

Acting on Pope Benedict's Call for Education in Chastity

I. Introduction

- A. Today we come together on the liturgical feast of St. Ambrose, Doctor of the Church. In the early Church, he was known for his courage, learning, rhetoric and leadership, but he was also known for his beautiful promotion of consecrated virgins in the early Church, which was basically the state of female chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Women came to him from all over the Roman empire to consecrate themselves to God in this way. He was so good at praising consecrated virginity that mothers tried to prevent their daughters even from listening to him. At the request of his sister, St. Marcellina, who consecrated herself as a virgin in Rome, he wrote three books concerning virginity, one about its beauty, another about its great models, and third a commentary on the Pope's homily at his sister's consecration. He published the first book on the feast of the virgin martyr St. Agnes and one of the things he said there that has always moved me, and which is very relevant to our topic today, was about the connection between virginity and martyrdom: "Virginity is not praiseworthy because it is found in martyrs, but because itself makes martyrs." The type of love that leads one to consecrate herself totally to God in response to his love is what makes a person strong in loving him to the end, loving him despite suffering, torture and even execution. I think this is true. When virginity, when consecrated celibate chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, is assumed and lived to the full, it leads to loving fidelity in little and big things, it leads to a daily martyrdom, a witness, of the love we've first received and can't help but radiate.
- B. The larger application of this truth pointed to by St. Ambrose is that chastity leads to holiness, that chastity makes saints.
- C. Nowhere is our call to holiness more powerfully and succinctly expressed than in St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, where he famously says, "This is the will of God, your sanctification." But few really know what he says immediately thereafter, as an explication of the path to fulfill God's will for our holiness. St. Paul writes, "that you abstain from *porneia*" a Greek term that refers to all sexual sin and is generally translated as unchastity. In order to become a saint, we have to be chaste. That's how important chastity is for every human being.
- D. We're living, however, in a time in which probably no part of Catholic faith and life is as caricatured, contradicted, criticized, condemned, calumniated and contravened as Catholic moral teaching on chastity. Many outside the Church, and even many inside, look at the Church's teaching as something as outdated as Victorian clothing, as the path to repression rather than love, as a school of freaks rather than saints. They charge it's against our biology, by shackling a natural urge. It's against our rational nature, by restraining our freedom. It's even against God's plans for us, by impeding the life of joy he intends. In short, they regard the Church as a naysaying, puritanical nag proclaiming Bad News instead of Good. Listening to all the criticism, one would expect that the path to happiness would be precisely by living contrary, rather than according, to what the Church teaches as God's wisdom. But how has that worked out? Has the culture that trumpets the right to sex with whomever we want, whenever we want, wherever we want, however we want brought us happiness? Or has it not contributed to the escalating problems of broken hearts, marriages and families, sexually transmitted diseases, sex crimes, violence and trafficking, prostitution and pornography, sexual addictions, teenage pregnancies and abortions?
- E. In the midst of this widespread misunderstanding and mockery of the Church's teachings on human sexuality, not to mention the mounting misery that has come from its rejection, there is added urgency for the Church to help Catholics and non-Catholics alike to recapture, treasure and protect the truth and beauty of chaste human love. A crucial part of the New Evangelization is to proclaim the Gospel of Human Love in the Divine Plan. If people are truly going to grow in their living by faith during the Year of Faith and beyond, they need to learn, and to learn to live, the Good News of the Church's teachings with regard to chastity, instead of living to the pseudo-Gospel of sexual libertinism proclaimed by the false prophets of the

sexual revolution. And in order for that to begin, we — priests and consecrated — must become credible heralds of the path, by ourselves joyfully and faithfully living this Gospel with faith and ardor.

- F. Contrary to what many mistakenly believe, the Church's teaching on chastity is not a type of asbestos that we try to wrap around the most passionate of human experiences. Rather it's a wisdom that seeks to help those flames not destroy what God wants the sexual urge to lead to: real love, so that we might genuinely love others as Christ has loved us. Rather than negative and prudish, the Church couldn't have a more exalted appreciation for human love. But few really know it. That's why education in chastity is so important.
- G. Speaking to the US Bishops from the Minnesota and the Dakotas in March of this year, Pope Benedict said,
1. "There is an urgent need for the entire Christian community to recover an appreciation of the virtue of chastity. The integrating and liberating function of this virtue (CCC 2338-2343) should be emphasized by a formation of the heart, which presents the Christian understanding of sexuality as a source of genuine freedom, happiness and the fulfillment of our fundamental and innate human vocation to love. It is not merely a question of presenting arguments, but of appealing to an integrated, consistent and uplifting vision of human sexuality. The richness of this vision is more sound and appealing than the permissive ideologies exalted in some quarters; these in fact constitute a powerful and destructive form of counter-catechesis for the young.
 2. "Young people need to encounter the Church's teaching in its integrity, challenging and countercultural as that teaching may be; more importantly, they need to see it embodied... Chastity, as the Catechism reminds us, involves an ongoing "apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom" (2339). In a society that increasingly tends to misunderstand and even ridicule this essential dimension of Christian teaching, young people need to be reassured that "if we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, absolutely nothing, of what makes life free, beautiful and great."
- H. This is because our sexual love should be patterned on God's love. We have been created in the image and likeness of God who is love. We have been created by love, in love, for love. Our fulfillment is to love God and others as Christ has loved us first. In this Year of Faith, we're called to be fully evangelized and that means we must receive God's love, remain in it, and lavishly share it. We're being prepared to participate in the New Evangelization, and that means to preach love. It should come as no surprise that the evil one, if he wishes to blow up God's plan for every human being, is going to try to corrupt love. He attacked the family at the beginning of time, such that with the Fall, lust was introduced into the world. And he's always attacking those who are supposed to be icons of chastity in the middle of the world. If he can take our desire and our need for love and corrupt it, by having us seek counterfeit versions of love, his desire for our destruction will be closer to achievement. And if he can corrupt us in terms of our own chastity, he can do enormous damage in Christ's whole bride. *Corruptio optimi pessima*, as the ancient aphorism attests.
- I. This is why the virtue of chastity is so important for us to focus on anew. If we're ever going to become saints — and I reiterate God calls us all to be saints and instruments of his sanctification for others! — then we cannot become saints unless we refrain from porneia. This is because, as St. Paul says, holiness and impurity, sanctity and unchastity, are polar opposites. Holiness is simply the full flourishing of love in a human person and one cannot truly love unless one is chaste. Chastity is not just a counter-cultural Christian virtue, but something that is indispensable for us to become fully human, holy and eternally happy. That's why we need to know it and live it. That's why we need to help those we serve to know it and live it, too. Chastity is an essential part of the Church's mission for the salvation and sanctification of the human race.
- J. So I want to structure this talk on education in chastity in the following parts:
1. First, I want to describe what chastity is, because so many in the Church, including priests and consecrated, do not have a full understanding of what it is, as comes out even in their terminology.
 2. Next, I want to do a quick review of what the Church teaches about chastity in her documents. This is a treasure-trove of very helpful, beautiful, practical documents that can inspire us as we seek to become icons of the chastity of Christ in the world.
 3. Third, I want to give a few broader thoughts and applications on allied issues of chastity from the teaching of Blessed John Paul II's theology of the body. This will help, I hope, to see chastity in a broader context of theological anthropology so that we might be able to see better the means to acquire

the virtue within the whole framework of a life in which one is seeking and experiencing the redemption of the Body. I think, on the other hand as well, focusing on it in this way will help us to see that many failures of chastity aren't failures against the sixth commandment but against others.

4. Fourth, I want to tackle various practical issues, like the challenges to chastity in our libidinous culture and the means to grow in this virtue.
5. Lastly, after a short break, I want to take your questions. We'll have a break so that you can write them down anonymously on cards or papers provided. From past experience teaching chastity, I know that sometimes asking questions about chastity in public forms can be a little fearful. I hope that the anonymous submissions will really allow you in freedom to write down whatever questions you might have, so that your good, open candid questions might provoke answers that will be of assistance to more than just you.

