

My Catholic Morals! Study Group

Session 6 - Chastity, Purity, Affection, and Marital Love

Pre-meeting Prep

Participants should be asked to read Chapter Six of the *My Catholic Morals!* book prior to this meeting.

5 minutes - Gather

Snacks and informal social time as people arrive. Try to be punctual and gather everyone together no longer than 5 minutes after the scheduled starting time.

5-10 minutes - Opening prayer and Scripture

Everyone sits quietly as the leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and then invites a period of silence in the following way:

Let us quiet ourselves as we begin this study of our glorious Catholic morals together. "Lord, as we sit here for a minute in silence, help each one of us to bring our own questions, concerns, fears, and joys to You. Help us, in this moment of silence, to be attentive to Your gentle voice speaking to us, directing us, and calling us to a deeper faith."

Take about a minute in silence with eyes closed so that each person can speak to our Lord about their own particular cares and concerns.

Leader reads the following invitation:

Let us ponder the Word of God. Let us reflect upon our own faith journey with the following questions: Do I believe? How deep is my faith? Am I open to letting God speak to me? Am I open to the Word of God and willing to let God's truth sink in more deeply? Am I willing to let this new faith change my life?

The leader of the session prayerfully reads the following Scriptures, one at a time, pausing for about 30 seconds between each verse:

Exodus 20:14: You shall not commit adultery.

Exodus 20:17: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Matthew 5:27-28: You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Hebrews 13:4: Let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge the immoral and adulterers.

Romans 13:13-14: ...let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.

Revelations 14:1-4: Then I looked and there was the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of rushing water or a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. They were singing [what seemed to be] a new hymn before the throne, before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn this hymn except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been ransomed from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women; they are virgins and these are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been ransomed as the firstfruits of the human race for God and the Lamb.

Leader then says: ***Let us take a moment in silence to reflect upon these words.*** (a minute of silence)

The Leader invites everyone to listen quietly as the following prayer is prayed:

Lord, fill us with the gift of true purity of heart. Help us to see all people as you see them and to treat them with dignity and respect.

Lord, please be with every married couple and help them to discover Your love in their marriage. May every spouse grow in love of the other, laying down their lives in imitation of Your selfless love.

Dear Lord, please grant to us, and to the whole world, the gift of chastity. Remove all lusts and disordered passions from our lives and the lives of all, replacing these sins with the love of Your Heart.

We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The prayer time concludes with everyone professing the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He

rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

45-50 minutes - Discussion questions

Each person should be invited to share something or ask a question if he/she chooses regarding the questions/discussion starters below. Go through one question at a time, and give each person an opportunity to say something if he/she chooses. Avoid having one or two persons dominate the discussion. Go around the circle and do not be afraid to share! Your insights might assist someone else in their understanding of the topics. Your question might very well be the same question someone else has. Some of the questions below will invite a personal sharing; other questions will invite you to share with others what you read in Chapter Six. The goal is to share personally and to make sure that the faith of our Church is clearly expressed and understood by all.

1. What does it mean to be a “sexual being?” How is our love expressed through our sexuality in various ways to various people in our lives?
2. What is the “Universal Call to Chastity?” How is it that we are all called to chastity? How is chastity different from celibacy?
3. How do husband and wife live chastely?
4. There are many temptations to abuse sexuality. Discuss any of the following abuses in a holy and healthy way: adultery, fornication, free union, polygamy, masturbation, and prostitution.
5. There are three areas involving chastity and marital love that require careful and respectful discussion. Discuss the following areas in the light of our faith, being careful to be respectful to the sensitivity of these areas:
 1. Divorce - Though it is God’s intention and design that marriage be for life, divorce is a reality in many lives. For those who are comfortable, feel free to share any experiences of the causes and/or effects of divorce. Discuss also the responsibility of spouses who enter into divorce seeking God’s will wholeheartedly. Discuss, especially, Canon 1153 as quoted in the book.
 2. Contraception - This is a teaching of our faith that is clear and definitive but is also exceptionally difficult for many to accept and live. Discuss the reasons for that. Discuss, especially, the ways in which our culture influences this practice. Also make sure that those who have questions or are confused about the teachings of our faith understand our teachings clearly. Discuss clearly natural family planning and how this is a faithful embrace of God’s plan.
 3. Homosexual practices and homosexual orientation - In a very respectful way, discuss the topic of homosexuality with these questions:
 - i. Is it wrong to have a homosexual attraction?

- ii. Is it contrary to God's plan for sexuality to act on a homosexual attraction?
 - iii. What is the ideal approach to take when a loved one is struggling with these tendencies?
 - iv. What does our faith reveal about marriage being incompatible with same-sex marriage?
6. Covetousness - The Sixth Commandment forbids certain sexual activities, and the Ninth Commandment goes much further, forbidding interior sexual desires that are contrary to chastity and our vocation. Discuss the following:
 1. Read the *Catechism* #2520 and discuss it.
 2. How should one live and act in modesty?
 3. What cultural and social influences in our day and age make covetousness a strong temptation?
7. Discuss any further thoughts on living chastity and purity in a holy and healthy way. Too often we see these Commandments as things we cannot do. Discuss ways that we should see them as invitations to embrace wonderful virtues that help us respect the dignity of others and ourselves.

20 minutes - Final Reflections and sharing

Go around and give each person an opportunity to share what might have stood out the most to them from the discussion of the night or what left them the most confused, so as to gain further clarity or insight from others.

5 minutes - Closing prayer:

Leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and invites a minute of silence with all eyes closed. Each person should reflect upon what was discussed, especially what stood out to him/her the most.

Leader then prays the following prayer:

Dear Lord, we thank You for the powerful gift of our sexuality. We do acknowledge its power and influence on our lives. Help us to always live lives of purity and chastity, respecting ourselves and all those with whom we relate and encounter.

Lord, please free our world of impurity and sexual sins. Help all people to live lives of order and self-control.

Bless every marriage, especially those that struggle the most. Help husbands and wives to live out their marriage vows in the way that You call them to live.

Help those who struggle with sexual sins and tendencies. Be their strength and their consolation in their times of need.

Help us to all be merciful to others, just as You were merciful to the adulterous woman. May we imitate Your perfect compassion and mercy, dear Lord.

Jesus, we trust in You.

Leader then invites everyone present to offer their own prayer in the following way (Note: This can be done out loud, but it might be preferable if it's done in silence at the discretion of the leader):

Let us now each bring our own personal concerns before our Lord, trusting that He hears us and knows all we need. Let us entrust these prayers to Him with full confidence that He desires to take control.

(Take a minute of silence for each person to speak to God about their own personal needs).

Leader then invites everyone to close with the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.