

The Navigator



The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's

Volume XI, No. 4 — Fall 2016

A Disciplined Faith: Purity

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

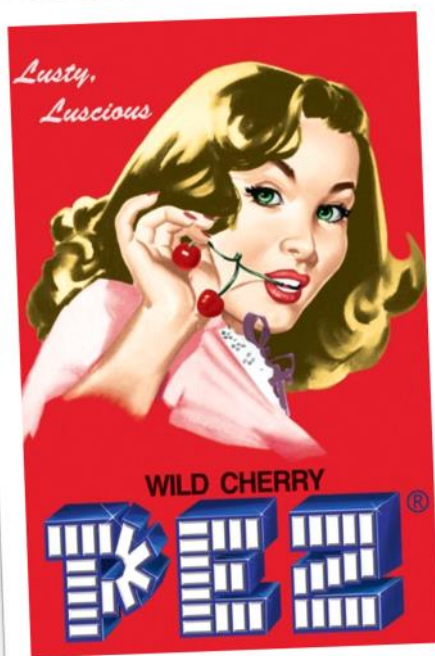
"Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

1 Timothy 4:12

"Sex sells." Or at least that's the old advertising adage. And by old I mean mostly within the past 50 years as scantily clad TV women drape themselves over car hoods, or squeeze into skintight jeans, or tease their men of what might happen that night if a particular kind of upholstery cleaner is added to the shopping cart. And men? It began by attracting the eye of the must-have girl by using Vitalis in their hair and High Karate aftershave on their faces—by the expressions of the girls, the innuendo was obvious. Over the years this 'hyper-sexing' of America found its way into to talk shows, highway billboards, magazine covers, check-out line paperback novels, storefront displays, and internet pop-up ads; it's everywhere; it's intoxicating; and it works. Oh, we Americans may pretend to be the heirs and successors of some obscure notion of early national Puritanism but, in reality, we willingly jump headlong into this growing morass of sexual stimuli—even those who claim a living allegiance to Christ.

The first time I personally recognized the lure of this kind of imagery was in 1973. It was through a Hanes Beautymist Pantyhose commercial on TV. The camera began this long, slow trek along a pair of legs, starting at the toes and moving up the calves, knees, thighs—all quite stun-

ning. I'm sure it prompted teenage boys everywhere to wonder just how far the camera would go and if this mystery body was wearing any clothes at all. And then everything turned sour. As the camera continued on its journey it passed over green silk shorts, a thicker and more muscular torso, and massive arms and shoulders until it reached the face of former New York Jets Quarterback and NFL Hall of Famer, Joe Namath. What?! The pitch was that if Beautymist Pantyhose could make the legs of Joe Namath look this good, imagine what it could do for you (and for only \$1.69!). "Eeeewwwww!", intoned a prime-time chorus of frustrated male imaginations. But there it was, the *real* end-game of our sexual revolution: betrayal, shame, disappointment, and empty promises. It was also the perfect mirror of how insane our culture was becoming and the direction it would take for the next 40 years.



Right now the whole world, and especially the Church, is standing in a type of ancient Roman Colosseum. I would call it the "arena of *porneia*". *Porneia* (and all the English words we derive from this ancient Greek word) isn't so much a *what* as it is a *who*: perhaps the most toxic and demonic principality of this insatiable age; an agent of Satan who seeks to corrupt and exchange God's holy attribute of love within us with an evil doppelganger of lust. In Talmudic, Deuterocanonical (i.e., Tobit), and classical Christian literature his name is Asmodeus, one of the seven Princes of Hell who is linked to the seven cardinal vices. His principle vice, lust, is designed to twist sexual desire. Are we defenseless against this kind of foe? The tool we

IN THIS ISSUE OF "THE NAVIGATOR"

A Disciplined Faith: Purity	1
Monastic Muse	2
99 ^{44/100} % Pure?	3
Holy Hymnody	5
The Final Word: St. Augustine of Hippo	5

use to stand firm against this insidious enemy is the fifth of our external disciplines, the discipline of purity.

By purity we are referring to *sexual purity*. This is nothing more than what our grandparents and great grandparents used to call *chastity*; that old fashioned term that means being innocent of all sexual situations that run contrary to Scripture. This, of course, is dependent on your current circumstances. If you are married, it means abiding in heterosexual fidelity; if you are single, then it means remaining in celibacy. It also means being modest or decent; in other words, free from the taint of all that is lewd. This discipline not only seeks to preserve one's own purity but even takes into consideration how our own dress, talk, habits, or body language can help or hinder the purity of those around us. Let's look at these three—fidelity, chastity, and modesty—in a little more detail.