II. Meaning of Chastity.

- A. Even among clergy, religious, consecrated and catechists, chastity is regularly confused with continence (abstinence from sexual activity) or celibacy (the state of being unmarried). When the Catechism emphasizes that “all Christ’s faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life,” and that “married people are called to live conjugal chastity,” many married couples are left scratching their heads, wondering how they can be both “chaste” and start a family. The reason for the confusion likely stems from the fact that when term “chastity” is most often used, it’s employed in the context of the sexual education of teenagers (who are called to continence in chastity) or in the description of the promises or vows professed by people like us (who are called to celibate continence in chastity). The confusion points to the urgency and importance for all in the Church to understand what chastity is and how all the baptized — married couples, singles, priests, consecrated, those with same-sex attractions and opposite-sex attractions — are called to it no matter what their state of life.
- B. The first step in the Church’s teaching on chastity is found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catechism talks about chastity as a vocation, a gift from God, and a grace (2345) but at the same time it talks about it as the “fruit of spiritual effort” that includes the “apprenticeship in self-mastery” so that man “governs his passions and finds peace” rather than letting himself “be dominated by them” (2339). It’s linked fundamentally to the virtue of temperance or self-control (2341). This self-mastery leading toward self-control is a “long and exacting work,” it goes on to say. “One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life.” But the end is a “successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being” (2337). Chastity, therefore, is a “school of the gift of the person that leads to a spiritual communion, which is at the basis of all friendship, not to mention other relationships (2347). Christ is the model of chastity (2394) and all the faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life (2348).
- C. But that look at chastity as the temperate integration of the sexual urge never struck Blessed Pope John Paul II as adequate. The sexual urge is meant, he wrote in various prepapal essays, to lead us ecstatically out of ourselves to communion with others and God, to recognize that we are not self-sufficient. Moderating the sexual urge is not enough; we need to orient it appropriately so that it actually brings about communion rather than destroys it. Chastity is not linked fundamentally to temperance, he wrote in his 1960 work, “Love and Responsibility,” but rather linked it to love. Chastity is the moral habit that raises one’s attractions to another to the dignity of that person as a whole. There is a temptation — which we see in lust in general and in pornography in particular — to “reduce” another to the values of the body or, more specifically, to the erogenous zones. There is, moreover, the further temptation to “use” another — either intentionally in one’s mind or physically through their body — for one’s own sensual or emotional gratification; many people in our culture consensually use each other sexually in this way. This mutual utilitarianism, however, is not love, but the opposite of love. Harmonious egoisms or reciprocal narcissisms don’t lead to the formation of a loving “we,” but just two even-more-isolated-egos. Love, rather, always seeks the true good of the other for the other’s sake. When a person loves genuinely, he is willing to sacrifice his pleasure or even his life for the one loved. Chastity makes this possible, because it is the virtue that trains a person’s vision as well as his will to keep his attraction to the other person up to the level of the person’s true good rather than “consume” the other to satisfy one’s sexual appetites.

- D. In his papal catecheses on “Human Love in the Divine Plan,” popularly called the Theology of the Body, Pope John Paul II went even further in his teaching on chastity. He described that the virtue of chastity isn’t so much bound to the virtue of temperance as to the virtues of purity and piety. Purity is a virtue that impacts our vision. “Blessed are the pure of heart,” Jesus taught, “for they shall see God.” Purity allows us to see God in others, to recognize a reflection of the image of God, to see something of Love incarnate, of the divine giver. Piety is the habit that helps us, once we’ve remembered or recognized that they’re not a “mere mortal” to them others according to their true dignity, according to the image of God in them. St. Paul wrote to husbands and wives, “Be subordinate to each other out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21, calling them to recognize and revere Christ in each other and mutually lay down their lives for each other out of love for the Lord they recognize dwelling in the other. Linked to piety, chastity helps us to see the other as sacred subject instead of a sexual object.
- E. So we can say that chastity is connected to all four virtues — self-control, love, purity and piety. It’s what helps us keep our *eros* capable of *philia* and *agape*, to use the categories Pope Benedict uses in *Deus Caritas Est*. Living chastely does not relegate others to a “loveless life,” but provides the conditions for the possibility of any true love through the integration of *eros* consistent with *philia* and *agape*. If we’re ever, however, going to help individuals learn how to love (*agape*) others as Christ has loved us and assist them to discover a love that saves and leads to true and lasting happiness, we need to rediscover and repropose with enthusiasm the virtue of chastity, and help them to live it.
- F. Priests, religious and the consecrated have a special responsibility in the new evangelization to preach this virtue since we live with it in a special way bound to our celibate state. We can show that it’s possible and that it’s joyful.
- G. I remember once when a young widower came to see me. He had begun to solicit prostitutes. When I asked him what led him to begin to make such choices, he replied, "Well, Father, I'm a man, and once my wife died, what was I to do?" I replied to him, "Do I look dead because I'm not sleeping with women?" He laughed. I continued, "Stop pretending that if you don't have sex you're going to die. If I can be chaste for my entire life, you can be chaste, too."

III. Chastity in the understanding of the Magisterium — Let’s deepen our understanding of chastity by examining some of the documents of the Church. I’ll mention nine points.

- A. (ONE) John Paul II said in *Vita Consecrata* that Chastity is a direct response to the hedonistic culture that degrades sexuality.
1. **Vita Consecrata 88.** (The challenge of consecrated chastity) The first challenge is that of a hedonistic culture that separates sexuality from all objective moral norms, often treating it as a mere diversion and a consumer good and, with the complicity of the means of social communication, justifying a kind of idolatry of the sexual instinct. The consequences of this are before everyone’s eyes: transgressions of every kind, with resulting psychic and moral suffering on the part of individuals and families. The reply of the consecrated life is above all in the joyful living of perfect chastity as a witness to the power of God’s love manifested in the weakness of the human condition. The consecrated person attests that what many have believed impossible becomes, with the Lord’s grace, possible and truly liberating. Yes, in Christ it is possible to love God with all one’s heart, putting him above every other love, and thus to love every creature with the freedom of God! This testimony is more necessary than ever today, precisely because it is so little understood by our world. ... The consecrated life must present to today’s world examples of chastity lived by men and women who show balance, self-mastery, an enterprising spirit, and psychological and affective maturity. Thanks to this witness, human love is offered a stable point of reference: the pure love which consecrated persons draw from the contemplation of Trinitarian love, revealed to us in Christ. Precisely because they are immersed in this mystery, consecrated persons feel themselves capable of a radical and universal love, which gives them the strength for the self-mastery and discipline necessary in order not to fall under the domination of the senses and instincts. Consecrated chastity thus appears as a joyful and liberating experience. Enlightened by faith in the Risen Lord and by the prospect of the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Rv. 21:1), it offers a priceless incentive in the task of educating to that chastity which corresponds to other states of life as well.

- B. (TWO) It continues and constitutes the spousal love of Christ and is a choice inspired by the Holy Spirit to choose Christ as one's exclusive spouse, which foretells the love of heaven.
1. **Redemptoris Donum 11.** The paschal character of this call makes itself known from various points of view, in connection with each individual counsel. It is indeed according to the measure of the economy of the Redemption that one must also judge and practice ... chastity. There is contained in this the response to Christ's words, which are at the same time an invitation: "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it." Prior to this Christ had emphasized: "Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given." These last words clearly show that this invitation is a counsel. This counsel is addressed in a particular way to the love of the human heart. ... The evangelical counsel of chastity is only an indication of that particular possibility which for the human heart, whether of a man or of a woman, constitutes the spousal love of Christ Himself, of Jesus the "Lord." "To make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" is not in fact merely a free renunciation of marriage and family life, but a charismatic choice of Christ as one's exclusive Spouse. This choice not only specifically enables one to be "anxious about the affairs of the Lord" but--when it is made "for the kingdom of heaven"--it brings this eschatological kingdom of God close to the life of all people in the conditions of temporality, and makes it in a certain way present in the midst of the world. In this way, consecrated persons accomplish the interior purpose of the entire economy of the Redemption. For this purpose expresses itself in bringing near the kingdom of God in its definitive, eschatological dimension. Through the vow of chastity, consecrated persons share in the economy of the Redemption through the free renunciation of the temporal joys of married and family life; on the other hand, precisely by their "having made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven," they bring into the midst of this passing world the announcement of the future resurrection[and of eternal life: life in union with God Himself through the beatific vision and the love which contains in itself and completely pervades all the other loves of the human heart.
- C. (THREE) Chastity is not fundamentally a "no," but a "yes," a yes specifically for the kingdom. It's not chastity "in" the kingdom but "for" the kingdom. There's a supernatural motive, a pearl of great price, for which one gives up even the beauty of marriage and family.
1. **Presbyterorum Ordinis 16.** Perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven was recommended by Christ the Lord. It has been freely accepted and laudably observed by many Christians down through the centuries as well as in our own time, and has always been highly esteemed in a special way by the Church as a feature of priestly life.
 2. **Pastores Dabo Vobis 29.** For an adequate priestly spiritual life, celibacy ought not to be considered and lived as an isolated or purely negative element, but as one aspect of a positive, specific and characteristic approach to being a priest. Leaving father and mother, the priest follows Jesus the Good Shepherd, in an apostolic communion, in the service of the People of God. Chastity brings sexuality back to its original meaning, a genuine sign of and precious service to the love of communion and gift of self to others.
 3. **PDV 29.** In virginity and celibacy, chastity retains its original meaning, that is, of human sexuality lived as a genuine sign of and precious service to the love of communion and gift of self to others. This ... makes evident, even in the renunciation of marriage, the "nuptial meaning" of the body through a communion and a personal gift to Jesus Christ and his Church which prefigures and anticipates the perfect and final communion and self-giving of the world to come.
- D. (FOUR) It's a gift — an "outstanding gift of grace" (PC 12) that frees the heart from lust to love God and others:
1. **Perfectae Caritatis 12.** The chastity "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:12) which religious profess should be counted an outstanding gift of grace. It frees the heart of man in a unique fashion (cf. 1 Cor. 7:32-35) so that it may be more inflamed with love for God and for all men.
 2. **Presbyterorum Ordinis 16.** This sacred Council approves and confirms this legislation so far as it concerns those destined for the priesthood, and feels confident in the Spirit that the gift of celibacy, so appropriate to the priesthood of the New Testament, is liberally granted by the Father, provided those who share Christ's priesthood through the sacrament of Order, and indeed the whole Church, **ask for**

