



HOME/SCHOOL/PARISH CONNECTION

Chastity

Catechism of the Catholic Church: (See CCC 2337, 2339)

Chastity integrates the passions of the body with our ability to reason and to choose the good. Living the virtue of chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person.

Chastity involves man's inner unity of belonging to the bodily world (that is the physical body) and the spiritual world (referring to our relationship with God and others) and is expressed with love and respect in the relationship of one person to another. Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy. Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of a properly-formed conscience and free choice, and to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Virtue of the Month:

Chastity

Saintly Exemplar:

Saint Maria Goretti

Statue: St. Maria Goretti
Church, Madison, WI



Excellent Resources

Teaching the Way of Love Series — Office of Marriage and Family Life

dioceseoflacrosse.com/parentsplace

Link to meeting dates and times
dioceseoflacrosse.com/wlcalendar

Talking to Youth about Sexuality, A Parent's Guide

Mike Aquilina

Our Sunday Visitor, \$5.

Theology of the Body for Teens and Theology of the Body- Middle School Edition,
DVD with leader/student text,
Ascension Press, 800-376-0520

Raising Pure Teens, 100 Strategies, Jason Evert & Chris Stefanick, www.chastity.com

What is the Virtue of Chastity?

Chastity is the virtue that allows us to do what is right, good and loving in the area of sexuality and relationships by controlling our sexual desires. God gave us our sexual desire, which is a sacred gift reserved for the sacramental union of husband and wife and the procreation of children. Chastity is protective as sexuality can become disordered and misdirected toward lust: lust involves any disordered thoughts or desires - which may or may not lead to action - that violates purity. The sinister effect of the violation of chastity includes not only the possibility of the abuse of another person but always the degradation of one's own personal dignity.

Chastity is also a gift from God, a grace, a fruit of spiritual effort. The practice of chastity is about permeating the passions and appetites of the senses with right reason so that an individual will be treated as a person to be loved through proper respect rather than as a thing to be used.

Chastity is not a matter of repression of sexual feelings and temptations, but the integration of the gift of sexuality. To integrate this gift of sexuality is to make sexual feelings and temptations subordinate to love and respect. This means that the gift of physical, spousal union is reserved for marriage alone. Integration is also preserved when a person foregoes physical, spousal union for the sake of the total, willing gift of self to God in the priesthood or consecrated life.

Before puberty children need to be formed in the virtue of temperance. Training in chastity includes self-discipline demonstrated with modest behavior, protection of the senses, fidelity to prayer, reception of the Sacraments and wise guidance. This process of self-mastery is life-long.

Why do we need the Virtue of Chastity?

The practice of chastity is necessary due to the effects of Original Sin. Unchastity or lust causes spiritual closing of the mind, rashness, thoughtlessness, diminished fidelity, inordinate self-love, hatred of God, excessive love of this world, and abhorrence or despair of a future world.

Chastity allows us to use the gift of sexuality the way God intended it to be, protecting it from selfish exploitation. A chaste person becomes free to fulfill the law of love totally and selflessly within one's vocation.

Suggestions for teaching the Virtue of Chastity at Home:

Common principles for teaching and practicing the virtue of chastity within the family:

The Catholic Church's teachings on human sexuality are a light in the darkness because the Church presents God's plan for authentic love and human fulfillment. Living the virtue of chastity leads to a life filled with healthy relationships, respect for each human person, joy and interior peace.

Chastity is about finding fulfillment in the gift of self through self-giving love rather than selfishness.

In critiquing the culture, we are bombarded by images of sex that cheapen the God-given gift of sexuality and which set up our young people for heartbreak and misery. This misuse of sex is about selfishness and using other persons as objects for sexual pleasure. The opposite of selfishness is self-giving love. Fulfillment in life comes through serving those in need, through unselfish relationships with friends, and through one's personal vocation which always is to be directed to expressing itself in the service of charity.

Chastity is not about repression of sexual feelings and temptations but the integration of the gift.

Repression does not effectively address sexual feelings and temptations, but merely tries to deny them. If repressed, it is likely that these desires will eventually manifest themselves in a disordered way. To integrate the gift of sexuality means to make sexual feelings and temptations subordinate to love and respect. This means the gift of physical, spousal union is reserved for marriage alone. This integration is also preserved when a person foregoes earthly, spousal union for the sake of the total and willing gift of self to God in the priesthood or consecrated life.

Chastity is more about saying "yes" than about saying "no". Chastity involves abstinence, which means saying no to sex outside of the life-long commitment of marriage. However, chastity is more about saying yes to Christ through proper respect for self and others by protecting and integrating God's gift of sexuality. This yes gives honor to God in guarding the personal dignity and value of every person as a child of God, which leads to a life of joy and peace. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of chastity.

