

4

HUMAN SEXUALITY

The Battle for the Human Soul

Maria Fedoryka

The wounded surgeon plies the steel
That questions the distempered part;
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel
The sharp compassion of the healer's art
Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.

Our only health is the disease
If we obey the dying nurse
Whose constant care is not to please
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
And that, to be restored, our sickness must
grow worse.

—T. S. Eliot, *East Coker, The Four Quartets*

Human Sexuality

For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens.

Ephesians 6:12

The crisis in the Church is a crisis of betrayal: those who freely accepted the charge of safeguarding Christ's teachings, of being ministers of his sacraments, and of guiding his flock to salvation broke faith with both Christ and his flock. The betrayal consists of cover-ups, the protection and enabling of the criminals, and the subsequent failure of the bishops to repent of these. But the full extent of the crisis can be grasped only in light of the sacred character of human sexuality and its consequent centrality in the meaning and vocation of the human person. The special character of human sexuality, in turn, reveals why the intimate sphere is a unique locus of battle between God and his enemy for the human soul.

The calling of the human person is of a most transcendent and spiritual nature: that of living in a response to and a communion with the true, the good, and the beautiful, and in a communion of love with other persons, and ultimately in a communion of love with God. In the vocation to transcendence and com-

Human Sexuality

munion, the human person is like the angels. But this being possessed of a spirit so essential to the fulfillment of its calling finds itself—unlike the angels—wedded to the world of matter; indeed, its very being is composed of the bodily as well as of the spiritual. We are confronted here by a natural mystery. How can these two orders of being meet and merge and meld together in this way, without either of them losing its own characteristics? It is perhaps not surprising that the history of this question is riddled with errors that come from giving in to the temptation of rejecting or short-changing one or the other of the pair. But the unity-in-duality of the human person has always been preserved in safety in the heart of the Church's understanding of the human person and reflected in her teachings.

Matter by itself contains a minimum of meaning. But through the union of matter with form, the visible world is no longer “merely” material but wonderfully participates in, and so reveals to us, the true, the good, and the beautiful, becoming a kind of natural sacrament, a “herald” of what is contained in its fullness in the interior unicity of God. The destiny of the visible world is to play an integral role in the person's vocation to transcendence.

Human Sexuality

In the human person, the union of the bodily and the spiritual is even more wonderful. Through its union with the rational soul, the animal body is raised immeasurably higher than in nonpersonal beings: through their mutual interpenetration, in which each enters into the other, a body becomes personal-ized even as the personal soul is em-bodied. This is truly a marvel: body becomes “enlivened” *from within* by a *rational soul* and truly takes on a *personal character*. The body, however, returns the favor, as it were. At first glance, it may look as though the bodily limits spirit—and in certain ways it does. But I believe that overall it is the other way around: having been “lifted” into a personal way of being by its intimate union with the soul, the body is in turn able to enlarge the life of the spirit, enriching the spirit’s sphere of experience and activity. By the plan of God, a wonderful mutuality takes place. In the words of Benedict XVI in *Deus caritas est*, “the human person is a unity in duality, in which spirit and matter compenetrates, and [in which] each is brought to a new nobility.” Thus the body, too, is able to participate in the person’s vocation to transcendence, and indeed to enrich that vocation.

For the Christian, the embodiment of the human

Human Sexuality

person received a new meaning and a new dignity in the Incarnation of Christ. By means of Mary's faith in and her fiat to God, the second person of the Trinity was united with human nature and "became flesh." In *Gaudium et spes* 22, we read this well-known passage:

The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear ... For, by his Incarnation, he, the son of God, *in a certain way united himself with each man*. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin.

From all eternity, the Son lives in a communion with the Father. When the Son enters time, "uniting himself with human nature," it is the sacred body of Our Lord that is at the center of this communion with the Father. Christ's sacred body is the special locus of his obedience to his father, and through this obedience it becomes the direct means of our salvation. We find in Hebrews 10:5:

Human Sexuality

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;
holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in.
Then I said, "As is written of me in the scroll,
Behold, I come to do your will, O God."

From the time of his sacrificial death until the end of time, the Lord remains with us on earth in the Eucharist, in his body, blood, soul and divinity, as our nourishment for eternal life. And since the Ascension, by virtue of the Word's union with human nature, there is some real sense in which a human body belongs to the Blessed Trinity.

