SEXUALITY

KAI: Hey, Libby. Check it out. I got this great new book that we can use for our big sex talk today. It has diagrams and everything.

LIBBY: Ok, but we're going to talk more about the whys behind the Church's teachings on sex, not the mechanics of it.

KAI: Oh yeah, but don't you think people need to see this full-color, incredibly accurate ...

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

KAI: Hi. I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And I'm Libby. Welcome to Catholic Central.

KAI: So, when you think about the Catholic Church and sexuality, chances are good you imagine something like this.

CHURCH LADY:

Don't be attracted to anyone, ever. Don't ever look good-looking people directly in the eye. And never get into a car with someone you might be attracted to at some point in the future.

LIBBY: So, a lot of restrictions along with a healthy helping of guilt and shame.

KAI: But, contrary to what some might say, the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality weren't invented out of thin air because a bunch of people wanted to repress you.

LIBBY: Every Church teaching has a long history of Scripture, logic, and tradition behind it. And, to fully understand them, it's really helpful to know the why behind them, rather than just believing that it's because the Catholic Church is anti-love, anti-sex, anti-pleasure, and anti-bodies.

KAI: Gees. Do people also believe that it's anti-frolicking-in-fields and anti-everything-else-that's-good-or-fun-or-happy?

LIBBY: Well, the Church is just as anti those things as it is anti-sex.

KAI: What?

LIBBY: That is to say, not at all.

KAI: Oh, whew. I was afraid I was going to have to clean out some pictures on my hard drive.

LIBBY: Okay. So let's start with why humans were created. Catholics believe God created everything that exists, including us. He is love itself. And we are made in His image.

KAI: Basically, God created us with the power to love as He does, and to receive love in return. This is what Catholics refer to as the gift of self. And it's what all people are supposed to do.

LIBBY: It means giving ourselves to God and one another in love, and putting other people above yourself. You could say it's the reason why we're here.

KAI: God created us this way not just because love is like the warm, fuzzy blanket of feelings.

LIBBY: But because He prepares us for, and leads us to, His divine love through human love.

KAI: Which can include some pretty aggressive cuddling, if you know what I mean. Wink.

LIBBY: Well, yeah. God didn't create us to love in some intangible woo-ey way. We show our love through our bodies.

KAI: And since it is created by God, the human body has inherent dignity and holiness, and points to something more than just the physical.

LIBBY: And since the body and soul are tied together, the things you do with the body affect the soul. Just like it can be good for the soul to use your body to speak words of comfort, visit someone who is sick, or give food to someone who's hungry.

Using your body in a not so great way hurts your soul. And sexuality is really where the physical and spiritual collide. We are sexual beings, just by the way we're made. The Church teaches that the one-flesh union …

KAI: That means sex.

LIBBY: ... is sacramental because it reveals God.

KAI: Yeah but ... OK, even with the euphemism, isn't that kind of gross?

LIBBY: Well, calm down. It's not like we're trying to get you to imagine Jesus tagging along on date night.

TV voice: He is with us again.

Jesus: Here …

TV voice: It is the Lord.

Jesus: … love this part.

LIBBY: But since we are in the image of God, and in Him we live and move and have our being, God is connected to everything we do. And sex was created so that spouses could actually enjoy the activity needed to further our species as freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully as God love us.

KAI: You can't deny that sex is uniquely powerful. It affects you in profound physiological and emotional ways, making it distinct from other ways of showing love.

LIBBY: Its hold on us has led to centuries of irrational choices, including the destruction of entire civilizations.

KAI: The power it has to affect us, to bring us together, and create new life, is a sign of God's love for us, and how much freedom He gives us, for good and for evil. So, the Church wants to help us protect ourselves from misusing it. And that's where chastity comes in.

LIBBY: Chastity is a virtue, and is more than just abstinence, celibacy, or the name of the heroine of the historical fiction novel I'm writing about Puritans.

KAI: According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.

LIBBY: But chastity is actually a pretty complex topic. For starters, it means growing in self-control with our sexual desires. Which helps us to respect the dignity of ourselves and others by not saying things with our bodies that we don't truly mean.

KAI: Our bodies have a language all their own.

LIBBY: And if we're not careful, it's easy to say something with our bodies that we don't really want to say. Like, “I want to give myself to you, accept you totally for who you are, and have lots of little version of you and me running around the planet.”

KAI: Because, even if we don't want it to, and we try to avoid all the consequences, that's what sex is actually saying on a biological level. And it brings us to our next point. Humans sometimes don't do that great a job of actually loving others.

LIBBY: So, why should we expect things to be different when it comes to the horizontal polka? In the worst cases, that can become sexual abuse, harassment, or assault, when pursuing our own desires becomes more important than the other person's consent and well-being.

KAI: Taking a step back from something helps us to see it more clearly, and, hopefully, make better decisions about it. The self-control that chastity gives us allows us the freedom to appreciate other people for who they are, as images of God. That capacity is one of the many great pluses of not being like all the other mammals. Along with opposable thumbs and being able to produce Korean pop music.

LIBBY: All people, even if they're married, are called to grow in chastity. Because we all suffer from the effects of lust: the desire to use or control other people sexually, so that we can get what we want.

KAI ON THE STREET:

But what if someone wants you to use them for their body?

KAI: Well. The desire to love someone through the body points to something fundamentally good. But just because someone wants something doesn't mean it would be good for them to have it … or good for you to give it.

LIBBY: You have to ask yourself, are you really able to love them freely? Unless you are in an exclusive, lifelong commitment, chances are there will be limitations on your love.

KAI: And if someone can't give and receive love freely and totally, when you ask them to do something with their body that expresses total love, for your pleasure, you reduce them down to what they can do for you.

LIBBY: You can also disrespect yourself that way.

KAI: Focusing so much on what you can do for others that you lose sight of your own boundaries, and the priority that your relationship with God should have. Thus, we come to regret even things that seem like a really good idea at the time.

LIBBY: At the end of the day, sexuality is all about a relationship. But it's important to remember that practicing chastity and maintaining healthy boundaries in relationships are hard for everyone.

KAI: Yeah. The Catechism calls it a long and exacting work, that requires effort throughout life. And almost everyone on earth has failed it at some point.

LIBBY: So, to sum up, God has given us something powerful in the gift of sexuality.

KAI: But like money, alcohol, and your parents' Netflix password, it's something that we need to use responsibly.

LIBBY: The virtue of chastity helps us not to abuse it, so that we don't hurt others or get hurt ourselves.

KAI: Ultimately, it's all about the freedom to say no to what isn't good for us, and yes to all the frolicking in the world. I mean, yes to what will help us most in our relationships with God and others.

LIBBY: Well, on that note, that's it for now. I'm Libby.

KAI: And I'm Kai. Until next time.

LIBBY: Hey. Can I see that book?

CATHOLIC CENTRAL CLOSING CREDITS

KAI: Wait … I've never done…

LIBBY: I just want to look at it.

KAI: I've never done ... Whoa. Gosh.

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