



For the Sixth Commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” I am not going to go through specific sins as I have with the other commandments so far. This is a family program, after all. I’ve listed for you on the reflection sheet the specific sins covered by this commandment and the Ninth Commandment and their gravity. These reflection sheets are fairly explicit regarding the sins, so use discretion with your children.

Rather, I would like to speak to you about the great gift of sexuality that God has given us. It is a gift that has become distorted and abused in us and in our society at this time probably more than any other. Besides the gift of souls and free will, the power of sexuality is what makes us most like God. I’ll say that again: Besides the gift of souls and free will, the power of sexuality is what makes us most like God. You might be surprised to hear that, but it’s true.

God, as we know, lives in a mystery of loving, personal communion in the Holy Trinity. The Father gives Himself completely to the Son. The Son receives the Father’s gift of Himself and returns the gift of Himself to the Father, and their exchange of life and love is so real, that it itself is another person, the Holy Spirit. God is perfect love and communion within Himself, and He inscribed into us the capacity to be in communion with Him and with others.

What does “communion” mean? It means to become “one with”. Think about this. God has given us the power to become “one with” Him and with others without losing our own individuality.

Now, of course, how that communion with others comes about and is expressed is going to be different according to the specific relationship involved. A husband and wife are in communion in a different way than a mother and a daughter, or two friends, or a Pastor and his parish, or a brother and a sister. Yet all these ways and many more are exercises of our capacity for communion, for becoming “one with” others and God.

What makes this all possible is the power of sexuality that God has given us. Sexuality affects all aspects of a human person: our affectivity (emotions and sentiment), our capacity to love, our capacity to procreate, our ability to form bonds of communion.

Now here’s the problem. When original sin entered the world, this power of sexuality – which was meant by God to be the power with which we give ourselves away as a gift and receive others as a gift in the forming of personal communion – this power gained a

tendency not to give, but to take, to dominate for one's self. That is what all the sexual sins are. It is the using of our sexual power to take for ourselves, to take merely pleasure, to take dominance, to use others or even our own selves for selfishness sake.

And this is where the Catholic Church gets such a bad rap. The Church is seen as wanting to limit our ability to use our sexuality. But that's not it at all! God, through the Church, wants to show us how to use the power of sexuality that we have as He created it to be used, for communion, for the giving of one's self and receiving of another in love, and not for selfishness sake.

We have a clear choice in this regarding our sexuality: either a person governs his or her passions and finds peace, or a person lets themselves become dominated by their passions and become miserable. Let me say it another way: If we follow God's commandments on sexuality (which are given to us through the Church) we will have peace. If we do not follow God's commandments on sexuality we will be a slave to our sin in misery.

Now nobody is saying that this is easy. The church recognizes that this is long and exacting work. Original sin has done a pretty good number on us regarding this and our own sinful choices have gone a long way to deepening the problem. But hear me clearly: It is not impossible. With the help of all the grace that God offers and with our own firm choice to conquer sin, we can live chaste lives, lives in which we use God's gift of sexuality as He created it to be used.

So what are the practical steps we must take so that the virtue of chastity may grow in us:

1. Self-knowledge – We have to be aware concerning where, when, and how we fall. We have to acknowledge our weaknesses and avoid those situations in which we know we will fall.

If a boyfriend and girlfriend know they will get in trouble if they put themselves in a situation in which they are completely alone, they must make a firm choice not to put themselves in a situation in which they are completely alone.

If a person knows that there's going to be a problem if they are on the computer late at night, they need to make a firm choice not to be on the computer late at night.

We have to know ourselves and avoid those situations that lead to sin.

2. We must be firm in our obedience to God's commands. We have to believe what God is telling us about these sexual sins and then make a firm choice: "I will obey."

If a married couple, for example, doesn't believe what God is telling them about the evil of contraception, they don't have a chance. They don't have a chance to be chaste.

