



Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For all parents
with young adults.

The spouses' union achieves the twofold end of marriage; the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life. These two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family.

~Catechism of the Catholic Church #2363



by the virtue of chastity. Let's look at an analogy to illustrate the relationship between the goodness of sex and the necessity of chastity.

Fire is extremely good. It provides heat that we need for survival as well as for comfort. It cooks our food. It provides energy and light that we have become so dependent on to run our lives. Yet, when it gets out of control there is nothing more destructive than fire. Fire can destroy and kill. We tell children not to play with fire for that very reason.

Yet, the young are very curious about fire, aren't they? They always want to touch the hot frying pan or to play with matches or to put sticks in the campfire. They need to be taught by loving adults that fire must be surrounded by some form of protection and that it has to be respected. They have to learn how to manage fire carefully and maturely. Then, when they're old enough to show respect and self-discipline, they can begin to use fire properly and benefit from its goodness.

The genital sexual expression of love is an even greater good than fire. That is why it has to be surrounded by the protection of marriage. Within marriage, the sexual act can achieve its two ends; the bonding of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. Under the security of marriage, the love of the spouses can nurture the family and help it flourish. As the love of the spouses deepens, so does the experience of respect, service and charity within the family. This rich tenderness perfects each member of the family so that they can embrace God more deeply and more perfectly. Now that's power.

Sexual expression that is sheltered by marriage and that retains the union of love and life is like a well-controlled fire. Its power is harnessed and focused for good. It is capable of becoming noble and honorable. It is a source of joy and pleasure (CCC 2362). Unfortunately, sexual love that is focused only on the intensity of emotions and pleasurable experiences is like a fire that goes out of control. Its power becomes destructive.

We need to teach our children this vitally important message. Sex is a good that must be protected

We have seen the destructive power of sex outside of marriage and are just becoming aware of the dangers of separating the two natural purposes of the sexual act. Sex outside of marriage has led to a steep increase in single parenting and to an overwhelming number of abortions. It has contributed to an increase in divorce and to a rise in depression. In addition, the separation of the life-giving nature from the love-giving nature has impacted our health and well-being. The broad acceptance of contraception has been tied to an upsurge in cancer, cardiovascular disease and infertility. It has also been linked to an increase in pornography and a growing disregard for women. Finally, the separation of the creation of life from the sexual act itself has made it possible for the establishment of numerous reproductive technologies that have directly resulted in the creation of hundreds of thousands of embryos that are frozen in storage. These babies are treated as manufactured products and have been denied their right to be conceived in an environment of love through an act of love.

Anytime that the sexual act is detached from marriage it loses its goodness and sanctity. Any time that love and life are disconnected in the sexual act, harm becomes a likely outcome. And, every time that the sexual act is separated from love and life it is devalued and degraded. In all of these cases, the sexual act can give rise to selfishness where people use each other for the sake of pleasure. Instead of creating the beauty of family, it can create the hardship of single motherhood, abortion, broken hearts and broken relationships. And, just as with fire that is allowed to burn outside of any protection or respect, the sexual act unleashes its power for ruin.

That's why loving adults need to teach young people to exercise the virtue of chastity which upholds the integrity of the gift of sex. Chastity maintains the two purposes of the sexual act under the mantle of marriage. It is the virtue that ensures that the genital expression of love always communicates, "I love you so much that I promise to spend the rest of my life with you and raise a family together." If the act of sex communicates anything less than this, it is like fire burning out of control. All young people need to hear this explanation before they get burned. This message matters.

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

When sex communicates, “ I love you so much that I promise to spend the rest of my life with you and start a family together” it is _____.

_____ does not involve love, commitment or the creation of new life. It treats another person as an object to be _____.

_____ does not involve love, commitment or the creation of new life. It creates a habit of using sex for _____.

_____ deny the _____ element of sex.

_____ directly opposes the life giving purpose of the sexual act.

Contraceptives are listed as _____ carcinogens which mean they do cause _____.

_____ is sex outside of marriage and can never communicate a lifelong _____ to love.

_____ attacks the institution of marriage.

Continue the Discussion

Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.

1. What are the elements of sexual activity that make it so powerful?
2. If people are really looking for true love in their life that lasts a lifetime, why do they settle for sexual practices that do not lead to marriage and the creation of family?
3. Think about the future spouse that your child will marry. Which of the sexual practices mentioned in this segment do you want them to have experienced? Explain your answer.
4. Think about your children as future spouses. What can you do to ready them for a lifelong faithful marriage? What should you avoid doing?
5. What can parents do to show respect for sexual expression in a culture that demeans and degrades its beauty and purpose?

Make a Plan

For The Parent

In this activity, we ask that you take another look at what the Catholic Church says about sexual expression. Understandably, you have opinions and thoughts about each of the sexual practices that were addressed thus far. You are not alone. Some very interesting people also have ideas about these issues. What we ask is that you respectfully and prayerfully consider the quotes that follow. After reading each quote, imagine why the author thinks the way he or she does. Record your reflections in the spaces provided. When you are finished, talk with your child.

“Contraception is the one sin for which the penalty is national death, race death; a sin for which there is no atonement.” -- Theodore Roosevelt

“The abandonment of the reproductive function (life-giving nature) is the common feature of all sexual perversions. We actually describe a sexual activity as perverse if it has given up the aim of reproduction and pursues the attainment of pleasure as an aim independent of it.” -- Sigmund Freud in Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis

“Contraceptive methods are like putting a premium on vice. They make men and women reckless. Nature is relentless and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws... If contraceptive methods become the order of the day, nothing but moral degradation can be the result. As it is, man has sufficiently degraded woman for his lust, and contraception, no matter how well meaning the advocates may be, will still further degrade her.” -- Mahatma Gandhi

Everything that makes a sexual encounter easy hastens at the same time its plunge into irrelevance (worthlessness). --Paul Ricouer, French philosopher.

Chastity is the virtue by which a person who is capable of passion deliberately and resolutely reserves his erotic desires for love and resists temptation to find lewd images in the media or to use others as a means of achieving his own satisfaction. It must never be confused with prudishness. A person who lives chastely is not the plaything of his lusts, but, rather, lives his sexuality deliberately, motivated by love... -- (YOUCAT 220)

Make a Plan

For The Student

Understanding the morality of sexual behaviors is both challenging and necessary. It is challenging because it forces you to take a look at what you believe and how you choose to live your life. And it is necessary because it sets the course for the type of relationships you will have.

The Catholic Church teaches that God designed sexual activity to communicate the following; “I love you so much that I promise to spend the rest of my life with you and have a family together.” When a sexual act communicates all of these attributes, it is moral and right. But, if even one element of this statement is missing, the sexual act is not moral and is sinful.

Look at the table below. With the assistance of your parent, determine if the sexual behavior communicates the three attributes of moral sexual expression. If the act does communicate an attribute, put an “+” in the column below the attribute. If the behavior does not communicate the attribute, leave the space blank. When you are done, discuss the questions below the table with your parents.

Sexual Behavior	Selfless Love for Another	Lifelong Commitment	Open to New Life
Pornography			
Masturbation			
Homosexual Acts			
Contraceptive Sex			
Sex Before Marriage			
Sex Outside of Marriage			
Sex within Marriage			

Why should there be restrictions on sexual behaviors?

Discuss five or more ways to uphold Christ’s standards on sexuality when you are out with your friends?

Why does the Catholic Church say no to gay marriage but yes to persons with same sex attraction?

God’s love is selfless and focused on the needs of the other. How will you put other people’s needs before your own in the following situations: at home, with peers, in school? When is it sinful or dangerous to put someone else’s needs before your own?

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