

courages touching another person's body but not allowing that person to touch your heart. Be chaste and experience what real freedom is like.

2. Damnation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1854-55) states that the gravity of sin may be understood as to how much it affects charity. "Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it," but "mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to Him." Break seriously the 6th or 9th commandments, and turn away from God, perhaps forever. "Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself. It results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices forever, with no turning back." Dawn Eden, a Catholic writer, wrote "If you have sex outside of marriage, what you're really saying to your sex partner is, "I wish you hell."

3. Preparation for a vocation. Before one goes into a marriage, or a convent or monastery or seminary to pursue a vocation, if a basic purity has not yet been achieved, it is more than unlikely it will be achieved by the above institutions. There are several reasons for this; one is that seminaries and convents do not have the resources to provide basic human formation. And if a man thinks that he can have the regular habit of violating the 6th commandment with himself and then go into marriage as if matrimony will make him chaste, he is a fool. If he had any wisdom (or love for God), he would have undergone the struggle to become chaste before pursuing his vocation.

Look at marriage this way. You should desire a spouse that possesses faith, integrity, trustworthiness, emotional self-control, etc. And you should desire to be such a person in order to be a good spouse.

4. Being chaste means not being dependent upon foams, jellies, the Pill, shots, sponges, latex, etc. It also means not contracting HIV, AIDS, Hepatitis, Chancroid, Tichomoniasis, HPV, Genital warts, Herpes, Gonorrhea, Chlamydia, Bacterial Vaginosis, Syphilis, Scabies, Crabs (lice), Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, Mucropurulent Cervicitis, Molluscum Contagiosum, Lymphogranuloma Venereum...to mention some of the diseases resulting in the violation of the commandments with another. And keep in mind that for some, there is no cure.

5. The building of true intimacy. The basic causes of divorce are problems of communication, unhappiness, and incompatibility. Again, quoting Eden, "These problems often arise because couples have not learned, before their marriage, to communicate effectively and to make sacrifices for the good of the other. A major reason for this is often that they have skipped steps to intimacy, using sex to create a false bond while failing to make necessary efforts to deepen their relationship."

This affects intimacy with God as well. Impurity results in a false bond with God; still going to Mass and saying prayers perhaps, but hollow in the inside – giving only a portion of the heart to God, keeping the rest for oneself. And the radical selfishness of violating the 6th commandment with oneself means necessarily a radical turning away from friendship with God. Like Lucio says to the 1st Gentleman in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, "Nay not, as one would say, healthy; but so sound as things that are hollow: thy bones are hollow; impiety has made a feast with thee."

## On Gaining and Keeping Purity, I

Of all the causes of modern apostasy perhaps the greatest – at least regarding the number of people who fall into it – is impurity. Our Lady of Fatima stated that most souls were lost to the fires of hell principally due to the sins against the 6th and 9th commandments – that is to say the sins of impurity.

To gain and keep purity then, will be the most common struggle of the faithful in any parish. St. Thomas More once called the 6th commandment "The Difficult Commandment." It is difficult without the modern onslaught of impure images; triply hard in our times, I think.

For this series of inserts, I want to use the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, in chapter 158 of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. The title of the chapter is How Man is Freed from Sin. I'll quote him, and then make some comments.

He begins, "Since man cannot return to one member of a pair of contraries without moving away from the other extreme, he must, in order to return to the state of rectitude by means of grace, move away from the sin whereby he had swerved from rectitude." Notice how he does not immediately propose specific prayers or penances, but points out simply that if you want to return to (in our case, purity), you have to move away from impurity. To begin a movement away from impurity is the first step for St. Thomas. How should one begin this movement?" The answer might be surprising.

"And because man is chiefly directed toward the ultimate end, and also turned away from it, through his will, it is not only necessary for man to abandon sin in the external act, but also to renounce it in his will, for the purpose of rising again

from sin." That is the first act then, to make a decision. How can we make a good decision to be pure?

For this, several things might be necessary. To make a decision to follow some path or to set a goal, we need a good reason or reasons to pursue it. On the positive side, we need to see how beautiful and crucial to all other virtues purity really is. Let us turn for a moment then, to the wisdom of St. John Bosco. "Every virtue in your soul is a precious ornament which makes you dear to God and to man. But holy purity, the queen of virtues, the angelic virtue, is a jewel so precious that those who possess it become like the angels of God in heaven, even though clothed in mortal flesh. Our Savior Himself says: They shall be as the angels of God. This virtue is the mainstay of all that is holy, and if, unfortunately, it is lost, all other virtues are lost." Here are some other reasons.

1. G.K. Chesterton wrote: "Catholic doctrine and discipline may be walls; but they are the walls of a playground. We might fancy some children playing on the flat grassy top of some tall island in the sea. So long as there was a wall round the cliff's edge they could fling themselves into every frantic game and make the place the noisiest of nurseries. But the walls were knocked down, leaving the naked peril of the precipice. They did not fall over; but when their friends returned to them they were huddled in terror in the center of the island; and their song had ceased." The world, the flesh and the devil insist that chastity is confining and constricting – a loss of freedom. This is a lie. The opposite is the truth. There is a freedom of the children of God. But we live at a time that reduces self-image to mere anatomy. There is no freedom or dignity in that. There is no dignity in a society that en-