

Teens: A pure heart is a happy heart!

by Bishop Victor Galeone

It hardly seems that a year has passed since my last message to our youth. I'd like to begin this year's message by recounting an incident that took place in July while I was visiting my relatives in Italy.

One evening, several of my cousins were reminiscing. Rosaria recounted an event that had occurred 50 years ago, when she and her husband Pietro were engaged. Pietro had asked Rosaria's parents if he could take her on a date that night to the town's new movie house. (Mind you, she was 20 years old, and Pietro was 23.) The parents agreed, provided that one of them went along as chaperon. So that night, Pietro and Rosaria sat in a darkened theater, with my Aunt Antonia - "who weighed well over 200 pounds - sitting between them! Rosaria concluded her story by saying, "Victor, until our wedding night, we were never alone " not even for an instant."

How the times have changed! Some months ago, a college freshman that I had confirmed dropped me a line. She was asking for advice on how she and her boyfriend might maintain their chastity while dating. In my response to Tami (not her real name), these were some of my suggestions:

1. Surrender your hearts to Jesus. No one, not even your best friend, should come before him.
2. Invite Jesus to be the unseen guest on your dates, by beginning each date with a prayer.
3. Don't draw an imaginary line in the sand: "Everything on this side is OK. Anything on that side is wrong. Now how close can we get to the line without crossing it? - " As they say in Lake Wobegone: "If you didn't want to go to Minneapolis, why did you get on the train?"
4. How do you know if you're getting too close to the line - " maybe even crossed it? Simply ask yourself: "If Bo and I were married, how would I react if one day I found Bo with someone else, doing what we're doing right now? Would I tolerate it? If not, why not? - Because she's not his wife? Well, I'm not his wife yet, either."
5. Tami, you have to be the one to help Bo from becoming too affectionate. If you feel that he's crossing the line, you must remind him, "Bo, I think it's time to say goodnight."
6. An Italian adage (dealing with resisting or giving in to temptation) says: "A drop of vinegar, followed by an ocean of honey (= a clear conscience). Or a drop of honey, followed by an ocean of vinegar (= a remorseful conscience)."
7. Get to confession regularly. This sacrament offers great peace.
8. An old Hindu proverb: "There is no joy like that of an unfulfilled desire." For a concrete example of this and its opposite, read the account of Ammon and Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22. Anne Boleyn was also keenly aware of this truth, as she rejected King Henry VIII's advances: "I will never be your mistress. I will only be your queen."

From a journal I keep, I would like to cite the entry for July 19, 1992. That summer I had accompanied our parish youth group to the Youth Conference in Steubenville, Ohio:

The highlight of the Youth Conference was the moving testimony of Mark and Kelly - two high school seniors from New Orleans. Both have surrendered their hearts to Jesus and promised to keep themselves pure until their wedding night. As Kelly (who is not Catholic) witnessed, "But it's not easy - " especially when a friend asks you in the locker room before gym class, "Kelly, has Mark taken you to

bed yet?" - 'Not yet.' - 'Well what's he waiting for?' - 'Our wedding night.' - 'Kelly get with it! This ain't the Middle Ages!'"

Mark and Kelly begin all their dates with a prayer, asking Jesus to keep them pure. Yet we adults are afraid to challenge our youth! We're giving them condoms instead of Christ!

In closing, I would like to quote what another young lady had to say about this subject:

"The person I spend the rest of my life with must be someone who has proven his ability to be committed. After all, my marriage will be a lifelong commitment! His abstinence from sex is one way to 'prove' his ability to be true to me. I would be oh-so honored to find out that the man I marry has respected me enough " without even knowing me! - to have kept himself only for me until our wedding night."

Teens, keep your eyes on Jesus! And remember his promise: "Happy are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." (Mt. 5:8)