that gift humbly and earnestly. This sacred Council also exhorts all priests who, with trust in God's grace, have of their own free choice accepted consecrated celibacy after the example of Christ, to hold fast to it with courage and enthusiasm, and to persevere faithfully in this state, appreciating that glorious gift that has been given them by the Father and is so clearly extolled by the Lord.

E. (FIVE) Chastity is a sign and stimulus of love, to pastoral charity, and spiritual fecundity

1. **Vita Consecrata 75.** "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. And during supper ... Jesus rose ... and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded" (Jn. 13:1-2, 4-5). In the washing of feet Jesus reveals the depth of God's love for humanity: In Jesus, God places himself at the service of human beings! At the same time he reveals the meaning of the Christian life and, even more, of the consecrated life, which is **a life of self-giving love**, of practical and generous service. In its commitment to following the Son of man, who "came not to be served but to serve" (Mt. 20:28), the consecrated life, at least in the best periods of its long history, has been characterized by this "washing of feet," that is, by service directed in particular to the poorest and neediest. If, on the one hand, the consecrated life contemplates the sublime mystery of the Word in the bosom of the Father (cf. Jn. 1:1), on the other hand it follows the Word who became flesh (cf. Jn. 1:14), lowering himself, humbling himself in order to serve others. Even today those who follow Christ on the path of the evangelical counsels intend to go where Christ went and to do what he did. He continually calls new disciples to himself, both men and women, to communicate to them by an outpouring of the Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5) the divine agape, his way of loving, and to urge them thus to serve others in the humble gift of themselves, far from all self-interest. ... The fact that consecrated persons fix their gaze on the Lord's countenance does not diminish their commitment on behalf of humanity; on the contrary, it strengthens this commitment, enabling it to have an impact on history, in order to free history from all that disfigures it. The quest for divine beauty impels consecrated persons to care for the deformed image of God on the faces of their brothers and sisters, faces disfigured by hunger, faces disillusioned by political promises, faces humiliated by seeing their culture despised, faces frightened by constant and indiscriminate violence, the anguished faces of minors, the hurt and humiliated faces of women, the tired faces of migrants who are not given a warm welcome, the faces of the elderly who are without even the minimum conditions for a dignified life. The consecrated life thus shows with the eloquence of works that divine charity is the foundation and stimulus of freely given and active love. St. Vincent de Paul was deeply convinced of this when he explained to the Daughters of Charity this program of life: The spirit of the Society consists in giving yourselves to God in order to love our Lord and to serve him in the person of the materially and spiritually poor, in their houses and elsewhere, in order to teach poor young girls, children, in general anybody whom Divine Providence sends you." Today, among the possible works of charity, certainly the one which in a special way shows the world this love "to the end" is the fervent proclamation of Jesus Christ to those who do not yet know him, to those who have forgotten him and to the poor in a preferential way.

2. It's a choice made by Christ and his Mother, who were both virginal spouses and spiritual parents.

a. They show us the fruitfulness in the HS to which man freely submits his spirit and body "for the Kingdom." Only slowly did the apostles realize the spiritual fecundity from the HS in man who is chaste and continent for the sake of the Kingdom. Christ shows that chaste continence is a particularly effective and privileged way to enter the kingdom. This has decisive meaning for the ethos and theology of the body. Christ chose it for himself, not because it is "not expedient to marry," but "for the kingdom." This "for the kingdom" has both objective (the reality of the state) and subjective (motivational) importance. To be spiritually fruitful in the HS, chaste continence must be willed and chosen through faith to identify with the truth and reality of that kingdom now. Such chaste continence bears and participates in the dynamism of the redemption of the body and features a particular likeness to Christ.

IV. The larger context of the formation in chastity

A. In his Theology of the Body, Blessed John Paul II aims to speak about Human Love in the Divine Plan. Specifically he seeks to focus on the "Redemption of the Body" after the Fall, so that the human person, caught in a battleground between love and lust, with the help of the Holy Spirit, learn how to love. It's all about education in true love, the nuptial meaning of the person, the gift of oneself unselfishly to

others. That's why, I think, his thoughts throughout the 129-135 catecheses he gave us in what is popularly called the Theology of the Body are so important to our discussion about education in chastity as a virtue that helps us truly to love others, to integrate *eros* with *philia* and *agape* rather than have it destroy *philia*, *agape* and the person.

- B. So what I'd like to do in this section is to "re-read" the theology of the body from the perspective of chastity to pick up various insights to help us in our own living of this crucial virtue for our and the world's sanctification and salvation. There are ten points:
- C. (ONE) Original solitude is meant in chastity to lead to original unity, to a communion of persons.
1. We are called not to be isolated monads, but communion of persons in love. (Not just in this life but in the next, with the Trinity, with the saints." 1 John — so that you may have *koinonia* with God and with one another.)
 2. "It is not good for man to be alone" — none of us is meant to be a loner. When we seek to be isolated from others, this is a defect in chastity, which is a virtue that's meant to help us to love.
 3. Priests and consecrated are called fundamentally to be persons of communion and instruments of God's forming that communion in the Church, his family. This must be intentional and practical. We must want it. We just act on it and not be loners. Jesus during the first Mass prayed that we all may be one.
 4. The theology of the body is a powerful restatement of who we're called to be and how God wants to unite us in a communion with him and with others and the devil wants to divide us from God and each other.
- D. (TWO) Original nakedness
1. We were created to be transparent before God and others, and others were supposed to be able to trust us to love them rather than take advantage of their vulnerabilities.
 2. We will obviously have "secrets" and keep appropriate "confidences," but we're clearly not called to live a double life. God knows us. This is why it's so important for us to be transparent in confession and spiritual direction about the struggles we're facing, so that we're not self-deceived.
- E. (THREE) Original Purity of Heart
1. I've mentioned before that from the beginning, we're called to see the image of God in others. Blessed are the pure of heart for they see God!
 2. This requires work! We should pray for the grace to see God in others. One of my favorite prayers is "Lord, give me your eyes!" I hope to see the Lord in others and not just stop at what may be superficially attractive or unattractive. Another great prayer is "Domine, ut videam!," the prayer of Bartimaeus, "Lord, that I may see!"
- F. (FOUR) The nuptial meaning of our existence
- a. Our entire existence is supposed to be an unselfish gift to others. We are beings for God and others.
 2. Rom 14:7: "None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. 8 For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."
 3. We build up his kingdom, not our own.
 - a. Others should be able to sense this nuptial meaning. It's often one of the first things they see. Do we have time for them? Do we sacrifice for them when they need it? Or do they get the sense that we're using them? Manipulation — even if it has nothing specifically to do with *eros* — is likewise a defect in chastity, because it's clearly a failure to love others. Using others is the opposite of loving them.
 - b. To give of ourselves, we need self-mastery and true freedom, which is why there will always be a connection to temperance in chastity, as we've spoken about earlier.
- G. (FIVE) Love versus the three-fold lust.
1. In the second part of the first triptych of the TOB, John Paul II talks about the consequences of the Fall in the life of each one of us and how in our heart there is a battle between the nuptial meaning of our life and a desire to use everything and everyone else to gratify, aggrandize, and assert ourselves. Our heart has become a battleground he says between lust and love.
 2. He says something very provocative, that lust — concupiscence — alters the fundamental intentionality of the human being, from a giver to a taker, from a lover to a consumer of others. In our intentionality,

lust is the opposite of chastity, because lust leads us to see the others as objects for our use rather than subjects, the only worthy response to whom is reverence and self-giving.

