



Liberating Chastity



*“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”
Matthew 6:33*

By Andrew Comiskey

I am convinced that chastity is the single best definition of sexual and relational wholeness. Though often misunderstood as ‘Catholic abstinence’, chastity encompasses a dimensional understanding of what it means to be human in our passions. Chastity is about ordering these passions so that the powers of life and love engender creativity rather than squander it. That involves a dozen little streams that contribute to a river teeming with life yet necessarily cleansed, stirred, and directed for the sake of life.

These smaller streams include reconciliation to one’s birth gender, cultivating self-awareness so that one’s sexual inclinations remain under the sway of a deft will, and setting boundaries with persons-of-interest until one can be sure that opposite-gender marriage is the best way forward. If so, chastity insists that marrieds continue to offer themselves physically for the other’s good, neither lusting nor withholding in a manipulative way.

Integration

Another word for chastity is integration—aligning our spiritual commitment to love God wholly with our longing to love others as wholly as we can. That means accepting oneself as a person called to live in the duality of man for woman and woman for man. I was once accused of failing to recognize the ‘diversity’ of humanity’s many sexual ‘selves’. I replied, ‘I see only two: man and woman.’ God created us to know how He made us by how we commit to loving this ‘other’— this beautiful annoying one who highlights our difference

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and provokes unused muscle to love beyond our same-gendered blinders.

I like to think of chastity as the convergence of one stream with a mighty river: my sexual ‘waters’ welcoming the flood of blood and water flowing from Jesus’ side. I open to Him and allow His infusion of cleansing and healing and wisdom and all-around guidance to transform my impure offering. Almighty mercy steers and clears the disordered masculine...Come, Lord!

Disintegration

We need a clear and Spirit-filled understanding of chastity. Now. The Church is awash with articulate men and women who claim to be both ‘LGBT+’ and Christian. Many integrate faith into their rainbow ‘speak’, skipping no beat between the Cross and their place on the ‘gender spectrum’. A host of possibilities come next: abstinence, sexual activity, or exclusive same-gender friendships (staving off sex until...) Confusing. Conservatives tend to disagree with them but sympathize: ‘You have suffered, we’ve hurt you through reparative therapy, and now we know that you cannot change. Do what you must...’

They roll their eyes at persons who claim ‘healing’; in truth, some who make such claims seem sincere yet implausible, as if their evidently wounded humanity is split from their spiritual enthusiasm. We witness hope and ticking bombs.

Chastity Founded on Reality

Jesus-centered chastity makes a way in this wilderness. Why? Chastity demands Reality: how the One God of the universe made us and how He redeems us. That’s why chastity is always preceded by prudence (knowing Reality and making wise decisions based on it), by justice (giving others their due based on Reality, which is significant in the sexual sphere: how many times do we applaud one ‘coming out’ as (s)he throws his or her family under the bus?), by fortitude (being true to Reality under fire, even the threat of death), and temperance, the inspired ordering of all of our passions, not just sexual ones. This temperate ordering must be Spirit-filled, founded on Reality: Creator God helps His creatures to become the sexual beings He made us to be.

Chastity—the ordering of sexual desire—is a subset of temperance. Rightly understood in virtue’s ‘pecking order’, chastity is more a fruit of good human and spiritual formation than its centerpiece. Yet without ongoing growth in chastity, the very powers that create life can confuse, divide, and destroy life. In this, our common enemy has been most successful. It’s time to throw him under the bus.

Winning the War of Words

When we wise up to real chastity, we win. We win the war of words by naming things according to Reality. We



no longer confuse anyone with LGBT+ language. Our words describe moving toward God's goal for every man and woman: chastity, the integration of who we are—male and female made in His image. Chastity silences 'gay versus straight' chatter, 'heterosexual versus homosexual' jargon. We are simply men and women becoming chaste.

We win the messy culture battles concerning 'reparative' therapy and the question: 'Can the homosexual change?' The 'homosexual' does not exist in God's anthropology, only persons with certain vulnerabilities. And 'reparative therapy', coined by Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, is simply a tool for understanding how some persons, especially males, become disintegrated in their sexual selves. The goal remains chastity, and one should be free to pursue whatever course of clinical and pastoral action (s)he desires in the quest to become more integrated.

