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The importance of sexual purity for marriage

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SEXUAL PURITY FOR MARRIAGE

Znaczenie czystości seksualnej dla małżeństwa

Artykuł podejmuje próbę ukazania znaczenia czystości seksualnej dla małżeństwa. Czystość seksualna polega na rozumnym i wolnym zintegrowaniu płciowości ciała ze sferą duchową osoby tak, aby przejawy seksualności, różne w każdym okresie życia, były wyrazem afirmacji godności osobowej (własnej i innych osób), kierowania się miłością oraz szacunkiem dla życia ludzkiego. Tkwiąca w człowieku potrzeba miłości oblubieńczej, potrzeba oddania się drugiej osobie jest głębsza od popędu seksualnego i związana jest przede wszystkim z duchową naturą osoby. Dar z siebie w miłości posiada prawdziwą wartość, gdy jest całkowity i nieodwołalny, a to zakłada, że również ciało integralnie należy do tego daru. Zachowywanie dziewictwa przed ślubem jest wyrazem pragnienia oddania się ukochanemu człowiekowi w małżeństwie w sposób wyłączny i całościowy. Sens dziewictwa wyraża się w tym, że służy ono miłości i wyraża pragnienie oddania się bez reszty i na zawsze ukochanej osobie w ramach nierozzerwalnego związku małżeńskiego.

True marital community is based on disinterested mutual gift which the spouses give of themselves. An interpersonal relationship, resulting from the gift of one person to another, is referred to as the “bond of Holy Communion”. The reciprocal self-giving is a mainstay of the nuptial love – it is to take a good person as a multidimensional good and to give self as a response to it. To un-

derstand the importance and the value of other person's gift, it is needed to "penetrate into an existence and good that each person is"¹.

The person and the community

Spiritual life includes personal dignity, rationality, freedom and human physicality – those features are the basis for understanding the uniqueness and self belonging of a person. Only the same person may dispose and decide about oneself. These categories may suggest that the person is a "closed whole", to which nothing more can be "added". In addition to these characteristics, a person is characterized as an ontological openness – despite its self belonging, a person is always open to external reality.

The man co-existing with others enters into the interpersonal relationships. The second "you" is constitutive for a personal life of my "I" because a person becomes "I" only in the term "you" – "from the second »you« comes to me a »call«, the spoken »words« that create for me the opportunity to term the essence of my existence"². This means that in a relationship with another person, a man realize oneself.

At the meeting with another person: the rationality of human nature, awareness of their own existence and self-determination are being manifested and carried out in full³; because only in the context of a "question" and an "answer" the man begins to realize his freedom. The realization of human freedom takes place in interpersonal relationships because freedom is embedded in the community life and it manifests itself as an element of ordering it. Freedom is also a source from which the ability of getting into relationships comes⁴.

The capability of self-giving comes from the fact of the man's personal character – "what can be described as a "person's quality" is being seen as a »gift«"⁵. The structure of such person includes self-ownership and self-governing which participate in self-determination – it means they condition

¹ K. Wojtyła, Rodzina jako „*communio personarum*” (Family as a *communio personarum*), „Ateneum Kapłańskie” 1974, vol. 83, no 3, p. 358.

² Ibidem, p. 339.

³ W. Gasidło, Z zagadnień etyki małżeńskiej i rodzinnej (From issues of marital and family ethics), Kraków 1990, p. 43.

⁴ M. Nowak, Podstawy pedagogiki otwartej. Ujęcie dynamiczne w inspiracji chrześcijańskiej (Bases of opened pedagogy. Dynamic recognition in the Christian inspiration), Lublin 2000, p. 336.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 309.

conscious, rational and free “self-giving”. Therefore, only the person can dedicate oneself who possesses oneself.

On the basis of the receptiveness of one person to another the importance of the community, which is a relation between people, can be understood. The people’s community (the co-existence with another person) is an existential process because “two people, so active and responsible parties, should be connected in a dialogue in the »existence communication«”⁶. The community has a value in itself. It arises due to the people’s good which is also its purpose.

When it comes to realize self opportunities resulting from being a member of particular gender, the relationships with someone of the opposite sex becomes particularly important. Man is borne out by making real contacts with woman, while woman finds herself in man’s face. Thanks to bipolar genders, man and woman are focused on each other in a characteristic way. They are also ready to create a specific unity of life unparalleled among people of the same sex⁷. In view of that mutual interdependence, a marriage constitutes a privileged place where a couple recognizes each other as a people, caters a deep desire for unity and takes its mission of transmitting life. The marriage is a way to enable the fulfillment of human being throughout its life.

