

RCIA CLASS 23 – THE SIXTH AND NINTH COMMANDMENTS

*"I saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem coming out of heaven for God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."
Revelation 21:2*

"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." Matthew 5:8

I. Man and woman reflect God's love and creative goodness in complementary ways. "The respective perfections of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfections of God: those of a mother and those of a father and husband." Catechism of the Catholic Church 370. "God created man in His image; in the divine image He created him; male and female, He created them." Genesis 1:27.

A. One's expression of masculinity or femininity is an essential part of the person's response to this role of reflecting God's creative love. "Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns the capacity to love and procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude to form bonds of communion with others." Catechism of the Catholic Church 2332

- The way in which a person lives out his masculinity or femininity either reflects God's creative glory or blurs it. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?" 1 Cor. 6:19.

B. One's vocation (e.g., married couples, priests, nuns, brothers) is a most basic way in which one lives out that call to show forth God's love. "Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state are called by the Lord . . . to that perfect holiness by which the Father Himself is perfect." Vatican II Council, Lumen Gentium (1963) 11.

C. Chastity in any state of life leads people to have full command of their lives so that they can reflect God's love and glory more perfectly. "The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. . . Chastity leads him who practices it to become a witness to his neighbor of God's fidelity and loving kindness." Catechism of the Catholic Church 2338, 2346.

II. Likewise, sexual expression brings about a spiritual effect, whether one wants it to or not. It brings a couple into a union and symbolizes the total joining of two lives together.

A. Sexual expression is meant to symbolize and brings about the total giving of oneself.

1. The complete physical joining reflects a complete spiritual joining, for body and soul are connected.
2. Openness to fertility is a part of that total openness to the other; to reject fertility is to reject a part of the other person. Likewise, to exclude fertility is to avoid total self-giving.

B If sex is used outside of marriage, it is dishonest; it symbolizes the total joining of two lives, but that reality is not there. As Pope Paul VI said, "To use this divine gift (i.e. sexual relations) destroying, even if only partially, its meaning and its purpose is to contradict the nature both of man and of woman and their most intimate relationship and therefore it is to contradict also the plan of God and His will." Paul VI, Humanae Vitae (1968) 13.

1. That fundamental contradiction is one reason why so much dishonesty, with oneself and others, surrounds lustfulness.
2. Experience (e.g. college, bars, entertainment) indicates that perhaps nothing except politics causes more dishonesty than lustfulness.

C. When a couple lives together before marriage, they are pretending to be married without the reality; there is again dishonesty. Furthermore, the effect of that symbol is diminished. In a similar fashion, the effect of other symbols (e.g., flags, uniforms) is diminished if used outside their rightful context.

1. Analogies to "test driving car" or the like do not work, for not only are people not objects, but also one gets rid of products after a certain number of years or when something better comes along. Likewise, analogies to internships or similar employment situations are inapplicable, for spouses are not employees, marriage is not a commercial event, and employment can be terminated by either side (and usually is when a better prospect comes along.)
2. Studies from the University of Rutgers and University of Denver both found that couples who are chaste before marriage have a divorce rate about two thirds that of couples who are unchaste. See 2003 University of Rutgers Marriage

D. Homosexuality likewise leads to a fundamental imbalance, which in turn leads either to a skewing of the human person (making the man unmasculine or woman unfeminine) and/or to a relationship that does not reflect complementarity, that is not open to the other gender. While one may be compassionate to people who suffer from this tendency, compassion should not lead to moral laxity here, any more than it would for any other flaw.

- It will not do to argue that homosexuality must be accepted because people are "born" that way for at least two reasons. First, there is no evidence to that effect, as even the American Psychological Association, which has desperately tried to argue for the normality of homosexuality, recently admitted. See APA, "Answers to Your Questions about Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality" (2009.) Second, even if a person is born with a psychological flaw (e.g., a tendency to alcoholism, drug addiction, depression etc.), we do not for that reason say that the tendency is normal.

E. In addition, artificial contraception or even more so sterilization removes a crucial part of the human person, namely fertility, from intercourse, and replaces that with artificiality.

