why parents have to be very intentional about their guidance in matters related to sexual discipline. Direction should be given in three areas to be effective. First parents need to provide information about discipline of the body. Secondly, they need to provide assistance on preparing the mind to be chaste. And finally, parents need to assist the youth with spiritual exercises that will lead to pure thoughts. Read each section below and record your thoughts. When finished, start talking.

Body – the discipline of the body is closely linked to modesty. Modest persons avoid hairstyles, clothing, and grooming techniques that call undue attention and/or distract others.

How can you help your child determine what is acceptable dress, hair care, and grooming? List your ideas about what is and is not acceptable with clothing, make-up/grooming, hair styles and permanent tattoos/piercings.

Mind – the discipline of the mind begins by guarding the senses (sight, hearing, touch). These senses are directly linked to the imagination, which is a breeding ground for one's actions. If impure and unchaste thoughts are entertained in one's imagination, they can lead to unchaste action.

What sensory information is your child exposed to that may lead to impure thoughts? How can you limit this sensory information? How can you help your child redirect these thoughts?

Spirit – There are many spiritual disciplines that will help your child align his or her will with God's will. The most common are reception of the Sacraments and prayer. Both are necessary for the continued growth of chastity.

How can you help your child develop chastity through your own prayers and reception of the Sacraments? What can you do to cultivate your child's prayer life and eagerness to receive the Sacraments?

Make a Plan

For The Student

Chastity (sexual self-discipline) as a virtue is developed over time. You can never consider that it is learned once and for all. That is why you have to be very intentional about remaining pure in three areas; purity of your body, purity of your mind and purity of your spirit.

Because this is something that takes effort, you will need guidance. It is best to seek this first from your parent(s) and if that is not possible from a faithful and responsible adult.

Read each of the paragraphs below and then write down your thoughts about how you can develop chastity in your life.

Body – the discipline of the body is closely linked to modesty. Modest persons avoid hairstyles, clothing, and grooming techniques that call undue attention and/or distract others.

If you are going to be chaste, what is acceptable dress, hair care, and grooming? List your ideas about what is and is not acceptable with clothing, make-up/grooming, hair styles and permanent tattoos/piercings.

Mind – the discipline of the mind begins by guarding the senses (sight, hearing, touch). These senses are directly linked to the imagination, which is a breeding ground for one's actions. If impure and unchaste thoughts are entertained in one's imagination, they can lead to unchaste action.

What sensory information are you exposed to that may lead to impure thoughts? How can you limit this sensory information? How can you redirect your thoughts to something that is pure?

Spirit – There are many spiritual disciplines that will help you align your will with God's will. The most common are reception of the Sacraments and prayer. Both are necessary for the continued growth of chastity.

How can prayer and reception of the Sacraments help you develop chastity? What can you do to develop your prayer life and eagerness to receive the Sacraments?

Imprimatur: †Most Rev. William P. Cullahan, OFM Conv.
Bishop of LaCrosse
8 November 2013

Published by AJ Heinzen and Associates.
All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher.

Visit www.twl4parents.com for more practical parenting ideas.