Chastity is more about transformation than about information. We must begin on the positive side in forming young people to distinguish between the *gift of self* and *selfishness*. This involves formation in true love, courage, and self-control. Transformation is about growth in the spiritual life, so that through supernatural grace received in the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, young people can face the biological development and impulses they begin to experience. They will be formed in a growing love for God and a greater awareness of the dignity of each human person and his or her body as a Temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1Corinthians 6:19). Prayer is needed so that the information given is appropriate, not stimulating curiosity. Give teens only *limited* information on the painful consequences that result from inappropriate sexual activity.

Chastity is as much about parents as it is about young people. Parents play a critical role in promoting chaste living with their children. Statistics prove that young people look, above all, to their parents for individualized formation in the meaning of life and self-giving love, setting boundaries, assistance in avoiding harmful situations and guidance to develop the daily habit of prayer, regular confession and Sunday Mass attendance. As an example to their children, parents are to show love, respect, and commitment to each other.

Chastity

Saint Maria Goretti

Make a Commitment to Chastity

- 1) Make the Commitment REAL—sign a card/wear ring/write letter to future spouse.
- 2) Know why you are committed to chastity.
- 3) Be vocal about your decision.
- 4) Find an accountability partner or mentor.

Change How You Date

- 1) Focus on friendships. Be selective.
- 2) Set physical limits / boundaries.
- 3) Plan dates to avoid time alone/surprises.

Live to Make Commitment Achievable

- 1) Find strength in Prayer and Sacraments.
- 2) Stay sober and keep a pure mind.
- 3) Think of future spouse in temptations.

Taken from: *A Case for Chastity, the Way to Real Love and True Freedom for Catholic Teens* by H. Gallagher & Peter Vlahutin



Candid Conversation on Boundaries:

Set a curfew
Don't put yourself in a compromising position with games, drinking etc.
While on a date... Stay in groups /
Be alone only in public places with adults / No passionate kissing
No activity below the neck
Keep your clothes on / No laying down
No groping above or below clothes
If a person's body has a sexual attraction, then it is up to our mind and will to say "no". Without boundaries, if put in the wrong situation, such as alone in the back seat of a car, a point will be reached in which the mind and will give way to passion, leading to hurtful, sinful actions.

Suggestions for teaching the Virtue of Chastity at Home:

Aspects in formation of the virtue of chastity

Parents are the primary educators of their children. Regarding human sexuality, parents are to include all aspects of the topic: moral, spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical. The goal is formation in chastity in accord with the teaching of Christ and the Catholic Church, to be lived in a wholesome manner within marriage, the single state, the priesthood and religious life.

The family provides the most beneficial training in human sexuality and chastity in an individualized, timely and prayerful manner. Talking with youth about human sexuality and formation in chastity is to be gradual, taking into account the child's unique physical, emotional, and spiritual development. Further, "each child's process of maturation as a person is different. Therefore, the most intimate aspects, whether biological or emotional, should be communicated in a *personalized dialogue*...Experience shows that this dialogue works out better when the parent who communicates the biological, emotional, moral, and spiritual information is of the same sex as the child or young person." Further, "parents should provide this information with great delicacy, but clearly and at the appropriate time." (*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, n. 66, 67, 75) Vital concepts about human sexuality are to include authentic love, right relationships with others, the bodily and psychological development of masculinity and femininity, chastity, the incredible gift of procreation, and Catholic moral principles, which refer to right conduct leading to God and wrong conduct, away from God. Communication between parent and child is always a priority. Even before these conversations about sexuality take place between parent and child, there needs to be monitoring of what the child watches. There are programs that are inappropriate to watch because they make explicit, things that should be hidden. These programs can give young people ideas that can easily lead to sin. Further, images remain in the memory and will resurface. (*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* n. 23, 64-76, 112-113; *On the Role of the Family* 37). When it is not possible for parents to take on this formation, a teacher chosen by the parents may assist by teaching the student. If a teacher in a school or educational center does assist, parents must keep themselves precisely informed on the content and methodology as well as attend the supplemental formation.

The document *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* Guidelines for Education within the Family, Pontifical Council for the Family (hereafter TM) offers the following guidelines in paragraphs 77-111 regarding what should be **taught by parents** to their child individually at various stages of development.