3. And when we talk about lust, we need to refer, as John Paul II does, to the three-fold concupiscence described by St. John. The immediate launching point for the discussion on lust is when Jesus talks about “adultery in the heart,” it’s an adultery not merely against one’s spouse, not merely with someone else’s spouse, but an adultery against God, something we see throughout the Old Testament, particularly in Hosea.
4. St. John describes the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.
 - a. Lust of the flesh — what’s typically referred to as “carnal lust.”
 - i. This is a perennial challenge for everyone, including priests and consecrated.
 - ii. The sexual urge, rather than leading us to seek the true good and communion with others, leads us to try to appropriate them for our own gratification.
 - iii. There are both physical and emotional components to this lust of the flesh. Generally the physical part of lust is stronger for men and the emotional lust for relationships and others depending upon us and longing for us are stronger for women, but both are present.
 - iv. This is a huge problem in the Church, as many are cheating on their vocation to love God and others.
 - a) We’re not just dealing here with the abuse of minors, but also many cheating on their vocation in other ways:
 - b) Pornography use.
 - c) Emotional porn “romance” novels, like 50 Shades of Gray
 - d) The solitary sin of masturbation
 - e) Heterosexual relationships
 - f) Homosexual relationships
 - v. In some religious communities, in some chanceries, as long as it’s not something legal, they’ll often look the other way. Out of love for God, for his Church, and for all involved, we can’t afford to! This doesn’t mean that the response has to be to prevent any and all interrelations that, worst case scenario, might lead to scandal, but it does mean that we really must educate people in chastity so that they may know how to respond to, purify and integrate any attractions that arise within them within the context of their true love for God and others.
 - b. Lust of the eyes — materialism.
 - i. A common defect against chastity in the priesthood and consecrated life is acquisitiveness, a longing for material possessions. While people may be continent, and while people may not be responding erotically to others, they may be longing for mammon. Many parish priests do pretty good for themselves: Just take a look at the average waistline, the average car, the average accommodations, the average amount of vacation time and destinations. Others have been caught embezzling. They think they’re entitled to it. Religious women and men, despite their vow of poverty, can often understand it as meaning merely that they don’t personally own anything, but they have an expectation that the community will provide the best. This lust of the eyes can be evident, for example, in an excessive desire for certain types of clothing and various other vain material things.
 - ii. I’d also say that this lust of the eyes can affect whole communities, when the community starts to become too solicitous of money, or vocations, or other quantitative realities. This starts easily to lead to manipulation of others in order to satisfy an insatiable desire for growth in any of these dimensions.
 - iii. The Lord calls us all to be “poor in spirit,” finding in his kingdom our great treasure. When we begin to seek these things, we are no longer really thinking about the unselfish love of others, which is what the virtue of chastity is supposed to enable.
 - c. Pride of life
 - i. This is a desire for control, to lord it over others, to be served rather than to serve, even to dominate. We want to be in the center. We want thanks, adulation, recognition. This is far from

being a “humble servant in the vineyard of the Lord.” Far from being a “useless servant” who has only done what is required.

- ii. We see this so much in the priesthood and in consecrated life and it’s a clear defect against unselfishly loving others.
- iii. Many of those in authority can begin to forget that they are fundamentally under God’s authority; they cease to be obedient to him (ob-audire, to listen attentively) to see what he’s asking with respect to those who are in obedience to them, but instead become authoritarian and harm rather than serve those entrusted to them. Those under authority of superiors can bristle not just when a superior may be imprudent or overstepping his or her bounds, but also when the superior is clearly doing what’s good but it just goes against our preferences of the way things ought to be or when we’re being asked to do something we don’t want to do.
- d. Obviously there’s an antidote in the evangelical counsels.
 - i. Chastity against lust of the flesh
 - ii. Poverty against lust of the eyes
 - iii. Obedience against pride of life
- e. I would want to add that lust in general, in any one of these three ways, disorders our relationship with God, with others, with ourselves
 - i. Like Adam and Eve, we begin to hide ourselves from God.
 - a) We can begin to cease to pray or to pray well.
 - b) We can start to go through the motions.
 - c) The remedy is to expose ourselves before the Lord, take off the masks, the fig leaves in confession.
 - ii. The reality of lust can alienate us from others. We can become afraid that others will take advantage of us or that we, in our weakness, might take advantage of them.
 - a) The result is that we withdraw and no longer live in communion.
 - b) We can even become paranoid on occasion that others have nefarious plans to harm us.
 - iii. Lust also disorders us within ourselves, wounding the union between body and soul. We can see this in St. Paul’s experience of his own battle against concupiscence.
 - a) Rom 7: 14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold into slavery to sin. 15 What I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I concur that the law is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18 For I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh. The willing is ready at hand, but doing the good is not. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want. 20 Now if [I] do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21 So, then, I discover the principle that when I want to do right, evil is at hand. 22 For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self, 23 but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, I myself, with my mind, serve the law of God but, with my flesh, the law of sin.

H. (SIXTH) Life according to the Holy Spirit

1. The real lynchpin of the TOB, what JP II calls the “program and synthesis” of the TOB, is “life according to the Holy Spirit.” This is the path of the redemption of the body. This is the path of chastity.
2. St. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans:
 - a. Rom 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit...
3. So we have to ask whether we’re living according to the Holy Spirit or living according to concupiscence.
4. There are clear benchmarks as to which of the two we’re choosing:
 - a. Our minds

- i. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit (Rom 8:5).
 - ii. Are our minds set on the things of the Holy Spirit or more on sports, politics, exercise, television, our petty grievances, our obsession with work, etc?
 - iii. Where are our desires? Where is our treasure?
 - iv. Are we immersed in the things of the Spirit?
 - a) Prayer? “The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Rom 8:26). If we’re living by the Spirit, we’ll be praying and praying by the Spirit.
 - b) The Word of God he inspired?
 - c) The faith?
 - b. Mortification
 - i. Those who live by the Spirit “put to death the deeds of the body.” (Rom 8:13)
 - ii. “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other” (Gal 5:16-17).
 - iii. Are we battling against our lower desires?
 - iv. Self-mastery can only be gained by mortification. HS wants to help us put to death the way of the flesh. This is not a true death, in fact, but the only way to life. A grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die in order to bear fruit. We must save our life through losing it.
 - v. Mortification is mocked today. Discipline, hairshirt, cilice, fasting, cold showers are looked upon as psychologically morbid, but they’re part of normal Christian asceticism. Interior mortifications are even more important, like patience, biting our tongue, bearing injury in union with Christ.
 - c. Divine Filiation
 - i. “All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ... You have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:14-17).
 - d. The Works and Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:19-23)— We can look at the Works and Fruit as manifestations of whether we’re truly living by the Spirit. I won’t mention all of them, but those that perhaps are most relevant to the discussion at hand.
5. Works
- a. Fornication (*porneia*) — Let’s not miss what’s first on the list.
 - b. Impurity — *akathartos*, everything unfit to come before God. The soiling of life
 - c. Licentiousness — *aselgeia*, readiness for any pleasure
 - d. Drunkenness
 - e. Carousing — *komos*, a band of friends accompanying a victor. Used for friends of Bacchus. Unrestrained revelry, enjoyment that’s degenerated into license.
 - f. There are other ones, too, that show that the works of the flesh aren’t all flowing from the concupiscence of the flesh, but the other aspects of concupiscence: idolatry, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, and dissension.
 - g. St. Paul tells us, “I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:21).
 - h. Do we believe that we don’t enter the kingdom of God by these ways? That there is a disjunction?
 - i. Most of us will recognize that we’re guilty of some if not several of them. It shows how much the redemption still needs to take place in us, how much room there is for the miracle the Holy Spirit wants to work in us during this mission.
 - j. It shows how much we need the Holy Spirit!
6. Fruit — a combination, like any fruit, between two principles, the Holy Spirit and our receptivity and response. I’ll mention only two:
- a. Love — *agape*, unconquerable benevolence. Deliberate effort to seek nothing but the best for another.

- b. Self-control — *egkrateia*, self-mastery, master of desires and love for pleasure. Used for an athlete's discipline of his body and of Christian mastery of sex (by Paul in 1 Cor 9:25 and 7:9). Emperor who never lets private interests influence the government of his people.
- c. Temple of the Holy Spirit
 - i. The last benchmark would be whether we treat our body like a temple, like a Church, like a tabernacle in which God dwells.
 - a) Do we care for our body as the best pastor takes care of his Church?
 - b) Do we keep it clean through chastity? Do we treat it with piety and hold it in holiness and honor?
 - c) At a more mundane, but still important level, are we good stewards of our body?
 - i) Do we care for it with exercise? Healthy eating? The right amount of rest? Avoiding carcinogens and carcinogenic practices?
 - d) Do we avoid narcissism, which is a quasi deification of our body, forgetting about it's being a temple of the Holy Spirit?
 - e) Do we see our body is meant to be a house of worship in which God is welcomed and adored?
 - f) Is our body for the Lord and the Lord for the body?
 - g) Is our body one with the Lord by keeping our holy communion?
 - h) Do we seek to glorify God in our body and come fully alive?

