

reawakening our desire for

# THE PURE

istock photo/ThomasVogel

We taste the pure in the fresh sweetness of a Georgia peach, hear it in the extraordinary symphonies of Beethoven, touch it as we hold a newborn infant, and see it reflected in the eyes of someone who loves us. It is had in the cold glass of water after a long run or in the little leaves of the green bonsai plant on our desk, breaking the otherwise lifeless gray walls of our cubicle at work.

And what about when we move inward, past the externals and into the inner room of man's heart?

**Where does our search for purity lead us?**



# MAN'S SEARCH

## Why this issue on purity?

It's a response to the cry we hear from the hearts of so many we meet everyday on the streets of New York City, in the women we serve through our Visitation Mission, in the young and not so young who join us for retreats at Villa Maria Guadalupe, in the women we accompany on the road to healing after abortion, and the thousands we encounter throughout the country by way of our evangelization mission as we bring the message – Christ is our Hope.

There is a cry from the heart for something more. A longing for a new way of living that no longer gives rise to the interior conflict and shame experienced in the wake of regrettable choices; a longing to bring the dark places within us to the light; a longing to be made new by God's grace: A longing, in essence, for a way of life that leaves us ennobled and free.

In a word, the world is desperately searching for purity. We hope this issue inspires you. Please share it with family and friends!

In Christ our Life, *Mother Agnes Mary*

**Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him (Genesis 26-27).**

**The awesome reality** How often do we stop to think about the impact of this reality in our lives? What does it mean to reflect the image of God? And what is this Divine likeness that forms the weave of every person's heart and soul? A weave in which each thread bears the weight and

brilliance of Him who is the ultimate, the beginning, and the end? The fabric of our identity, desires, and destiny is intimately entwined in God, who is pure being, all love, unalloyed truth, source of all goodness and fullness of beauty. Therefore, true to the great Weaver that has fashioned us, the human heart seeks and longs for that which is pure.

Our senses begin to tell us of this reality – we taste the pure in the fresh sweetness of a Georgia peach, hear it in the extraordinary symphonies of Beethoven, touch it as we hold a newborn infant, and see it reflected in the eyes of someone who loves us. It is had in the cold glass of water after a long run, the five-minute swim on a hot summer's day, or in the little leaves of the green bonsai plant on our desk, breaking the otherwise lifeless gray walls of our cubicle at work.

And what about when we move inward, past the externals and into the inner room of our heart? We find a parallel. We delight in the calm and peace that fills us while we watch a gentle snowfall, and find our lives transformed by a good conversation with a trusted friend after a long week of tangles at work. The glories of the sun fading quietly over the horizon uncover our longing for the infinite, and yet, paradoxically, lead us to rest within at what seems our very center. And what about the wonder that fills us as we watch an old couple walking hand in hand along the beach, or the delight of young parents holding their first child?

Its draw is powerful and compelling, its fill most satisfying, and its wake - ennobling. It is all around us, tucked to varying extent in the true, good, and beautiful things of everyday life. Purity, in all the degrees it is had, offers us a little taste of heaven. It holds





# FOR THE PURE.

out to us that which is true to our nature and dignity. It is in purity that we can rest in the peace, harmony, and a sense of inner integrity we long for, and we know deep down we are made for.

**The challenge.** Modern times have brought special challenges to our search for purity. The pleasure-driven, convenience-based currents of living and giving in today's culture often lead us to betray our better sense. While the late night ice-cream pint with friends or drive-thru menu taste great and are easily had, it doesn't take more than a few experiences of indulgence to realize that finding pleasure isn't always finding the pure, and that pleasure has its limits and regrets. Even so, modern culture has tried to offer a solution, creating a whole line of products to get the pleasure without the consequence. And though your favorite treat may not bear the consequences of sugar or fat, at the end of the day, the fat-free half and half flags your intuition and your taste buds to realize, you've settled for a counterfeit. So too, decades after the advent of artificial contraception, couples are realizing its hidden costs to their hearts and health. Have we settled for a counterfeit of love? An increasing number of young married couples are turning to modern methods of natural family planning in order to build their relationship on a solid foundation and plan their family in the light of God's providence.

Although we find ourselves surrounded by time-saving devices made available by incredible advances in technology, ironically, we find ourselves busier than ever, divided and frenzied by instant communication and information coming too fast to absorb. Every text and email seems an urgent read. How can you possibly be present to the person or task in front of you when the message alerts from your phone demand your attention? At the end of the day we are pleased to have kept up to some extent with the

culture's pace of the instant, and yet we know it edges us into a mode of living, not of balance or well-being, but of survival.

**The response.** Interestingly enough, the lived experience of modern convenience is giving way to a second thought – is it really the best thing for me? This has opened the doors to a new and booming market of products promising the all-natural, 100% organic, preservative-free, unprocessed, and whole. Not to mention the holistic approaches to medicine, exercise, and living, that challenge the piece-meal approach to living life on the fly. Opposing the fragmenting effects of technology, families are laying down rules for “media-free” dinner times, and vacations are planned to remote locations, carrying the hopes of recovering from the scattering effects of the culture. Indeed, while this past decade has made gospel the necessity of accessibility, some are turning off their phones and blackberries to create the boundaries they need to be accessible to those they love.

