



Hawaii Catholic Herald

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Pages for the young adult Catholic

hope  
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## Ask Mason & Teo

### How am I supposed to deal with my sexual desires?

Mason & Teo, I receive your column electronically and I find your column has answered many of my unanswered questions. I am a part of a small group that gathers weekly and in our discussion we talked about mortal and venial sins. I heard that masturbation is a sin. Why is it a sin? What am I supposed to do with these sexual desires and feelings if I cannot have sex and I'm not supposed to masturbate? (Restrained)

Dear Restrained,  
Thank you for considering our ministry in aiding your ascent toward the truth. To sin means to reject or oppose the love of God knowingly and willfully. Sin is not something that exists out there by itself in the world. It is in the heart, in a person's free will, as stated in Matthew 15:19-20, "For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy. These are what defile a person."

Masturbation is defined as the deliberate stimulation of the genital organs in order to derive sexual pleasure. The outward act of masturbation is sinful because it confirms that the person's heart and mind has consented to an inward act of impurity.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2352), "masturbation is an intrinsically and gravely disordered action. The deliberate use of the sexual faculty ... outside of marriage is essentially contrary to its purpose."

In order to understand what is wrong with masturbation, we must understand the holiness of one's own body and the sacredness of human sexuality. According to Pope John Paul II (Theology of the Body, Feb. 20, 1980), "the body and it alone is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine."

God created sex as an intimate union of life and love for a husband and wife. When a couple gets married, they vow before God and the church that their love will be free, total, faithful, and life-giving. When they make love in the "one flesh" union, their bodies speak those wedding vows. Their love is a sign of God's free, total, faithful, and life-giv-

ing love.

It is free — not forced or lust-driven. It is total — they hold nothing back from each other, including their fertility, until death. It is faithful — including the heart, mind and body to your one and only spouse. And it is life-giving — open to children, without artificial contraception or deliberate sterilization.

Sexual intercourse between spouses is meant to participate in the very life and love of God. It makes visible the invisible mystery of God. It is a life-giving communion. The "one flesh" communion of man and wife foreshadows the Eucharistic communion of Christ and the church.

Christian marriage, then, reflects the supernatural and eternal love of God within the Trinity, between God and all humanity, made visible in the love of Christ and the church.

In light of what sex is supposed to be, masturbation harms our ability to love because it indulges the heart and mind in impure sexual fantasies. God designed you for one spouse only and so, during sexual pleasure, the brain releases epinephrine which burns onto your memory the beauty of your spouse alone. However, when we turn away from God's design, we harm ourselves by distorting love into something lust-driven and selfish, instead of genuine and selfless.

God gave us sexual desire as the power to love as he loves so that we could participate in divine life, as co-creators with him, in selfless love. These urges can help train you in love and faithfulness.

The heart is a battlefield of lust and love. Purity and chastity is not about wrestling your lusts to the ground and putting a submission hold on them. God wants to transform and free you from the things that control you. "The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy" (CCC 2339).

Sexual urge and desire has the power for life and destruction. A man must learn to use his interior strength to serve and sacrifice. In resisting temptation, we earn merit in heaven. It is an opportunity to pray, it helps us grow in humility and it gives us a chance to prove our love for God.

The word "temptation" comes from the Latin, "tentare," which means to test. In essence, temptation is a test of love. By fighting well, we prove our love and fidelity to God. After a temptation, a person will either be closer to God or further from him.

The choice lies with you. If you choose well, your reward will be God himself. Make good choices.

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## 'Your Holiness, what must we do?'

### In Malta, young people ask pope for guidance in facing their fears, doubts

By Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

VALLETTA, Malta

In an unexpected display of honesty and frankness, five young Maltese men and women spoke to Pope Benedict XVI about their hopes, doubts, and fears as well as the contradictions they sense within the Catholic Church.

Their testimonies were part of a music-filled and prayerful gathering of about 40,000 youth along the Valletta waterfront April 18.

The first young man on stage spoke on behalf of young people such as homosexuals, substance abusers, or children of broken or dysfunctional families who may feel marginalized by the church.

He told the pope "we should be treated with more compassion — without being judged — and with more love."

Being shunned or looked down upon by some members of the Catholic community causes some young people to call God's love into question, he said.

"How can we believe that

God accepts us unconditionally when his own people reject us?" he asked.

Catholics who feel marginalized can experience great confusion and suffering especially when secular society seems more willing than the church to accept them and treat them with dignity, he said.

"Your Holiness, what must we do?" he asked, and the crowd applauded.

The next speaker, a young woman, spoke on behalf of Catholics who are active members of the church. She said faithful Catholics, "as a group, feel excluded by society."

They work to keep Catholic teaching and values alive in society even though they know that "we are consciously estranging ourselves from our contemporary culture."

She told the pope that it feels like "it is our faith itself that impedes us from entering further into dialogue with society."

