



## THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

**“You shall not commit adultery”**

### **1. The Vocation to Chastity** **Texts from the** **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

“You shall not commit adultery.” (Ex 20:14; Dt 5:17)

“You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Mt 5:27-28)

**“MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM...”**

#### **Sexuality in the plan of God**

God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the *vocation*, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion.

“God created man in his own image... male and female he created them”; he blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:27-28); “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.” (Gen 5:1-2) (2331)

*Sexuality* affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others. (2332)

Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual *identity*. Physical, moral and spiritual *difference* and *complementarity* are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs and mutual support between the sexes are lived out. (2333)

#### **The holiness of marriage**

In creating men 'male and female,' God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity. Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God. (2334)

Each of the two sexes is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. *The union of man and woman* in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator's generosity and fecundity: “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.” (Gen 2:24) All human generations proceed from this union. (2335)

Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins. In the Sermon on the Mount, he interprets God's plan strictly: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’. But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Mt 5:27-28) “What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Mt 19:6)

*The tradition of the Church has understood the sixth commandment as encompassing the whole of human sexuality.* (2336)

### **THE VOCATION TO CHASTITY**

Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man's belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman. The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. (2337)

#### **Chastity - self-control, temperance, a grace of God**

Chastity includes an *apprenticeship in self-mastery* which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy. Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. (2339)

Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the *means* for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an asceticism [spiritual discipline] adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God's commandments, exercise of the moral virtues and fidelity to prayer. “Indeed it is through chastity that we are gathered together and led back to the unity from which we were fragmented into multiplicity.” (St. Augustine) (2340)

The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of *temperance*, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason. (2341)

Self-mastery is a *long and exacting work*. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life. The effort required can be more intense in certain periods, such as when the personality is being formed during childhood and adolescence. (2342)

Chastity has *laws of growth* which progress through stages marked by imperfection and too often by sin. (2343)

Chastity represents an eminently personal task; it also involves a *cultural effort*, for there is an interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society. Chastity presupposes an education that respects the moral and spiritual dimensions of human life. (2344)

Chastity is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a *grace*, a fruit of spiritual effort. The Holy Spirit enables one whom the water of Baptism has regenerated to imitate the purity of Christ. 2345

#### **Chastity, charity, and friendship**

Charity is the *form* of all the virtues. Under its influence, chastity appears as a school of the gift of the person. Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self. Chastity leads him who practices it to become a witness to his neighbour of God's fidelity and loving kindness. (2346)

The virtue of chastity blossoms in *friendship*. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate Jesus Christ who has chosen us as his friends, who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine estate. Chastity is a promise of immortality.

Chastity is expressed notably in *friendship with one's neighbour*. Whether it develops between persons of the same or opposite sex, friendship and spiritual communion represents a great good for all. (2347)

### ***The various forms of chastity***

All the baptized are called to chastity. The Christian has 'put on Christ' (Gal 3:27), the model for all chastity. All Christ's faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life. At the moment of his Baptism, the Christian is pledged to lead his affective life in chastity. (2348)

People should cultivate chastity in the way that is suited to their state of life. Some profess virginity or consecrated celibacy which enables them to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner. Others live in the way prescribed for all by the moral law, whether they are married or single. Married people are called to live conjugal chastity; others practice chastity in continence.

Those *who are engaged to marry* are called to live chastity in continence. They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity and the hope of receiving one another from God. They should reserve for marriage the expressions of affection that belong to married love. They will help each other grow in chastity. (2350)

### ***Offences against chastity***

*Lust* is disordered desire for, or inordinate enjoyment of, sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes. (2351)

By *masturbation* is to be understood the deliberate stimulation of the genital organs in order to derive sexual pleasure. Both the Magisterium of the Church, in the course of a constant tradition, and the moral sense of the faithful have been in no doubt and have firmly maintained that masturbation is an intrinsically and gravely disordered action. The deliberate use of the sexual faculty, for whatever reason, outside of marriage is essentially contrary to its purpose. For here sexual pleasure is sought outside of the sexual relationship which is demanded by the moral order and in which the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love is achieved.

To form an equitable judgement about the subjects' moral responsibility and to guide pastoral action, one must take into account the affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety or other psychological or social factors that can lessen, if not even reduce to a minimum, moral culpability. (2352)

*Fornication* is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children. Moreover, it is a grave scandal when there is corruption of the young. (2353)

*Pornography* consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offence. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials. (2354)

*Prostitution* does injury to the dignity of the person who engages in it, reducing the person to an instrument of sexual pleasure. The one who pays sins gravely against himself: he violates the chastity to which his Baptism pledged him and defiles his body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Prostitution is a social scourge. It usually involves women, but also men, children and adolescents (the latter two cases involve the added sin of scandal). While it is always gravely sinful to engage in prostitution, the imputability of the offence can be attenuated by destitution, blackmail or social pressure. (2355)

*Rape* is the forcible violation of the sexual intimacy of another person. It does injury to justice and charity. Rape deeply wounds the respect, freedom and physical and moral integrity to which every person has a right. It causes grave damage that can mark the victim for life. It is always an intrinsically evil act. Graver still is the rape of children committed by parents (incest) or those responsible for the education of the children entrusted to them. (2356)

### ***Chastity and homosexuality***

Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered'. (Cf. Gen 19:1-29; Rom 1:24-27; I Cor 6:10; I Tim 1:10) They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved. (2357)

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfil God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition. (2358)

Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection. (2359)

### **IN BRIEF**

- **Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. (2392)**
- **By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. (2393)**
- **Christ is the model of chastity. Every baptized person is called to lead a chaste life, each according to his particular state of life. (2394)**
- **Chastity means the integration of sexuality within the person. It includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery. (2395)**
- **Among the sins gravely contrary to chastity are masturbation, fornication, pornography, and homosexual practices. (2396)**