

Talking about human sexuality and chastity may not be easy for you. Here are some resources that may be helpful.

TEXT RESOURCES

- *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*
(www.vatican.va)
- *The Catholic Vision of Love*
(Our Sunday Visitor Press)
- *Growing in Love*
(Harcourt Religion Publishing)
- *Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living*
(USCCB Press)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- www.usccb.org/laity/marriage
US Bishops' Office on Marriage and Laity. Resources on family life, human sexuality, and more.
- www.usccb.org/education/chasteliving.pdf
US Bishops' curriculum on chastity and sexual education.
- www.nfcym.org/resources/pastoralresponse/tlw/index.htm
True Love Waits, a national youth ministry resource on chastity and sexuality education for teens.
- www.nfpandmore.org
Information on Natural Family Planning, along with resources on sexuality and more.

Talking With Youth About Human Sexuality, Chastity, and More

A Guide For Parents

Support Guidance Formation



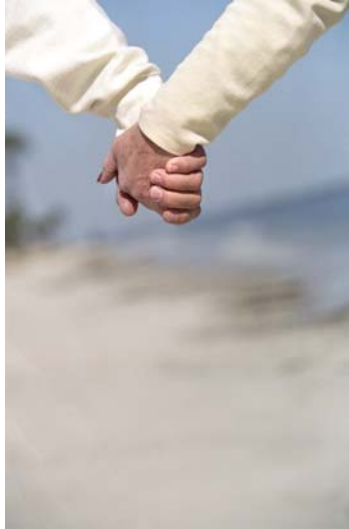
**Diocese of Rochester
Department of Evangelization and Catechesis
2008**

Helping Teens Live Chastely

Start talking to your children early! It's never too early and it's never too late!

- Teach your children why we believe what we believe.
- Present what you believe about human sexuality and chastity as a unified couple. Don't contradict each other.
- Discuss your expectations regarding behavior.
- Help teens avoid situations where drugs and alcohol are part of the culture—and tell them why. Drugs and alcohol lower one's ability to respond to difficult situations.
- Talk about what qualities teens should look for in their relationships in general and in their dates in particular.
- Share what you believe about marriage, about life partners and about the demands of creating relationships that reflect the love of God.
- Talk about how teens can approach the subject of chastity with their dates and how they can respond to peer pressure.
- Give your children an opportunity to talk to you before and after their dates. Listen to their questions and help them respond to peer pressure and their own mixed feelings.

Encourage your teen to attend retreats, youth events, and mass regularly. It's easier to take the road less traveled if you are in the company of others who believe as you do!



What Teens Want to Know About... God's Invitation to Love: What we Believe



Remember Genesis 1:26. "We are all made in the 'image and likeness of God.'" This wonderful imagery demonstrates that our bodies, minds and souls reflect God and God's love every day. Each of us possesses human dignity and each of us deserves to be treated as a unique and special creation made by and for God.

Human sexuality is a part of God's gift to us and it is to be treasured, respected and nurtured. Our human sexuality is part of our identity and a precious gift to be lived out as part of our lives as Catholic Christians responding to the Gospel. Understanding *how* to live it out maturely is a lifelong task. Our Church places great value on sexual intimacy. Our teachings uphold the idea that sexual intimacy is a joyful and holy union of two married people and that marital union reflects the glory of God.

We understand and live this reality by speaking of "falling in love". By that we mean surrendering wholly to the other, becoming one in each other and being fully united with the other. It is more than an emotion; it is a new reality. The Church believes in that new reality, and further believes that sexual intimacy is a gift *for* that new reality. It is part of God's plan for us that we experience the full joy of intimate relationship in marriage recognized and blessed by the Church.

Marriage is a relationship based on the sure knowledge that the other is made in the image and likeness of God; that one's spouse is of God. It is in that relationship of mutual respect, mutual love and mutual otherness that we can reflect the perfection of God's love.

Even as we recognize the holiness of married love and sexual intimacy within marriage, the Church also recognizes the reality of sexual urges and sexual temptations. For that reason, the Church identifies chastity as a virtue that helps us live a life of temperance.