**What satisfies?** And what about the dimension of human relationships? If the human person has been created in the image and likeness of God, what does it mean to love like Him? A quick look at the life of Christ offers the simple conclusion – self-gift. To love each other as Christ has loved us means laying your life down for the person next to you in a way total and sacrificial. The last several decades have offered a stark contrast to this definition of love, establishing that love is found in the convenient, here today – gone tomorrow, pleasure-based, non-committal relationship. But does this definition lay down a framework that can really satisfy our desire for love? Is it really what our hearts are made for? Or is there something more? On the following pages six young adults offer their perspective...



## A chat with Janet on sexual purity

**J**anet lives in New York City and works as an executive assistant. She is the co-founder and style editor of Verily Magazine, a new lifestyle and fashion publication seeking to engage women in conversation about authentic femininity. Janet loves exploring the sights, sounds, and people of NYC, taking long walks with a camera slung around her shoulders to “enjoy the adventure and capture the beauty” of the city.

### What was your journey to understanding and living a life of purity?

In my heart, I knew the goodness and truth of purity, but in my head I didn't hold many reasons as to why or how I could honestly live chastely. In [high school], I looked around and saw a lot of good people becoming sexually active. For a while, I held purity as some kind of “ideal,” rather than a reality to be grasped. After college, for the first time in my life, I met other young people who were all striving to live purely. Without having to say anything, they simply witnessed to me by their lives. Purity is so much more than “saving sex for marriage.” Purity is a way of life, a state of mind, a disposition of the heart. From that moment on, and after a “re-conversion” in my heart, I began to live with a new desire for purity, in all aspects of my life.

### What are people looking for in love and relationships?

I don't think the majority of people, especially young people, are looking for shallow, self-centered relationships; yet, much of the time they find themselves in the middle, or even yearning for such a relationship. Mutual emotional and sexual satisfaction seems to sum up the culture's idea of a romantic relationship. Well, what happens when the balance of mutual satisfaction shifts and the other becomes dissatisfied? The superficial foundation of the relationship deteriorates. What they may not know is that their very real desire for communion, acceptance, and freedom to love has been undermined by their attempts to follow the mantra, “Do what feels good and it will bring happiness.”

### What has living a life of purity brought to your life?

Of the numerous, beautiful effects that striving for purity has brought me, one has been a drastic change in how I viewed and valued myself. Living chastely has brought an immense peace to my restless heart, and has produced the fruit of self-acceptance, and more importantly, thanksgiving for who I am as a woman. The absolute freedom that comes forth from accepting the unshakeable truth of our dignity and precious gift of sexuality is truly liberating. After my newly found sense of self worth, I started dressing differently and more consciously. I even threw out my mini-skirts and party dresses rather than donate them to local charities - to save any other woman from wearing them! Fashion is extremely powerful and speaks volumes about who we are and what we wish to communicate. I thought I could separate the two, but ended up feeling separated myself.

### What helps you to live a life of purity?

Along the daring road of living a chaste life, having friends who uphold, support, and strive beside you makes all the difference in the world. Take courage! If you have lived an unchaste life, whether in body, heart, or mind, you have never gone too far, or acted beyond the breadth of Mercy Himself. It is never too late to turn right around and run headfirst into the arms of our most loving Father.





Elena and David share

## A love that is real

**E**lena and David were married last July. Elena loves running marathons with her dog George, gardening, and buttermilk donuts. David is faithful to reading the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy every Christmas, can always find room for a vanilla malt, and can basically fix anything. Elena and David welcomed their first baby into the world in August 2012.

**Did you feel supported in your decision to save sex for marriage?**

**Elena:** I had friends show concern for me while I was engaged that I wasn't going to have sex until marriage. They told me how important sex was. Today's culture encourages people to seek out superficial ideals of love, and over-idealizes and idolizes sex. Once a relationship becomes a challenge or a sacrifice, there is a strong temptation to think that love shouldn't be hard, it should be easy and exciting and lead to all kinds of fulfillment all the time. I feel very proud of my virginity before I was married, and I feel proud of the relationship David

and I have now. Only being sexually intimate with one person is a great start to never worrying about what you are missing, and always being satisfied because you are with the one that you love and that loves you forever! Then that physical relationship can be all about love and not about having a person to gratify certain needs.

**How would you encourage someone to find love that is authentic?**

Pray and develop a relationship with God. Be patient and have faith and trust in God's love for you. Waiting for that special someone is extremely difficult, not least of all because there is complete uncertainty about when and where it will happen. The wait can leave people discouraged, some even give up. Everyone desires authentic love, and I often see it hidden deep underneath a friend or co-worker's strivings for the superficial and over-sexualized "love" our culture promotes. The toughest thing to see, though, is a woman or man who voices desires for a pure man or woman, but who then quickly reveals strong doubts that he or she even exists. The culture holds out