In Christ, the meaning of *bodily existence* is revealed to us with full clarity. The Christian now has an infallible roadmap by which to travel the journey of life: in and through the body, in imitation of Christ's gift of himself to the Father and to us, the Christian is to make a gift of himself to God and to others. Through bodily discipline and self-denial, we emancipate ourselves from our fallen flesh so as to come to possess ourselves, as the body is reintegrated into an intimate unity with the spiritual soul; in the process, we gain the freedom to make a gift of ourselves to others. Without minimizing the spiritual works of mercy, or the seriousness of the purely spiritual sin

Human Sexuality

of pride, it is nevertheless true that the body is the special theater or medium for the working out of our salvation. At the end of time, we are told by Christ that we will hear the King say, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

The supernatural act of laying down one’s own bodily life for another modeled for us by Christ is a complete *gift of self* that surpasses all other ways of making a gift of ourselves in our embodied existence. Because of the centrality of bodily life to the human condition, to give up one’s *bodily* life is to give one’s *very self*, in one’s depth and entirely. Theologians tell us that the shedding of a mere drop of Christ’s divine blood would have been sufficient to save us. But they also tell us that, given God’s plan for us, it was fitting that our salvation should have come about through Christ’s giving up of his bodily life. God’s plan was to establish with us the most *intimate* relationship possible, a spousal relationship, and it is on the cross, through his death, that Christ gave himself entirely,

Human Sexuality

and thus *espoused* the Church to himself and in it, its members.

Now, this ultimate form of self-giving in laying down one's life for another out of love has a natural analogue in the *spousal self-giving of man and woman in marriage*. By a mysterious design of God, the bodily sphere of gendered sexuality makes possible a complete mutual giving and receiving of the self of one human person in relation to another that in this life cannot be accomplished without the body. By token of this same design, the reality of human sexuality is also the basis of the most intimate form of union possible between the human soul and God, namely, the state of virginity. This capacity of gendered- bodily-being to be the condition for a spousal union between persons is also the foundation of a uniquely intimate cooperation between God and man, in enabling the fruitfulness ("gen"-erosity) of human love to achieve unimaginable proportions, namely, the engendering of a new immortal soul. In and through en-gendered bodily complementarity, in its integration with the personal soul and its act of spousal love, God invites human love into a partnership with his own creative love, granting husband and wife a share in his own fatherhood, in which God makes a gift of himself to each person.

Human Sexuality

On all these counts, it becomes clear that, while all things belong to God, the sphere of human gendered sexuality belongs to God in a unique way and is therefore sacred. It also begins to emerge why it is the special place of battle between God and his enemy the devil—the *diabolos*, the one who divides by means of the lie. In this essay, I will consider the features of this sphere of bodily existence that account for its sacred character and allow it to figure so centrally in the drama of earthly life. A small but seminal work by Dietrich von Hildebrand titled *In Defense of Purity* will serve as the foundation for these reflections.¹

Sex as a bodily experience, writes Hildebrand, is unlike any other bodily experience, in that it is *deep* by its very nature. He means by this, first, that in this sphere, the body awakens in its vital depths; there is something in the quality of these experiences that “penetrates to the very root of man’s physical being.” Other bodily experiences take on this character only when a person’s life is at stake, but the domain of sexuality has this deep quality by its very nature, and thus in every instance of its use or awakening.

1. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *In Defense of Purity* (Steubenville, OH: Hildebrand Press, 2017). All quotations in this essay are from this volume, unless otherwise indicated.

Human Sexuality

Second, this experience of depth is evidence that the body and the soul “meet in a unique fashion.” It is as if here body and soul come to a point of intersection: as the body is awakened in its depth, so the soul is also touched in its depth. This means that in the domain of sexuality, the sphere of the bodily touches and is bound up with the person’s *Self* in its depth. This is why Hildebrand writes that sex “occupies a central position in the personality.”

We must elaborate on this decisive point, and I do so using the language of Karol Wojtyla when he explains that the sexual sphere touches on and is bound up with the depth within us where we *possess ourselves from within*, in that place where each of us *experiences himself as being “his own.”* In *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla points out that this connection between sexuality and selfhood is both *objective* and *experiential* (*ontological* and *existential*): “There certainly exists a very special connection between sex and the person in the objective order, which at the level of consciousness has its counterpart in a special awareness of the right of personal property in one’s ‘I.’”² This connection between the self-possessing Self and the sexual sphere

2. Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2013), 82.