As you can imagine, purity is the proper mode of life for all Christians. Paul reminds us of this in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, **“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are Gods.”** Because we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and because He dwells within us (1 Corinthians 3:16), we are to treat our bodies and the bodies of others with the greatest of respect.

For those who are married, purity calls us to abstain from all sexual activity except within the context of Christian marriage (that is, between one man and one woman). This sacramental union bids both spouses to be faithful to each other in every aspect of married life (in heart, mind, spirit, body, and imagination) for they have been made **“one flesh”** in Christ (Matthew 19:5; cf., Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:8; 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31).

Those who are single—i.e., virgins, divorced, widowed—are also called to their own kind of purity (in heart, mind, spirit,

“God fashioned us with a keen sense of longing and passion. Our lives, however, were also designed to be a proving ground of that passion.”

body, and imagination); a sexual purity in which they surrender their desires to Christ and serve Him through single-heartedness and abstinence until they enter into the holy state of marriage (cf., 1 Corinthians 7:25-35). This abstinence is a high calling from God and was originally considered as a consecrated order within the early Church—the Order of Virgins—and applied to both men and women. Because of its sacred nature, some may even be called by the Holy Spirit to live this way for the remainder of their lives, giving the sacrifice of their natural sexuality as a gift to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32).



Younger Christians are to be taught a healthy respect for their bodies and should be instructed in biblical morality; learning how to develop true friendships with those of the same and opposite sex, and understanding that those around them are first and foremost the children of God; their own spiritual brothers and sisters. As they grow into physical maturity, they are to be mindful that members of the opposite sex are to be treated with the most respectful of intentions so as not to invoke unwanted passions (cf., 1 Timothy 4:12; 5:1b-2).

1 Timothy 4:12; 5:1b-2).

Purity is as much a Christian witness as it is a discipline, particularly when we take a visible stand against immorality, blurred gender roles, and the sexually saturated environment of our culture. How do we do this? By honoring God in our masculinity or femininity; by rejoicing in our singleness or in our marriages;

MONASTIC MUSE

muse \ 'myüz \ **1:** *vb* to turn something over in the mind meditatively,
2: to think reflectively, **3:** *n* a state of deep thought...

Purity is the only complete indication of the presence of God within us and of our readiness for His coming.

—St. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-395), from his treatise *On Virginit*y

by honoring our relationships with those of the opposite sex, particularly with our spouses as a mirror of Christ and His Bride (Ephesians 5:32); by reigning in and training our thoughts; by tempering our choice of literature or entertainment; and by promoting all things that draw us ever closer into the image of Christ.

Sexual purity is a state of perfection. Perhaps the only person to ever maintain this state was the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth. Enoch (“who walked with God”) and Job (“who eschewed evil”) were probably close seconds, but that means the rest of us will probably find ourselves stumbling, asking for forgiveness and strength, dusting ourselves off, and trying again. I don’t write those words so that we have permission to live in some kind of guilt-free failure but to help us realize that God fashioned us

with a keen sense of longing and passion. Our lives, however, were also designed to be a proving ground of that passion—a time of tempering—so that, in the end, they could be offered as a perfect, redeemed gift to the Lord in the same way a bride gives herself to her groom. In this case, the Bride will be the Church and the Groom will be Jesus Christ. After all, isn’t that the heavenly end-game of purity: rapturous, untainted passion between the King and the Queen of all that ever shall be?

Next time we’ll examine the last external discipline in Saint Brendan’s *Rule of Life*; the discipline of temperance.

Rejoice!
Fr. Alan Andraeas

99⁴⁴/100% Pure?

Sue Andraeas

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.”
Ephesians 5:3

What a time to be writing an article about purity! Our American news, I’m sure, reaches beyond our borders to those of you who do not live in this country, and whether reporters are discussing the two main presidential candidates or famous celebrities from sports or Hollywood—or even during the commercials between these stories—there are few places left in the Western culture that are not tainted by blatant sexual impropriety or innuendo. Here are three personal small ‘moments’ that suggest just how deeply entrenched impurity has become in our society.

#1. I was watching a show on PBS (and, for those of you not familiar with American television,...this is the channel that was originally known as the academic and cultural high ground in TV viewing) and the host of the show was visiting a bike shop where the artisan was welding original, hand-crafted bicycles by using a special kind of weld that he had developed. The camera showed the weld being created, flipped back to watch the reaction of the host as he examined the artisan’s handiwork, and then zoomed in on his face as he exclaimed, “Man! That’s one sexy weld.” Sexy? We’re talking about molten metal joining two metal tubes together!

#2. It was one of my first days of teaching in this area and I found myself out on the playground. Two cute little girls, no older than six, were swinging together and singing their hearts

out. And what were they singing? It was a Top 10 pop song; the lyrics were about the ‘afterglow’ of a one-night stand. I’m sure these two little girls had no clue what they were singing about, but they were well on their way to developing both impure ideas and the vocabulary to express them.

