

Facilitator Script for Introductory Class

Direct Aims: to clearly establish what this course is NOT about
to clearly establish the three main goals of this course
to introduce the text by which these goals will be reached
to place the thought and writings of Fr. Paul Quay S.J. in historical context
to communicate reading and homework requirements

Facilitator: introduce yourself and any assistants; share appropriate background information, necessary logistical information, etc.
invite self-introductions by participants—include reasons for attending this course

Opening Prayer: pass out copies of *Hymn to the Bridegroom*. Use this as the opening prayer.
(see appendix for reproducible copies)

Hymn to the Bridegroom

Rev. Gerald Moultrie

Behold the Bridegroom cometh, in the middle of the night, And blessed is he whose loins are girt, whose lamp is burning bright; But woe to that dull servant, whom the Master shall surprise, With lamp untrimmed, unburning, and with slumber in his eyes.	That day, the day of fear, shall come; My soul, slack not thy toil, But light thy lamp, and feed it well, And make it bright with oil; Thou knowest not how soon may sound The cry at eventide, "Behold the Bridegroom comes! Arise! He comes to meet His bride."
Do thou, my soul, beware, beware, lest thou in sleep sink down, Lest thou be given o'er to death, and lose the golden crown; But see that thou be sober, with a watchful eye, and thus Cry — "Holy, holy, holy God, Have mercy upon us."	Beware, my soul; beware, beware, lest thou in slumber lie, And, like the Five, remain without, And knock, and vainly cry; But watch, and bear thy lamp undimmed, And Christ shall gird thee on His own bright wedding-robe of light, — the glory of the Son.

Facilitator: Use the following text as a guide.

I want to begin by making clear what we are *not* trying to accomplish in this course.

We are *not* here to share our individual opinions about human sexuality.

We are *not* here to discuss what individual people think or feel about their sexuality.

We are not here to discuss what people do with their sexuality or how they do it.

We are *not* here to look at sexuality from a clinical perspective—be it psychological, biological, or sociological. And here's why:

The feature that all such approaches to human sexuality have in common is that they begin and end with man, and the trouble with that kind of an approach is its limited perspective. It reminds us of the story of the blind men who were trying to describe an elephant—one by feeling an ear; another by feeling the trunk; and another by feeling the elephant's side. Each man could discover only a part of the truth about an elephant.

Unless we are elephant hunters, making a mistake about our understanding of an elephant does not carry with it serious or ultimate consequences. On the other hand, an erroneous understanding of human sexuality and its meaning for men and women can and often does lead to any number of serious consequences.

Of course, these consequences most obviously manifest in psychological, biological and sociological ways. We all recognize the tragedies that can result from the behavior of sexually maladjusted persons; we are all aware of the alarming rates of unplanned pregnancies; and we continually hear about increasing rates of venereal disease.

While these outward manifestations of the misuse of human sexuality require attention and remediation, we are convinced that they are not the root of the problem and we are certain that no amount of study and/or practical application of clinical disciplines will solve these problems. We must look elsewhere. And that brings us to the point of what we *are* trying to accomplish in this course.

We have three main goals. The first goal applies to everyone here. Hopefully, the second goal does too. But the third goal will apply only to a certain few:

Goal number one: We hope to give all participants a well-articulated vision of and appreciation for the Christian meaning of human sexuality—that is, what divine revelation tells us about the subject.

Goal number 2: We hope to equip participants with practical tools for being an effective witness to that meaning within their own circle of family and friends.

Goal number 3: We hope to interest some participants in taking a leadership role in their parish, school or community and is willing to train as a course facilitator who then offers this course to other adults.

As we work our way through the next nine weeks, keep these goals in mind, and be asking yourself to what level of commitment you may be called in the future. We'll have more details on that later. The text we are using for this purpose (hold up the book) by Father Paul Quay, S.J. is *The Christian Meaning of Human Sexuality*. (show the book, then pass out copies to participants)

The view of human sexuality that Father Quay shares in this text is implicit in Sacred Scripture and has been further developed by Early Church Fathers in their reflections on Scripture. So this

understanding of human sexuality is not new. Its first expressions—found in the Old Testament—are thousands of years old. The Early Church Fathers on whose writings Father Quay draws—St. Methodius of Olympus, Doctor of the Church St. John Chrysostom, and St. Augustine of Hippo, all lived and wrote in the 300-or 400s—more than 1600 years ago. Fast forward to modern times and we see that the first publication of Father Quay’s work was in 1976 as a set of Lenten meditations that he delivered at John Carroll University in Ohio. So his thoughts, though they mesh perfectly with those of Pope John Paul II, preceded the beginning of the Pope’s Wednesday audiences on the Theology of the Body by about three years.