Human Sexuality

as experienced has its metaphysical roots in the structural parallel between them: just as in our personal selfhood we “have” ourselves from within, there is a parallel way in which we “have” ourselves from within in our bodily being in the sphere of bodily sexuality.

This fact about the structure of human sexuality brings us to the heart of the matter, which is contained in two points. First, by the freely chosen design of God, the self-possessing center of the Self is inseparable from bodily sexuality. Second, this fact explains how it can be that, again, by God’s design, the sexual sphere enters into the total surrender of the human person that is proper to spousal love. But this leads to a final metaphysical point regarding the structure of the spousal act itself. In the spousal act, the bodily and spiritual come together in a *mutual integration*, forming one reality in two dimensions. This is found first in the reality that the bodily act of sex is fashioned *on the analogy of the spiritual reality of love*; in particular, one can discern in the bodily gestures, the bodily experiences, and their corresponding experiences in the psyche constituting the act (and, in another dimension, its procreative fruitfulness) an “image” of the features of love. But this would not yet account for the mutual interiority of body and soul

Human Sexuality

in the spousal act. In addition to this analogical relationship between bodily sex and the spiritual reality of spousal love, there is the further relationship of embodiment and ensoulment. The spiritual reality of spousal love itself enters into the sphere of the bodily, which it can do because the bodily act contains an interior metaphysical space fashioned precisely to be “filled” or “animated from within” by spousal love. That is, the sexual act “is itself” only in a *mutual integration* with the self-possessing person *in its act of gendered, spousal self-giving* and is thus by nature a “spousal act.”

In a 1972 document in which he considers the indissolubility of marriage, Joseph Ratzinger writes of the depth at which the self-giving of marriage takes place: “Marriage is one of those fundamental decisions of human existence that can only be made completely or not at all, precisely because therein man as a whole is involved, as his very self, unto that depth where he, touched by Christ, transformed, is taken into his ‘I’ opened on the cross and open for us all.”³ Now, the teaching of the Church says that the union of mar-

3. Joseph Bolin, trans., “Joseph Ratzinger: On the Question of the Indissolubility of Marriage,” March 25, 2011, <https://www.pathsoflove.com/texts/ratzinger-indissolubility-marriage/>.

Human Sexuality

riage is not entirely accomplished in the vows, solemn as they are, but is *consummated*—that is, *brought to completion* and *made definitive*—only in the bodily act of mutual self-giving. We can see why this is so on the basis of our reflections. Sexuality is bound up with the self-possessing center of the person and is therefore “material” to the act in which the person gives himself from this center. The following lengthy passage from Hildebrand’s *Purity* captures eloquently this truth about human existence:

in a certain sense sex is the secret of every human being [such that] the disclosure of this secret to another creature and the delivery of it to that other in [marriage] constitutes a self-surrender and self-donation of a wholly unique kind. Even the supreme and most complete surrender of the soul to some other human being who is dearer than life itself and in whose soul we plunge our own by a profound mutual discovery and understanding in Jesus, is, nevertheless, not equivalent to that mysterious external self-delivery which takes place in the act of marriage. This may seem a hard saying, since the surrender of the heart to another is something higher and more valuable than the surrender of the body ... [Nevertheless, on] earth it is not in our power without the cooperation of the body to give our heart to another creature in the same way as when the body plays its part. In eternity alone will it be possible.

Human Sexuality

Hildebrand then compares the spousal bodily self-giving with the sacrifice of one's life, saying that this sacrifice alone achieves the completeness of self-giving comparable to the completeness of self-giving in the conjugal act.

This act that accomplishes and embodies complete mutual self-giving between husband and wife is also the place in which new human life comes into existence. How fitting that it should be so! Far from being merely the bodily event of the coming together of two gametes, the conception of the child is the “outflow” and crowning of a *concrete act of love* between the parents. In fact, just as the sexual union is an embodiment of the *unitive* dimension of love, so the child is the embodiment of the *fruitfulness* of love that along with union, and flowing from it, makes up the very essence of love. And just as the two dimensions of union and fruit are inseparable in the spiritual reality of love, so they are not to be directly separated in the embodiment of that love in the spousal act. As Paul VI tells us in *Humanae vitae*, the two dimensions of the conjugal act do not just “happen” to be placed together but are meaningfully united. Thus their separation necessarily dismantles the act as an act of love.

