

Chastity: Order in Our Courts

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Following Jesus to Calvary requires temperance, that gift of the Holy Spirit which sets love in order within us. The ordered soul loves to linger with Jesus. Yet we with shifting, bloodshot eyes struggle to keep watch with Him. Gerald May is right: 'Addicts cannot meditate.' So we cry out: 'Come Holy Spirit, set love in order within us by uniting us with the One who has power to compose us. Make us whole as we fix our eyes on the One who suffers to set us free!'

Leanne Payne describes the peril of the divided heart: 'An unhealthy fantasy life destroys. It wars against the true imagination which can intuit the real and thus is creative. When our minds are pregnant with illusion, we cannot be impregnated with what is true.' (*The Healing Presence*) This Holy Week let us ask Jesus to take every lie that divides our hearts and unite us with Himself through His Spirit. May we linger longer with Him, uniting our suffering with His as we await new life.

Chastity is the first fruit of temperance. It derives its meaning from 1Cor. 12:24 in which St. Paul describes how God orders His members into one whole Body, 'giving greater honor to the parts that lack it.' So too does God order the various parts of our individual humanity into a whole. Chastity involves the integration of sexual love—the powerful, frustrating well of desire we bear in our bodies—with our first love relationship with Jesus (CCC #2335).

The Holy Spirit guides this lifetime goal of integration. Becoming chaste is about becoming whole, and involves as much our accepting the good gift of our gendered humanity as it does rejecting 'the seductive power of an artificial civilization driven by lust and greed.' (Joseph Pieper; 1Thes. 4:3-8) Knowing how we subject our gift to La La Land, we cry out: 'Jesus, the very forces that gave us life now threaten to destroy it. Have mercy, holy God!'

He does have mercy. His kindness draws us and binds up our fractures so we can abide longer with Him. His purpose in ordering our sexuality? So we can enjoy creation with the One who created it. He does not want His world to demonize us but rather to be a source of delight, within the loving limits of truth and the Spirit-fed virtues of temperance and chastity. How liberating to turn from sensational self-interest toward a genuine desire to know and honor the whole of a person!

We cleave to the One who is 'resolute toward Jerusalem' where Calvary awaits Him (LK 9:51). He calls us to walk with Him so we can gift others with a whole (enough) witness of gender clarity and tempered desire. We become for them a witness of the God who amid suffering binds up sorrow with love.

'We seek to be chaste because someone we love needs us to be chaste.' - Heather King