Chastity



Chastity is a virtue that helps us do what is right and good in areas of relationship and love. It is part of learning to see the world through the eyes of Christ. Growing in our understanding of living a chaste life is part of our life long process of growing in faith. Chastity is rooted in our spiritual hope that the Good News will change every aspect of our lives. Chastity helps us to live out our discipleship in the world. Chastity promotes the full integration of sexuality within people and it is a virtue to be respected and nurtured.

What is A Chaste Life?

Living a chaste life is living a life in purity not only sexually but also in thought, word, and action. Out of the respect for the dignity of all humans and our human sexuality we Catholics believe that the fullness of sexual expression happens within marriage. Chastity keeps love pure, honest, and faithful out of respect for our own human sexuality and the sexuality of others by holding onto our sexual gift until marriage.

Marriage

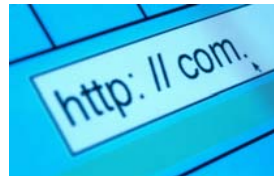
Husbands and wives enter into the bond of matrimony not only out of respect and commitment, but also to publicly proclaim the “realness” of their love. Couples’ vocation to marriage facilitates the selfless giving, truth, honesty and faithfulness that make the physical sexual expression of love **real**. A chaste lifestyle culminates in that **reality** of love through fidelity and covenant between the spouses.



We Catholics believe that the relationship of a husband and wife reflects Christ’s love for us. It is a pure, selfless, and honest love that delights both us and God.

Life Today

Today’s world challenges our understanding of the value of chastity. Everyday, we are flooded with images, concepts, and pressures from television, peers, advertising, and magazines. Teens are especially vulnerable to these images and in fact, many of these images are directed right at our teens. How can we help our teens face the challenges they meet every day? How can we help them understand the value of chastity?



What should Parents know?

Parents and guardians have the wonderful responsibility of raising their children as faithful people. At Baptism, parents promise that they will bring their children up in the faith and teach them to love God and one another. Helping children develop a healthy understanding of human sexuality is one of the important tasks parents face.



What’s a Parent to do?

1. Show teens what healthy relationships look like. Talk about how you respect one another in every way in your relationship.
2. Talk to your teens! Even though they may seem uncomfortable or dismissive of what you have to say, understand that they really *want* to hear why you believe what you believe about healthy relationships.
3. Establish guidelines that reinforce your values. Help teens understand how the clothes they wear, the television they watch, the books they read, and the company they keep can help them respond to the challenges of everyday life.
4. Give them language to talk about what we Show teens what healthy relationships look like. Talk about how believe:
 - a. “Everybody’s doing it...”
“I’m not doing it because I don’t believe it’s the right thing to do.”
 - b. “If you love me...”
“If you love me, you won’t pressure me to do something that I don’t want to do.”
 - c. “But we’re in love...”
“People who are in love respect the needs and values of the other person. Please respect what I believe.”
 - d. “Don’t you love me?”
“Yes, but I love and respect myself enough to know this isn’t the right decision for me now.”
5. Encourage group dates and events.
6. Use television shows, stories on the Internet or in the news to talk about your values.
7. Encourage modest and appropriate dress and language and model it yourself.

What are some common questions from parents and teens?

How can I encourage chastity if I didn't practice it before marriage?

As powerful as an "I waited until marriage story is," the reality is that not all parents have lived that experience. The power of your life's experience—even if you didn't practice chastity—can be an invaluable tool when talking to your teen. The important thing, however, is to communicate that you have learned from that experience and hope to share that wisdom with your child. Know your limits and boundaries in sharing your experiences before talking to your teen.

How do I turn around an impure relationship if I haven't been practicing chaste living?

The first step in creating a chaste lifestyle is to remember that we enter into relationships to please God. Think of it this way: when you go to the movies, God is in the theater with you. When you're in the car, God's in the back seat. Secondly, learn more about what chaste living really means. Learn about how we value relationships and how we uphold our sexual gifts.

Are Abstinence and Chastity the same thing?

Not at all! Abstinence is saying "no" to something for a reason. We abstain from meat on Fridays. We can abstain from snacks before bed. Priests and religious abstain from sexual intercourse as a sign of their commitment to their ministry. Chastity, on the other hand, is a virtue. Chastity is the virtue of understanding and respecting one's sexuality to such a great degree that one waits for the intimate act of sexual intercourse until the appropriate time and place - in marriage.