The essence of love – as a gift

The reality of human love is very rich and complex. Nowadays, love is surrounded by many misunderstandings, myths and distortions. The word ‘love’ has many different meanings, particularly with regard to the relationship between man and woman.

Love is the “first and essential dynamism of human being”⁸. The true love is a gift of self which opens a person to others. By opening up the second “I”, man meets his personal existence – “a person finds himself or herself not in a clo-

⁶ Ibidem, p. 306.

⁷ M. Marczewski, „Sakrament najpierwotniejszy”. Sakramentalność małżeństwa w ujęciu Jana Pawła II („The oldest sacrament”. Sacramentalness of the marriage in apprehending John Paul II), „Ethos” 1998, no 3(43), pp. 94-95.

⁸ M. i W. Chudzi, Małżeństwo i rodzina w perspektywie stabilności i rozwoju kultury (The marriage and the family in the prospect of the stability and the development of the culture), in: Jan Paweł II, „Familiaris consortio”. Tekst i komentarze, Lublin 1987, p. 170.

sure of his or her own »I« but just in an opening up the second »I«⁹. To love is to “be ever more human”¹⁰, because love is an act that most fully develops the existence of a person – “a man lives his humanity, if it is carried by love”¹¹.

The man is being most fully updated by love. The man exists to love and to be loved. “The man cannot live without love. The man remains an incomprehensible being for himself, his life is meaningless if he will not encounter the Love, if he will not meet the Love, if he will not touch the Love and make It his own, if he will not participate intimately in it”¹². According to Karol Wojtyła the love in an individual entity shapes itself by preference, desire and goodwill¹³. The love is people’s mutual reference which is based on the specified attitude to the welfare of a person. The reference to good starts by liking (to please means to present self as some sort of good). The predilection of a particular person is falling in love. When a person is in love the cognitive acts are directed through the emotional and volitional factors. An emotional reaction may cause a forging of penchants when it sees through it the value of a person who does not have such features in fact¹⁴. Therefore, it is important to discover the truth about the person you like.

Human, as a man or as a woman, is “a limited and insufficient being for itself”¹⁵ so it needs the opposite sex as a supplement to its existence. The desire to complete a ‘scarcity’ of self which is being discovered, is manifested in the pursuit to the other person – it is a desire of good which can be seen in this person. It indicates on a love of lust which is characterized by a hankering for own good: “I want you because you are the good for me”¹⁶. The essence and the aim of the love of lust is the unity of people (the union in love).

The love of lust does not exhaust the essence of love between people. In addition to the desire of another person as a good for oneself, it is must be also required to desire the good for that person. Therefore, love must be kind

⁹ A. J. Nowak, Wartość seksualna w miłości (Sexual value in love), in: Miłość w postawie ludzkiej (Love in the human attitude), ed. W. Słomka, Lublin 1993, p. 253.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 251.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 253.

¹² John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptor hominis* (4.02.1979), n. 10.

¹³ K. Wojtyła, Miłość i odpowiedzialność (Love and the responsibility), Lublin 1986, p. 69.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 70-74.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 75.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 76.

which means selflessness : “I wish everything that is good for you”¹⁷. Thus, it remains in a direct connection with friendship. The kind love is most likely to approach to a person full of love, so it comes to a relation based on the mutual self-giving.

Love between a man and a woman comes normally from a sexual instinct. It has its direct consequences in the survival of human sexual values of an opposite gender. Once it is associated with the body of that person and it shows a significant orientation to use, then an experience is dominated by a sensual desire. The sensuality has mainly the lustful attitude – a person of the opposite sex is recognized as an object of desire because of its sexual value. The sensuality by itself is ‘blind’ to the person, so it must be included in a complete and mature reference to this person because he or she will not be the love¹⁸.

When the content of an experience does not directly refer to the “body”, the experience is expressed in emotions. An earnestness is essentially free from the bias on the use because an emotional experience is dominated by a desire of closeness, affection, intimacy and exclusivity. An emotional involvement to the other individual may cause that the person who is in love may add different values to the person he or she is in love with. That person may not necessarily have those personal qualities. Therefore there is a certain ambiguity – on the one hand, a human looks for the spiritual proximity and the sensitivity of the beloved person. On the other hand, the human is far away from the beloved person because he or she “does not live the beloved person’s true value”¹⁹ but the ideal values attributed to that person, which are often a fiction. This dissonance may be the cause of many disappointments.

