

Redeemer Pacific explores bishops' letter on chastity

Lecture tackled questions surrounding 'authentic Christian chastity' and why it's important today

By C.S. Morrissey
Special to The B.C. Catholic

What is authentic Christian chastity? Why is it important to strive for it? How can you find healing when you are struggling?

At the end of January the Episcopal Commission for Doctrine of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral letter to young people about chastity.

Just days later Redeemer Pacific College (RPC) explored the topic with the lecture *Sexual Purity in the New Millennium*, this year's lecture in the annual Marriage, Family, and Sexuality series sponsored by *Fideles*.

Fideles is an RPC academic journal distributed at RPC's *Fideles* events. The word is Latin for *The Faithful*.

"Chastity is a very real challenge, particularly for young people in our country today. We want to assure those young people who are struggling to live a life of chastity that their bishops stand prayerfully with them and are there to support and encourage them," said Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, the commission's chairman, when the pastoral letter was released.

"I am certain that young people striving to be faithful to the Gospel are not afraid of a challenging and authentic love. It is the only kind that ultimately gives true joy!"

The pastoral letter encourages young people to surround them-



Sarah Buckham / Special to The B.C. Catholic
Robert Stackpole (left) and Jake Khym field questions on the CCCB letter on chastity.

selves with friends striving to live chastely. Catholic colleges like Redeemer Pacific offer an environment suitable for the pursuit of virtue. Students are given the opportunity to follow the bishops' advice about the importance of daily prayer, spiritual guidance, supportive friendships, and regular confession.

"Living chastity is no easy business in the sex-saturated world of contemporary Western culture," observes the bishops' letter. "It's impossible to walk through a shopping mall, turn on a computer or television, glance at an advertisement, or browse through a bookstore without being bombarded by sexual imagery of every kind.

"Pornography has never been more widespread, reaching almost epidemic proportions. It denigrates authentic sexual expression and encourages masturbation, sexual

Reconciliation and the Eucharist help us live chaste lives.

intimacy outside marriage, and the separation of the life-giving and love-giving meaning of sexual relations."

"The sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist help us on our journey to live chaste lives," the letter continues. "If we commit a sin of impurity alone or with another person, the sacrament of reconciliation communicates to us God's forgiveness and merciful love. All we need to do is approach His throne of mercy with sincere sorrow in confession, and we are assured that all our sins are forgiven."

The letter discusses St. Augustine, Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, and St. Gianna Beretta Molla as "chaste lovers and holy role models." An exhilarating Catholic education gives students the opportunity to learn wisdom from these fellow Catholics of ours, who can



Sarah Buckham / Special to The B.C. Catholic
Sarah Hudson delivers a speech at Redeemer Pacific College on chastity.

truly help us bear witness through love and friendship.

A crowd of over 120, including students, attended the RPC event. Sarah Hudson spoke on *Women and Sexual Purity* and Jake Khym on *Men and Sexual Purity*, and then an extended question-and-answer lasted over an hour, with

vigorous discussion. Students posed honest, probing questions and received wise, practical answers. Speakers also met privately afterwards with those who wished to continue discussion.

Sarah Hudson is a former executive director of National Campus Life Network and Jake Khym is a counselling psychologist practising in Abbotsford with Life Restoration Counselling. Their expert help will continue to be made available, with the assistance of RPC, both in print and in Internet audio presentations.

More information is available at www.moreC.com/fideles, where the bishops' pastoral letter is also available, along with YouTube video and other helpful resources.

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