

and the vast multitude of Catholic men, women, and children in every part of the world today who are leading beautifully pure lives- priests, nuns, brothers, lay men and women, boys and girls in school and out of school.

10. Bearing in mind the words of St. Paul: “Or know you not, that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost . . . and you are not your own? . . . For you are bought with a great price” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

11. To make it a rule during the time when one is tempted in thought:

a) To use quick distractions. Imagine that a fire has just broken out in the adjoining room or that the bishop has just entered the front door or that you are in the midst of your favorite game or that you are in a falling airplane. Recall some very funny story. A hearty laugh often provides a very effective release from troublesome thoughts.

b) To think of God’s omnipresence, of the crucified Christ, of death, of hell.

c) To call to God for aid by short prayer; for example, “My Jesus, have mercy.”

d) To recall that every temptation resisted is merit gained and every sin committed (though later forgiven) increases one’s purgatory. Remember that by giving in to temptations against purity they are not lessened except for the moment. By yielding to them, they grow ever more insatiable.

e) To avoid being afraid or terrified at the idea of impure thoughts besieging you. Say to yourself: “If they come, I’ll simply resist them and thus increase my reward in heaven.” Cultivate a calm and serene attitude.

Decide beforehand, when calm and untroubled by temptation, the exact means which you will employ during the temptations that are to come- the exact aspiration, the exact joke; whether you will think of hell or of death or of Christ crucified. If you wait until the temptation is on you before trying to choose your weapon, you will waver in your choice and your delay may prove costly.

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THE CASE FOR CHASTITY

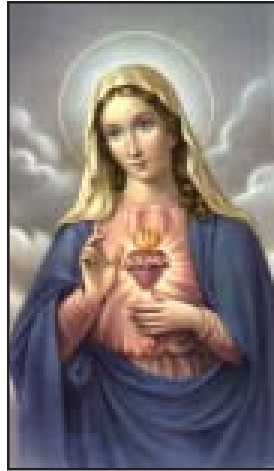
FR. EDWIN F. HEALY
From the book *Moral Guidance*

Chastity is a virtue that greatly ennobles, for it yields to the soul dominion over the body and makes man’s animal instincts subservient to his higher nature. Chastity preserves man’s innate dignity by keeping him from the selfish and degrading indulgence in pleasures forbidden him by the natural law. Is it not true, however, that chastity is unnatural, since it impedes man’s proper development? Does it not consist in the utter crushing of desirable self-expression? No, chastity is not unnatural to man, for man is intended by nature to be guided by reason and to be ruled, not by the cravings of the body, but by the dictates of the soul. Chastity does not wither up man’s personality, but rather increases his moral stature and helps on the development of his higher faculties. The more impure a man becomes, the nearer he approaches the evil spirits and the more enslaved he finds himself to blind passion. On the contrary, the more chaste he is, the closer he draws to God and the greater is his liberty in exercising the higher powers of his spiritual nature. Chastity retains for man his freedom from the entangling tendrils of a lower appetite and disposes him to hear and follow the guidance of his conscience. Chastity is protected by modesty of behavior and dress.

THE BEAUTY AND MERIT OF CHASTITY

Chastity is a strong and beautiful virtue. It is strong because to possess it requires fortitude, strength of character, and genuine virility. To spurn temptations to other types of sin (e. g., stealing, lying, disobedience) is not difficult for the ordinary Christian, but to refuse

the pleasant, insistent, seductive attraction to impurity demands real moral courage. By yielding one chooses the easy way, the cowardly way. By resisting one becomes more manly. “For thou hast done manfully and thy heart has been strengthened because thou hast loved chastity” (Judith 15:11). In the chaste person shines forth the virtue of constancy, for chastity implies not merely a single victory but a long series of conquests over passion.



Chastity is a beautiful virtue as well, for it preserves untarnished the splendor and beauty of the superior part of man; namely, that of his soul. The wholesome attractiveness of the pure stands out in striking contrast to the appeal of those who have given themselves to impurity. One may see the radiant luster of this virtue in the spotless Lamb of God, in the Immaculate Mary, in the pure St. John, and other saints. “O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory” (Wisdom 4:1).

Why is chastity so emphatically praised? It is because this virtue preserves man from sins that are especially shameful and keeps his vision clear to see the value of heavenly things. Impurity, on the contrary, blinds man’s mind and fills him with disgust for the things of God. Just as chastity may, in a sense, be called the foundation of sanctity, so impurity may be branded as one of the most common causes of man’s spiritual ruin.

“The life of man upon earth is a warfare” (Job 7:1), and the struggle to preserve chastity is one of life’s greatest battles. Victory is won only by sternly disciplining the body. The fight must be directed against a very alluring pleasure. To subdue this appetite one must practice many virtues; for example, modesty, sobriety, humility, and mortification. “For the flesh lusteth against the spirit: and the spirit against the flesh And they that are Christ’s, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences” (Galatians 5:17, 24).

The person who, with regard to the matter of the Sixth Commandment especially, intends to go as far as he can just short of sin is very imprudent. Such a one shows little appreciation for the

priceless value and the enhancing beauty of the virtue that is jeopardized by this way of acting. “No price is worthy of a continent soul” (Ecclesiasticus 26:20). Moreover, he seems to possess little knowledge of the weakness of human nature. Experience proves that one who rashly endangers the virtue of chastity will not long continue without serious sin. “He that toucheth pitch, shall be defiled with it” (Ecclesiasticus 13:1).

HELPS TO CHASTITY

The following means are usually of great aid in cultivating the virtue of chastity:

1. Training the will to rigorous control over one’s thoughts, for an unbridled imagination gives rise to many temptations. A properly disciplined will can be very effective in excluding dangerous thoughts.
2. Self-denial regularly practiced. This may be done by mortifying the senses in occasionally abstaining from delicacies of food, smoking, theater-going, etc., or by performing disagreeable tasks, by patiently submitting to hardships, etc.
3. Developing keen interest in some study, work, or hobby that will take up all one’s spare time. It is well known that “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop,” and so we must be sure to keep ourselves occupied.
4. Regular and frequent reception of the sacraments of penance and Holy Communion. One should, if possible, always confess to the same confessor.
5. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph.
6. Meditation on the beauty of chastity and on the degrading effects of impurity.
7. Guarding the eyes, the ears, and the hands.
8. Avoiding as far as possible the circumstances which have in the past led one into sin or which reason tells one will surely prove a source of temptation.
9. Remembering that to acquire the virtue of chastity is quite possible. Not to become discouraged by the number or persistency of the temptations. Recalling the promises of God—“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13)—the long list of saints who shone by their purity,