1. Artificial contraception says to the other, "I love you, but not all of you." I want you to change something natural to you to satisfy myself.

2. Artificial contraception also introduces artificiality into the most intimate act of marriage. Things (e.g., cars, desks, computers) can be made artificially, but if love is artificial, it is not love. Other expressions of love, such as letters, words, compliments, are worthless if artificial. Surely the act of love is all the more so.

3. Because it excludes the fertility of the other person, and because it uses mere technology, rather than self-discipline, to prevent conception of new life, artificial contraception is gravely contrary to conjugal love. "The innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectivity contradictory language, namely that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality." Catechism of the Catholic Church 2370; John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio (1981) 32.

4. Studies by Nona Aquilar, published in the book No Pill No Risk Birth Control showed less than a 5% divorce rate

among couples who use natural family planning after 20 years. In *Divorce Rate Comparisons Between Couples Using Natural Family Planning & Artificial Birth Control*, a 2001 study by Mercedes Wilson and Dr. Robert Lerner of the University of Chicago, showed a 0.25% divorce rate in eight years.

5. Christianity has historically disapproved of artificial contraception. The Didache from about 100 did so, as did Martin Luther and John Calvin. Not until 1930 with the Lambeth conference did any Christian denomination approve of it under any circumstances; and even then, it was supposed to be only for emergency situations.

F. Natural family planning involves the openness to the other person and the self-sacrifice called for by love.

1. Basically, if a couple prayerfully discerns that having another child at the present time would not be helpful, they refrain from conjugal relations for the few days, about 5, per month, when the women may become pregnant.

- With knowledge developed in the last 40 years, it can be ascertained with almost complete certainty which days of the month a woman can become pregnant. The former rhythm method was mostly accurate, but not completely so.

2. The couple should be open to children in general. The choice to defer having children should not be selfish, or involve a cowardly unwillingness to take risks. But, as has been understood in the history of the Church, there are situations in which deferring having children may be a good idea. Natural family planning is a natural means of doing so, and thus consistent with love.

3. Even on the level of reason, when there is a natural and unnatural means of accomplishing an end, the natural one is preferable. For example, one would prefer dietary changes to drugs. It is natural to use scientific knowledge of exercise, nutrition, etc. for an athlete to build muscles; unnatural recourse to steroids would be wrong. It is natural to try to do better on an exam by study; use of drugs to stimulate thinking would be wrong.

- If one weeds a garden, it remains fertile; by contrast, pouring poison on it to prevent unwanted growth destroys it.

4. Natural Family Planning does involve more sacrifice, but then again so does love. Artificial contraception is easy, but that makes it less like love. Natural Family Planning encourages discourse and mutual understanding. Artificial

contraception hands off this important decision to a thing, a barrier or a pill; even the language (barrier, protection) implies separation.

G. In vitro fertilization basically creates a whole human artificially, not in love, reducing the person to the level of a product. The expression is that I created you as I would a computer or a car. Love becomes irrelevant.

- By contrast, medical procedures that restore fertility that is natural to the human person are a legitimate form of medicine, whose purpose is to maintain and restore the human body to its natural state.

H. Purity gives love space to grow and leads to a greater vision of the other.

1. One learns the virtue of sacrifice, which will be important in different ways in married life.

2. Sexual expression becomes a sign of marital love, rather than marriage being simply a legalization of the sexual relationship.

3. Love is like a sapling that needs space to grow into a tree. Letting sexual relations in too early creates a situation where they will eat it or trample it .

4. Waiting until marriage, and honoring the spouse in marriage, gives the message that the other is worth waiting and sacrificing for. Throughout marriage, couples are called to look out for each other's interests first, to give themselves to each other and the Church and Christ gave themselves to each other.

III. The call to chastity, and thus to freedom to express love in a masculine or feminine fashion, involves, not only actions, but also thoughts.

