

Lust & Chastity

We continue our look at the seven deadly sins and seven life-giving virtues. This week our focus is lust and its antidote chastity. Looking at the Catholic Catechism, it defines lust as the "*disordered desire for inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure*" (2351).

Oddly enough, many typically think of lust as the worst of the deadly sins. However, this is not the case. Granted, lust is deadly and extremely addictive. It can kill sanctifying grace in the soul and open the door to many other sins. None-the-less, unlike pride, which is completely focused on the self, lust at least hints at love. It points to the fact that we are made to make a sincere gift of ourselves and in doing so, image Trinitarian love.

As many are aware, the sin of pornography is like a cancer in our culture. The pornography industry is the largest and most profitable industry in the world. It makes more money in profit than the NFL, NBA, and MLB combined. Such profit reveals that our basic two-fold desire *to be loved* and *to love another* has gone haywire.

Lust takes many forms. Interiorly, lustful thoughts, desires, and fantasies are sinful because they sexually objectify another person. Sadly, lust blinds one from the beauty of a person, a person who is created out of love and for love. By offering lustful thoughts, desires, and fantasies to Christ and/or our Blessed Mother, they can be purified and redeemed.

Exteriorly, lust seeks to indulge itself in sexual pleasure apart from God's law. God wills that our sexuality is ordered toward unity and procreation. It is only in the context of marriage, a lifelong commitment of life and love, that sexual union is done in truth. Sexual activities such as fornication, adultery, pornography, and masturbation deviate from the truth of free, total, and life-giving love. Thankfully, God's grace can help those struggling in these areas to experience or re-experience the joy of living their sexuality in truth.

When left unchecked, lust can greatly damage your spiritual life. For example, it can kill your life of prayer. Those engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage regularly may offer prayers exteriorly now and then. However, it is unlikely they are immersed deeply in a life of meditative and/or contemplative prayer. If so, our Lord, who is truth, would unsettle their hearts and afflict their conscience.

In addition to inhibiting a rich life of prayer, lust darkens the intellect. One immersed in lust typically does not have a deep hunger for

serious studies. Unfortunately, lust also deforms the imagination and turns the eye made for beauty (and in particular, God) toward base pleasures. Adolphe Tanqueray, a twentieth-century moral theologian, says that there is no greater obstacle to spiritual growth than lust.

In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the lustful are blown back and forth by strong winds, which prevents them from finding peace and rest. In other words, they are restless in their desire for fleshy pleasures. Prayer, structure, and discipline are needed.

The antidote for lust is chastity, which is moral uprightness in the area of sexuality. Chastity is the virtue by which you bring your sexual passions in union with reason so that you can truly make a gift of yourself. In plain English, chastity helps you love as Jesus loves – freely, fully, faithfully, and fruitfully in truth. In short, the chaste person recognizes that persons are to be loved, not objects to be used.

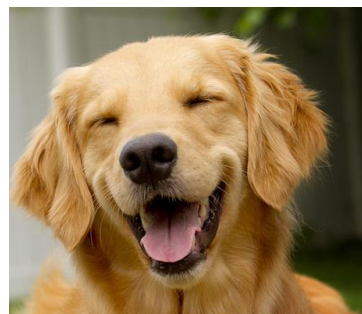
Practically speaking, there are many ways to grow in chastity. First, avoid the near occasion of sin. Do not put yourself in situations where you are going to be tempted. For example, if you struggle with pornography, refrain from using a computer after certain hours, especially when you are tired or lonely. Additionally, put a picture of the Sacred Heart or Immaculate Heart in the corner of your computer screen or next to your computer. Furthermore, obtain an accountability software program or ask a friend to be an accountability partner for you.

Furthermore, pray for chastity and regularly go to confession. In particular, ask our Blessed Mother to give you a chaste heart and help you see others as God sees them. You could also write a prayer for chastity and include it as part of your daily prayers.

Regardless, by God's grace and taking some prudent steps, you can grow in the beautiful virtue of chastity. If you struggle in this area, do not give up! By winning your freedom, you will experience nothing short of loving as Christ loves. ~St. Thérèse, pray for us!



Goldy using his computer wisely



Goldy full of joy