I. (SEVENTH) Virginal meaning of our body

- 1. Our bodies, our lives, are first a gift to God.
 - a. Not to his people first. The problem with vocations posters sometimes is when they ask the question, "Do you like to help people?"
 - b. We give to the people as part of the gift to God but not independent from it. Love one another as I have loved you. Feed my sheep.
- 2. We must constantly renew this gift.
 - a. Morning offering
 - b. Compline at night
 - c. Rom 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- 3. Gives orientation if someone has "lost" his or her virginity.
 - a. The true virginal meaning of the body has far more to do than intact membranes or whether one, by accident or choice, has just refrained from sexual activity.
 - b. The real virginal meaning of the body is that the person gives himself or herself to God in love, in anticipation of heaven. That can be "recovered" in a certain real sense by a thorough consecration to the Lord for the sake of the kingdom.

J. (EIGHTH) Reverence for others based on purity of heart (Eph 5:22)

- 1. Our interaction with God and others must be reverent.
- 2. More than anyone, we're called as priests and those consecrated to the Lord to see Christ in others, even in the most disfigured images.
- 3. This must lead to the way we treat others.
 - a. Certain people may be easy, in some sense, to revere. It was easy to revere, in a theological sense, Blessed John Paul II and Blessed Mother Teresa. We interact with some who likewise radiate holiness and goodness; reverence for them is somewhat easy, both naturally and supernaturally.
 - b. But there are others who are hard to reverence. They get on our nerves. They behave in a way that makes it hard for us to see God or even good in them. But they are just as much in the image of God and it requires greater work on our part.
 - c. Reverence is different than love but we can borrow many of the same predicates that St. Paul used to describe love in 1 Cor 13. Reverence is patient, kind, not jealous or boastful, arrogant, rude, irritable or resentful.

4. How do we grow in reverence:
 - a. First, by the way we reverence God.
 - i. First, do we genuinely reverence him?
 - ii. Do we recognize and treat him as the Creator of the World, as his divine majesty?
 - iii. Do we speak to him and of him with reverence? One of the great things about the new translation is that it restores a truly sacred and reverent language, which is a start. We must use it reverently, though, and help our people to do so.
 - iv. Do we make truly reverent genuflections and bows? Do we couple those external signs with interior reverence? Do we ever kneel when we pray?
 - v. Do we seek to give God our best? Are we satisfied with our living in a palace and God's living in a tent, as David once said?
 - vi. Blessed Mother Teresa: She was able to recognize and reverence Christ in the distressing disguises of the poor only by reverencing him for three hours a day in the Eucharist. Our prayer, when done reverently, should overflow into our reverence of others.
 - b. Second, by the way we reverence ourselves
 - i. This isn't narcissism.
 - ii. The more we see humbly ourselves as sacred beings with all our weakness, as earthen vessels, the easier it is to see and reverence others.
 - c. Finally, by constantly looking for God and the good in others.
 - i. Marriages often begin to break down when they cease to "honor" each other, cease to praise each other for the good. They may love 90% of their spouse but they obsess about the 10% they don't. They cease to thank. They take for granted the good and begin to nag about the bad.
 - ii. We can be the same way sometimes. We can focus on those who aren't there rather than those who are. We can focus on people's limitations or defects or what we don't like about them rather than the gifts God has given them, their strengths, and what God loves about them.

K. (NINTH) The Spousal Meaning of our Call

1. We are called to love as Christ loved the Church and gave his life to make her holy by water and the word.
2. The priestly and consecrated life is one of spousal love. Without it, we're lost. It's crucial for us to get this.
 - a. 1 Cor 13: 1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.
 - b. If we become martyrs, but don't have love, we are and gain nothing!
 - c. This love is fundamentally *agape*, but there is a purely *erotic* dimension to this *agape*, as B16 talked about God's *eros* in Deus Caritas Est. Eros in the Greek means the inner tendency toward the good, true and beautiful. It can be corrupted, but ultimately it helps our *agape* become truly passionate.
 - i. B16: God loves, and his love may certainly be called *eros*, yet it is also totally *agape*. The Prophets, particularly Hosea and Ezekiel, described God's passion for his people using boldly erotic images. ... God's passionate love for his people—for humanity—is at the same time a forgiving love. It is so great that it turns God against himself, his love against his justice. Here Christians can see a dim prefigurement of the mystery of the Cross: so great is God's love for man that by becoming man he follows him even into death, and so reconciles justice and love. ... This universal principle of creation—the *Logos*, primordial reason—is at the same time a lover with all the passion of a true love. *Eros* is thus supremely ennobled, yet at the same time it is so purified as to become one with *agape*. We can thus see how the reception of the *Song of Songs* in the canon of sacred Scripture was soon explained by the idea that these love songs ultimately describe God's relation to man and man's relation to God. Thus the *Song of Songs* became, both in Christian and Jewish literature, a source of mystical knowledge and experience, an expression of the essence of biblical faith: that man can indeed enter into union with God—his primordial aspiration. But this union is no mere fusion, a sinking in the nameless ocean of the Divine; it is a

unity which creates love, a unity in which both God and man remain themselves and yet become fully one. As Saint Paul says: “He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (*1 Cor* 6:17).

- ii. This divine activity now takes on dramatic form when, in Jesus Christ, it is God himself who goes in search of the “stray sheep”, a suffering and lost humanity. When Jesus speaks in his parables of the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, of the woman who looks for the lost coin, of the father who goes to meet and embrace his prodigal son, these are no mere words: they constitute an explanation of his very being and activity. His death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form. By contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. *19:37*), we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical Letter: “God is love” (*1 Jn* 4:8). It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move.

3. Chastity is meant ultimately to help us learn to LOVE. It’s not a loveless life. But many times we live it that way.
 - a. So the first question is do we sense we’re loved by God? Do we sense this passion from the Lord? That he loves us so much to die for us? Do we sense that we are one of the two protagonists in the Song of Songs, that God pursues us with passionate agape?
 - b. Then the second question is: do we love? Do we love with a human heart? Do we have a passion like God demonstrates in the Song of Songs, in which our attraction to the good, true and beautiful has been purified by purity of heart and true chastity wanting one thing, the person’s salvation? Are we capable of being Ulysses for one soul like he journeyed out of love for his wife?
 - c. Do we ever say I love you, either with our lips or with our body language? We shouldn’t go around saying this to vulnerable people who might misread it, but do we ever say it to anyone? Or is our “chastity” rather than unleashing true love repressing it?
4. Many Catholics don’t understand this sponsality.
 - a. We’re spoken for. We’re not single.
 - b. One of the reasons, I believe, for the constant push for “priests to get married” (or more precisely for married men to be ordained) is because this sponsality of the priesthood, this nuptial dimension of his priesthood, is often not recognized, and this is because often it is not lived.

L. (TENTH) The Paternal/Maternal Meaning of our Call

1. In this spousal union, there is a spiritual fecundity in which our spiritual paternity or spiritual maternity needs to be lived.
 - a. In the TOB, JP II talks about “knowledge and procreation,” because a paternal meaning of the body is built into a man and a maternal meaning built into a woman.
 - b. This is something, likewise, that our culture doesn’t grasp.
 - c. There’s a special fecundity according to the Holy Spirit in which we, together with the Lord, lead others to spiritual generation and regeneration.
 - d. In a 1979 letter to priests, JP II wrote, “The Priest, by renouncing this fatherhood proper to married men, seeks another fatherhood and, as it were, even another motherhood, recalling the words of the Apostle about the children whom he begets in suffering” (cf. *1 Cor* 4:15; *Gal* 4:19).
2. This spiritual paternity and maternity is crucial for us to grasp, because it trains us how to love chastely while interacting up close and intimately.
 - a. Fathers and mothers love their children. Except for the rare parents who are sadly perverted, they love the entire being of their kids and do not lust after them.
 - b. This is a great help in truly chaste living. Every sin against chastity — in our minds, in our flesh and fantasy, or with others, is ultimately spiritually incestuous. Remembering this is very important for us not to succumb to the temptation of the evil one in our weaknesses. Very few people are attracted toward incest, and that’s what every sexual sin for a priest or consecrated person with the promise or vow of chastity is, because we exercise for them a relationship of spiritual paternity and maternity.