If love remains only the sensuality and (or) emotions, it will not be true a true and mature love. Love must be based on the spiritual element of man, in which exist the powers able to apprehend the truth and the realization of freedom. The sensorial and emotional reaction to opposite gender person, which we have presented, should be related to the truth than man is a person. The person’s value is connected with its entire being, and not with sex only. Therefore, the values of a person exceeds its sex values regardless of whether they are rooted in sensuality or to man’s moral earnestness. Love in its full sense is

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 78.

¹⁸ Ibidem, pp. 95-98.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 100.

not only a feeling nor an excite of senses, but it is a virtue which is a genuine commitment to person's freedom coming from the truth about oneself²⁰.

Love is the "commitment to freedom" in relation to the other person, which is expressed in a rational and free dedication of oneself. In an order of nature we can no talk about giving a person to another person, especially in a physical sense, because each person is an incommunicable being, it is its own master (*sui iuris*) and cannot be released to another person. However, what is not possible in the order of nature, may make the order of love and moral sense. True love 'pulls out' the person of its natural man's inviolability and makes him or her want to give self to the person he or she loves.

By putting yourself in love to another person (man, God), a special form of love, defined as nuptial love, is being created. It consists of boundless dedication of oneself and taking another person's dedication. The spousal love is an adopting of a person as a multi-dimensional good and it responds to that by the bestowal of oneself. In its essence it is an intimate 'adherence' to the beloved 'you' which is associated with a sense of responsibility and a concern for the true good of that person. The most appropriate term for spousal love is , therefore, a word 'gift'. The gift is associated with people and it is the union creator. It gives something to someone, but for love we do not give 'something' but the whole person as oneself.

A sincere gift of self becomes more important in marriage, it stands behind it bringing in a particular dimension of love. Love is the principle and the power of the conjugal community. It allows total dedication to another person. Marriage is a union of two people who dedicate self to each other and who take the gift from the person they love . At this level a community of love, which is expressed in "we", is being created. Moving from "I" to "we", the spouses are loyal in every area of life. They work together on their aims and show each other care and respect. The first marriage's task (also family's task) is "to live the reality of communion faithfully, in a constant effort to develop an authentic unity of people"²¹ says John Paul II.

The spouses as the subjects of conjugal communion, which starts with a gift from one person to another, do not find themselves as just "exceeding themselves, that is through a sincere gift of oneself for the family"²². The conjugal

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 110.

²¹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (22.11.1981), n. 18.

²² K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, op. cit., p. 142.

bond comes into the parental bond – to retain the marital community's identity it is necessary to cross it towards the communion of the family.

The essence of sexual purity

Sexual purity is a rational and free integration of sexuality of the body with the spiritual sphere of a person, so that aspects of sexuality, different in every life period, are an expression of affirmation of personal dignity (own and others) and guidance by love and respect for human life.

It should be noted that the sexual purity is often mistakenly understood as merely abstaining from sexual intercourse. Equating the sexual purity only with an abstinence is only a part of a concept. What is more, it results in presenting this value only in terms of renunciation. Life in chastity is very positive and it is a creative integration of sexuality with all spheres of man (physical, mental and spiritual). It is expressed in a conscious and voluntary control of sexual instinct, according to the state of person's life and its growth.

Therefore, chastity is a morally correct reference to own and somebody else's sexuality, with a dignity and affirmation of the body and the whole person²³. Depending on the context of life (marriage, celibacy) the realization of the sexual purity looks different, the obligations are different. Till the outcome of the way of life – life in a marriage or in unmarried state – the purity is usually identified with the virginity keeping.

During the premarital period of life the purity is being shaped by abstaining from the lustful passions. Such self-control is assumed to avoid the occasions provoking to immoral behave and to have the ability to overcome the impulses of sexual instinct. "Disorder in the use of sex tends progressively to the destruction of the ability to love the other person; instead of making a pleasure a sincere gift of oneself, it is made an object of sexuality and it brings other people to the level of their objects of satisfaction"²⁴. Keeping the purity in youth can enable a correct sexual development, it prepares to a proud life in marriage or in unmarried state.

Living a life of sexual purity achieves its special meaning for people being married. An expression "marital purity" itself can cause confusion and distrust. A comprehension can often be limited to cursory statements about certain stan-

²³ S. Nowosad, *Cnota czystości we współczesnym nauczaniu Kościoła* (Virtue of the cleanness in contemporary teaching the Church), Warszawa 1994, p. 175.

²⁴ G. Buccellato, *Błogosławieństwo czystości. Wychowanie młodych do czystości* (Blessing of the cleanness. Upbringing young to the cleanness), Warszawa 1999, p. 36.

dards of behavior, usually negative behavior (“Do not...”). Marriage is the area of the realization of sexuality in its physical and spiritual meaning: “Sexuality being seen in all its truth, always in relation to love, and further in the context of an integral vision of human person, is being realized by loving another person and by giving oneself as a gift”²⁵. Sexuality is a power tending to the unification of people in a spousal love. Marital purity can be generally described as an assignment of sexuality, especially a sexual desire of each spouse, to the superior value of which is love.