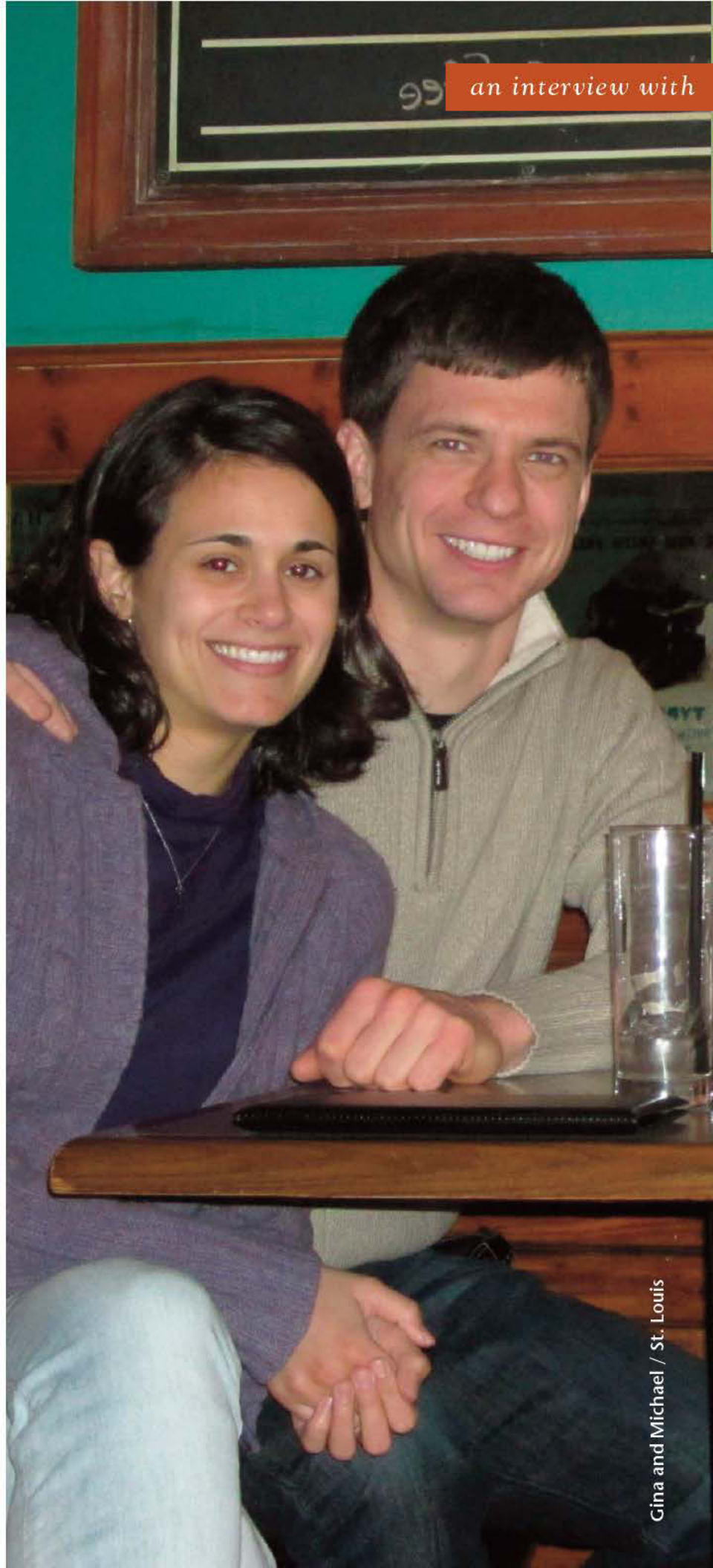
low expectations and the general population doesn't trust enough to be patient and seek an even more fulfilling, yet challenging love. The result is a lot of people who in their hearts know their relationships could be better and more satisfying. The key is having trust that God knows what is best for you and that he will bring you someone even better for you than you could imagine yourself. Furthermore, when you are dating and you don't see this person bringing you to a better relationship with God, challenging your weaknesses and affirming your strengths, and treating you the way you believe you should be treated (in terms of what you have experienced of God's love), you cannot be afraid to walk away. Have high standards, and stick to them. Who you marry is one of the most important decisions in your life because it has lifelong effects on your discovery and experience of authentic and fulfilling love!

**What helped you live a life of sexual purity throughout your relationships prior to being married?**

**David:** By the grace of God I saved myself for marriage and I can't tell you how happy I am about it now. Dating prior to finding Elena I knew sex was a holy and self-giving act, which held me back from teetering off the edge. I had moments that I would realize that I could do this, and next week the girl I was dating could be with anyone. It seemed like a suicide to the soul, there was something reckless about it. I am so glad that I waited, because it's a treasure you share with just one person. There is something intimate about that.

**What would you say to other men striving to live lives of purity?**

I would say that the power of self-mastery, and being in control of urges and appetites is unparalleled in its gift and beauty. Waiting can only help you in knowing, mastering, and strengthening yourself, and in growing in virtue. I would encourage people to be aware of what the real power of sexuality is. It can be directed to be so life-giving – to consider the reality that we share in God's likeness as we participate in the creation of a new soul. But it can also be so destructive if looked at only as something for pleasure. It really does damage to the moral fiber of the culture. It's not an isolated act; sexual impurity hurts people in real, but perhaps more hidden ways. It's a tremendous power we all have. We need to wake up and realize we've been given a gift to do something great with – and we need to use it wisely and in accordance with God's plan and the teachings of the Church.



# When love embraces the entire person

## Gina and Michael

met at a fundraising event a year ago, and have been dating for the past seven months. Gina is a graduate student, and Michael is in medical school in the St. Louis area. When they are together Gina and Michael hit the trails for a good bike ride or run and have a Friday tradition of making pizza together - pesto, salmon, cream cheese, pine nuts, artichoke hearts, and sun-dried tomatoes! They hope to plan a bike trip across Missouri in the near future.

### What has been your journey to understanding and living a life of sexual purity?

**Gina:** I grew up in a wonderful Catholic family, with my parents as incredible witnesses to the Christian vocation of married love. Another very formative period in my life was after my sophomore year of college when I was introduced to Pope John Paul II's *Love and Responsibility*, which I devoured. I quickly turned to the full *Theology of the Body*, absorbing the overwhelming beauty and love I felt in every word. I so much desired the vision of love put forth by Pope John Paul II in my own life. Still, in real life and relationships I often fell short of sexual purity. God has worked within my mind and my heart to bring me to trust Him, to be freed from the confusion and uncertainty I felt about living a truly chaste life, to finally understand the "yes" of chastity, and to reorient my desires, and this has been truly amazing.

