

## 7- A LOVE THAT LASTS: Discovering Authentic Love

God's love is ever faithful. God pursues us calling us to the kind of relationship He intends for us from the very beginning. All his covenants are ever faithful – this is agape, the love that exists within the Holy Trinity. It is not about what He can get from us, but about what He gives to us.

*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is error, truth;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
(Attrib. St Francis of Assisi)*

We are created in the image and likeness of God. It should thus not be surprising that we are called to love like God – “God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). Today's culture often confuses love defining it in terms of eros and emotion. Deep down though, we know that true love is about self-giving – willing the good of the other. There are countless example around us:

- the self-sacrifice of parents for their children, especially when one or more child has some disability.
- those who lay down their lives in courageous acts to save the lives of others.
- Sisters, nuns and others who dedicate their lives to the care of the poorest in society
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Whilst not all of us are called to these more extreme examples of selflessness, we do all know with an inner knowledge that love that comes with putting others first, so well expressed in the Prayer of St Francis above.

### Video Links:

The Meaning of "I Love You" – Ascension Presents – Mike Schmits (9.5 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJVFmKeAPuM>

Find Out If You're Really in Love – Ascension Presents – Jackie and Bobby Angel (8 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQ5mSScdInw>

### Suggested Scripture readings:

1 Corinthians 13:4–8, 1 John 4:18–19, Matthew 22:37–39

Reading:

*Deus Caritas Est* - Pope Benedict XVI – 25 December 2005

TO THE BISHOPS  
PRIESTS AND DEACONS  
MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS  
AND ALL THE LAY FAITHFUL  
ON CHRISTIAN LOVE

[https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html)

# Catechism of the Catholic Church

## THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not commit adultery.<sup>113</sup>

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.<sup>114</sup>

### \* I. "MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM . . ."

**2331** "God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image . . . God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the *vocation*, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion."<sup>115</sup>

"God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them";<sup>116</sup> He blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply";<sup>117</sup> "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created."<sup>118</sup>

**2332** *Sexuality* affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others.

**2333** Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual *identity*. Physical, moral, and spiritual *difference* and *complementarity* are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.

**2334** "In creating men 'male and female,' God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity."<sup>119</sup> "Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God."<sup>120</sup>

**2335** Each of the two sexes is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. The *union of man and woman* in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator's generosity and fecundity: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh."<sup>121</sup> All human generations proceed from this union.<sup>122</sup>

**2336** Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins. In the Sermon on the Mount, he interprets God's plan strictly: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."<sup>123</sup> What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.<sup>124</sup>

The tradition of the Church has understood the sixth commandment as encompassing the whole of human sexuality.

## II. THE VOCATION TO CHASTITY

**2337** Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man's belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman.

The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person and the integrality of the gift.

### The integrity of the person

**2338** The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech.<sup>125</sup>

**2339** Chastity includes an *apprenticeship in self-mastery* which is a 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.<sup>126</sup> "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end."<sup>127</sup>

**2340** Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the means for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an asceticism adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God's commandments, exercise of the moral virtues, and fidelity to prayer. "Indeed it is through chastity that we are gathered together and led back to the unity from which we were fragmented into multiplicity."<sup>128</sup>

**2341** The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of *temperance*, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason.

**2342** Self-mastery is a *long and exacting work*. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life.<sup>129</sup> The effort required can be more intense in certain periods, such as when the personality is being formed during childhood and adolescence.

**2343** Chastity has *laws of growth* which progress through stages marked by imperfection and too often by sin. "Man . . . day by day builds himself up through his many free decisions; and so he knows, loves, and accomplishes moral good by stages of growth."<sup>130</sup>

**2344** Chastity represents an eminently personal task; it also involves a *cultural effort*, for there is "an interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society."<sup>131</sup> Chastity presupposes respect for the rights of the person, in particular the right to receive information and an education that respect the moral and spiritual dimensions of human life.

**2345** Chastity is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a *grace*, a fruit of spiritual effort.<sup>132</sup> The Holy Spirit enables one whom the water of Baptism has regenerated to imitate the purity of Christ.<sup>133</sup>

## **The integrality of the gift of self**

**2346** Charity is the *form* of all the virtues. Under its influence, chastity appears as a school of the gift of the person. Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self. Chastity leads him who practices it to become a witness to his neighbor of God's fidelity and loving kindness.

**2347** The virtue of chastity blossoms in *friendship*. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends,<sup>134</sup> who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine estate. Chastity is a promise of immortality.

Chastity is expressed notably in *friendship with one's neighbor*. Whether it develops between persons of the same or opposite sex, friendship represents a great good for all. It leads to spiritual communion.