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# Chastity

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Roman Catholic tradition has consistently taught that the marital act, governed by chastity, is the only legitimate sexual expression of love and life. Author Coleen Kelly Mast sees chastity as the proper use of our sexual powers according to God's plan. Continenence, sexual self-control, "is completely in tune with physical, mental and social health".<sup>1</sup> Chastity is a legitimate sexual option. In fact, it is a necessity. "The chaste person is the one who is able to express his/her sexuality *well* in reaching out to touch others and be touched by them."<sup>2</sup>

Chastity is healthy sexual behavior, consequently, permissive sex is unhealthy sexual behavior. Casual sex is an unhealthy misuse of our God-given sexual powers causing venereal disease, AIDS, contraception, teen pregnancy, abortion, forced marriages, suicide, emotional problems, etc. Sex can be cheapened, but it becomes extremely costly to society.

"Wholistic sexual health care balances the physical, the mental, the emotional, the social and the spiritual health of the whole person."<sup>3</sup> Chastity is, self-evidently, primary sexual health care because "it is the most convenient and the least expensive".<sup>4</sup>

Self-restraint possesses an enviable track record in family planning, in the single lifestyle, in the priesthood and the religious life, and in post-partum health care. Virginity deserves much credit for bringing welcomed

but unrecognized relief to a very problematic sexual situation. Without chastity things could be much worse.

Self-control has done wonders for people concerned about weight control, balanced nutrition, physical fitness, and alcohol and drug abuse (including smoking). Self-restraint has produced better health where self-indulgence led to poor health.

“Casual sex is sex abuse just as alcoholism is drug abuse.”<sup>5</sup> Both are human abuses. Abstinence makes the heart grow fonder as it allows our sexual health to grow stronger. Chastity is good sexual health. Good sexual health is everybody’s business when our taxes “foot the bill” for sexual health problems and our children, though unborn, pay with their lives through abortion — the most extreme form of child abuse. Today, self-control is a public necessity, yet, the media continue to “sell” sexual irresponsibility as the “good life”. “Adolescent sexual activity is no longer just a moral issue but is a serious national health problem.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Workable Programs Exist**

But there are sound workable programs on chastity, chastity skills and secondary virginity. These programs require committed role models, convinced that chastity is livable, practical and realistic.

Current chastity programs develop the concepts of sexual freedom, self-respect, commitment and secondary virginity. They caution against the myth of “spontaneous sex”.

Preliminary results from such programs are most promising. Teens do not want to have sex. Chastity coupled with commitment works.

Tragically, contraceptive values and casual sex have become socially acceptable, supported by our tax dollars, while our sexual problems get worse. Contraceptive wastage “since 1969 totals \$778.5 millions worldwide”.<sup>7</sup> What the natural methods of family planning could have done with that! We are unable/unwilling to face the truth of chastity.

The birth control lobby has never been more aggressive nor more explicit in its objectives as it simultaneously ridicules chastity with its “moralizing”, “unrealistic” and other slogans, and relentlessly pursues its own agenda. For example: “We are not going to be an organization promoting celibacy or chastity.”<sup>8</sup> (Faye Wattleton, President of Planned Parenthood). “Stopping teenage sex is *not* our objective. Stopping teen pregnancy is.”<sup>9</sup> (David Perkins, Planned Parenthood media official). It seems all types of behavior are justified now and nothing is considered wrong except condemnation of wrongdoing.

We are being educated to accept casual sex as a private matter where nobody is hurt while our pre-marital sex casualties — AIDS victims, single parents, victims of contraception and abortion, pregnant teens, etc. — experience the destructiveness of this fallacy. Sex is not a constitutional right, like free speech, that can be exercised whenever you want with no harmful results.

Meanwhile, our children hunger for Catholic sexual values to sort the confusion around them.

*The Hope:* If society launched a chastity campaign for wholistic sexual health reasons against the cancer of casual sex *as aggressively as* it now wages war on smoking, drugs and alcohol, our sexual problems would be cut drastically and our children would have a legitimate sexual option in chastity which most would gratefully and gladly accept.

### **'Self-control Popular'**

Today, this is possible because self-control is popular! I believe society will eventually be forced to recognize the value of sexual self-control as the contraceptive solution self-destructs. But our children are begging for such support now, which, compared to the hundreds of millions being wasted on contraception, would cost very little. Such a campaign is workable, realistic and cost efficient — but we are still reluctant to commit. The problem lies in our attitudes.

We must begin by questioning our contraceptive assumptions. Contraceptives are *not* more “realistic” for youth than abstinence. AIDS is a *health* issue, therefore, the condom is *not* more “pluralistic” than chastity. Remember, chastity constitutes primary wholistic sexual health care. Pluralism requires that Catholics pursue their values as *vigorously* as other denominations pursue theirs. Chastity has *not* been really tried when we persist in wasting good money on contraception. Contraception does *not* constitute sexual responsibility.

Are our teens going to do it anyway? Are we going to give them permission by tolerating contraception? What we tolerate, we promote! Roman Catholic teaching has consistently fought against these assumptions — and endured much ridicule. Do we have the courage to provide chastity — to give our youth sexual freedom? Can we “take” being mocked as “self-righteous” or ridiculed as being “unrealistic” by people we expected would understand?

Nowhere do these assumptions operate so blatantly as in the “safe sex” condom solution to the AIDS crisis. Isn't it ironic that this crisis has succeeded in paralyzing the defense systems of both the AIDS victim and society — the former by a viral infection, the latter by a civil rights attitude that keeps public health officials from doing their job? Chastity is primary health care. It should form public policy on AIDS Prevention. Is there a more compassionate model than Mother Teresa?

### **Cooperation Needed**

Chastity will protect marriage and family values. But society, church and family must cooperate to ensure this is a genuine reality. Our actions and example must match our belief and commitment to ensure the sexual freedom of our children.

Society should financially support sex-free, drug-free, smoke-free and alcohol-free preventative programs. Preventative programs constitute primary, therefore, our health officials should be vigorously promoting them. "Teen sexual activity is a serious national health problem."<sup>10</sup> Remember, the problem is not teen pregnancy — that's one of the symptoms. The problem is teen sexual activity. It is necessary to have preventative "Say No! to sex" programming. Don't rewrite the health "handbook" for sex.

Clergy must also educate towards the sexual freedom of our youth. They must regularly explain the Church position on sexuality clearly. Pope John Paul II has written much and spoken often on this topic. Catholics have a right to know the mind of the Church in this area and any possible scandal caused by silence can and must be avoided.

Parents, our youth should see solid marriages where chastity is modeled as a *livable* option. Pre-marital chastity may not, then, appear at all bizarre to them. Good communication, well-established in the early years, will enhance later adolescent chastity discussions. Love and a willingness to dialogue will override "sexual expertise". Parents and teens, together, can satisfy youth hunger for Catholic sexual values. For the sake of our children, we must regain an appreciation of chastity so we can pass them this inheritance.

In our society . . . there is tremendous pressure put upon (youth) to become "sexually active", that is, to have sexual intercourse. These young persons are in special need of the virtue of chastity, for it is only by being chaste that they can *be* themselves and choose to do what they are to do if they are to be the beings they are meant to be.<sup>11</sup>

Justice demands that society's resources fuel Judeo-Christian chastity "sexual freedom" programs as aggressively as they now finance the Humanistic "contraceptive" one which is currently oppressing our youth with a myriad of sexual health problems.

In the Christian view, chastity by no means signifies 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.<sup>12</sup> (Pope John Paul II)

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