- A. Jesus Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, emphasized purity of thought as the first line of defense in maintaining purity of action. See Matt. 5:27-30. Evagrius Ponticus, who developed the idea of the seven capital vices in his main books called *Pratikos* and *Chapters on Prayer*, called those vices the seven evil thoughts (logismos), recognizing that the battle between good and evil.
- B. Purity of heart, freedom from selfishness of all types, allows one the vision to understand other people as children of God, and see the glory of God more in all things. As the Beatitudes point out, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God." Matt. 5:8.
- C. As a result, we must be very careful of the influences that we let into our imagination.
1. The imagination is a gift enabling us to comprehend things we do not see. As Even secular fields, such as history and science, must use the imagination to sense things not directly experienced. Likewise, as Pope John Paul II pointed out in his 1993 Letter to Artists, all people involved in culture try to express what cannot be seen in technical fashion. "Those who perceive in themselves this kind of divine spark which is the artistic vocation—as poet, writer, sculptor, architect, musician, actor and so on—feel at the same time the obligation not to waste this talent but to develop it, in order to put it at the service of their neighbor and of humanity as a whole."
 2. Even more so, in the spiritual realm, we must use the imagination to sense the presence of Christ, Mary, the angels and saints, the situation behind the words of Scripture, and in addition, personifications of virtue, holiness, honor, etc. In the parables, for example, Jesus uses analogies to things we see to help us sense a kingdom we do not see. Likewise, many prophets, especially the likes of Daniel, Ezekiel, and St. John in the Book of Revelation, use vivid images to express spiritual realities.
 3. However, the devil can also use the imagination to tempt one into a fake realm, presenting good as evil and evil as

good through images, whether visual, audible, or some combination. It thus becomes imperative to guard against those temptations. As Jesus says, it is worth all costs. See Matt. 5:29-30, Mark 9:43-38.

4. In particular, pornography is a grave evil, for it is inviting the devil into one's mind, and allowing him ammunition to use for launching attacks on into the future. As Bishop Loverde pointed out in his 2006 apostolic letter *Bought With a Price*, "this plague stalks the souls of men, women and children, ravages the bonds of marriage and victimizes the most innocent among us. It obscures and destroys people's ability to see one another as unique and beautiful expressions of God's creation, instead darkening their vision." People who use such images are making themselves slaves to sin; and those who promote it are acting as servants of the devil and would, as Jesus said, be better off facing death. See Mark 9:42; Matt. 18:6-9.

D. It is thus crucial to feed our minds with better images and avoid the thoughts that tend to lead to temptation. Good culture in general and Catholic culture in particular, is helpful to fulfill St. Paul's injunction, "Whatever is true, whatever honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, whatever has any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on these things. . . . And the peace of God will be with you." Phil. 4:8-9.

IV. There are many resources for understanding the Church's teachings on sexual ethics and the call to purity and holiness.

A. Some of the leading Church documents include:

1. Casti Connubi (1931) by Pope Pius XI, which defended the traditional Church teaching on marriage and chastity in response to calls to change it, especially with regard to artificial contraception.
2. Humanae Vitae (1968) by Pope Paul VI, which sets forth a wholesome vision of marriage and childbearing in the context of the universal call to holiness, reiterating the Church's teachings distinguishing artificial contraception (which is immoral) from natural family planning.

3. Familiaris Consortio (1981) by Pope John Paul II, which describes the Church's teaching on the meaning of the Christian family, and especially in her role of promoting the faith and evangelizing the world.

4. Donum Vitae (1987) and Dignitatis Personae (2008) by the Vatican Congregation on the Doctrine of the Faith, which discusses areas of bioethics, especially with reference to procreation, distinguishing between in vitro fertilization (which is impermissible, both as a form of domination and because embryos are destroyed) from legitimate fertility treatments.

B. Some theological discussions of the Church's teachings include:

1. Theology of the Body a series of talks by Pope John Paul II from 1979 – 1984, which set forth the personalist background to the Church's teachings, and in particular, how they promote each person's value and ability to love. In Theology of the Body Explained (2003) Christopher West presents these talks in a simpler fashion and thus explains Catholic moral theology in the context of truth and love as expressed through the body.

2. If You Loved Me (2004) by Jason Evert, which describes the Church's teachings and their background in a question and answer format.

3. Three to Get Married (1951) by Fulton Sheen is a timeless classic, explaining the Church's teachings on the Christian family as including Christ as the sanctifier and redeemer.