

Why Chaste Couples Don't Divorce

by Robert Babecka

Some statistics-One out of two marriages end in divorce. If both partners were chaste before marriage (that is, they had not engaged in premarital sex) their marriage has an 84 percent likelihood of lasting (Dr. James Dobson, Focus on the Family). If they remain chaste after marriage (that is, do not use contraception or sterilization to prevent unintended births) this number jumps to 95 percent (Father Paul Marx, Human Life International). Some studies show even lower divorce rates. These comparisons only apply fully in a society where contraception is readily available and couples willingly forego their use.

Why do these marriages last?

On the Natural Level

Chaste couples see God in the sexual act. To a Catholic, marriage is more than a contract; it is a sacrament, an action instituted by Christ to convey Grace. Faithful Catholics see the sexual act as our willing participation in God's plan to bring new souls into this world. If a couple does not rely on artificial birth control they are forced to face this reality every time they have sex and even when they refrain from sex (if they are not ready for kids). If they are practicing such abstinence, they still have to face this reality. A man fasting from food or drink is especially mindful of them when he is without. If a Christian couple recognizes that their marriage is not just a relationship between a man and wife, but between a man, a wife, and God, their marriage will be stronger.

If you see the marital act as something sacred, pornography, even the kind that constantly assaults us in the mainstream media and advertisements, becomes more repugnant.

What if a couple uses contraception? It is hard to see sex as sacred if a person is deliberately fighting the procreative aspect of sex. If the marital act is not sacred, then what makes marriage sacred? The institution of marriage becomes degraded. It becomes a cultural norm, a socially acceptable way to have access to sexual activity. When couples experience trouble, this "sacred glue" is not there to hold them together. The higher purpose their marriage should be serving is obscured.

On the Supernatural Level

Sacraments convey Grace. When we participate in the sacraments as God intended, we receive God's blessing. Just as Jesus cursed the fig tree that bore no fruit, we cannot expect the full outpouring of God's Grace when we refuse God's command to be fruitful and multiply and thwart His will by redesigning the sexual act to suit our purposes.

What about the people blessed with strong marriages not likely to end in divorce?

We never know what will happen. But perhaps as important as preventing divorce, is the fact that this "sacred glue" should also strengthen a healthy marriage. Everyone should want that.