

Second Sunday of Lent

Exodus 20: 1 - 17 VI. You shall not commit adultery	Deuteronomy 5: 6 - 21 VI. You shall not commit adultery
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We continue to look at the relationship between the virtue of chastity and the Sixth Commandment. Last week we quoted two statements from the Catechism of the Catholic Church found in the section dealing with the Sixth Commandment. These two statements set off a small alarm. Section 2339 states: "Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom." Section 2341 states: "The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of temperance, which seeks to permeate the passions and the appetites of the senses with reason." The philosophical ideas of freedom and reason have consumed a lot of paper and ink. St. Paul entered the debate in his letters. The Second Vatican Council Constitution on the Church in the Modern World teaches, "Only in freedom can we direct ourselves toward goodness. Often, our contemporaries foster freedom perversely as a license for doing whatever pleases them. Authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the Divine image within us. For God has willed that we remain under the control of our own decisions. Hence our dignity demands that we act according to a knowing and free choice." (See §17) Freedom creates stress when we must decide between good and evil. Sometimes we are told by the teachings of the Church that something is evil, but our reason tells us something different. So, to put the virtue of chastity under the realms of freedom and reason can make chastity mean almost anything to each individual, culture, and ways of society. Still, we must follow the teachings of the Church. Today, our society would see nothing wrong with cohabitation, lust, abortion, etc. Does the virtue of chastity change with time and societies? If the answer is yes, then the Sixth Commandment also changes with time and societies. We have our laws and our ratings of what is acceptable in our country that even sixty years ago would have been strikingly different. Now if the answer is no, then we have the teachings of the Church based on the Scriptures. The norms of the Church should help shape society rather than society shaping the Church. Jesus was a sign of contradiction when he was a preacher. He is a sign of contradiction today. We too must share in the cross of Christ. More next week!