

# **Chastity**

The sixth commandment of the decalogue is called the difficult commandment; the virtue of chastity is called the angelic virtue. Perhaps it is only right that the virtue that makes man most like an angel should be the most difficult to practice perfectly; always the best things must be paid for at the highest price.

But Christian men and women of today have not only their own unruly flesh and the suggestions of the devil to conquer in attaining chastity; they must contend likewise with the concerted efforts of the world around them to make chastity seem either impossible or not worthwhile. Pseudo-intellectuals scoff at chastity, and if some of them could have their way, concepts like immodesty, adultery, lust, sensuality, etc., would be stricken from the minds of all mankind. Many who do not go so far as to deny the virtue of chastity in theory, nevertheless live as if it were impossible of attainment, and frankly tell their friends and neighbors that it is impossible for them, too. Worst of all, there are some Catholics (so called) who join hands with the pagan world in discouraging the practice of chastity. Count among them those who both practice and preach birth-prevention; those who philander while married themselves, or with others who are married; those who take part in the dissemination of obscene and inflammatory incentives to lust. Chastity becomes doubly difficult in the face of such influences to the contrary.

Chastity is defined as the virtue by which, with the help of God's grace attained by prayer and the Sacraments, human beings are enabled to refrain from all misuse of their sex faculties. This implies two things: 1) that they never directly desire or consent to sex-pleasure outside the sphere and contrary to the purposes for which sex-pleasure was

intended. The proper sphere of sex activity is the state of marriage, and there it is intended as a means of procreation and of the expression of love between husband and wife. To directly desire and seek sex-pleasure in marriage while excluding by interference the purpose of procreation, or to desire and indulge it in any direct way outside of marriage, would always be a grave sin. 2) The definition of chastity also implies that human beings must avoid those unnecessary actions that indirectly but usually lead to indulgence in sex-pleasure, even though the latter be not intended at the beginning. Thus to read obscene books would be seriously inducive to consent in sex-pleasure. Sometimes, of course, an unnecessary action is only slightly inducive to consent to sinful pleasure; in that case it would constitute a venial sin.

Misunderstanding arises in the minds of some by the oft-quoted principle: In matters of chastity there is no lightness of matter; every sin is a grave sin. This is true, it must be known, in regard to all direct and voluntary desires and indulgences in sex-pleasure outside of marriage or contrary to the purpose of sex. Nevertheless, some sins against chastity may be venial because of lack of full consent of the will, or because of lack of full deliberation, or because an action, such as a momentary indecent glance, or a passing thought, could not be called gravely inducive to sinful consent.

Self-examination on the virtue of chastity must keep these fundamental principles in view.

## **I. Mortal Sins**

1. Have I deliberately taken delight in impure thoughts and images in my mind after I recognized them to be evil?
2. Have I knowingly consented to a desire for impure experiences, without any effort to suppress the desire?
3. Have I taken part in impure conversation for the express purpose of giving others bad thoughts or with the realization that they would probably consent to bad thoughts?
4. Have I gone out of my way to hear impure conversation or taken sinful pleasure in it when I heard it?
5. Have I read obscene books or looked at obscene pictures after I knew that they would cause serious temptations to sins of impurity?
6. Have I gone to places where I knew the entertainment was lewd and immoral, or attended obscene stage shows or movies?
7. Have I touched others impurely, or taken part in prolonged and intense kisses and embraces?
8. Have I caused or consented to solitary lust?
9. Have I taken part in sins of lust with others, and were they married or single, of the same sex or the opposite sex?
10. Have I sinned with someone related to me by blood or affinity?
11. Have I added sacrilege to the sin of impurity by desiring, or attempting, or consenting to sin with a person consecrated to God?
12. Have I made animals a means or an occasion of seriously sinful actions?

13. Have I forced another to submit to my lustful actions?
14. Have I encouraged others to sin against purity or told them that they could not avoid it?
15. Have I exposed others to grave danger by impure signs, actions or exposure?
16. (For married persons) Have I used contraceptive means whether natural (such as interruption) or artificial (such as instruments) in performing marriage duties?
17. Have I, without a good reason, refused or neglected to render the marriage obligation when seriously asked?
18. Have I, as a married person, committed sins of impurity with others, and were they married or single?
19. Have I failed to correct or train my children in regard to chastity when it was evident that there was need of such correction or training?
20. Have I exercised no watchfulness over the company-keeping of my adolescent sons and daughters, permitting and encouraging them to spend long hours alone and in dangerous circumstances?
21. Have I bought or sold, lent or given, obscene books or magazines or other objects to be used for impure purposes?

## **II. Venial Sins**

1. Have I, without a reason, read books or magazines that were at least dangerous, or concerned only with impassioned love?
2. Have I allowed my eyes to wander in curiosity over dangerous objects?

3. Have I been slow and half-hearted in trying to banish bad thoughts and desires?
4. Have I permitted decent expressions of love or friendship for another to be prolonged to the point of danger of lust?
5. Have I gone to shows or movies that I knew to be somewhat dangerous, at least in part?
6. Have I been careless about my clothing, posture, appearance, thus exposing others to some danger?
7. Have I shown half-deliberate interest in the evil conversation of others?
8. Have I, on the spur of the moment, uttered double-meaning words or phrases?
9. Have I sought out or continued companionship with others whom I knew to be inclined to evil jests and words?
10. Have I supported the publishers of daring and dangerous picture magazines or of borderline periodicals by buying or spreading their publications in any way?
11. Have I neglected to use special opportunities of grace and prayer when I was passing through a period of more than usual temptation?
12. Have I failed to check vigorously impulses and daydreams of unruly love and affection?