

## Sexuality - Its power and purpose



We are all powerfully, incurably, and wonderfully sexed, this is part of a conspiracy between God and nature. Sexuality lies right next to our instinct for breathing and it is ever-present in our lives.

Spiritual literature tends to be naïve and in denial about the power of sexuality, as if it could be dismissed as some insignificant factor in the spiritual journey, and as if it could be dismissed at all. It cannot be. It will always make itself felt, consciously or unconsciously. Nature is almost cruel in this regard, particularly to the young. It fills youthful bodies with powerful hormones before those persons have the emotional and intellectual maturity to properly understand and creatively channel that energy. Nature's cruelty, or anomaly, is that it gives someone an adult body before that same person is adult in his or her emotions and intellect. There are a lot of physical and moral dangers in a still-developing child walking around in a fully adult body.

Further, today this is being exacerbated by the fact that we are reaching puberty at an ever younger age and are marrying at an ever-later one. This makes for a situation, almost the norm in many cultures, where a young girl or boy reaches puberty at age eleven or twelve and will get married only about twenty years later. This begs the obvious question: How is his or her sexuality to be emotionally and morally contained during all those years? Where does that leave him or her in the struggle to remain faithful to the commandments?

Admittedly, nature seems almost cruel here, but it has its own angle. Its dominant concern is to get each of us into the gene pool and all those powerful hormones it begins pouring into our bodies at adolescence and all those myriad ways in which it heats up our emotions have the same intent, it wants us to be fruitful and multiply, to perpetuate ourselves and our own species. And nature is uncompromising here: At every level of our being (physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual) there is a pressure, a sexual one, to get us into the gene pool. So when you next see a young man or woman strutting his or her sexuality, be both sympathetic and understanding, you were once there, and nature is just trying to get him or her into the gene pool. Such are its ways and such are its propensities, and God is in on the conspiracy.

Of course getting into the gene pool means much more than physically having children, though that is deep, deep imperative written everywhere inside us that may be ignored only in the face of some major psychological and moral risks. There are other ways of having children, though nature all on its own does not easily accept that. It wants children in the flesh. But the full bloom of sexuality, generative living, takes on other life-giving forms. We have all heard the slogan: Have a child. Plant a tree. Write a book. There are different ways to get into the gene pool and all of us know persons who, while not having children of their own and neither writing a book nor planting a tree, are wonderfully generative women and men. Indeed the religious vow of celibacy is predicated on that truth. Sexuality also has a powerful spiritual dimension.

But, with that being admitted, we may never be naïve to its sheer, blind power. Dealing with the brute and unrelenting power of our sexuality lies at the root of many of our deepest psychological and moral struggles. This takes on many guises, but the pressure always has the same intent: Nature and God keep an unrelenting pressure on us to get into the gene pool, that is, to always open our lives to something bigger than ourselves and to always remain cognizant of the fact that intimacy with others, the cosmos, and God is our real goal. It is no great surprise that our sexuality is so grandiose that it would have us want to make love to the whole world. Isn't that our real goal

As well, sexuality wreaks havoc with many people's church lives. It is no secret that today one of the

major reasons why many young people, and indeed people of all ages, are no longer going regularly to their churches has to do, in one way or the other, with their struggles with sexuality and their perception of how their churches view their situation. My point here is not that we and the churches should change the commandments regarding sex, but that we should do a couple of things: First, we should more realistically acknowledge its brute power in our lives and integrate sexual complexity more honestly into our spiritualities. Second, we should be far more empathic and pastorally sensitive to the issues that beset people because of their sexuality.

Sexuality is sacred a fire. It takes its origins in God and is everywhere, powerfully present inside creation. Denial is not our friend here.

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