

What does Chastity mean?

by *Father Gerard Monaghan* (Reprinted from the Catholic News Agency, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com>, accessed on July 16, 2012)

Most people believe that being chaste means that one is not sexually active. WRONG!!!

There are many people living good chaste lives who have healthy and vibrant sex lives. It should be noted that they are married. That's right, even married people are called to be chaste. As a matter of fact, chastity has more to do with fidelity than it does with foregoing sexual experiences. The essence of chastity is being faithful to one's state in life. Therefore, for a married couple, it means saving their physical expression of love for their spouse, exclusively.

What does chastity mean for the single person?

For the single person it means the same thing. If you think this is crazy, stick with the tour and see for yourself. Sexual intercourse, despite what the media would indicate, is not an indoor sport. It is the ULTIMATE expression of love between a husband and wife. Sexual intercourse, despite what the media would indicate, is not merely a physical act.

It is the total self-giving of one person to another. It is so intimate that it is an emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and physical experience.

It is so profound that it strengthens and completes the bond of marriage. What's wrong with sex before marriage?

The bond of love between husband and wife is similar to the adhesive power of Duct Tape. If we realize that sexual intimacy creates and strengthens the bond between man and woman, then what happens when we are sexually active with different people before we get married?

If we place a piece of tape on our wrist (the first person we have sex with) there is a strong bond. When we break that relationship, it is like tearing the tape off our arm - it hurts. Then when we meet another person and become intimate with them we put the same piece of tape back on our arm. But this time we find that the bond isn't as strong and so it is with the tape and the relationship. And each time it hurts a little less when the tape is ripped off and each time the tape is put back on, the bond is that much weaker.

Is there such a thing as chastity in marriage?

If or when you get married you will desire that your spouse will be faithful to you and you will desire to be faithful to your spouse. That is the desire to live a chaste married life.

While you are single, it is only logical that you practice this virtue so that when you are married you will be able to have a truly loving relationship. Or you could say that if you want to be faithful to your spouse when you are married, would it not make sense to be faithful to your future spouse right now?

Because of the sacredness of marriage, because of the sacredness of our bodies, and because of the sacredness of our sexuality, any misuse of sex is tragic and detrimental to our spiritual lives. As Catholics we are called to be an example to others in the world.

We are called to be like Jesus: counter-cultural. We are called to realize that if we want to find peace and joy, then we must live in accord with the will of God. God has created us in His image and if we live according to His commandments we will be happy. Unfortunately, Jesus didn't say it would be easy. In fact He said, "Pick up your cross and follow me."

How does someone restore and maintain chastity in his or her life?

Any young person who desires to be chaste or restore his or her chaste lifestyle will have the opportunity to take up their cross and follow Jesus. Fortunately, Jesus has promised up that he will always be there to help us and that he will not abandon us.

He is always there desiring to help us but we must be open to receiving His grace (help). Jesus has asked us to pray constantly. This is extremely important for anyone trying to live the virtue of chastity.

To unite ourselves to Christ in prayer as often as possible is the only way to succeed. Anything from the most simple yet profound "Help me Jesus" to the more formal prayers such as the Rosary - asking Mary, our Heavenly Mother, to help us by her intercession.

How do the sacraments help us in a chastity lifestyle?

It is a good practice to frequent the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion. If we fall and commit a sin of impurity with ourselves or with another person, the Sacrament of Reconciliation assures us of God's desire to forgive us and of his endless love for us. All we have to do is approach God's throne of mercy, with sincere sorrow, in confession and we are assured that all of our sins are forgiven and forgotten by God and we get to start anew.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is called the source and summit of our faith. The source of our faith is in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, that which we celebrate in the Eucharist. It is the Summit of our faith because through the Eucharist we enter into an intimate union with Jesus Christ by receiving His body, blood, soul and Divinity in Communion. These sacraments show us how much Jesus loves us. By cherishing the gift of our body and helping others to truly respect themselves we show God how much we love Him.

What does the Church mean by Chastity?

It means that we are called to live our lives in a way that manifests the dignity of the human being by acknowledging our sexuality as a gift from God. When this gift from God is used in accord with His Will we give glory to God and actually build up the Kingdom of God by being faithful to our state in life.