

OST Lecture Series
Spring 2023
March 15, 22, 29th.
Ron Rolheiser OMI

Three Difficult Contemporary Questions: *Clerical Sexual Abuse, A Radically Shifting Sexual Ethos, and Suicide as seen with a Faith Perspective*

Outline for the three sessions ...

1. **March 15th – Clerical Sexual Abuse**
 2. **March 22nd – A Radically Shifting Sexual Ethos**
 3. **March 29th – Suicide as seen within a Faith Perspective**
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Sexuality is an integral part of the soul and its energies must be understood and channeled within a framework that respects the soul. Indeed, the union of sexuality and spirituality is like an electrical connection. A bad connection is disastrous. No connection is equally bad. A good connection generates life and joy. Lived through lovingly and faithfully, sex, perhaps more than anything else, has the power to help us break the casings of selfishness and bitterness and open us further and further to a more gracious adulthood. But, rarely, in any religion or culture, has there been a truly generative connection between sexuality and spirituality. How do we bless Eros and at the same time protect its sacred depth? How do we befriend, enjoy, and celebrate sexuality, even as we properly protect it and ourselves?

A Radically Shifting Sexual Ethos

I. The Shifting Sexual Ethos within a Secularized Culture – “Sex in the City”

- The desacralization of sex - A shift within the past generation: a **triple severing**
 - Sex as no longer linked to procreation – sex for love alone
 - Sex as no longer linked to marriage – sex as an extension of dating
 - Sex as no longer linked to love and dating – sex as purely recreational, hook-up sex – as cut off from soul
- The reduction of “sexuality” to “sex”
 - An over-fixation on the physical aspects of sex

- The increase of sex that is split off from one's deeper person
 - Sex as "soteriology" and panacea
 - The loss of the wider concept of the archetypal "garden"
 - The death of heterosexual friendship
 - The "puer" and "puella" as replacing the "father" and the "mother" as the "mature" sexual image
 - The emergence of the archetypal "king" who has sexual rights to all the women
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Insert - Some notes on Sexuality and Sex

- **The etymology of the word "sex"**
 - "Sex" comes from the Latin verb: "secare", meaning "to cut off"
 - Implications of what it means "to be sexed" – Sexuality as a dimension of self-awareness, the sense of having been cut off, pervasive at every level of our being.
 - Sexuality at every level of reality
 - **Sexuality as "divine fire" and as the source of our energy**
 - Plato – madness that comes from the gods
 - Sexuality as fire from the Gods
 - As the most powerful fire in the world - for love and ecstasy and for murder and suicide
 - **A pivotal distinction – Sexuality (as energy) as wider than Genitality (having sex)**
 - **Sexuality - "It is not good to be alone!"**
The drive for community, friendship, wholeness, family, creativity, play, meaning that is trans-personal, altruism, immortality, enjoyment, delight, "the garden", consummation and everything that takes us beyond aloneness.
 - **Genitality - "The hunger for the two becoming one flesh!"**
Having sex. Particularized consummation.
 - **The Greek idea of EROS as containing six interpenetrating elements: *eros; mania, ludens, pragma, philia*, and *agape* - and the idea of integration**
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- The denigration and death of "chastity" within the culture
- A culture devoid of meaningful initiation rites
- A culture of early sexual maturation and late marriage
- A culture with a new view vis-a-vis the "integration" of sex, i.e., the fantasy of the millennials (and of the hook-up culture) of an "earlier" splitting off and a "later" integration of sex

- The failure of other cultures to model a healthier ethos
 - The struggle with sexuality within the churches
 - The perennial struggle to link sexual energy to sacred energy
 - The perennial struggle to accept sexual complexity within the spiritual journey
 - The perennial struggle to attribute sexuality to Jesus, to Mary, and to the saints.
 - The Judeo/Christian God as a “male celibate”
 - Four Christian responses:
 - “The Theology of the Body” – a beautiful “poetics” as a high ideal
 - The Theology of Abstinence – Chastity and absence until marriage
 - Accommodation to the cultural ethos – we try to baptize as best we can what is happening in our culture
 - The struggle for a robust healthy theology and spirituality of sexuality
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II. Ten Contemporary Cultural Myths about Sex

1. *“I cannot be happy and whole as a human being unless I have sex.”*
 2. *“Sex is an energy that is infinitely malleable, with no inherent non-negotiables, except that it may not be exploitive.”*
 3. *“Heterosexual friendship is existentially impossible.”*
 4. *“I can have detached, casual, recreational sex.”*
 5. *“I am having safe, responsible sex if I am responsible regarding contraception and sexually transmitted diseases.”*
 6. *“Sex is more about orgasms than about glue for the soul.”*
 7. *“I can spend a season of my life having sex, with no connection to marriage, and then, when I meet the right person, I can re-integrate sex with monogamy, fidelity, and sacrament, and the marriage bed.”*
 8. *“The sexual instinct is at odds with the religious instinct.”*
 9. *“We become freer and more mature as we shed the taboos of chastity and restraint. Passion and chastity oppose each other.”*
 10. *“The church has nothing of value to say about sex!”*
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