### What does sexual purity bring to a dating relationship?

The effects are amazing and have been, for me, literally unbelievable, in the sense that though I had longed for genuine love and

sexual purity, I did not believe it was possible. Sometimes I think God says, "You don't think I can do that? I'll show you I can do that, and so much more." To a dating relationship chastity brings trust and freedom and many other blessings, but what I have also been discovering is that it also brings a challenge (which is of course also a blessing): to love in other deeper, more creative ways. My experience has really been a freeing experience- not having to worry about STDs, or single motherhood, not being caught up in an awful world of who cheated on and slept with who, not having so much regret during a breakup.

### What words would you offer to someone seeking to discover authentic and fulfilling love?

The poem by St. Anthony of Padua, "Be Satisfied With Me" really spoke to my heart when I first heard it, and continues to speak to me today. I would offer the insight of St. Anthony of Padua: learn to trust God and be satisfied in Him alone. It is only then that we are truly ready for a human relationship and human love that is as God intended it. Keep focusing on God, doing what He asks of you today and not worrying about the future or finding someone..."You just keep looking off and away up to Me."

### What has your journey to living a life of sexual purity been like?

**Michael:** I used to think I could have what was pleasurable with no consequences. I used to think that I was smart enough to know the pitfalls, and able to avoid them. Thankfully, the One who is Love touched my heart and taught me a more excellent way. Sexual purity is the way to find the great love that we all long for in our heart. Don't be satisfied with less!

### How does the culture encourage people to discover fulfillment in intimate relationships?

I find that the culture's notion of satisfaction is defined by use. Everything in our lives is here for us to use however we want, and so people are seen the same way. Romantic relationships then are a mutual agreement where two people agree to allow themselves to be used to satisfy another's desire (whatever that may be), in exchange for the right to use that person for the satisfaction of theirs. If a relationship is just a way to get what you want, and that is how you act, then there is no room for it to be more than what you want. The beauty of a chaste and Christian relationship is that it can be much much more than one could ever imagine it to be.


### What does sexual purity bring to a dating relationship?

Genuine love and sexual purity, like anything good, require work, sacrifice, perseverance, discipline, growth, creativity, thought, care, patience and many more virtues. It brings with it the most incredible fulfillment and JOY! It's worth every effort, and the reward is far greater than the sacrifice.

### Where do you find the strength and support to live a life of purity?

Prayer, prayer, and prayer. The support of family and friends always helps. And constantly reminding myself that a life of purity and chastity is the road that satisfies that quiet longing in my heart that is looking for something so beautiful and good that it is not easily found.





## A heart to heart with Mike

**Mike** is a young musician who lives in New York City. He spends his days educating young people about the gift and value of living a life of sexual purity with an organization called *Generation Life*. Mike enjoys playing and writing music with "Annie," his guitar. In his free time he loves swing dancing, snowboarding, surfing, and is always up for a game of Ultimate Frisbee.

# Lived purity. Everything to gain.

Mike / New York 2012

### How does the culture define love and healthy sexuality?

The culture says: Love is a feeling. I have intense feelings for you and I am in love. Once those feelings are gone, I am not in love anymore, and must move on. And, that healthy sexuality is not "repressing" yourself. Whatever, however, with whomever you like, anything goes as long as it feels good. The culture says "sex=love," and then goes nuts trying to figure out how to fix things when this is not the case. In movies, TV, music — all media does its best to make a climactic emotional appeal to our senses. As such, they use one of God's greatest gifts, the most intimate act of life-giving love between spouses, and try to place it in the context of their story. Unfortunately, once the marital act leaves the committed bounds of a loving marriage, it becomes distorted, and is only a shadow of the true love that it should embody. It is stripped of its truth and beauty, its life-giving nature, and simply becomes a selfish act of shared intense emotion and pleasure at best, and an ugly, love-destroying lie at its worst.

### What is to be gained by living sexual purity?

When I decided to spend time everyday with Jesus in the Eucharist, His grace was poured out on me, and I gained a new

desire to find love more deeply than what I was seeking in impurity. Seeking sexual purity frees us from the bondage of sexual sin, and allows us to be open to true love when it comes along. It helps a person integrate himself, body, mind, soul, into a cohesive person where actions, thoughts — everything is directed to love, truth, beauty — namely, God.

### What would you say to those considering living a life of sexual purity?

Go for it! You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain. What you leave behind is self-doubt, STDs, lies, abortion, random hookups, and being latched to someone who doesn't truly respect you and your body. What you gain is authentic love, authentic friendship, joy, peace of heart and mind, committed marriage, vocation, and the freedom to follow God's will in your life. It is probably the most difficult thing you will ever do, but it is the most worthwhile thing you will ever pursue. Living sexual purity is completely counter-cultural, but at the same time, completely true to our nature. You may fall, but God will give you His grace, and continually call you back to Himself in the Sacrament of Confession. He won't relent until He has ALL of your heart, and He will in return give you everything you truly desire — REAL LOVE.





