

# Homily

Fr. Brian Schieber, Vicar of Clergy, wrote this inspiring homily for the Original My House Manual in 2006.

The homily, in harmony with the video, can be used to create an awareness of the problem and to offer an opportunity for a priest, parishioner or parent to bring to full awareness the gravity of the problem and the hope of salvation.

## **HOMILY ON AUTHENTIC LOVE AND SEXUALITY By Father Brian Schieber**

Not long ago at Christmas time, I remember asking a few 8th graders what they got for Christmas. One remarked that he got a new DVD player. I said, "Oh, your family got a DVD player." He said, "No, this one is just for me. I have a TV in my bedroom, now I have my own DVD player."

Growing up, my parents taught us to stay away from strangers, and yet today, through TV, DVD's, and the Internet we are letting strangers into our children's bedrooms. Our children are losing their innocence through the ready access to indecency piped right into our homes.

It is time that we reclaim our families and homes for Christ. That is why we are participating in this Archdiocesan program entitled, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

As the video showed, we are in the midst of a battle. St. Paul tells us how to prepare for this battle. In the letter to the Ephesians, he tells us that the first piece of armor that we must put on for the spiritual battle is this: "gird your loins with the truth."

If we want to reclaim our families for Christ, and win the battle of sexual purity, we must first gird our loins with the truth. We must first reclaim the truth about our sexuality and authentic love. What our culture has been telling us about our sexuality and love is a lie. Our world thinks that sex is nothing more than something I pursue for my own recreation and pleasure. Love has been reduced to a mere feeling - something that I can easily fall in and out of.

If we want to see what authentic love is all about, though, we look to Jesus. The bible tells us that God is love and Jesus is God incarnate. We need only observe Christ to see love incarnate, to see love in action.

Jesus shows us that the heart of love is SELF-GIFT. Indeed, what is the greatest symbol of love that we have in the Church? The crucifix. There is no greater love than this – than to lay down your life for another.

Love is not merely a feeling that ebbs and flows. Jesus did not feel good as he went through the passion and offered his life for us on the cross. Rather, love is a decision. Love is a decision to will the good of another.

**THIS IS MY BODY** given for you! That is what love is all about.

This gift of self leads to UNION. Jesus gave his body for us, and asks us in turn to surrender our lives to him. His act of self-gift – THIS IS MY BODY – leads to COMMUNION. Notice the Eucharistic language. The Eucharist is the sacrament of love and reveals God's love to us.

We see in the Eucharist God's entire plan – to unite us with himself and to share his very divine life with us. God's plan in fact is to marry us. Interestingly the bible begins with marriage – the marriage of Adam and Eve and ends with a marriage – the marriage of the new Adam who is Christ and the new Eve who is the Church.

Finally, love leads to new LIFE. Love is fruitful. It is life giving. Jesus himself said, I have come so that you might have LIFE and have it to the full.

In fact, through Jesus' total gift of self on the cross, eternal life came to the world. Self-gift that brings about a communion of persons brings forth new life.

This then is what love looks like:

TOTAL SELF-GIFT

THAT RESULTS IN PERMANENT UNION

THAT IS LIFE GIVING

Now, since we are created in God's image and likeness, we are made to imitate God's love.

Some years ago, I gave a homily about sexuality and the Church's teaching on contraception. A few days after I gave that homily, an anonymous letter arrived in the mail. In this letter, the person said, "Father, please keep God out of our bedroom and out of our sex lives."

It dawned on me that this person had hit the nail on the head in identifying the problem of our world's view of sexuality. You see if God is love, and we remove God from the bedroom and God from our sex life, then we have removed love from the bedroom and love from our sex life.

Rather than God having nothing to do with marriage and sex, marriage and sex are precisely where God should be revealed!

Marriage in fact is a sacrament. It is an outward sign that reveals to the world God's love for his people.

