

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA Sixth Commandment: You Shall Not Commit Adultery

[Jesus said,] “You have heard . . . ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery . . . in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28)

Insight

How does contemporary society support or challenge married life?

The young waitress was flirting with Bill. He was sure of it. And he had to admit to himself that he enjoyed the extra attention. She kept coming back to the table to ensure that everything was to his satisfaction, but she hardly even acknowledged his wife’s presence.

He could tell that Sarah, his wife, was not happy. She was short with her responses to him and to the waitress. Bill wasn’t participating in the flirtatious behavior, but he could imagine how it might be easy to get caught up in it. He could certainly understand why his wife was not comfortable with the waitress’ behavior.

They finished their meal, paid the bill, and got into the car for the drive home. Bill assured Sarah that he was solely committed to her and that he would always be faithful. Sarah trusted Bill and knew that this was true.

For Reflection . . .

Chastity consists in the successful integration of sexuality such that it expresses the inner unity of a person, bodily and spiritually.

How does maturity relate to chastity?

How are all people called to live a chaste life?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2331–2400

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 404–415

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 487–502

Church Teaching

Chastity: A Positive Teaching

Jesus’ teaching expands the Sixth Commandment so that it goes beyond the prohibition against adulterous behavior. By his life, teaching, and mission, Jesus restores creation to its original purity. The Church thus sees this Commandment as embracing the entire understanding of human sexuality. As such, the gift of chastity helps us to wholesomely integrate ourselves as unified beings: body and spirit.

Jesus himself is the model of chastity, a model applicable to everyone in keeping with their state in life—whether married, single, religious, or ordained. This virtue, however, does not come without an apprenticeship in self-mastery. It requires maturity and temperance, which are gained over many years and through the stages of life.

Friendship

The virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship, a friendship illustrated by the Lord who befriends us as his disciples. Friendship with others of the same or opposite sex is a tremendous gift and leads to spiritual communion between people.

Marriage

Chastity also forms the foundation for a healthy, holy marriage. Chaste husbands and wives are called to continual growth in unity throughout their marriage. They cultivate an intimate partnership in life and love ordered to their own good and that of their children. Married couples cooperate with God in bringing children into this world as the fruit of their chaste, mutual self-giving. Even when adopted, a child does not come from outside a marriage as if an addition to the spouses’ love. The child wells up from the very heart of their mutual self-giving.