**THE PLAN:** The most successful tasks begin with a plan, and holiness is no exception.

**You** don't have to look around long to come to the conclusion that we live in a fallen world – we know it so well firsthand! In addition to the gift of free will, we also inherited a state of disharmony within our human nature that leads to trials, sorrow, and pain – some that we bring upon ourselves, and some brought about by others. Because of this, we can find ourselves seeking comfort as the ultimate goal in life. Deep down we realize comfort, as delightful as it may be at times, is not what we were created for. **The Lord didn't come to give us comfortable lives – He came to give us "life in abundance," (John 10). Life is meant to be a grand adventure, an epic drama; as Mother Teresa said, "Let us do something beautiful for God." Jesus stirs within us the desire to do something great with our lives.**

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "We are not saints, because we WILL not to be saints." In order to achieve the integration and the freedom for which we long – to live "in the glorious freedom of the children of God," (Romans 8:21) – it is necessary to develop habits of virtue, and to keep our eyes on the goal, which is heaven. In order to make my life a gift to another, I must first be in possession of myself. This is not a passive process, it is necessary to live with intentionality – actively engaging life, not living it as a passive spectator. We desire to be virtuous – but it takes more than that – we need to will it, to choose it, and the strength of our will depends upon two irreplaceable things: God's grace and my effort to cultivate a life of virtue and to root out vices. Pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth will seek to trap us along the way. It is best to be prepared by countering them in advance – by striving to grow in the virtues which directly oppose those vices: humility, charity, chastity, patience, temperance, kindness and diligence.

istock photo/Mammuth

1. Make a plan to root out those things that keep me from loving God and those around me. For example, if you are struggling with pornography, block all pornographic websites, or put your computer in a public place so you won't be tempted. If you find that texting or social networking sites are leading you into gossip or if it is a constant source of misunderstandings, make an effort to communicate the important things with friends and family by phone or face to face in order to authentically foster and deepen your friendships. For all of the advances in our media and communications-frenzied world, there seems to be very little actual communion between persons. The resulting sense of isolation is the perfect environment for the seeds of a self-centered attitude to develop.

2. Make time for the simple but rich joys of life: eating together as a family, praying with your spouse and/or children, or spending quality time with friends. Take some time to relax and enjoy the beauty of nature, art or music and let them nourish and strengthen your soul.

3. Choose someone reliable to confide in, a friend who can encourage you and keep you accountable. Christianity is based on a relationship with a Person, Jesus Christ, and it is not accidental that He founded a community of believers – the Church. We need to support and encourage each other along the way. We do not walk through this life alone. We walk side by side with friends, and our truest friend, Jesus.

It is hard to change our habits, to step away from the things that distract us, weaken us. Even though our "old self" is difficult to live with, the thought of leaving old habits behind can be scarier than inviting the Lord into those weak areas of our hearts. Blessed John Paul II gives us beautiful words of encouragement: "Do not be afraid. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society. The future starts today, not tomorrow."

## THE PURE LIFE OF BLESSED PIER GIORGIO FRASSATI

**A**lthough the Frassati family was well-to-do, Pier Giorgio's father never gave his two children much spending money. What little he did have, however, Pier Giorgio gave to help the poor, even using his train fare for charity and then running home to be on time. When asked by friends why he often rode third class on the trains he would reply with a smile, "Because there is not a fourth class."

Pier Giorgio also spent time in the countryside with friends; mountain climbing was one of his favorite sports. On these outings, the young friends did not hesitate to share their religious inspirations and spiritual lives. Beneath the smiling exterior of the restless university student was concealed the amazing life of a mystic. Love for Jesus motivated his actions. He daily assisted at Mass and would make lengthy thanksgivings afterwards. At the young age of 24, Pier Giorgio contracted acute poliomyelitis from the poor he attended, and died on July 4, 1925. Until his last breath, he radiated a profound joy and a freedom that is the mark and reward of one so pure. Thousands attended his funeral, inspired by a man filled with courageous, self-sacrificing love.

-extracts taken from [www.bett.net/frassati](http://www.bett.net/frassati)







# [starting over]

*And all my dreams* CAME BACK...

**The Young Women's Retreats throughout the year at Villa Maria Guadalupe** have become a haven of peace and newfound hope and a place of healing for University students and young professionals from all over the country. One of the retreatants shared this testimony of the action of God's grace in her heart during the retreat:

"I didn't have the relationship a girl needs to have with her father. I had several broken relationships, and had seen a lot of abuse. I didn't know who I was. I felt unlovable, and yet, I still wanted to give myself away. I decided to go on a Young Women's Retreat at Villa Maria Guadalupe. It was called, *'Perfect Love Casts Out Fear,'* and I really wanted to believe that was true. My relationship with God at the time was not a personal one. One of the Sisters gave a conference on *'The Feminine Genius,'* and the dignity of being a woman, made in the image and likeness of God. When she described woman as the crowing glory of creation, something happened to me. I realized that woman was the last touch, the cherry on top of the cake, if you will. It dawned on me – I have so much to give! God made everything, all these things...and He decided to make me. The world needed *me*. I went to the Lord in prayer saying, 'Jesus, these are the things I believe about myself. Show me how to be a woman. I need to know the truth about who I am.'

I had been living in a world of so much anger, feeling I could never be pure again because of what had happened to me, because I had fallen into sin. That weekend, I knew God was saying, 'You have dignity. You do not need to degrade yourself.' I understood then that I needed help, and it wasn't long before I was able to receive His forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It made me cry because I knew I wasn't alone anymore.

And all my dreams came back.

I had yearned for a fairytale, for someone to come and save me! I reclaimed my freedom by accepting God's infinite love. I started sitting before the Blessed Sacrament because it was the one place where I felt myself. I would just sit there and allow myself to be loved.