On the wedding day, a priest asks a couple 3 basic questions: Have you come here freely without reservation to give yourself to each other in marriage? TOTAL SELF-GIFT. Will you love and honor each other for the rest of your lives? PERMANENT UNION. Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the laws of God and his Church? OPENNESS TO LIFE. Right there in the marriage vows we see an image of God's love. Total self-gift, that results in permanent union, that is open to life.

Sex then is the language of the body that is meant to speak the wedding vows! In the marital embrace a couple is saying, "take me, this is my body given for you." They are saying, "I give myself to you as an expression of my total commitment and as a way to renew our covenant which is permanent and faithful."

They are saying, “we are open to accepting children lovingly from God.”

Sex is meant to be an expression of the marriage vows. Sex is meant to be an expression of authentic love! This sounds so obvious, but somehow our world has lost sight of this.

Ultimately, this is the question that we have to ask ourselves regarding our sexuality. Does this thought or action image the love of the Trinity? Is it an expression of total self-gift? Is it an expression of permanent union? Is it open to life?

We begin to see how our world no longer sees sex as a gift for another, as an expression of commitment, as a means to co-create new life with God. In fact, in our popular culture, sex really doesn't have much to do with love at all.

If love is about giving myself for the good of another, the very opposite of love is to use another for my own gratification and pleasure. Here lies the tragedy of pornography and self-gratification. It is nothing more than use and exploitation.

It is also evident that sex outside of marriage can never image the commitment that love is supposed to express.

And in no way can contraception or homosexual acts image God's love which is never sterile, but always fruitful and life-giving.

The fall out of our culture's sexual ethic has been devastating. Relationships based on use, selfishness and little commitment have left our society broken. You know the statistics: one in every 2 marriages ends in divorce, unwanted pregnancies result in 1.5 million abortions a year, over half of children born today are born outside of marriage, people have fallen into the grip of sexual addiction and vice.

But there is hope. Where sin abounds grace abounds all the more.

Indeed at the root of all of our sins of impurity is a desire for true love, a desire for intimacy, a desire for acceptance, a desire for the beautiful. GK Chesterton once said, “Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for Jesus Christ.” We are all looking for true love.

Christ is the answer to our deepest human longings for intimacy and acceptance. He beckons all whom are weary and broken to find healing and refreshment in him. Jesus awaits us in the sacrament of reconciliation to shower us with his mercy and forgiveness, and then he asks us to rise back up and follow him. This is where true freedom and joy will be found, in following his way of love. It is time for the Church to launch a counter-sexual revolution. We must gird our loins with the truth. We must reclaim the truth about authentic love and God's plan for our sexuality.

In the coming weeks, I invite you to participate in the Archdiocesan program, “As for me and my house.” Take this opportunity to educate yourself, to learn how to protect your family, to find healing and help, and to reclaim your house for the Lord.

# Homily Talking Points

- Talk about the dignity of the human person... that we are made in God's image and are called to mirror his love.
- Speak about how our culture has the power to pull us away from the dignity of our human sexuality and the beauty of authentic love.
- Present God's plan for our sexuality in the context of the true meaning of love.
- Show how pornography and other sexual sins do not reflect God's love, and violate our dignity.
- Talk about the opposite of love being the use of another as an object for our own gratification.
- Raise awareness of the dangers of pornography entering into our homes, particularly its corrosive effect on the marriage covenant and the damage it does to the spouse and the family.
- Present the Archdiocesan initiative – "As for Me and My House."
- Speak about forgiveness and hope.
- Encourage participation in the sacrament of reconciliation.
- Invite and encourage people to participate in "As for Me and My House."

You may also want to mention some of the following advantages to participating in the program:

- Become aware of the dangers to our children.
- Discover the resources available to assist you in protecting your family.
- Learn what resources are available for those who have fallen into the habit of using pornography.
- Discover the resources available to assist the parish community to grow in their understanding of God's plan for human sexuality.