And here, if we are allowed to guess at such things,

Human Sexuality

we have perhaps found the highest meaning of the body in the order of nature and the ultimate reason why God made *embodied* persons: because of the body, and because it is bound up with the person's self-possession in the way outlined above, creaturely love is able to be caught up into and cooperate with the divine creative love. In the giving of their bodies for the creation of new human life, the spouses truly give of themselves, truly "loving into existence" the new human life. Angels, having no bodies, cannot be partners with God in the creation of new angels. The soul is indeed "brought to a new nobility," in the words of Benedict, in this pro-creative capacity made possible by the soul's union with the body. In short, spousal intimacy in its unitive and fruitful dimensions together affords the creature a close mirroring of the life of the Trinity.

Hildebrand's book on spousal intimacy ends with a philosophical reflection on consecrated virginity (or celibacy), which he calls "the mystery of supernatural love." The "marriage" with Christ in virginity comes about through the person's vowing of the intimate sphere to God. To truly understand virginity as an espousal of the soul with God, Hildebrand finds that one must have understood the deep and central place occupied by sexuality within the human person, its

Human Sexuality

intimacy and its mystery, its unique capacity to serve the deepest kind of surrender possible of one human person to another. Parallel to the way that the sexual sphere is the means of the entire and irrevocable self-giving of one human being to another, it enters in a similar way into establishing a spiritual marriage between the soul and Christ. In what follows I again quote some lengthy passages that convey this role of the intimate sphere in establishing a uniquely intimate communion of the human person with Christ:

The act which places this sexual secret in the hands of Jesus inviolate and sealed forever denotes a self-surrender to Him and marriage with Him which corresponds with the matrimonial self-surrender to a creature. Since Jesus is a heavenly bridegroom, marriage with Him must be completely different from earthly wedlock, a purely spiritual union. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental feature really common to both. That supreme self-surrender of the entire person—analogous to the surrender of life for another—which can be given to a fellow-creature by marriage alone, is here made to Jesus by the vow never to disclose the secret to anyone, by the radical and final renunciation for his love of all exercise of sex, and by cutting oneself off from the world to live for him alone.

Human Sexuality

By the consecration of this domain that is so central to human personality, the virgin's psychological center of gravity shifts from this world to the next and is centered on "Him whom [her] soul loves," in the words of the Song of Songs. "By that renunciation [the consecrated virgin] dies to the world and partakes of something that otherwise would be possible only in eternity. A center within herself is in a sense set 'free,' which she discloses to Christ alone and whose surrender to a fellow-creature is indissolubly bound up with the disclosure of sex." Hildebrand quotes a beautiful passage from Methodius of Olympus with respect to the special purity proper to the virginal state: "A garden enclosed art thou, my sister, my bride; a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed.' Such is the praise which Christ pronounces on those who have attained the goal of virginity, and He sums all up in the single word 'bride.' For the bride must be espoused to her Bridegroom and bear His name; she must abide spotless and inviolate, like a sealed garden, wherein every scent of heavenly perfume is shed abroad, where Christ alone may enter and gather what grows therein of incorporeal seed."

From these reflections, the Christian especially can gain a deeper understanding that human sexu-

Human Sexuality

ality is *sacred*, as something that belongs to God in a special way. Its sacredness has to do, first, with its role as being in the service of engendering new human life. Here, God becomes present in a unique way, bringing into existence out of nothing the new human soul to en-soul the body conceived by the mutual self-gift of the parents. If we knew nothing else about the spousal act, this should be enough for us to fear appropriating this sphere for any illegitimate use.

Its sacredness, second, is grounded in the fact that God intended to insert the sexual domain as a gift into the very center of the person, from within which the person owns himself: that interior space in which God encounters the person, the interiority out of which he is called to give himself in love to God and neighbor. This truth about the intimate sphere as a sacred space belonging to God should engender reverence and awe in the Christian; it should make him shrink in fear from entering this sphere in any way other than making a gift of himself to another in spousal love, within the bounds of marriage. Further, the fact that the depth of the person is at issue is why there is an intuitive sense in the Christian that it is only with God's sanction that he may enter into the sexual sphere. As co-owner of his being, and the be-

Human Sexuality

ing of the other, God must authorize—and be a partner in—the total self-giving of one person to another.