I started living, really living. I wanted to be the woman Christ made me to be. I could love myself, and give myself to Him. It was transforming. I now know that I am the daughter of a King. I know that I am beautiful; my body is beautiful. It took sacrifice, to live this way. Things changed for me- the way I saw and spoke with others. I started to really love people, seeing the good in them. I knew happiness was out there, but the joy of knowing Christ is like a never ending, eternal fire! What's more, I started wanting to see God, face to face; I desired heaven. Now, Mass is what gets me through the day, through my life, because at Mass...heaven comes down to earth. I can't be thankful enough."



## Heaven - What we are made for.

The psalmist likens the human heart in exile to "a lonely bird on a rooftop," crying out for meaning, fulfillment, and the presence of another. In daily life, we experience what Peter Kreeft refers to as a "sense that the world we see is haunted by something we do not see, an unseen presence." In the human face, romantic love, pictures, stories and music, we are brought to a threshold with the awareness that there is an infinite "beyond within." We catch glimpses of the eternal on this temporal earth. We can feel a homesickness, even when we're at home! An unnamed longing for love can overtake us in the midst of those who love us most. This ache is in the happiest of marriages and communities, within the best of friendships, and among the greatest goods this world has to offer us. What is it?

It has everything to do with our origin and our ultimate destiny. It's as if the Blessed Trinity kisses us at the moment of our creation, and our souls remember that kiss of the Divine. His love is forever, and the Lord is no foolish lover. He knows that for the rest of our days, we'll be searching for that which corresponds to this memory buried deep within us. We were made for heaven. The Church calls the contemplation of God in His heavenly glory the beatific vision. Now, we see "indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face." In this vision of the life to come, God opens Himself to you, to me, in an inexhaustible way. It is not just a revelation but a communication and a sharing of that love, the most amazing of intimacies. The Catechism tells us it will be an "... ever-flowing well-spring of happiness, peace, and mutual communion."

The life of heaven is not infinite boredom! In *Spe Salvi*, Pope Benedict XVI said, "eternity is not an unending succession of days in the calendar, but something more like the supreme moment of satisfaction, in which totality embraces us and we embrace totality... It would be like plunging into the ocean of infinite love, a moment in which time – the before and after – no longer exists. We can only attempt to grasp the idea that such a moment is life in the full sense, a plunging ever anew into the vastness of being, in which we are simply overwhelmed with joy."

"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be." These may be the most consoling words



It has everything to do with our origin and our ultimate destiny. It's as if the Blessed Trinity kisses us at the moment of our creation, and our souls remember that kiss of the Divine. His love is forever, and the Lord is no foolish lover. He knows that for the rest of our days, we'll be searching for that which corresponds to this memory buried deep within us. We were made for heaven.

the Son of God ever spoke. Jesus became man and lived on earth, telling of a Kingdom that was already among us and simultaneously, to be anticipated, the Kingdom of God and of Heaven.

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." It is a beatitude, a supreme blessedness, and an invitation for us to begin experiencing heaven on earth; to see God because we have allowed him to create a clean heart in us. To become pure of heart means to live totally attached to Christ, and to become increasingly detached from all that is not of Him. This detachment does not mean we are cold in our loves, quite the contrary. In order to love God and neighbor purely, we sever ourselves from false and empty means of fulfillment, from selfish inclinations and sinful illusions and counterfeits, especially those pleasures and preoccupations that can become idols and illnesses. Although we "groan in pain as we await the redemption of our bodies," we are filled with hope at the promise given by the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart... You shall be my people and I shall be your God."

Blessed are the pure of heart – they *see* God. We are called to this here and now, the blessed vision of the *hidden* face of Jesus in every face. To perceive His presence in the Sacred Host, a word meaning victim and connoting innocence. By living a life of purity we are harkened back to a state of innocence, of childlike simplicity, openness and expression. The Lord said, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Pope Paul VI affirmed this, "Innocence is a great fortress: a child is stronger than we are against the devil because he is innocent." In this world that mocks and degrades the pure of heart, we are invited by the Lord to experience the freedom of the children of God. St. Paul reminded us that "eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on the heart of man, what God had prepared for those who love Him."

Like the young woman whose dreams came back, may we radically place our hearts into the hands of the One whose purity restores our innocence and inspires our hope in heaven.



**To register** for an upcoming retreat at Villa Maria go to: [sistersoflife.org](http://sistersoflife.org) or call: 203-329-1492.





# mapping the interior world

## Navigating the sea of our inner world

Modern man has a tendency to value the visible, material world to the neglect of the immaterial, invisible world. Yet our hearts cry out for something more and have a thirst for meaning that cannot be quenched aside from the infinite. While we are drawn to what we can see and touch, we instinctively know that the immaterial things in life - love, freedom, friendship, faith - have the most profound and enduring value.

**What is needed for the boat's journey?  
A captain, rudder, wind and sail.**

Where does the journey begin? How can we discover what cannot be seen? While our inner world may seem wild and unexplored, like a vast roaring ocean, our hearts are not meant to be left shrouded in doubt. Though complex and often misunderstood, the interior world has a distinctive landscape made up of the intellect, will, and the heart. Each of these faculties is given to us to propel us to happiness and fulfillment, to God Himself.

The intellect and the will are the powers that we share with the angels. The intellect is the home of our memory and imagination and guides our ability to think, reason, understand and come in contact with the truth. The will is the place of decision and the faculty by which we seek and choose the good. The heart is made up of desires and affections and is ennobled by the intuitive mind, a sense that effortlessly grasps the whole of something. We cannot fully possess the truth of something unless it is known at both the intellectual and emotional level of our existence (mind and heart).