3. The virtue of chastity deepens within us through prayer and the sacraments. We cannot do this on our own strength. It is impossible to be chaste on our own strength alone. We need God's help and we need it all the time. Pray, Pray, Pray! Spend time with God and when we continually spend time with God He transforms us so that we don't ever want the sexual sins. That is the most free person in the world, the person who doesn't want to commit these sins.

We strive never to fall, but if we have, Jesus has given us confession and the grace of confession is powerful to break the chains of lustful habits.

My friends, our sexuality is a great power that God has given us, and the proper use of it blossoms in tremendous, life-giving friendship and communion with God, with our neighbor, with our spouse. We must all beg God for the grace to use it properly and strive with all our might to keep from abusing it so that we may have peace of heart and live in the love and communion with God and others in which we were created to live.

**Fr. Mark Gurtner at St. Anthony de Padua Church, South Bend, Indiana
4th Sunday of Lent 2010**

The 10 Commandments

- #6: You shall not commit adultery
#9: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife

God inscribed into us the capacity to be in communion with Him and with others. What makes this possible is the gift of sexuality. Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person: affectivity (the power of emotion and sentiment), capacity to love and procreate, and in a general way, the aptitude to form bonds of communion with others. Chastity is using our sexual power as God created it to be used. Sexual sins are using this power in a way that God did not intend.

Sexual Sins

Lust - The disordered desire for or inordinately excessive enjoyment of sexual pleasure

Fornication - Sexual union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman.
Fornication is always grave matter for mortal sin.

Adultery - Sexual union involving a married person outside of marriage.
Adultery is always grave matter for mortal sin.

Masturbation is always grave matter for mortal sin.

Homosexual acts are always grave matter for mortal sin.

Pornography - The purchase of or viewing of pornography for the purpose of sexual arousal is always grave matter for mortal sin.

Rape and Prostitution are always grave matter for mortal sin.

Artificial Birth Control which is used for **contraception** is always grave matter for mortal sin.

Coitus interruptus - The intentional stopping of the sexual act before completion by husband and wife. It is always grave matter for mortal sin.

Immodest Dress is grave matter for mortal sin if one purposely dresses this way to sexually arouse others who are not one's spouse or if one flagrantly dresses immodestly even if not intending to arouse another.

Impure glances at others which are undertaken for the purpose of arousing one's self sexually is grave matter for mortal sin. Generally speaking, though, fleeting impure glances are venial sins.

Deliberate watching of impure television and movies for the purpose of arousing one's self is grave matter for mortal sin.

Desiring sexual sins are in themselves sins. If a person desires something which is gravely sinful, that desire itself is gravely sinful. Please note that sexual thoughts which are neither desired nor chosen and which are not purposely dwelt upon are not sins at all.

In vitro fertilization and **Artificial Insemination** are always grave matter for mortal sin.

Living together with a member of the opposite sex outside of marriage or family is grave matter for mortal sin.

Kissing or touching another person or allowing oneself to be kissed or touched for the purpose of sexual arousal outside of marriage is grave matter for mortal sin.

Divorce and civil remarriage outside the church is always grave matter for mortal sin.

Directly intended sterilization is grave matter for mortal sin.

Any action or desire purposely chosen to arouse oneself sexually outside of the relationship of husband and wife is grave matter for mortal sin.

Mortal and Venial sins

Mortal sins are sins that break our relationship with God. If one dies having committed a mortal sin and is unrepentant of that sin, one goes to Hell, forever separated from God.

There are three conditions that must be met for one to have committed a mortal sin:

- 1) The sin must be grave matter. God through the Church reveals to us which sins are grave matter. If one has questions about whether a sin is grave, one should consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church and a good priest-confessor.
- 2) One must have full knowledge that what their doing is a grave sin.
- 3) One must have acted deliberately (or freely).

In other words, mortal sins cannot be committed "accidentally." A person who commits a mortal sin is one who knows that their action is a grave sin and freely chooses to do it anyway.

Venial sins are sins that hurt, but do not break, our relationship with God. Venial sins weaken a person's will to avoid evil and may lead one to commit mortal sin. They are violations of God's love and one should strive to avoid them.