Centered on the theme of a created person's ownership of his own being at the very depth level in which he necessarily belongs to God, we can gain a new and deeper understanding of the sexual domain as one of the most important interior battlegrounds in the war against God by his enemy for the ownership of human souls. Though it is certainly not the only place of spiritual battle within the human person, it is unique in the opportunities it affords God's enemy because of its special character, as outlined above. It is clear that something of such central importance to God, and of such centrality to human existence, should be targeted for corruption and wounding by the enemy. To strike at this dimension of human life is to strike a blow at the heart of the most meaningful realities of life on earth, a blow that has its full repercussions in eternity. I offer here only a sketch that would require filling in.

It is, in the first place, an easy target. Because it is bound up with that place within the person that is made to love and to be loved, it is particularly vulnerable to temptation and to misuse, and wounds of whatever kind incurred in the depth of the person—

Human Sexuality

whether related to the sphere of sexuality itself or not—tend to make the person susceptible to manipulation in this domain.

Connected to this is the fact that to be wounded in the sexual sphere—especially prior to the period of natural sexual awakening in puberty, though this is true at any time of life—is to be wounded in one's depth. Poetical and mystical language speaks truly of the experience of being “pierced” and “wounded” by love, as the beloved in his beauty enters into the depth of one's being and is offered to one as a gift to be freely received. This experience is expansive and life-giving. A negative mirror image of this occurs when a person suffers the violent entry of another into this most intimate sphere in which the person belongs to himself. In this entry the perpetrator seeks by force to “take possession” of the other in his intimate depth and appropriate him for himself in a disregard of the other's dignity and freedom. The person receives an injury both ontological and experiential that because of its depth level affects life as a whole for the one so injured, but that at the same time is often eclipsed from consciousness because of its intensity. This is too delicate a topic to enter into in this context, but it is a reality of which too many are tragically aware.

Human Sexuality

It is also an easy target because of the moral separation between body and soul that is present within the human person as the inheritance of original sin, such that the union between them must now be won back by a difficult struggle. In this regard it is especially in the sphere of sexuality that the Christian must arm himself with the virtues of courage and fortitude, and is in need of God's grace. The power and depth of the sexual sphere as a *bodily* experience were originally fashioned by God to correspond to and be in the service of the power and depth of the *spousal love* that they are meant to embody. I agree with John Paul II that in its original structure there is no element of animality to the human sexual sphere, no element of the "instinct" that drives the animal as a being with no power of self-possession. Because of this disintegration resulting from the Fall, however, the body tends to seek its own satisfaction, and then it appears within our consciousness as having a life of its own, and a powerful one. And because the sexual sphere is the point of intimate contact between body and soul, when the body is separated from its proper place as integrated with the soul, it pulls the soul after it, not only making the soul its captive, but also eclipsing its spiritual character. The soul then loses

Human Sexuality

its power of transcendence, and a unique loss of self-possession occurs. The body is no longer animated from within by love, entering into the service of love, but falls and degrades, becoming an empty shell, now a mere instrument to achieving pleasure or some other end, subordinating the person(s) into the position of use, and in fact of abuse.

We are told that corruption in the domain of sexuality opens the door to other kinds of corruption in a more notable way than other kinds of vices; these reflections help us to see why. Because bodily sexuality intersects with the ontological and existential center within the person, to possess the person in the sexual sphere is to possess him in his personal depth in some mysterious way, as the enemy of God well knows. This is why, according to Aurel Kolnai, “an absence of sexual restraint fairly regularly becomes the soil and focus of other kinds of weakness and vice.” The centrality of the sexual sphere means that even aside from moral considerations, the loss of self involved in the misuse of the sexual sphere entails a disintegration of the personality as a whole in a way that is not true of the misuse of other spheres of human action and life.