Since all of us have been wounded by original sin, the perfect balance within our soul has been disrupted: the intellect no longer sees the truth clearly, the will is weakened in its resolve to choose the good, and our emotions are not ordered and can easily go in many directions. This is played out on many levels with everything from making healthy food choices to decisions in relationships. Our emotions and desires may pull us toward apparent goods

It is incredible to realize that in our age we have travelled to the ends of the earth, flown through outer space and probed the secrets of the material universe, plunged into the depths of the sea, walked on the moon, hiked to the highest peaks, and circumnavigated the earth. Yet in spite of these accomplishments, there seems to be an ever greater restlessness in the human heart. Why is it that we would sooner travel to the deep hidden regions of the earth than seek what lies within our very beings? Through the ages, the inner world has been a mystery and a place of questioning. In the 6th century BC the prophet Jeremiah cried out, "More torturous than all else is the human heart, beyond remedy, who can understand it?"

The greatest frontiers lie within the human person. While the marvelous expanse of our inner world may be a mystery, it is most fully who we are. There are unknown reservoirs of strength, energy, nobility and goodness in our depths that can be drawn upon in times of need. The human person is the summit of God's marvelous creation, no other being in all of creation has the capacity to love and to be in a personal relationship with his Creator. Like the psalmist we can ask, "What is man?" Who are we and what makes us so uniquely ourselves? It is in our soul, in the depths of the heart, that the human person is irreducible and all the world's standards are laid aside.

In our heart, we encounter God Himself - eternity. This inner sanctuary is the sacred place of truth and union with God. Because of this, the geography of the heart becomes infinite! In prayer, union with God, we are no longer bound by the material universe, we touch the divine. In the Gospels, Jesus promises to dwell within our hearts and warns us against hard-heartedness, or having our hearts far from Him in prayer. The disciples speak of their hearts burning within them when they meet the Lord. At times when our hearts feel numb or hardened, God says that He will put a new heart and a new spirit into us.





(things that seem good but do not bring true happiness) and if we allow them to act as our sole guide they eventually leave us empty and unsatisfied. Pursuit of the higher goods in life often requires effort and a firm commitment over time. The intellect leads us to the objective truth and therefore guides the emotions which experience the world in a subjective way. One choice at a time, our wills are strengthened to choose what is true and good and our hearts are educated and formed.

**To experience fully the breathtaking beauty of the journey, you need a healthy wind in your sails.**

While it is important that we distinguish between the objective and the subjective states of mind, allowing ourselves to experience and feel our emotions is critical. There is a law of the heart, that if we try to numb certain emotions, we eventually dull all of them. The emotions are a gift created by God and are fundamentally good. St. Thomas Aquinas taught that all emotions (hope, despair, courage, fear, anger, love, hate, desire, aversion, joy, sadness) are good and necessary if we are to be fully and authentically human. They are signs and have an innate need to be guided by the intellect and the will. For example, the feeling of loneliness may be a call for us to seek a deeper union with God, to draw near to our spouse or to reach out to friends and family. The emotion of anger can propel us to correct an injustice. If we silence our hearts, we may avoid discomfort, but it is a shortcut that will inhibit us from being fully alive and life can become a drudgery.

**Without the captain to direct and the rudder to steer, the wind will toss us this way and that, and leave us lost in a turbulent sea.**

While it is critical we are attentive to our hearts, our culture has a tendency to glorify the emotions with the adage, "as long as it feels good, do it." This may bring a fleeting satisfaction, but is a path for disaster. While we were made for happiness, our emotions can never be our sole guide because they can lead us astray and are intended to be led by the intellect and the will. If we only rely on our feelings, we become a slave to them in a tyranny of emotions, where they rule indiscriminately giving no deference to the other faculties of the soul. Even though the emotions have an important part in life, it is first necessary that we are in contact with truth or we will lose our way.

