



“Man cannot live without love.” JPII

FIGHTING AGAINST THE CULTURE OF DEATH

When John Paul II’s “Theology of the Body” was first published, it was a very controversial document. The frankness of his treatise on the subject of sexuality, however, gives us a clear and straightforward perspective of how our “culture of death” has taught society to think.

Education in this realm is extremely necessary today if we want to help people to understand where Satan is leading us. Our world today has never known such attacks on the human person because of impurity. True happiness is found only in God, and wherever we have left Him behind is where we will start to use ourselves and other people to achieve our egoistic goals. In order to understand the logic of what our faith teaches, it is sometimes necessary to inform ourselves and to use the intellect God gave us.

In former times, we were told that our spirits were “good” and our bodies were “bad.” Nothing is further from the truth. In actuality, the belief or idea that the body is “bad” is a heresy that is condemned by the Church. This heresy is called “Manichaeism” and was founded in the third century. Pope John Paul II recognized this, and noted that the mentality of Manichaeism projects the body as an evil, whereas the Catholic Church in reality teaches the exact opposite. If the body is evil, then the Incarnation would have been a sacrilege. Our Lord was born of a woman, and this would be impossible if our bodies were evil, as God is all good. Christ has divinized the human body thorough His Incarnation, He lifted the body to the realm of divinity, united in Trinitarian love. Every human being that is or has lived on this earth is invited to a similar union with God.

The Church does not teach us to be prudish and reject the body, but helps us to fully comprehend her teaching on that subject. Those who perceive the views of the Catholic Church as strict and overbearing do not realize that it does this precisely because the Church values the human body, and she realizes how sacred the body is. We have to learn to understand and perceive “our body – ours and our neighbor’s – as a temple of the Holy Spirit, (which is) a manifestation of divine beauty.” (CCC, n. 2519).

John Paul II tells us that learning the true meaning of our own bodies and sexuality will not come easy and that it calls for great “perseverance and consistency.” We must learn to distinguish between what the world teaches on sexuality, (which is perversion); and the true reality of this beautiful gift that God has given us. The Holy Father has told us that it is possible, and even more, that it is extremely necessary in our broken world of today. We, the young people, are the future of tomorrow so it is our task to revolutionize the current views of sexuality. There are many groups of young people who are taking a stand to preserve their purity, such as the Pure Hearts movement in Poland and The Goretti Group from California, USA.

The questions and answers that we will present in the next few issues of the Michael Journal are to help you in everyday situations. You are invited to write to the editor if you have any issues that we do not address, we will do our best to answer your questions. God bless you, and happy reading!

Catherine Duchesne

Q. Isn’t being chaste the same thing as being a prude?

A. The world looks at chastity and sees repression: a dull and frigid lifestyle that is probably the result of fear or not being able to find a date. “Those poor people living chaste lives. They don’t have a clue what they’re missing. If only someone could liberate them from their prudery.” Sound familiar?

This may come as a surprise to those who think that chastity and prudery are synonymous, but chastity has nothing to do with having a negative idea of sex. In fact, only the pure of heart are capable of seeing the depth and mystery of sex. For the person who is pure, sex is an unspeakably wonderful gift and the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the foundation of chastity is the dignity of every person and the greatness of sex.

Sure, chastity says no to sex before marriage. This is not because sex or the body is bad, but, on the contrary, because sex is a holy mystery and a person’s body is a holy temple. Holy things are not open to all; they are only for those who meet the requirement, who pass the test.



Pope John Paul II

Think of the Holy of Holies in the Jewish temple, into which no Israelite dared enter except the high priest once a year. The doors were closed to other good and pious Jews not because the Holy of Holies was unclean or disgusting or because the Jews were embarrassed about it. On the contrary, it was restricted because it was so holy, so special, that it was appropriate only for the one priest pledged to the temple’s service to enter.

Our bodies likewise are holy and special, and access to this temple is only for the one pledged forever to it in the sacrament of matrimony. If we understood chastity for what it is, we would see that nothing testifies to the goodness of the body and sex as much as chastity does. Chastity affirms that we do not toy with sex precisely because of the greatness of sex. Those who treat sex as if it were a fair exchange for a nice dinner or six months of commitment are the ones who have yet to discover the greatness of sex. As writer Elisabeth Elliot said, “There is dullness, monotony, sheer boredom in all of life when virginity and purity are no longer protected and prized. By trying to grab fulfillment everywhere, we find it nowhere.”¹ We constantly look for what we can get out of someone, how we can please ourselves and go with the flow.

Chastity has a bad rap because it involves dying to ourselves. But this death is not in vain. In the words of Christ, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). The world sees chastity as death because it does not have the patience to see the life and love that spring forth from the sacrifice. It is not repression or guilt that motivates the chaste man or woman, it is the desire for real love.

The virtue of purity is wildly attractive. Freed from selfish sexual aggressiveness, the pure are empow-

ered to love as we were created to love. So, the problem with lust is not that lustful desires are too strong; they are too weak and lukewarm and self-absorbed. Prudery is fittingly represented as frigid but purity is white hot. Purity burns with a passionate love that puts lust in the freezer.

Q. How do you stop being flirty, and suddenly start saying no?

A. Here are five steps to make it happen:

1. Pray for the strength. So often we complain that it’s hard to be pure, but we never bother to ask God for the grace to do it. Purity is a gift from God, so we have to ask for it. Pray before you go to school or on a date, and also pray when you feel weak and tempted to flirt. At any time, turn your heart to God, and ask for grace. We must do our part, but the strength to be pure comes from Him.

2. You choose your friends, so choose wisely. If your circle of friends does not support your decision to be pure, you have to work on getting new friends. Maybe look into local church youth groups. I do not know of a single person who has chosen to live a life of purity who has not lost some friends in the process. I know this is all easier said than done. But when we have a true change of heart, we’ll gravitate towards better people. We won’t want to be pulled down any more. And there are people out there who can bring out the best in us. We just need to do some work and find them.

3. Realize that saying no is a lot easier when you avoid bad relationships before they begin. Temptations are much easier to turn away when you’re at a distance. Imagine if a robber came to your house, and you saw him through the peep-hole. It’s easiest to just lock the door. If you don’t, he may try to open it. If he gets a foot in the door, it’s harder to shut. But once he’s fully in the house, it would seem next to impossible to get him out. In the same way, the longer you take to reject a temptation, the more vulnerable you become, and the harder it is to resist. So as soon as you begin to think about flirting with a guy who you know is bad for you, stop.

4. Prepare yourself for the struggle. As you know, some guys gossip worse than girls do. If a girl who used to flirt suddenly shows deep respect for herself, guys may give her a hard time. But this is only because their pride is hurt. They miss having around the weak-willed girl who would giggle at their perverted jokes. At first, they may joke about her change of heart. But if her change is lasting, they’ll grow to respect her. If only every girl would respect herself, men would quickly learn their value.

5. As reinforcement, if you go here, www.chastity.com, you can listen to our chastity talk whenever you want.

I know you desire love. This is ultimately why you flirt. You enjoy the attention and sometimes affection. But you know deep in your heart that it’s a counterfeit, a pacifier for having the courage to hold out for the real thing. So, instead of thinking that you have to snuff out your desires to flirt, realize that you have to fight those desires with a greater desire: the desire to respect yourself, and to find the love God wants to give you. If you do these things, your desire for self respect and real love will deepen and overcome your desire for the passing high you get from flirting.

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