

MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED

February 25, 2018 – Second Sunday of Lent

Spirituality Ponderings Pornography Part III

Fighting the Sin of Pornography

I thought I would end this month's reflection on Pornography with some quotes from Christopher West. He is one of the greatest teachers in our Church today on the Church's teaching on Sex. Quotes from his book ***Good News About Sex and Marriage: Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching*** will be in bold. My commentary will be in regular font.

As a freshman in college, I found myself deeply and painfully confused about my own identity as a man. I couldn't deny the fact that I'd brought much of this pain and confusion upon myself through my sexual attitudes and behaviors. The rampant promiscuity of college dorm life only served to magnify the meaninglessness of it all.

The stories of "sexual conquests" that we all shared (and no doubt exaggerated) as freshman guys made me think more and more about the ugliness of which men are capable. For every "conquest" there was a woman on the other end used and discarded. But no one seemed to care.

It all came to a head for me the night I witnessed a date rape in one of the dorms. (This was a Catholic College, by the

way.) The experience haunted me: How could a man treat a woman as nothing but a "thing" for his sexual kicks? But the more I asked myself this question in reference to what I witnessed, the more I knew I had to direct that same question toward myself.

I've never raped anybody, I thought. But am I much different from that guy in the way I've treated women in my own thoughts and attitudes? Don't I also use my girlfriend for my sexual kicks? When I was finally honest with myself, I had to conclude that I wasn't much better than the rapist.

In this time of deep soul searching, I became angry with God. "You gave men these hormones!" I insisted. "They seem to be getting me any everybody else I know in a heck of a lot of trouble. What am I suppose to do with them. I want to know the truth! What's this sex thing all about? What does it mean to be a man?"

What I ultimately found were the writings of Pope John Paul II. Here is a man who has rethought and re-presented the teachings of the Catholic Church on sex and marriage with profound insight and great originality. His work sets the stage for a new "sexual revolution" that promises to deliver what its precursor couldn't: the true satisfaction of the desire that drives us all—to love and be loved.

He was able to explain the *whys* behind the *whats* of Catholic teaching in a way that

showed the profound beauty of God's reason for creating us male and female in the first place. He radically altered the way I saw myself as a man, the way I looked upon women, the way I understood the Church and God. In short he changed my view of, well, everything.

Inevitably, as I draw from my own experience and what I've learned from John Paul II to explain the Church's teaching, people respond: "I went to Catholic schools my whole life and never heard this. Why not?" Others respond in tears: "If I had only known this earlier in my life, perhaps I would have been spared the pain of so many mistakes."

The Church's teaching on Sex is not something that is meant to bind us and stifle us. It is rather meant to free us to use God's gifts the way He intended them to be used. We all want to live in a world where no one gets hurt and the only way for this to happen is for each of us to treat a person as a person and not as object. It is therefore important to open ourselves up to way God wants us to live our lives. Because we are complicated people, we need to realize that the Church's teachings are something that may seem complicated also and we may have to dive deeper into them in order to understand why the Church teaches what she teaches.

Prayer for Purity: **Mary, Mother most pure, and Joseph, chaste**

guardian of the Virgin, to you I entrust the purity of my soul and body. I beg you to plead with God for me that I may never for the remainder of my life soil my soul by any sin of impurity. I earnestly wish to be pure in thought, word and deed in imitation of your own holy purity. Obtain for me a deep sense of modesty, which will be reflected

in my external conduct. Protect my eyes, the windows of my soul, from anything that might dim the luster of a heart that must mirror only Christ-like purity. And when the "Bread of Angels" becomes my food in Holy Communion, seal my heart forever against the suggestions of sinful pleasures. Finally, may I be among the number of those of whom Jesus

spoke, "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God." Amen.



Breaking Open the Word

February 25, 2018 Second Sunday of Lent Lectionary: 26 Gospel MK 9:2-10

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them. As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

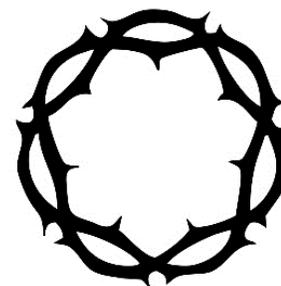
Spiritual Reflection:

"During the most glorious events of our Lord's public life—his transfiguration on Mount Tabor and his entry into Jerusalem—Mary remained hidden. But at times of gravest danger—the flight into Egypt, the way of the cross to Calvary, her sorrowful watch at the foot of the cross, and her vigil in the upper room with the apostles—Mary courageously chose to be present. She did not live for herself, but only for the Lord and his work of redemption."

– Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan

Spiritual Questions:

1. Why did Jesus only show three of disciples the transfiguration?
2. Can you serve God even if someone else seems to be getting special attention?
3. Can you practice your faith like Mary in the difficult times?
4. How can you follow Mary's example?
5. What are you going to do this week to grow in your faith?