Up to this point we have seen how the devil tar-

Human Sexuality

gets sexuality in his attempt to corrupt the human person because of its importance in God's plan. But there is another, more direct connection between the misuse of this sphere and the demonic. The sacred character of sexuality entails an especially intimate presence of God in this dimension of human existence, a greater proximity of the divine to this sphere. In a parallel way, precisely on the basis of this sacredness, the abuse of this sphere involves more directly the presence of the demonic than the misuse or abuse of other spheres of life. Developing this lies beyond the scope of this paper, but to omit mention of it would be to omit an important element in the discussion. Hildebrand makes a valuable contribution in this regard in describing the way in which misused sex does not retain any of its original qualities but takes on diametrically opposed ones. Hildebrand speaks of misuses that range from "treating the pleasure of sex as an end" all the way to its being used as a "vehicle of diabolically evil lust." When sex is exercised in its originally and intrinsically ordained integration with spousal love, it possesses the qualities of the "sublime joy of ultimate surrender, touching, chaste, intimate, sacred and mysterious"; it is "awe-inspiring ... noble, chaste, and free"; it effects a "liberating surrender" and

Human Sexuality

can therefore be “the medium of the most profound union” between husband and wife. When it is misused, these qualities are not simply diminished but rather are reversed. The quality that in its chaste use “constitutes the joy and attraction of sex as the medium of the most profound union with another” is replaced by a “fascinating, exciting, and befuddling charm which excludes anything beyond it”; rather than liberating the person from his self-centeredness, it becomes “intoxicating and befogging,” “close, bemusing, eerie”; rather than expanding the soul, it contracts it; the God-ordained extraordinary and mysterious nature of sex is replaced by “the twilight of magic, sinister and devilish” and oppresses and corrodes the soul. While it is true that all sexual sin includes concupiscence and entails the instrumentalization of the person (either of oneself or another), I believe that Hildebrand’s reflections give expression to an element that goes beyond these—a diabolical element that is added to sexual sin precisely because of the sacredness of sex, and its belonging to God. Without here spelling out the exact connection between them, I suggest that the qualities characterizing the misuse and abuse of sex are those that characterize the world of the demonic and therefore reveal its special presence in sexual sin.

Human Sexuality

And thus, while all sin puts the soul to one extent or another into the power of God's enemy, sexual sin—to differing degrees, depending on the nature of the abuse—affords the enemy a more direct control over the soul.

In conclusion, the enemy of God is well acquainted with all these features of sexuality, and he makes good use of them in his quest to expropriate the soul, to divide it from itself and from God. The devil parodies God, and the paradoxical laws so characteristic of genuine spiritual life have their parodied version when the human person fails to live according to his transcendent vocation—whether this defection has moral or psychological roots. The life-generating act of dying-to-self, which requires the chaste and generous (life-generating) integration of sexuality into spousal love, is replaced in its unchaste use by the lethal (death-dealing) turn into and against the self, and opens up a wound to the diabolical. We are called to make a gift of ourselves in our sexuality and in the “gathering up of ourselves” in our free spiritual center that takes place in genuine self-giving we come to possess ourselves, even as we come to belong to the other who receives us. In yielding to the bodily dynamism of sexuality in its misuse, we lose possession

Human Sexuality

of ourselves in our free spiritual center—and become the powerless prey of the enemy. There is a “hound of hell” as well as of heaven, though it would be more fitting to refer to him as the roaring lion who prowls about seeking someone to devour—someone who belongs neither to himself nor to another human person in love nor to God, and thus one who is ready for the taking by God’s adversary.

Meditating on the profound nature of the intimate sphere, its meaning, and the role it plays in human life, the Catholic Christian can only feel profound gratitude for the Church’s teaching on sexuality, on chastity, on purity, on modesty, on protecting the innocence of the young—especially the teaching we have received over the last hundred years. The “holy fear” and deep reverence with which the Church teaches us to approach this sphere have nothing to do with finding sexuality of itself illegitimate or problematical. On the contrary, they have to do with its sacred character, exalted place in the vocation of the human person, and the consequent vulnerabilities to which it is subject. As the custodian of our souls on earth, the Church sees through the trappings of earthly affairs into the true nature of the battle, which is a spiritual one, a battle for man’s very soul; and we are able to go

Human Sexuality

to her for the wisdom and the grace necessary to win the battle. Above all, we look to the Mother of God, who never fails to intercede for us before her Son.

Mother most pure,
Mother most chaste,
Mother inviolate,
Mother undefiled, pray for us.