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Chastity and the Face of God

"Blessed are the Pure in Heart for they shall see God" (St. Matthew 5.8)

Who among us is not well acquainted since our childhood with this beautiful beatitude. No doubt we have heard it quoted many, many times. For the pure of heart, it contains the most beautiful promise, that of seeing God *face to face*. Very tellingly, to a child these words would make very little impression — but for us, for the adults, familiar with sin, we all well know the struggle, and pain, the suffering and purification that we must pass through to attain to purity of heart. Not without reason is it called in the Catechism, "A Battle for Purity". What does Holy Mother Church tell us of this beautiful promise?

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we read:

"The pure in heart are promised that they will see God face to face and be like Him. Purity of heart is the precondition of the vision of God. Even now it enables us to see according to God, to accept others as our neighbors, it lets us perceive the human body -- our and our neighbors -- as the temple of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of Divine Beauty" (2519)

Attaining purity of heart, of mind and body, is a life long struggle, a *constant* dying to ourselves, a constant choosing to say *no* to that which would entice us into sin. We will all fall many, many times in the battle. Obtaining a pure heart is really the whole process of passing through Gods cleansing love, responding to His words in obedience, avoiding occasions of sin, the practice of modesty, and of arming ourselves with the graces of the Sacraments, in particular the Sacrament of Penance, of Confession, and the Holy Eucharist; ultimately, of returning to that state of spiritual childhood, of being dependent upon God for all love, fulfillment and satisfaction.

So often impurity is really a compensation for something we feel we lack, or that which in our greed we would snatch for our own ends. It takes heroic effort, self discipline, prayer and perseverance, because *in our present day society the attaining of purity of heart and intention is probably one of the hardest things to do.*

We are surrounded through the media, in cyberspace, on our very streets, with all that would corrupt and pervert us from the path of goodness and uprightness. We are all weak in our human sexuality, and we must ever remind ourselves that we carry our treasure in earthen vessels. Who among us has not been adversely affected, not only through our own experiences and temptations but also by films we may have seen, cheap magazines, Spam, 'sick jokes' ... the list is endless. These pictures, images and words invade our memories and can follow us, dog us, for years; and no sooner do we think ourselves free of them than they return to plague and disturb us. It is a toxic pollution of the mind, the heart, the soul – but we *have* a choice, we *can* break free of these obsessions, and the almost magnetic attractions of sexual display.

If we are fortunate enough to have kept our lives and hearts away from such things — and few of us have – we should praise God; but never, ever despise those who have been seduced by the aura of 'the world, the flesh and the devil'. Rather, let us support and assist them on the way back to health and wholeness and — yes — even sanctity. Let us offer them love that is genuine and real, freed from all that is manipulative, meretricious, and salacious ... that is the love of the world. It is only genuine, selfless love that can truly cleanse us from sin: God's love above all, and our own gift of love to another.

We should show reverence and respect towards others in any situation that calls us to render services that assist the well being of the body: nursing, care, etc. Curiosity, we must come to understand, is all too often a form of unchastity; we should not try to invade the thoughts and memories of others, but *love* them, so that in time they are able to let go, to share that which has become a barrier and a cause of shame for them. Good company, genuine friendship, authentic caring, all contribute to the person being purified of that which has dragged them into the morass of sin and darkness.

Purity of heart, without a doubt, can be regained by corresponding to the love of God, by responding to His grace. We can become cleansed of all that has stained and marred our beauty, no matter how many times we may fall. *Never* concede defeat, *never*, Jesus your Lord is so much greater than all your weakness, and *He* desires your heart, He desires to give you a new heart and a new spirit, a pure heart, a heart free of the spirit of this world, a heart immersed in His Spirit. Do not be tempted to think that this is impossible for you. God works with what is most damaged and broken and transforms it – our very hearts – into diamonds for His glory. We are, after all, made in His image ... Who is the source of all beauty and goodness.

And after all our effort ... He has promised, *we shall see God!*

Give witness to purity, within and without, that others may feel attracted to it, and come to know its blessings, to live with an undivided heart, to live in the light of God.

How beautiful our humanity really is! Let us become ever more deeply, more totally, God's.

A Poor Clare Colettine Nun



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