If you’ll turn to pages 229 and 230 you will find a handy reference for the scriptural and Early Church writings that informed Father Quay’s work. On page 233 is a list of other readings that relate to our topic, some of which were published long after Fr. Quay’s original work. Just a short word about St. Methodius of Olympus. As mentioned earlier, St. Methodius lived during the late third and early fourth century. He was a bishop, a scholar, and a martyr. The work of St. Methodius that Fr. Quay references is called *Treatise on Chastity*. Interestingly, this work describes a banquet at which ten virgins have gathered. During the banquet, each virgin takes her turn contributing to the discourse, praising chastity in various ways. The banquet closes with a hymn to the Bridegroom that Methodius puts into the mouth of St. Thecla—a first century virgin and martyr. A commentator on the *Treatise* described it this way: “It is not a work on chastity in any limited sense of that word, but rather, a manual of Christian doctrine, philosophy and theology, unified under the conception of chastity.”

This hymn to the Bridegroom is structured around the Greek alphabet, with one verse for each of the 24 letters. Each verse is followed by a refrain that says:

“I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom,
and holding a lighted torch, go out to meet Thee.”

I mention Methodius’s writing with some detail because it is good for us to know that Christians in the earliest centuries of the Church had a very well-developed understanding of the Christian meaning of human sexuality—something that has been largely lost in our day. Over the next nine weeks, we hope to recapture that ancient understanding and make it our own.

Please turn to the Table of Contents. In this present edition, *The Christian Meaning of Human Sexuality* has been expanded to include a second work from Father Quay, but published posthumously. Here you see that the book is divided into two parts—The Meaning of Sexuality and The Meaning of Fertility Awareness. In this course we are only dealing with Part I.

Part I is further divided into eight chapters. We have a total of nine class sessions. This first class is the orientation class. Each subsequent session will focus on one of the eight chapters. Please be aware that we will not be reading the chapters during class time. It is necessary that each of you find the time to complete the assigned reading and also prepare to participate in discussion by answering the questions for that chapter found in your handouts. That means, you will read

Chapter I this week and you will answer the questions for Chapter I that are on the first page of your handouts.

Sometimes, there will be assignments in addition to the questions. These activities deal mainly with practical application of the chapter content. For example, you may be asked to think back over your own life and see where your choices or values either did or did not line up with what was discussed in that chapter. This would be for your own personal reflection, not for sharing in class. Or perhaps you will be asked to observe the various environments in your home and parish and identify the symbolic language that is expressed by those environments. We will discuss those sorts of assignments in class. A third possible assignment might be to have a conversation with a friend or relative, and share something of what you are learning in this class.

The goal of all these activities is to help you internalize the content, apply it in your own life, and become an effective witness for the Christian meaning of human sexuality.

Now, let's turn to page 35 and read the preface to the first edition.
(Take turns, each person reading one paragraph.)

It is in the fourth paragraph that Father Quay summarizes the purpose of this book. Let's read that paragraph again, together.

"The Fathers were at one in teaching, in an endless variety of ways, that sexual activity by Christians is meant to mirror the relations between each of the divine Persons and the Church, and that these relations constitute the most basic meaning of any right sexual activity."

That summary is another way of saying something that we all have heard many times—that we are made in the image and likeness of God. But we have not very often heard of how that tremendous reality gives meaning to everything about our lives—even our sexuality.

Before we close, are there any questions?
(Take whatever time is needed to answer.)

I recommend that you schedule time for reading chapter one in the next day or two so you will have ample time to complete the page of questions before our meeting next week. *(Pass out the Holy Spirit Prayer cards)*

In closing, we'll pray this prayer by St. Augustine to the Holy Spirit.

Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy.
Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy.

Saint Augustine