V. Practical Issues

- A. In the theological survey of what chastity is, we've already covered many practical issues, but I'd like to raise several other ones that have not been addressed directly up until now.
- B. Concrete Means to grow in chastity.
1. The first means for growth in chastity or any other spiritual good is prayer.
 - a. If God calls us to live chastely then he will give us all the help we need in order to respond to that vocation, but we need to ask for that help and respond when God gives it.
 - b. Our prayer for chastity needs to be sincere. You may have heard the story of the young St. Augustine who lived a very unchaste life featuring fornication and cohabitation and even fathered a child with a concubine. After a very long and restless search for God, he gradually grew to believe in him, but he knew that to become a Christian he would need radically to alter his immoral behavior. He began to pray, "Give me chastity and continence — but not yet!" (Confessions 8,7,17). That's not the type of prayer I'm recommending! Rather we should ask God for the gift of chastity today and the grace to respond to that gift so that we might truly experience love.
 - c. Since chastity is linked to love and to piety, some vocal prayers that I think are helpful are, "Lord, give me your eyes!" or "Lord, help me to see others as you see them." When we seek to begin looking at others with the eyes of God, to see what he sees in them, to love them as he loves them, then it becomes much easier for us to raise our love to the dignity of the person as a whole and to reverence them out of reverence for God.
 - d. PDV 29: "To put into practice all the moral, pastoral and spiritual demands of priestly celibacy it is absolutely necessary that the priest pray humbly and trustingly, as the Council points out: "In the world today, many people call perfect continence impossible. The more they do so, the more humbly and perseveringly priests should join with the Church in praying for the grace of fidelity. It is never denied to those who ask. At the same time let priests make use of all the supernatural and natural helps which are now available to all". Once again it is prayer, together with the Church's Sacraments and ascetical practice, which will provide hope in difficulties, forgiveness in failings, and confidence and courage in resuming the journey."
 2. The second means is *ascesis*, or spiritual self-discipline.
 - a. Since chastity involves self-mastery, we need to do the types of spiritual exercises that will help us to acquire, with God's grace, the capacity to control our appetites rather than have them control us.
 - b. Often, with temptations against chastity, the way to acquire this self-mastery is not by disciplining the sexual appetite directly, because that often will only make the temptation stronger by having us think about it in order to say no to it. St. Philip Neri, one of the greatest spiritual directors of all time, used to say that in matters of sexual temptation, cowards win. In other words, it's better for us to flee from the temptation than to face it head on. Instead, we develop mastery over the sexual appetite indirectly, by, for example, disciplining our appetite for food.
 - c. Fasting is a great ascetical practice in the development of the virtue of chastity. But not all fasting is equally as useful.
 - i. Instead of a total fast from all food or just eating bread or water, I encourage something that is long-lasting, that won't be noticed much by others, and that will really help you gradually to learn how to say no to yourself in order to say yes to the others' good. Types of fasting that are useful in this regard involve: giving up all condiments to food, like butter, ketchup, salt and pepper, sugar, something you'll feel at every meal, especially if you like them; just drinking water, which is perfectly healthy and will help you to grow in self-discipline every time you lift a glass; or giving up sweets and substituting fruit, which again, few will notice except your doctor.
 - ii. These are small, almost unnoticeable ways, in which at every meal, you'll be growing in self-mastery over the strongest appetite we have, and the more that we can say no to a sweet tooth or a favorite drink or a flavoring, the stronger we will be able to say no to trying to satisfy disordered sexual appetites.
 3. The third means is friendship.
 - a. We cannot live without love, as John Paul II said, but romantic love is not the only type of love there is. In order to overcome the loneliness that can often lead to unchastity, true friendship is a great help. Real friendship needs to be promoted.

- b. At the same time, chastity requires that no friendship truly become exclusive, because if you're profiting from a friendship and care for others, you want others to profit from a similar friendship with your friend. Therefore, friendship ought to lead to community as friendships extend. This, too, is a great help to chastity.
- 4. The fourth means is service.
 - a. Lust and other types of unchastity change us from being self-givers made in the image and likeness of God, the supreme Giver, to takers, who consume others for our own gratification. One of the greatest ways to rehabilitate and reorient our whole nature is by giving of ourselves to others. Christian service toward others is a great means to put into practice the giving of ourselves to others. It's all the better when those we serve cannot pay us back, because then we won't even be doing it for the occasionally gratifying thank yous. The more unselfish our loving service, the better it will be in helping us develop the virtue of chastity.
- 5. The fifth means is to get help when we need it.
 - a. One of the greatest spiritual helps we need is the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we receive God's healing grace and occasionally very good practical advice from priests to help us to come up with a good game plan to avoid sin and practice chastity.
 - b. If we've got a sex addiction, it's important for us to seek the help of those in the psychological sciences who can help us to identify the unmet needs that we're seeking to fulfill in a wrong and sinful manner.
- 6. Sixth, we have to avoid those types of activities that facilitate unchastity.
 - a. One of these is drinking. If we're tempted to succumb to temptations to unchastity, drinking will only weaken our already frail defenses.
 - b. Another is avoiding altogether suggestive television programs, movies, websites or magazines. We're foolish if we think we can look at this stuff and not be affected. Cardinal Dolan once said that the primary sex organ is the brain, the oldest VCR player around, and when we spend our waking hours taking in scenes that would arouse an Egyptian mummy, should we be surprised that we cannot shake lustful thoughts?
- 7. The last means I'll mention is to avoid using the standards of the world as a guide.
 - a. The world will try to convince us that chastity is impossible, that if we don't give in to our sexual impulses at least occasionally that we'll become some type of freak. But we're called to conform ourselves instead to God's designs, to the example of Jesus, to the teachings of the Church, to life according to the Holy Spirit.
 - b. The deeper we put on the mind of Christ and enter into his loving heart, the stronger and more chaste we'll be.
- C. Discerning the call to chastity in continence
 - 1. I know many of you are still in the process of discernment and will be involved in helping others to discern whether they have a call to be consecrated as a chaste celibate for the sake of the kingdom.
 - 2. It raises the question of how to discern a call to chaste celibacy?
 - a. Is it an independent call rather than that to the priesthood or to the religious or consecrated life?
 - b. Is it just a necessary concession to responding to the call to the priesthood, religious or consecrated life?
 - c. Is it an interdependent call and gift that the Lord provides to those to whom he is calling to the priesthood, consecrated or religious life?
 - d. I don't think we can say it's independent of a priestly, religious or consecrated call, because that would mean there should be a consecrated, religious or priestly life without a call to chaste celibacy.
 - e. The Church clearly says that it's not just a "cost-of-doing-business," the price we have to pay in responding to another call. It's fundamentally a yes, not a no.
 - f. But it's not strictly speaking coextensive with the call, because the priesthood can exist without chaste celibacy, and the seeds of a consecration have often begun in the married state, as we see with St. Frances of Rome, St. Elizabeth of Portugal and others.
 - g. So there is an interdependence normally among these calls.
 - 3. How do we discern it?

