

“You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery.”

Economic revolutionaries, social revolutionaries: They can claim to find inspiration in the words of Christ. The Lord wasn't exactly a “capitalist.” And He never endorsed any particular aristocracy. But SEXUAL revolutionaries? When they look for justifications in the gospels, they run into a brick wall. Because Jesus of Nazareth was death on the sixth commandment.

Better to pluck out your eye than look at someone lustfully. Better to cut off your hand than use it to sin. Lord Jesus made it crystal-clear: when God spoke from Mount Sinai condemning adultery, He condemned every sexual escapade—everything except the one, honest act that makes marriage marriage, through a lifetime of fidelity.

We Catholics do not think ill of sex. After all, our churches would be empty without it. The Lord's severity on this subject did not proceed from prudishness on His part. He was celibate, but no prude. To the contrary, when He spoke about sex, He evoked the Garden of Eden. Be fruitful and multiply!

But: When it comes to the union of man and woman as one flesh, the holiness of Christ utterly prohibits anything cheap, anything fleeting or

libidinally selfish. He chose us for ecstasy and communion that lasts forever. He offered His celibate body on the cross to consummate our everlasting marriage with God. There's no room at the foot of His cross for anything other than chastity and fidelity in marriage.

Doesn't mean He won't forgive our falls. He knows what original sin has done to our human powers of self-control. When we succumb to temptation, He picks us up and gives us a fresh start, helping us to pursue again the serenity of perfect sexual honesty. Christ never gets tired of pardoning us weak sinners when we repent.

But the idea that any fruitless, short-term sexuality could peacefully co-exist with the holiness of Christ? His own words utterly anathematize this. Following Jesus means believing wholeheartedly that sex is only for marriage, and marriage is for life.

Now, the whole drama with the bishop and myself has brought the sexual-abuse crisis in the Church back into our minds. I think the most important thing about this is: We need to hear the Gospel of the victims who have spoken out.

Let me explain what I mean. To know the difference between Good and Evil, you have to know what Good is. Otherwise, Evil doesn't seem evil; it just seems normal.

If we lived on the gas planet Jupiter, we wouldn't know what a sunset on the Blue Ridge even looked like. But when our eyes catch a glimpse of something beautiful, then we can say to ourselves: We prefer this to endless acid rain.

Jesus Christ gives us the vision of genuine sexual integrity and freedom. We see the selfless chaste love of Jesus. We see the endless fruitfulness of that love. We grasp that Jesus of Nazareth is our brother, Who lived in the true love of our heavenly Father. When that vision of Christian faith penetrates our souls, we can say to ourselves: When it comes to sex, I deserve Blue-Ridge sunsets, and nothing less.

Anyone who ever got lied to, manipulated, or abused, but who then managed to distinguish evil from good, and say: I do not accept this! That person has proclaimed the Gospel. That person has purified the world.

Honest, committed marriage, consecrated by God: That is the true realm where sex can occur with genuine mutual respect. Not counterfeit love, but a friendship, a partnership, a holy bond.

Everyone deserves that, when it comes to sex. That, and nothing less. Jesus was death on the Sixth Commandment not to interfere with our happiness, but to guide us out of the acid rain and into the sunshine.