#3. Different school. Another six-year old girl arrived for the Christmas Concert (excuse me; Winter Concert) with red lipstick, mascara, a skin-tight top, mini skirt, nylons and heels. When I told her she looked pretty, she replied that her dad called her a ‘looker’ and that the boys would want to eat her up. She had already learned that this is what she needed.

If we, as Christians, rush through our prayers, forget to read our Bibles for a while, or have not developed any of the other disciplines, we can still *appear* to be Christian by our ‘Christian-ese’ behaviors and words. The world can still be fooled by our pretend-piety. But nothing will betray our lack of true holiness, in an exterior and visible way, faster than impurity. It sneaks out in our vocabulary and conversations, our wardrobe, our choices for how we spend our free time, our perception of others’ worth, our intimate and platonic relationships, even our sense of humor. And much of the time, we are not even aware of just how impure our thoughts and actions have become because the ‘purity gauge’ in our culture is set so low. What is the solution? How can we practice the discipline of purity in an impure land? To find that, we must first understand what God desires for his people. So let’s go back to Old Testament times...

In the first few books of the Old Testament, the idea of impurity is portrayed as ‘unclean,’ meaning ‘defiled’ or ‘polluted,’ and was first used to describe food. God’s people were instructed (in



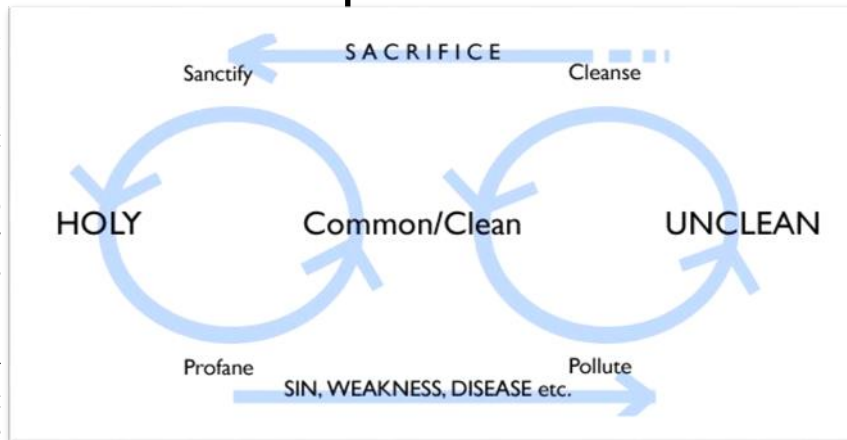
“Much of the time, we are not even aware of just how impure our thoughts and actions have become because the ‘purity gauge’ in our culture is set so low.”

what we know as the book of Leviticus) to never eat the carcasses of animals found dead, or gnats, or camels, etc.—those lists of meat that are divided into ‘clean and unclean.’ Later, it is used to describe water, cooking pots, women just after childbirth, skin lesions, household mold, and on and on the list goes. Later on, in the same book, God spends a great deal of time explaining the dress and conduct for Aaron and the line of priests who were to follow. They are to be set apart; holy. Clean. They were the living prophetic witness to the ‘holy cleanness’ of heaven.

So, if you found mold on your walls, or had questions about what kind of meat you can serve your Israeli family, you did not go to the ‘impurity police’ or to their equivalent of a home/kitchen expert like Martha Stewart. You went to the priest, the one who should be able to tell clean from unclean, purity from impurity in much the same way that a banker—an expert in real money—can more quickly spot a counterfeit. None of these laws concerning clean and unclean, pure and impure, health and disease were meant to limit God’s people except from what would keep them away from Him. And since there is nothing impure, unclean or unhealthy in God’s Heavenly Kingdom, our goal should be to remove them from our own lives in order to remain close to God. These first laws were about tangible, physical things, but God later developed this concept of purity into one that was more about spiritual purity than physical cleanness.

In the very first part of his letter to the Romans, Paul quickly links impurity to idolatry and greed, and from there, the list of consequential sins grows rapidly. At its core, impurity makes an idol of the created. It is directly

related to lust, which puts personal desire above sacrificial love. That means that lust and impurity are directly related—and so are purity and agape love. Of course they are! Sacrificial (self-forgetting) love is the act which naturally flows from a pure heart. God goes so far as to identify impurity as adultery committed against Himself (see Jeremiah 3). Now we see that, at its very core, purity is very much a spiritual matter—which is why it is a spiritual discipline! Purity is as much a protection from lusting after creation as it is protection against idolatry, or worshipping anything other than God. Jesus teaches that pure of heart will see God (Matthew 5:8). “Heart,” in this case, refers to our thoughts and ideas.