- a. The first thing I'd say is we won't discern it by concluding that we're not sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex. If we weren't attracted to people of the opposite sex, while it is a sign normally that we're called to a vocation of chaste celibacy (as those with same-sex attractions are), but NOT to the chaste celibacy of the priesthood, religious and consecrated life, which involve a spousal and paternal/maternal meaning with which one couldn't easily identify without normal heterosexual attractions.
 - b. So the fact that we're sexually attracted like most other people to certain people of the opposite sex is not an indication that we don't have the vocation to apostolic celibacy.
 - c. What is the indication? That as much as we're attracted to those of the opposite sex, we feel deep within us an even greater call to a total, exclusive loving commitment to God.
 - d. If I can speak autobiographically, I was blessed in my life to date a few different women before I entered the seminary. They were great, virtuous women whom I found beautiful and lovable. I believe they loved me. I loved our friendship and I believed that each would one day be a great wife and mother. But even though I loved them, I sensed that as I began to think about the rest of my life, their love for me, and mine for them, would not be enough. I sensed within a call to something much more. That only God's love would be enough for me and that I wouldn't find real joy unless and until I gave myself totally in love for God and for those he loved so much he died for them. I became convinced of my call to apostolic celibacy even before I became convinced of my call to the priesthood.
 - e. Now what St. Augustine said about our heart's being restless until it rests in God applies to everyone. I'm certainly not saying that those who discern that God is calling them to marriage aren't capable of a total commitment to the Lord in marriage. What St. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7 about a purported incompatibility between being anxious about the affairs of the Lord or anxious about the affairs of a spouse was superceded by the time he wrote Ephesians 5. But what I am saying is that for someone with a call to chaste celibacy, we discern within a special love that the Lord has for us as well as we discern a special commitment to him to which he's inviting us within the virginal meaning of our body.
 - f. Rather than a negative thing, it's a supremely positive one. It's almost as if we have two marriage prospects and we have to discern among the two. Through prayer, reflection, counsel and other means, we begin to sense that full of love we want to say yes to the Lord's proposal in total freedom, that it more corresponds to what we believe will lead us to happiness, even though the other proposal is a good and great one. This one we sense draws our heart more.
4. What about past falls?
 - a. Sometimes people ask that if they formerly lived an unchaste life whether it means that they're not called to chaste celibacy in consecrated or priestly life.
 - b. One look at the life of St. Augustine should be enough to convince us that the answer is "not necessarily." Sometimes our past falls were inappropriate roads to the love that only God can give that he might be calling someone to in an exclusive way.
 - c. Certainly, if one believes he or she cannot live without genital sexual activity, whether out of weakness, desire, choice or a sense of calling, then one would not be called to chaste celibacy.
 - d. But the fact that one has succumbed in the past to temptations doesn't mean that one is not called to consecration.
 - e. On this point, it's important, too, that we learn how to purify our memories. I had one friend in seminary who had lived a pretty profligate life before a major conversion. He told me candidly that he didn't have a problem with fantasies, but he had a serious issue with memories. I asked him how was he handling it. He said, "Knee callouses!" He was praying a holy hour every day on his knees, both to increase and express his love for God, not to mention to do penance and reparation for his past sins. But what happens when memories come up? John Paul II used to talk about the purification of memory, which is not erasing past experiences, which is impossible, or burying them within, which will cause neuroses. It's changing the present meaning of a past action. This is something very important likewise for forgiveness. What does it mean practically? When we think of a memory in the past, we change its present signification. Here's an example. Say you had an

unchaste episode with a past boyfriend. When you remember it, instead of “reliving it” and being filled with lust, or “re-repenting of it” and being filled with excessive shame after it’s been forgiven, you say something like, “Thank you, Lord, for your merciful love and for teaching me that all along I was really longing for you,” or “O happy fault that brought me the love of so great a redeemer!” or even “Lord, please forgive him and me for our sinful conduct and help us individually repent and find true love in you.” That way the past sins don’t continue to harm us in the present. It’s what I call the “cow manure principle,” changing the detritus of our sins and tough experiences into fertilizer for new growth.

5. What about present temptations?

- a. The devil is always trying to tempt us away from our primary vocation to receive and reciprocate God’s love. He’s always trying to corrupt our love and make it selfish and lustful. So we shouldn’t be surprised that we’re tempted.
- b. Temptations, however, aren’t falls! Temptations are tests, tests we can pass and not just fail. The more we pass these tests, the stronger we become in our vocations.
- c. It’s important to remember from the Letter to the Hebrews, that Jesus was tempted in every way we are but never sinned. He had sexual temptations, but he never succumbed to him. He understands what we’re going through and wants us to respond to the tests the way that he did, with the means I talked about above.
- d. The other thing I’d like to add here is that, especially with those who have never engaged in sexual activity, sometimes the expectations of how amazing married life would be do not correspond at all to reality. I’ve encountered this type of fantasizing often among virgins who get married later on in life. They’ve remained continent among difficult temptations for such a long time. They’ve kept their ideals, but their understanding of sexuality has become so idealized and romanticized that the real thing can never live up to their expectations and it creates huge problems in their marriages, because they expect love-making to be by far the most exhilarating experience they’ve ever received and often, for lots of reasons, especially at the beginning, it’s far from that. One of my relatives was a religious sister for six years. She left before final vows and eventually got engaged. She had all types of expectations of how great the honeymoon would be. They consummated the marriage and it was such an unpleasant experience for her that she said she would never make love again. And she never did. Eventually her husband divorced her. She never applied for a declaration of nullity but I’d be pretty certain she could get one because she was so unrealistic about what marriage was. So I’d urge you to be realistic about the good and beauty of marriage, but marital life and marital love have their struggles, too. And often those in troubled marriages who once were thinking about the priesthood or religious life begin to wonder if they had made a mistake, but their notions of what priesthood, consecrated and religious life are are often just as idealized as religious and consecrated understandings about marriage. The devil is always trying to convince us that the verdant pastures are elsewhere, even when we’re sitting on a plush lawn.

D. How do you respond to the desire for physical or marital intimacy?

1. It’s a common question that comes up among celibate men and women as to how we should respond to the sexual urge, our natural desires for physical intimacy, and for parenthood.
2. We should not pretend as if these desires do not exist. We need to acknowledge them. As I mentioned above, the sexual urge is a gift given by God to us to bring us out-of-ourselves into communion with others. It’s strong. For women, married or celibate, God’s made it to be particularly strong during fertile phases of your cycle and so you’re prone to feel it most during those phases, and so during those times, you should be praying in a particular way for the grace of chastity. The sexual urge shouldn’t be repressed. Rather, it should be directed. While at a physical level, it’s not going to be indulged in a chaste life, there are other means by which what it’s geared to — a real communion of persons in love — can come about. Real love — the love of friendship, the love of agape — is still very much possible, with God and chastely with others.
3. The first thing I recommend is that you look at the sexual urge as a great gift. Give it to God. We don’t give God things that are without value, but things that are precious. There can be a little mourning involved in this, which is common. It happens among women religious normally when they reach

menopause and the reality hits them that they'll never have biological children. But there are two ways to approach it. We can mourn like the daughter of Jephthah bewailing her virginity or like various of the sterile women in the Old Testament, or we can freely embrace the gift, like Christ did, and give it over in freedom. I've always been moved by Jesus' words in his discourse on the Last Supper, "No one takes my life from me. I freely lay it down!" When we consecrate ourselves to God, we consecrate our sexuality as well. Our fertility, our desire for marital intimacy, are not taken or stolen from us, but we freely give them to God. If we haven't given them freely, that's where the problems come.

4. What we're really made for and really need is love. And chaste celibacy is not a loveless life. It's a life full of love, beginning by opening ourselves consciously to the passionate love of God for us. Then we enter into relationships based on that love with others, real *philia*, real *agape*. One of the things about *eros* in general but especially about fallen *eros*, which is the way most of us encounter it, is that it's selfish. It wants its needs met. We can begin to believe, with many in our culture, that unless we indulge it we will become twisted not to mention unhappy. But it's love that we long for. It's the covenantal commitment we desire most. It's the intimacy of friendship to which we most aspire. It's the mutual acceptance for which we most deeply hanker. It's not sex, which is always supposed to be fruit of all of these other things, and is never a cause. And all of these goods — love, commitment, friendly intimacy, and mutual acceptance — are all possible when the chaste celibate life is lived well.

E. What do you do when you fall in love when you're a chaste celibate?

1. That question is intentionally provocative.
2. One of the most important things in the education of chastity for those called to apostolic celibacy is to know what to do when they fall in love with others. I say "when" not "if" because if a person is regularly interacting with others of the opposite sex, it's bound to happen, and we need to be prepared for it.
3. The first thing I'd say is that there is a HUGE DIFFERENCE between "falling in love" and "being in love." Falling in love is something that happens to you. St. Thomas Aquinas called it "imputatio," it impacts us from the outside. Someone walks into the room and we immediately find ourselves attracted. That's normal. We should find attractive people attractive, in the same way that we should find beautiful sunsets, or seaside vistas, or Palestrina motets attractive. The question is what we do with it, how we respond when we notice we're attracted.
4. Not knowing what to do when the experience occurs has led to the destruction of many vocations. Priests or religious or consecrated have thought that they must have been mistaken in their original discernment, because they suppose that by a life of chaste celibacy they shouldn't be attracted to anyone. A similar thing happens to many married men and women who, despite the ring they're wearing, look at the new employee at work and begin to think that that attraction needs to trump who they are and all the commitments they've made.
5. So we need to be ready for the experience, both of sexual attraction as well as the experience of falling in love, so that when it happens, we know how to respond with fidelity.
 - a. The first thing I suggest is that you admit candidly that you're attracted. You admit it to yourself. You admit it to God. You admit it to your spiritual director. One of the first things I do is say to the Lord interiorly, "Wow, Lord! Could you have made that woman [or her personality, etc.] any more beautiful?!"
 - b. The second thing I suggest you do is ask the Lord for the grace to look at that person purely, trying to see him as he sees him, to concern yourself for his spiritual good. Raise your glance from what you find attractive about his body or his personality to his overall good as a person loved by God.
 - c. The third thing I'd suggest is to survey the room. If there are others in the room, gravitate toward them. This is not because you're "running away" but to help you to remember that *everyone* in that room, especially those who might not be as physically attractive, is equally loved by God and that you need to get beyond physical appearances. If we catch ourselves gravitating toward those we find attractive, we're not chaste. And if we find ourselves really attracted to someone and gravitating toward them, we're in danger.
 - d. The fourth suggestion is to take appropriate precautions, conscious of your vulnerability. There are obviously the normal precautions that we avoid not just because we may be attracted, but so that no

one might think that we're being unfaithful to our vocation to celibate chastity. So we're not alone with others in rooms with no windows. We're not forming particular friendships with those to whom we can't help being physically attracted.