Jesus is the author and finisher of chastity; He is our goal, not a treatment. We seek first His glorious Kingdom (Matt. 6:33) and He adds to us progress in the ordering of our desires. Sanctification, growth in holiness, becoming whole—all such language applies. Chastity is multi-orbed: at once psychological and spiritual, cognitive and emotional, restrained and exuberant.

A Highway for All

After we take back true language, we celebrate the truth that chastity is an equal opportunity offender. Jesus-

seekers can and must walk together on a trajectory toward wholeness. There is no 'wounded' versus 'whole': we are all perpetrators and victims, all disintegrated creatures, and thus in need of humbling ourselves so we can take steps together toward chastity.

Growth in chastity takes a lifetime. There is no end, just growing integration until we see Him face-to-face. Rather than discourage us, chastity can free us from disparaging our progress in ordering desire. We cannot, and indeed should not claim absolute wholeness. That belies our still fallen state—disordered desire lessens and is redirected but is never immaculate. We err in claiming deliverance from the heart's ragged edges. Newness of life frees us to see the dirt and to say it, thereby taking ground in chastity and reflecting Him more fully in our sexual selves, one day at a time.

In truth, certain wounds and deficits take longer to resolve. Rather than vex us, we must learn to thank God for our fallen depths. How else would we have learned to trust Jesus and others? How else would the Cross have become our center? I thank God for how same-sex attraction became for me ground that drinks rain from heaven—the fracture that invites divine favor, not shame or self-hate. Growth in chastity involves knowing our 'stuff' and allowing Jesus to train us in proper disciplines that strengthen us in core weakness.

Miracles on the Way

Yet the lifetime plan does not mean we do not expect miracles! Do not forget that we walk with Spirited Jesus who helps us in our weakness and will surprise us with little 'grace-lets' that clear the path. In one area of sexual conflict, I was handed a small radiant cross by Him who said: 'Grasp this whenever that fear grips you.' He delivered me as I picked up my cross. I am free of that fear.

On the path, He is mighty to invite us into greater wholeness. Always. As this involves moral maturation, we have a hand in cooperating with His directives for our chastity. He gives us the dignity of ongoing choice as to whether we will take the next steps in our integration. There is always more integration because there is always more of Jesus to discover: more mercy that unblocks us and frees us to aspire to what would have been unimaginable to us months earlier. He is only good and always present in love to help us to take the next steps.

The Gospel at Stake

On chaste solid ground, we the Church must resist the worldly pull to assimilate LGBT+ reality. Again, we must



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kindly refuse to think and speak in LGBT+ categories. We engage with persons, not fake anthropologies. Heed the demise of historic Protestantism in America! Whenever one of these once proud denominations, beginning with Episcopalians, began to ordain 'gay' clergy or perform 'gay' weddings, their death knell was assured. Each 'gay-affirming' Protestant group in America is in free fall. Such compromise signals inner corruption and a distorted Gospel held out to the world.

Most seekers do not want to be assuaged in their compromised lives; they want strong medicine. We seek the Savior because we know we need salvaging, not placating. When the Church dulls her moral clarity in order to gain the 'world', she loses both the world and her own soul. People do not buy a discounted Gospel and Jesus won't tolerate a Church that prostitutes herself to gain the divided. Church, let's embrace the divided, turn together, and proceed toward wholeness.

Witnesses

Lastly, chastity must involve witnesses and walking partners. We become chaste together, with pastors, counselors, and Christian friends on whom we rely as we encourage one another in chastity. Let's tap into the powerful resource of the 'one another' in our quest for integration! This is our greatest need. We know little about the beauty of chastity because we rarely hear witnesses of real broken lives whom Jesus met and integrated into life-giving community.

We counter deception by truth: embodying and declaring the good news of chastity! We who once squandered life and now create and protect it need to tell others. We who like the Samaritan woman welcomed Jesus' 'living water' must release 'the streams of living water that now flow from within us' (Jn. 7:37, 38). Spring up, O well, in praise of Jesus, His Body, and the lives He is making chaste! **DSM**



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Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

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