Look over the Romans 1 list of characteristics that sneak in once impurity works its way into our being. That list includes, among other things, envy, murder (and remember, Christ says mental and verbal ‘murder’ are the same as

physical murder), strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, arrogance and boasting. That’s only a partial list! St. Paul concludes his thoughts by writing how impurity leaves us with having “no understanding, no fidelity (loyalty to God), no love, no mercy.” I would suggest that, if you are having trouble focusing as you pray, if Scripture seems cryptic and dry, the Holy Spirit seems to be absent, or if you feel like God is far away and not paying any attention to you, begin looking at what inspires your thoughts and emotions. What are you watching on television? What kind of music (meaning the lyrics and intent of rhythm) provides the soundtrack for your day? Do you ‘measure’ those around you based on the expectations provided by advertisements and Hollywood, or do you see them as the image of Christ that they truly are? By which standard do you measure your own worth?

Once you find the ‘leak’ of impure stimuli, clog it up. Turn it off. Replace it with thoughts and stimuli that are pure. “Like what?,” you may ask. Paul gave a list of those things as well, documented for us in Philippians 4:8; “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” And remember, it didn’t take 5 minutes for impurity to sneak into your interior life—your mind; it’ll take longer than 5 minutes to erase it. Be patient with yourself, and constantly remind yourself to choose cleanness, purity. Choose Christ.

Rejoice!
Sue



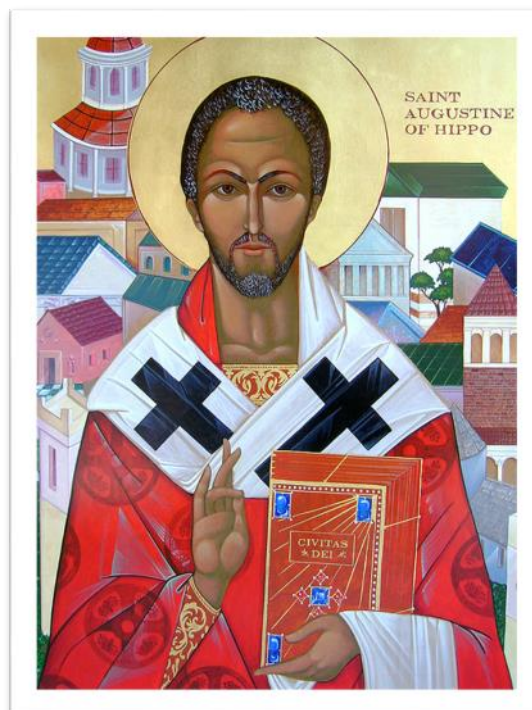
**Almighty God, to Whom all hearts are known /
Cleanse our desires, and fill us with Your own /
All that we are lies open here to You /
Breathe, great Creator God, and make us new.**

"Prayer for Purity"

**Text, Book of Common Prayer, Collect for Purity; Adopted by Ken Bible, 2012.
Sung to "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart" (Hymn tune: MORECOMBE, 10.10.1010).**

The Final Word: Saint Augustine of Hippo — North African (Algerian) theologian, philosopher, and Doctor of the Church (354-450 AD); from *The Rule of St. Augustine*

To see a woman when you go out is not forbidden, but it is sinful to desire her or to wish her to desire you, for it is not by intense or passionate feeling alone but also by one's gaze that lustful desires mutually arise. And do not say that your heart is pure if there is immodesty in your eye, because the unchaste eye is the anxious emissary of an impure heart. And when such hearts disclose their unchaste desires in a mutual gaze, even without saying a word, that is when chastity is suddenly driven out of their lives, even though their bodies remain unsullied by unchaste acts. For did not our Lord Himself tell us that even if we look at a woman to lust after her, we have already committed adultery in our hearts?



HOW TO CONTACT US

**Father Alan L. Andraeas, Prior
Susan G. Andraeas, Prioress**

**The Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
38 Cemetery Road
Dennysville, ME 04628-4326
207-726-5129**

**st.brendans@myfairpoint.net
www.saintbrendans-online.org**

WE COVET YOUR PRAYERS!!!

Please continue to pray for Saint Brendan's and these various needs:

- For God's strength and healing for both Fr. Alan and Sue (we are both facing some serious medical diagnoses).
- For strong and willing hands to come alongside of our labor; short-term or long-term.
- For the ongoing construction of Holy Trinity Chapel and the funds to accomplish the work.
- For necessary remodeling of the Priory House so that we can host more retreatants and guests.

The Navigator

Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
38 Cemetery Road
Dennysville, ME 04628-4326