Sometimes efforts to build a better world, be at the service of others and bring people closer to God feel like "a

Above, Pope Benedict XVI talks with young people on a catamaran as he makes his way to a larger gathering of youths at the waterfront in Valletta, Malta, April 18. (CNS photo/Tony Gentile, Reuters)

fruitless exercise," like an unfinished building that "is far too expensive to complete," she said.

"We wish to leave our mark on the church even as we are young. Your Holiness, what must we do?" she asked.

The next to speak were a young man and woman preparing to be married within the church.

They said they want to have a marriage that is guided by God's own spirit, and yet they are afraid "that life offers too many hurdles for us to live our married lives in God's light."

A major concern, they said, was trusting completely that God would provide for their family.

"We are not sure about our own interpretation of God's providence: whether it is totally gratuitous or whether it is a form of compensation for our wisdom and prudence in raising our children," the young woman said.

"Show us the way to live our married life as a calling from God. Your Holiness, tell us, what must we do?" they asked.

The last young person spoke on behalf of all the young men and women preparing for consecrated life.

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Movie reviews



*Oceans* (DisneyNature): Surprisingly philosophical nature documentary offers stunning images of sea life from around the globe while conveying a positive message about mankind's connection to the ocean and the need for environmental conservation. Actor Pierce Brosnan intones pleasing narration for co-directors and writers Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud, whose film, though it lacks a solid narrative structure and occasionally suffers from a dearth of explanatory detail, nonetheless constitutes a visual feast, and their avoidance of graphic images of predatory behavior makes this eye-catching spectacle suitable for viewers of all ages. A-I (G)

**The Back-Up Plan** (CBS Films): In this dull and predictable romantic comedy single pet store owner Zoe (Jennifer Lopez) conceives twins through artificial insemination, and seems blissfully happy until Mr. Right appears in the form of cheese maker Stan (Alex O'Loughlin). Zoe falls hard, but when she confesses her condition to Stan, he freaks. Despite a "happy" ending, director Alan Poul's film presents a thoroughly warped view of love, marriage and parenthood, and contradicts Catholic moral teachings on the necessity of maintaining the connection between the unitive and procreative aspects of marital love. Morally skewed treatment of human sexuality, graphic premarital sexual activity, rear and partial nudity, scenes of defecation, much crude language, graphic gynecological exams, and a gruesome water birth scene. O (PG-13)

**Death at a Funeral** (Screen Gems):

Ensemble farce relating the various outlandish mishaps that befall two estranged brothers (Chris Rock and Martin Lawrence) and their relatives and friends (notably James Marsden, Tracy Morgan and Danny Glover) as they gather to bury the family patriarch, including the played-for-laughs revelation of the deceased's concealed relationship with a mysterious stranger (Peter Dinklage). Director Neil LaBute's Americanization of Frank Oz's 2007 British comedy of the same title mostly seeks laughs in the bed, and bathroom, with predictably woeful results. Frivolous treatment of adulterous homosexuality, rear and partial nudity, drug theme, graphic scatological humor, sexual jokes and references, a half-dozen uses of profanity, frequent rough and crude language. O (R)

**Kick-Ass** (Lionsgate): Intentionally outrageous but deeply perverse action comedy in which an ordi-

nary high school student (Aaron Johnson) attempts to transform himself into a crusading superhero but instead becomes caught up in a feud pitting a deranged ex-police officer (Nicolas Cage) and the tween daughter (Chloe Grace Moretz) he has home-schooled as an assassin against a mob boss (Mark Strong) and his son (Christopher Mintz-Plasse), with all but the gangster assuming masked alter egos. Director and co-writer Matthew Vaughn's adaptation of Mark Millar and John S. Romita Jr.'s series of comic books fills the screen with bloody mayhem and the mouth of Moretz's blithely murderous character with cringe-inducing vulgarity. Much gory violence including torture and dismemberment, brief graphic nonmarital sexual activity and offscreen masturbation, upper female nudity, drug use, a few instances of profanity and pervasive rough and crude language. O (R)

Ratings

Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications: A-I – general patronage; A-II – adults and adolescents; A-III – adults; L – limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O – morally offensive.

Motion Picture Association of America ratings: G – general audiences, all ages admitted; PG – parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 – parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R – restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 – no one 17 or under admitted; NR – no rating.

- Alice in Wonderland* .....A-II (PG)
- The Back-Up Plan* .....O (PG-13)
- Clash of the Titans* .....A-III (PG-13)
- Date Night* .....L (PG-13)
- Death at a Funeral* .....O (R)
- Diary of a Wimpy Kid* .....A-II (PG)
- Hot Tub Time Machine* .....O (R)
- How to Train Your Dragon* .....A-II (PG)
- Kick-Ass* .....O (R)
- The Last Song* .....A-II (PG)
- Letters to God* .....A-II (PG)
- The Losers* .....L (PG-13)
- Oceans* .....A-I (G)
- Tyler Perry's Why Did I get Married Too?* .....A-III (PG-13)

Pope and youth in Malta

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He said God's call to live one's life completely for the Lord stirs up feelings of both happiness and despair. Those preparing for consecrated life are excited to be part of a community that is dedicated to building bridges with, not walls against, the modern world, he said.