Prayers for the Week

PRAYER FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE FAITH

O my Redeemer, will that dreadful time ever come, when but few Christians shall be left who are inspired by the spirit of faith, that time when Thine anger shall be provoked and Thy protection shall be take away from us? Have our vices and our evil lives irrevocably moved Thy justice to take vengeance, perhaps this very day, upon Thy children? O Thou, the beginning and end of our faith, we conjure Thee, in the bitterness of our contrite and humbled hearts, not to suffer the fair light of faith to be

extinguished in us. Remember Thy mercies of old, turn Thine eyes in mercy upon the vineyard planted by Thine own right hand, and watered by the sweat of the Apostles, by the precious blood of countless Martyrs and by the tears of so many sincere penitents, and made fruitful by the prayers of so many Confessors and innocent Virgins. O divine Mediator, look upon those zealous souls who raise their hearts to Thee and pray ceaselessly for the maintenance of that most precious gift of Thine, the true faith. We beseech Thee, O God of justice, to hold back the

decree of our rejection, and to turn away Thine eyes from our vices and regard instead the adorable Blood shed upon the Cross, which purchased our salvation and daily intercedes for us upon our altars. Ah, keep us safe in the true Catholic and Roman faith. Let sickness afflict us, vexations waste us, misfortunes overwhelm us! But preserve in us Thy holy faith; for if we are rich with this precious gift, we shall gladly endure every sorrow, and nothing shall ever be able to change our happiness. On the other hand, without this great treasure of faith, our unhappiness would be unspeakable and without limit! O good Jesus, author of our faith, preserve it untainted

within us; keep us safe in the bark of Peter, faithful and obedient to his successor and Thy Vicar here on earth, that so the unity of Holy Church may be maintained, holiness fostered, the Holy See protected in freedom, and the Church universal extended to the benefit of souls. O Jesus, author of our faith, humble and convert the enemies of Thy Church; grant true peace and concord to all Christian kings and princes and to all believers; strengthen and preserve us in Thy holy service, so that we may live in Thee and die in Thee. O Jesus, author of our faith, let me live for Thee and die for Thee. Amen.

Catholic Trivia



Last Week's Answers

1. C - "Renounce yourself in order to follow Christ; discipline your body; do not pamper yourself, but love fasting."
2. B - "I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt."
3. D - "The world offers you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness."
4. A - "The saints did not all begin well, but they ended well."

- A. St. John Vianney B. Pope Francis
C. Saint Benedict D. Pope Benedict XVI



This Week's Questions

1. In the gospel of John what is Jesus' first miracle:
2. The Summa Theologica was written by:
3. What is the name given to the series of 129 Wednesday Audiences delivered by JPII on the meaning of human embodiment:
4. Who administers the sacrament of holy matrimony?

Quotes of the Week

If the Word truly became flesh, then God had not only a mother, but also a grandmother, cousins, great-aunts, and weird uncles. If the Word truly dwelt among us, then he was part of a family that, like most, was fairly dysfunctional, a mix of the good and bad, the saintly and the sinful, the glorious and the not so glorious. And this is such good news for us. – Bishop Barron

The cross is Jesus going into the very lair of death. He goes to meet head-on that which frightens us the most. And what does He do? He

battles it. He engages it. And finally he conquers it. – Bishop Barron

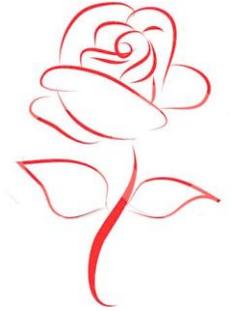
The minute you walk outside of your church on Sunday you're in mission territory. – Bishop Barron

Love without truth devolves into sentimentality. Truth without love becomes cold and calculated. – Bishop Barron

The ego-drama is nothing compared with the theo-drama. The fun begins when we let God write our stories. - Bishop Barron

Pro-Life Corner

Pro-Life Quote: If we took a moment of silence for each person lost to abortion, we would be silent for over 100 years. - Frank Pavone



Pro-Life Prayer for February: Prayer for the Unborn

Jesus, Impeccable Judge of human kind, Generous Allocator of all blessings, Thank you for the gift of life and the virtue of charity. Grant me the strength to model my life after You, Help me to refrain from any acts of judging others. Assist me so that I too may generously share with those in need. Erase from me any weaknesses of my human nature that prevent me from respecting human life in all its stages.

Allowing my soul to shine as the morning sun and be a beacon of your divine presence By Your grace may my charity towards others demonstrate a true respect for dignity of each human person. May Your name be forever praised. – Amen.

Saint Monica Society Prayer For February

Prayer for Fallen Away Catholics

Teach me, my Lord, to be sweet and gentle in all the events of life, in disappointments, in the thoughtlessness of those I trusted, in the unfaithfulness of those on whom I relied. May my example lead fallen away Catholics back to you.

Let me put myself aside, to think of the happiness of others, to hide my little pains and heartaches, so that I may be the only one to suffer from them. Teach me to profit by the suffering that comes across my path. May my example lead fallen away Catholics back to you.

Let me so use it that it may make me patient, not irritable. That it may make me broad in my forgiveness, not narrow, haughty and overbearing. May my example lead fallen away Catholics back to you.

May no one be less good for having come within my influence. No one less pure, less true, less kind, less noble for having been a fellow traveler in our journey toward Eternal Life. As I go my rounds from one distraction to another, let me whisper from time to time, a word of love to Thee. May my example lead fallen away Catholics back to you.

May my life be lived in the supernatural, full of power for good, and strong in its purpose of sanctity. May my example lead fallen away Catholics back to you. - Amen.

St. Monica Society

Please join us in praying a special prayer each month for Catholics who have fallen away from their faith.

Catholic Humor

I found the following jokes on a website ran by a Jesuit.

1) Company of Jesus:

One cold winter's day in Bethlehem, just after he had been born, Jesus is lying asleep in the manger. Awaking from his nap, he opens his eyes, sees the ox and the ass standing beside him, and thinks to himself, "So this is the Company of Jesus!"

2) Definition:

JESUITS: An order of priests known for their ability to found colleges with good basketball teams. (from "A Catholic Dictionary")

3) Holy Smoke:

There is always a right way and a wrong way to proceed: Two Jesuit novices both wanted a cigarette while they prayed. They decided to ask their superior for permission. The first asked, but was told no. A little while later he spotted his friend smoking. "Why did the superior allow you to smoke, but not me?" he asked. His friend replied, "Because you asked if you could smoke while you prayed, and I asked if I could pray while I smoked!"