The sexual purity but the marriage

Keeping the virginity before marriage is an expression of a desire to give oneself to the beloved person in an exclusive and comprehensive way. A sexual inviolability is a proof, an expression and a sign that “the only »you« can enter the deepest secrets of my being, only privileged »you« will be blessed with my love, only »you« can fill me”²⁶.

An inherent need of spousal love, the need to give oneself to another person is deeper than the sexual instinct and it is associated primarily with the spiritual nature of man²⁷. Giving oneself is in a close connection with love in which people give themselves to each other and accept it. Love creates a special tie between man and woman in terms of the diversity of their genders – “the ability to love as a gift of oneself has its »embodiment« in the nuptial character of the body in which there is a masculinity and femininity”²⁸. The sincere gift of self reveals a physical dimension of masculinity or femininity but also mental and spiritual dimension. An affirmation and accepting the other person should not only embrace its body but also include a personal “inside”.

The sexual purity integrates the person internally and subjects the domination instinct sphere to a rational will. With the purity the body receives a spousal dimension. In the context of spousal love this makes the body a sign of

²⁵ S. Nowosad, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

²⁶ H. Łuczak, *Dorastanie do miłości (Growing up to love)*, Warszawa 1989, p. 136.

²⁷ K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i...*, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

²⁸ Papieska Rada ds. Rodziny, *Ludzka płciowość: prawda i znaczenie. Wskazania dla wychowania w rodzinie (The Pontifical Council for the Family, Human sexuality: the truth and meaning. Recommendations for bringing up in the family)*, Łomianki 1996, n. 10.

a person²⁹. The nuptial meaning of the body in its masculinity or femininity is subjected to an initial innocence by which John Paul II understands the special “purity of a heart”³⁰. The purity is also an essential condition for the sincere character of love because it excludes an utilitarian approach to life and an instrumentalization of any person, including an objectification of its body.

In love the gift of self has a real value when it is complete and irreversible. It assumes that the body integrally belongs to it. To make the gift of self full and complete, ie carnal and spiritual at the same time, there is a need to “posses oneself”. Man must possess oneself, and that means as much as a unity, because the unity is one of the basic features of the human person³¹. The virginity and the sexual purity, which indicate the integrity of physicality and spirituality, bear testimony to the unity of man – “a person living in chastity preserves the integrity of the forces of life and love which are in its body. This ensures the unity of a person”³². The spousal relationship derives its unique profile from a sexual intercourse, which is a complete and irreversible gift of self. This gift is finally expressed as a gift of one’s body in the sexual cohabitation which is commonly called the “giving in to bodily passions”.

The meaning of virginity is expressed in the fact that it is for love and it expresses the desire of giving oneself completely and forever to a beloved person in an indissoluble marriage. Virginity means that a person has never “belonged” to anyone and that is why it is an expression of total and exclusive gift of oneself for the beloved person. Keeping the virginity for the spouse that allows you to make a priceless gift for the beloved person in the wedding day – “every delicious fruit [...] for you, my beloved, I used to hide”³³.

In a situation in which one of the spouses has not kept its virginity till marriage (he or she had a pre-marital sex with someone else earlier), spouse’s virginity may have an educational meaning. It does not mean, however, that the lack of spouse’s virginity must become an object of exhortations and instructions. The importance of virginity and sexual purity for people’s love should

²⁹ J. Bajda, *Człowiek jest powołany* (The man is appointed), W: *Człowiek – Osoba – Płeć* (Man – Person – Sex), red. M. Wójcik, Łomianki 1998, p. 78.

³⁰ John Paul II, *Mężczyznę i niewiastę stworzył ich. Odkupienie ciała a sakramentalność małżeństwa* (The man and the woman created them. Redeemed the body but the sacramental-ness of the marriage), *Liberia Editrice Vaticana* 1986, p. 65.

³¹ A. J. Nowak, op. cit., p. 251.

³² Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, n. 2338.

³³ *Pieśń nad pieśniami* 7, 14.

be shown through the testimony of life. Purity and virginity uphold the dignity and freedom of others, reveal the truth about the human body and show the true sense of sexual desire. Therefore, they protect an authentic, not falsified love and allow its development in marriage.