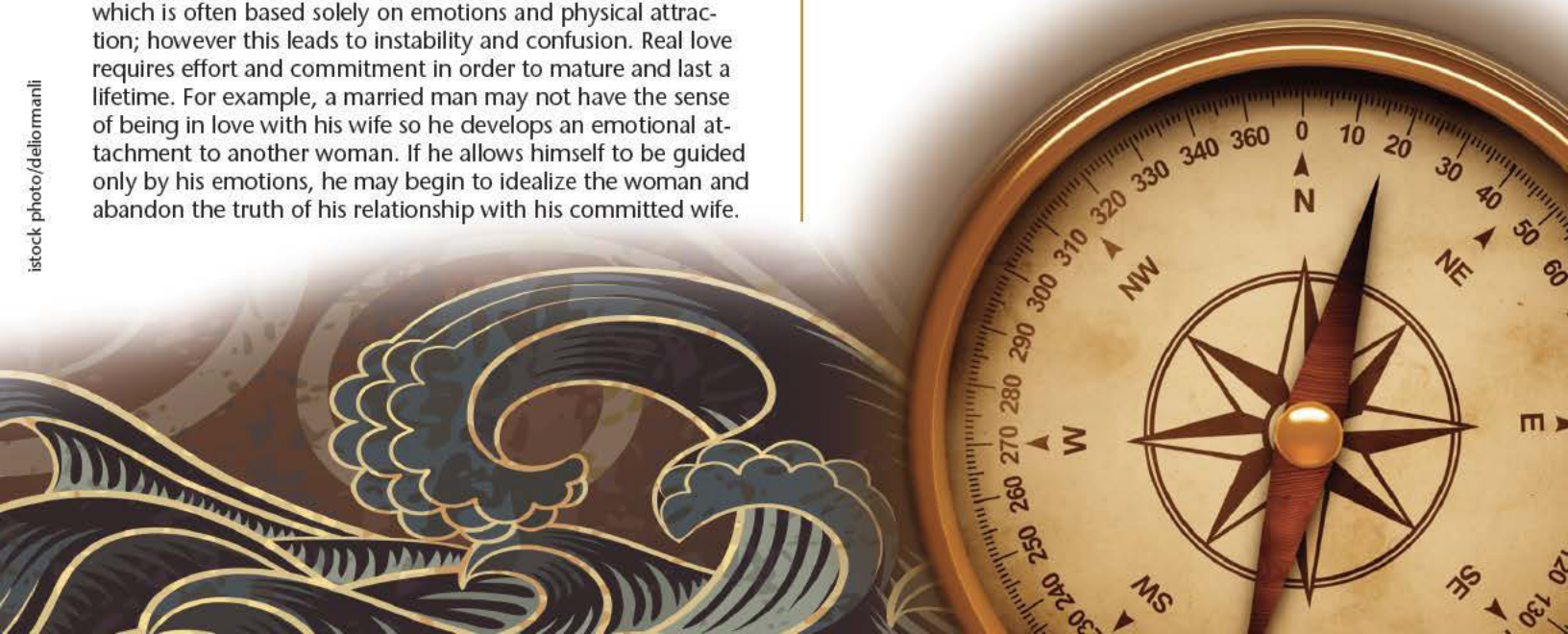
This distortion of the emotions can be seen in marriages that fail when they no longer attain the standard set by Hollywood which is often based solely on emotions and physical attraction; however this leads to instability and confusion. Real love requires effort and commitment in order to mature and last a lifetime. For example, a married man may not have the sense of being in love with his wife so he develops an emotional attachment to another woman. If he allows himself to be guided only by his emotions, he may begin to idealize the woman and abandon the truth of his relationship with his committed wife.

While he may not have the feeling of being in love with his wife at the moment, the truth of love is deeper. In marriage there is a deep abiding bond in the heart maintained by the will, strengthened by commitment, and reinforced by grace. Thus, it is possible to love even in moments when we do not have feelings of affection because it is an act of the will to remain true to the love professed on one's wedding day. We see this faithful love in couples who have been married for years, when one spouse becomes ill. Although the person may no longer be able to walk, speak, or have a physical relationship, his spouse nevertheless remains true and loves in a noble and beautiful way that brings an abiding peace and joy.

This type of life-giving love is also seen in the lives of the saints who love those who some may describe as unlovable, lost, and abandoned. While the saints may not feel a natural attraction towards the sick, lost or lonely, their intellect and will enlighten the heart and guide them to the truth of the goodness and dignity of the person and they are given a new supernatural vision through faith. Blessed Mother Teresa was indefatigable in loving the poorest of the poor with tenderness and compassion because in each person she saw Jesus, her love.

The process of integration is a journey and part of our earthly pilgrimage that leads us to wholeness and freedom. We are most fully alive and find peace of heart when our intellect, will, and emotions act in harmony because they are meant to lead us to truth, goodness, beauty and communion with God and others. When this happens we act with freedom and spontaneity.

When we are drawn to think about our real self we turn to those deep recesses of our being. This is where God, who probes the heart, awaits us, where we chart our course and decide our destiny. The heart is our secret core and sanctuary where we are alone with God. God is in our hearts; are we there to meet him or are we living outside of ourselves? To be in touch with this deep place of our being requires times of silence, personal reflection, prayer and living what has been called from ancient times an examined life. Our Lord urges us, "come back to the heart where you are truly loved, where there is life in you, and you are most fully yourself, and most fully treasured." God's role is not to spare us of the drama of human life but to join us in the adventure of living fully alive in touch with Him in our inmost core.





## EVANGELIZATION

The Sisters travel nationally and internationally, sharing the Charism of Life and speaking to groups on the dignity of the human person, the feminine genius, the call to purity, authentic love and vocation, the Eucharistic Christ, His mercy and forgiveness and various other topics related to life and love. This year alone, the Sisters had 126 speaking engagements around the United States, Canada, Spain, Australia and New Zealand to address high school students, university students, young professionals and families.



The Pure in Heart young adult group from Boston came down to join us at Villa Maria Guadalupe for the annual Fourth of July LifeFest Celebration.

## The Angelic Warfare Confraternity

Many people want to live out God's plan for human sexuality, but find it difficult to do so because of the constant assault of temptations all around them. The Church has entrusted to the Dominican Order a sacramental (an official blessing) instituted specifically to counteract sexual temptation. This sacramental is the blessed cord or medal of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Confraternity that goes with it. For more information, go to [www.angelicwarfare.org](http://www.angelicwarfare.org)



Entrance to the Novitiate  
June 29, 2012

### New novices, new names!

*(back row, left to right)*

Sr. Mary Pieta

Sr. Mary Margaret Hope

Sr. Maria Filumena

Sr. Angelina Marie

*(front row, left to right)*

Sr. Faith Marie

Sr. Josephine Rose

Sr. Marie Renée Véronique



Mother Agnes sharing the graces of the day after the entrance to the Novitiate Ceremony.







## Sisters of Life

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