- e. The fifth suggestion I'd have is that if it's really serious and you can't help yourself, then you do try to avoid the person, particularly if the person is a near occasion of sin for you and distracts you from your love for the Lord. This is not the optimal response — because we should treat others as Marys, not Eves, as Christs, not Adams — but when the concupiscent part of us is too strong, when we find ourselves at all tempted to flirt or find the other doing so, we need, out of love for God, for others, and for ourselves and our vocation, remove ourselves.
6. So there are several principles:
 - a. We can't control being attracted sometimes, but we can control how we respond.
 - b. We need to be honest with God, ourselves, our directors and sometimes our friends.
 - c. We want to be able to treat others — including those who are attractive — with truly chaste love, but if we find it difficult to look at others with truly Christ-like eyes, then we need to be humble and wise enough to get out of the fire.
7. A related point is what to do when you begin to sense that someone else is attracted to you.
 - a. This is a very important point for those of us in the priesthood and in consecrated life because the fact of our consecration to the Lord makes us much more attractive to some than whatever our natural looks would normally precipitate. Many will easily idealize us as saints. Many will see in us virtues that they don't see in others. Some will see us as trophies. It's important to be aware of this.
 - b. As consecrated women who dress with pure, modest fashion, you will be much more attractive to Catholic young men trying to be faithful than women in bikinis on Miami's south beach. You can't help it, because in some ways, it's a desire in them for God, for the infinite, for pure love. But beware of it. Sometimes it will come from those who are immature whom you can, with proper discretion, guide toward God, just like so many young women religious used to do in schools. But for some of the older ones, watch out for their latching on to you, or their becoming obsessed with you.
8. To whom we're normally most vulnerable.
 - a. On the flip side, watch out for the way the devil can sometimes work in you. Do you know for whom priests fall more than any other class of women? They're women who have been wounded in relationships — women in troubled marriages, women who have been abandoned by their husbands, women who are applying for annulments. The priest begins chastely to help them and eventually he begins to feel deeply sorry for the woman who has been hurt in ways she never should have been. Sometimes his words can be innocent at the beginning, just trying to say, "You're not fat or ugly or a loser like your husband used to call you," he can try to make her feel better about herself, and then something can start to spark from there, as she becomes dependent on him and he becomes dependent on her. For women, who often have a very strong natural desire to "fix" men, this could work in the opposite direction. I say this because I think you'd naturally be on guard against handsome Hollywood lead actors or pulchritudinous professional athletes, but sometimes the biggest danger can come from ordinary, good men who have been hurt.
9. When we're most vulnerable
 - a. Please know that when you're down and disappointed, you're much more vulnerable to falls against chastity. When you're in a bad situation, you look for an escape. When you feel beaten down by circumstances, you're prone to seek to be loved or needed or appreciated and can end up in circumstances you wouldn't normally find yourself in.
 - b. When the US Bishops commissioned a survey on why priests leave in the first five years of their priesthood — there was kind of an epidemic 10-15 years ago — they discovered that the biggest reason was a bad rectory situation, normally with the pastor but sometimes with the staff. In the olden days when there were many priests in the rectory, even if the pastor were a misanthrope who didn't give you keys to the rectory, locked the refrigerator so you couldn't snack, expected you to run down from the third floor to answer the doors, etc. — you normally had other priests there to befriend and with whom to commiserate. But when there were only two priests in a rectory and a

young priest was living with a “boss” who didn’t make him feel welcome, he would often look elsewhere. A couple would invite him over for dinner. Everyone enjoyed it. Soon he was taking as many invitations there as he could because he just wanted to get out of the rectory, but the wife began to see various virtues in him that were lacking in her husband and then multiple vocations would be destroyed.

- c. So be aware of the fact that if you’re not happy overall where you are, you’ll be tempted much more against chastity. Therefore, take greater precautions than normal to guard your heart lest it hurt you and others rather than help you to love others chastely.
10. What about chaste friendships with people of the opposite sex?
- a. Are these possible? Yes.
 - b. Are they important? Yes, because we do need the complementarity of the sexes to become fully human.
 - c. But they’re complicated to form and I don’t believe we should go *looking* for them out of our own neediness, which would be a danger and often might lead to unchaste rather than chaste friendships.
 - d. It’s always fortunate when we can form true friendships with biological brothers and sisters.
 - e. For such friendships to work with non-brothers and sisters, they really need clearly and obviously to strengthen the vocation of each and be formed with a real holy detachment. They need totally to be consistent with the meaning of the vocation of each, for example my spiritual fatherhood or your spiritual motherhood or their married state. Both parties have really got to be capable of this.
 - f. For me as a priest, I think I would have five of these types of friendships. Four are with women religious, one in California, another in Denver, a third in Tennessee and a fourth in New Jersey. I would also have another with a laywoman in New York who has dedicated her entire life to a very important cause in the Church. In each of these friendships, they look toward me as a priest, spiritual brother and spiritual father and I look toward the religious as a spiritual sister and mother and to the laywoman as a younger sister. I seldom see them and only talk to them a handful of times a year, but when I do, we pick up where we left off. We pray for each other. We support each other. If one of us is going through a hard time, we know we can totally count on the other’s prayers and good advice. I cherish the friendships very much, and, like any friendship, they’re a great joy for me, but I don’t depend on them in ordinary circumstances. I also don’t think I was honestly ready for them until I was already ordained a priest and secure in my priestly identity so that I could relate to them exclusively as a priest. I think it also helped, honestly, that these chaste friendships in the Lord formed first with religious women who were a generation older than I was who were able to model for me what chaste friendships among those in apostolic celibacy really are.
 - g. Most of my friendships are, unsurprisingly, with my brother priests, with my twin brother, with my college roommates, and with married men. Something like this, I believe, should always be the norm for chaste celibates, not opposite sex friendships.
 - h. So I would always encourage you to form deep friendships with other consecrated women, nourish the friendships with family members, and, over the course of time, if God wishes you to form friendships with those of the opposite sex, trust him enough to bring them about when you’re ready and they’re ready.

VI. Conclusion

- A. We’ve covered a lot of ground. There’s much more that can be said, especially in terms of the practical living out of the virtue. I hope that we’ll have a chance to explore some of that in our question-and-answer period together.
- B. But this talk has been on “education in chastity” and like education in anything, education in chastity is an ongoing training. Educate comes from the Latin expression *e-ducere*, which means literally to lead someone out, to guide someone from darkness into the light. Education is not just information given to the head, but formation given to the whole person. And we’re all always in need of this type of formation. In the past, the extent of chastity formation in the seminaries was *numquam duos, semper tres*, “never two people alone, always three.” And we know how that worked out. In other places, it was just continence formation, instructing people to avoid certain behaviors or near occasions, but not training them how to love. In many cases practices developed in which those with sexual neuroses developed practices that just formed others with

sexual neuroses, as happened, even recently, in religious orders where for example seminarians were taught to tuck in their shirts with rulers lest anything else happen, or where everyone of the opposite sex was treated as a danger to a vocation rather than as someone the only worthy response to whom was *agape*.

- C. The urgent need for chastity education for which Pope Benedict is calling isn't coming exclusively from our culture that has lost a sense of the beauty and meaning of human sexuality. It's also coming from within the Church, from the fact that chastity has often not been taught as the virtue that's crucial for us to learn how truly to love, with self-mastery, purity and piety. It hasn't been taught as a crucial element in the salvation and sanctification of the world.
- D. The Lord is calling us not just to know what true chastity is, but to live it in such a way that we will both inspire people to know that chaste love is possible no matter what their state of life as well as to help them hunger for the kingdom of heaven for which our chaste celibate love is an eschatological sign.
- E. So let us beg the Lord for the gift of chastity, not "not yet" as with Augustine, but "now and forever." Let us see it as the path of true holiness. Let it be our expression of our inner longing for God, for eternity, for the deepest communion of all, communion with God in the communion of saints. Let it be what leads us all to be martyrs of his burning love! Amen!