However, he said, they are often not taken seriously by members of society, especially at a time when there is heightened attention to "priests who fail other persons."

"It is our desire to grow closer to those who have distanced themselves from God, yet how are we to touch those hearts which are cold and suspicious?" he asked.

He told the pope that the church "should be prepared to make everybody welcome, to find a place for everyone who needs it," and invite "new people to discover God."

Yet it is hard to integrate into a society that seems to have no place for religious men and women, he said, adding "Your Holiness, what must we do?"

The pope did not answer each person's concern individually, but he gave a general response in a text that was prepared before the event, but was based on the young people's questions.

He said "every personal encounter with Jesus is an overwhelming experience of love."

Even the hatred and anger St. Paul felt toward Christians before his conversion "was completely swept away by the power of Christ's love," he said.

Some of the harsh words found in the writings of St. Paul may make it hard to believe that the Gospel is spreading a message of love, he said, but love means being challenged to convert, to cleanse oneself of sin and to become more perfect.

"When (God) challenges us because something in our lives is displeasing to him, he is not rejecting us, but he is asking us to change and become more perfect."

The pope said: "God rejects no one. And the church rejects no one." However, because God loves his children so completely, "he wants us to purify ourselves of our faults and build up our virtues so that we can have life in abundance."

He told the young people they should be proud that Malta "defends the unborn and promotes stable family life by saying no to abortion and divorce," and he urged them to maintain a courageous witness to the sanctity of life and the centrality of marriage and family life in society.

He also encouraged young people to fulfill their duty to show God's love through service to others, especially toward the most vulnerable and marginalized in society.

The world can learn from their Christian witness because "Gospel values are once again becoming countercultural, just as they were at the time of St. Paul," he said.

COMING OF AGE



Karen Osborne | Staying true to your beliefs, no matter the price

Would you take your clothes off for \$1 million? It's one of those truth-or-dare questions you get asked at slumber parties but don't really ever expect to deal with in real life – unless you work in Hollywood.

Recently, actor Neal McDonough, known for his work on "Desperate Housewives," left his leading role in the ABC series "Scoundrels" – and the large paycheck that came along with it. While the network called it a "simple casting change," insider sources close to the actor say he may have been fired.

McDonough, who is Catholic, won't do the sex scenes required by the show.

Thanks to reality shows and pop culture, getting famous has

become synonymous with taking your clothes off. Starlets feel showing skin is the only way to get ahead.

Some young actors feel they have to ooze sex appeal. The pressure to get and stay sexy is as grueling as the California sun. And, sooner or later, most young actors have to decide: Will I do that sex scene or not?

To do a sex scene, an actor has to have real physical, intimate contact with another actor or actress.

In Hollywood, it takes guts to go against the tide, especially since refusing to do scenes like that might make a person's career falter or fail (not to mention saying no to a pretty lucrative payday). It also takes guts to build a lasting, healthy relationship in a town where few high-profile marriages make it past the first few years.

McDonough is not alone in re-

fusing sex scenes. Rachel Bilson, Megan Fox, Jessica Alba, Jennifer Garner and other actresses reportedly have no-nudity clauses in their contracts.

These days, we're pummeled with shirtless Abercrombie guys and models who bare all. It's easy to forget that sex is powerful. It requires trust and faith and commitment. God didn't mean sex to be casual or public, which is why Catholics say it belongs only in a committed marriage relationship.

You don't have to look further than the tabloids to find out that our sexualized culture may be harming real relationships and self-images among married couples and even students in high school.

If you're a girl, how many times do you go to the mall and feel pressured to buy skimpy clothes just because there's hardly anything else on the rack? Like an actress trying to make a

name for herself, you're constantly bombarded with signals from the culture that say attracting a guy means that you have to show skin and put out.

But a good guy will value your personality (or your sparkling smile) and won't ask you to compromise yourself or your future to date him.

If you're a guy, you can often feel pressured to be someone you're not in an effort to attract others – someone who's more suave or "scores" with lots of girls. But an honorable guy knows that love is a special thing not to be lightly tossed around, and all the coolest girls appreciate that.

Neal McDonough seems to be doing fine in his life and career without having to take his clothes off. If he can stand up for his beliefs while working in the Hollywood pressure cooker, teens can do it too.

When you feel the pressure, don't compromise. It's totally OK to say no to the million-dollar question. Because absolutely nothing is worth the sinking feeling you get when you're not being true to your beliefs.