An appropriate chastity and love education prepare to live a life of virginity before marriage. It should show and sensitize the value of purity, emphasize the gift of virginity as a life of humility, joy, peace and freedom as a conscious choice of man. That choice means a lack of fear, lack of embarrassment and lack of complexes. An aplomb of a sexual tension and the subordination of dignity's instincts allow the true development of love. Premarital sex hampers that development because it means a lack of control, yielding to momentary desires and disregarding of partner's personal dignity, thereby causing the loss of dedication and selfishness. Abstaining from premarital sexual relations should not be considered as a repression but as an essential condition for personal development and growth of mutual love.

Prenuptial sexual relations bring very serious damage to some people and to future marriage. Quite often an effect of premarital sex is a premarital conception which is the cause of "forced" marriage of people who are not prepared to that. In such marriage (despite the fact that contracting such marriage loses the relevant sense and purpose of matrimony) may be created an atmosphere of hostility which has a bad influence on the unity of both spouses and child's growth. Therefore, the virginity has a great value: "virginity – male as well as female – should be a gift for a beloved man when the final decision was made, for better and worse, in health and disease. Virginity should be a gift for great ideals which require rigor and which are a proof of faith in the only, true love"³⁴.

The ability to sacrificial control of sexual desires and the understanding of the sexual purity development is essential in marriage when in different situations, eg in connection with pregnancy and after childbirth, in an illness or because of other reasons; it will be needed to keep a periodic sexual abstinence. Growing up in a mutual love of keeping the virginity and chastity is the only right path to the future marriage.

From a moral point of view there are no "neutral" or "impartial" sexual acts. It should be noted that love is not the result of sexual contact, but the opposite – the sexual act should be an expression of love. Sexuality in marriage should be a symbol of mature love being expressed in a readiness to sacrifice

³⁴ A. J. Nowak, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

for life and in an openness to have a child. As a sign of boundless dedication, the sexual act is not only the love but it also deepens the unity of two people's free choice³⁵.

If the intercourse does not express it, it levels down the education because it becomes a symbol of an unilateral or mutual play up of two people (in which each of them can be replaced by someone else). Such co-existence in terms of moral aspect expresses a false sign because it is not about expressing the mutual love and openness to procreation. An example of "false sign" is a sexual intercourse with a prostitute, rape, any sexual intercourse without love or enslavement.

Any pre-marital or extra-marital cohabitation is not a symbol of authentic love, but it is an instrumental treatment of other person. It does not represent the true unity of people (we can only talk about a temporary physical and emotional unity), it is also closed to the possibility of parenthood, often by deliberate sterilization by a contraception. In this case, erotic pleasure becomes a purpose in itself and is being looked for at all costs while the other man and its body are objectified and being treated as an instrument.

Marital purity refers to the love between husband and wife, strengthens the unity of loyalty and mutual devotion. Pure love is unbreakable, self-sacrificing and selfless. It is about the involvement in life of both spouses and about the dedication of one to another, without any selfish interests. The chastity brings to the family life "the fruits of placidity and peace. It also helps to address the problems and to overcome selfishness which is the true enemy of love"³⁶.

Conclusions

The marital intercourse should be a gift for the beloved man and it should not be regarded merely as a source of pleasure. There is a fundamental difference in motivation: in the latter case, the behavior is selfish, one person wants to use the other; contrastively, in the first case the person wants to dedicate oneself to the beloved person, so he or she might find joy, stillness of the body and heart. If the sexual contact is to express love, it must become a gift. If it is an act of a "short sexual gratification" it does not have a significant positive impact on personal bond of the spouses³⁷. The sexual act is clean where it is

³⁵ H. Łuczak, op. cit., p. 91.

³⁶ Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae vitae* (25.07.1968), n. 21.

³⁷ K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, op. cit, p. 93.

about love, it expresses the unity of the spouses and it is open to a new life, which does not mean that any intercourse must bear with new life.

Agnieszka Regulska: The importance of sexual purity for marriage

The article is making an attempt to show the significance of the sexual purity for the marriage. Sexual purity is a rational and free integration of sexuality of the body with the spiritual sphere of a person, so that aspects of sexuality, different in every life period, are an expression of affirmation of personal dignity (own and others) and guidance by love and respect for human life. An inherent need of spousal love, the need to give oneself to another person is deeper than the sexual instinct and it is associated primarily with the spiritual nature of man. In love the gift of self has a real value when it is complete and irreversible. It assumes that the body integrally belongs to it. Keeping the virginity before marriage is an expression of a desire to give oneself to the beloved person in an exclusive and comprehensive way. The meaning of virginity is expressed in the fact that it is for love and it expresses the desire of giving oneself completely and forever to a beloved person in an indissoluble marriage.

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