(Document available at www.vatican.va /click on English / type in name of the document)

Years of Innocence: From Pre-kindergarten to the first visible signs of changes in the child's body, the following is to be taught by parents:

The goodness and dignity of each human person; genuine friendship; respect for self and others; appreciation of others, their gifts and talents; objective standards of what is right and wrong; virtue as the development of good habits; the virtues of faith, hope, charity, temperance, obedience, generosity, self-denial; self-reflection and guidance toward intellectual abilities, hobbies and sports; modesty in dress and behavior. Note: "This period of tranquility and serenity must never be disturbed by unnecessary information about sex." (TM n. 78)

Puberty: During the years of gradual physical change (typically grades 6-8), parents are called to be particularly attentive to the Christian education of their children and teach the following:

Individual dignity based upon being created in the image of God; further development of prayer and the spiritual life, formation of conscience and following God's Commandments as a way of life, how to avoid the occasion of sin; explanation about sexuality in an ongoing relationship of communication and trust even though it is still not necessary to give detailed explanations about sexual union until 8th grade; the development of femininity and the cycles of fertility; the development of masculinity; sufficient information about the bodily and psychological characteristics of the opposite sex; teaching the value of and assistance in practicing Christian purity, modesty, and when it comes to trends, the necessary autonomy characteristic of a man or woman with a mature personality; avoiding undue introspection by helping them to cultivate what is beautiful, noble and true; how to live a virtuous life; help to resist negative outside influences; setting boundaries.

Adolescence: During the years following puberty, which is typically grades 9-12, parents should teach the following: God's strong invitation to holiness and our response; the example of fidelity to God and one another in the marriage covenant; help with discerning God's call to a personal vocation and how to live chastity in one's vocation; the importance of prayer and reception of the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist; the meaning of self-giving love; patient advice to avoid an excessive "closing in" on themselves; the vocational meaning of marriage and family; a positive and serene explanation of Christian morality including the indissolubility of marriage, the relationship between love and procreation, as well as sins against chastity (*Catechism*, para 2351-2356) the immorality and harmfulness of premarital relations, contraception, abortion, masturbation, homosexuality; and the value of virginity and celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom.

Chastity

Saint Maria Goretti



Also Known As:

Patron of chastity
Patron of youth
Patron of teenage girls
Patron of poverty
Patron of purity
Patron of forgiveness
Youngest saint

Feast Day:

July 6

From Maria's story
innocent children and young
people with their zest for life
can learn how not to be led
astray by disordered and
attractive pleasures which are
not only short-lived and empty
but also sinful. Instead they
can fix their sights on
achieving Christian moral
perfection which brings joy
and peace, however difficult
that course may prove.

from a homily
by **Pope Pius XII**
at the canonization of
Saint Maria Goretti



Statue: St. Maria Goretti Church,
Madison, WI

Her Life

- ☒ Maria was born in 1890. Her parents were very poor farmers, but had great love for God, Our Lady and each other. The family lived in eastern Italy.
- ☒ Her parents along with Maria, her 2 sisters and 3 brothers moved to Ferriere, Italy, with the hope of improving their financial condition. Maria's father, a hardworking, humble man, struck a deal with Signor Serenelli to be a tenant farmer, to work together and live in the same building with him and his son.
- ☒ At the age of 9, Maria's father died of malaria. While her mother, brothers and one sister worked in the farm fields, Maria took care of the household chores and cared for her youngest sister, with dedication and cheerfulness.
- ☒ Although Maria and her brothers and sisters remained illiterate, they were well-schooled in their faith. Maria had a deep understanding of who she was as a child of God, with a keen sense of her personal dignity and self-worth. This understanding would prepare her to choose to preserve her innocence from which she derived a joyful and peaceful life with her family. Maria grew in prayer as she prepared to receive Jesus in First Communion.
- ☒ Signor Serenelli's son, Alesandro, harassed Maria to perform difficult chores and to satisfy his impure thoughts. Although Maria refused to submit to Alessandro, he persisted. One day as Maria was sewing and watching her younger sister, Alesandro dragged her into the house and attempted to force her into sinful acts against chastity. Maria fought with all her strength to resist Alessandro and with great courage she warned him that this sin would condemn him to hell. Alessandro stabbed Maria 14 times and left her to die.
- ☒ Maria was treated in the local hospital but died 20 hours after Alessandro's attack. She was 11 years old. Before she died, Maria forgave Alessandro with all her heart and stated that she hoped that he would join her in Heaven.
- ☒ While in prison, Maria appeared to Alessandro in a dream. She held out to him fourteen white lilies representing the fourteen times that he stabbed her, causing him to change from desperation to repentance and conversion.

How is Saint Maria Goretti a Model of Chastity?

- ☒ Saint Maria Goretti was modest in her dress and was consciously pure in her behavior. She practiced virtue throughout her life and resisted Alessandro's obscene jokes and shameful advances to submit to his sinful desires.
- ☒ Maria did keep silent, realizing that exposing Alessandro would bring worry and grief to her mother and total financial ruin to the family. Maria took every precaution to avoid being near Alessandro alone, reminded him to obey the Commandments and told him that he would go to hell for this sin.
- ☒ Maria was a person of integrity: her actions were guided by her heart which sought to do the will of God, in this case to protect her self-worth.