

RELATIONSHIP ISSUES

This subject is a difficult one for everyone and it can be embarrassing to discuss with other people, especially our parents. We shall try and deal with the issues in a direct way recognizing that the Church is a hospital for sinners. Remember that, whatever we have done, we should never give in to despair. Instead, we should run to the healing power of the Church through repentance and confession.

Virginity in Christ

Today, society doesn't regard virginity as the normal state for unmarried people. Indeed, far from being valued, people who choose to preserve their virginity until marriage are regarded as strange. Society now teaches young people that promiscuous heterosexual and homosexual behaviour is acceptable as long as they are 'careful.' Unfortunately, people who choose to preserve their virginity are often cruelly bullied or simply put under pressure to be 'like everyone else.'

The Orthodox Church values virginity highly, but not just the physical part. Some Protestants make an issue of wearing rings to declare the fact that they are virgins. Unfortunately, many of them end up losing their virginity before marriage for the simple reason that they never knew why it was important to keep it. We should not boast about being virgins or wear rings to show how good we are. It is a fact that if we start boasting about our virtues, or looking down on other people, we will fall into the very sins that we are proud of not doing!

Preserving our virginity is much more than just simply avoiding sexual relations. St. John Chrysostom says that a *'person who says that he is a virgin in body, but who envies his brother in spirit, is not a virgin; and again, the boastful man is not a virgin.'*

Only if we try and keep our virginity out of respect for the teaching of Christ and the Church will we succeed in keeping ourselves in virginity until marriage or forever, if we choose to become a monk or nun. We should all try to be 'virgins in Christ' by not only