

CELIBACY AND THE EMOTIONAL LIFE¹

The man who accepts a life of consecrated celibacy enters a condition in which, nowadays especially, his whole emotional life is going to be profoundly affected.

"It is not good that man should be alone" said God, after having created Adam, "I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen. 2:18), "male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). The man consecrated by celibacy renounces obedience to this law, which God has made part of his nature and which inclines him to seek self-realization in a whole network of human relationships, among which the conjugal and the paternal have by far the greatest significance.

Such a renunciation is bound to create difficulties on the emotional level, for the life of the affections is deprived of that which, in a normal situation, is the main source of its nourishment and its growth. So, the man consecrated by celibacy must discover some specific and particular way in which this same nourishment, exercise and growth can be assured. Somehow or other, his love for God and his neighbour must become incarnate in his human emotional life. Charity, which is a gift of God and a divine way of loving, must become embodied in him so that his affectivity may be given a style and objectives which are beyond the inherent capacities of human nature. It is for this reason that the legitimacy, the possibility and the fruitfulness of the celibate way of life will be proportionate to the rightness and efficacy of the motives which have inclined a Christian to such a commitment and which, for the remainder of his days, must assure his perseverance and progress therein.

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THE MOTIVES FOR CELIBACY
AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

The crisis of clerical celibacy is not primarily a problem of ecclesiastical institutions: *at the deepest level it is a question of motivation.* This is true of all problems in which the emotional life in the celibate condition is involved.

It must be noted straight away that the religious vow of chastity does not have the same motives as the celibacy of the secular priest, nor are its consequences on the institutional level completely identical—even although it must be admitted that there has, historically, been a strong reciprocal influence between the priesthood and the religious life: for the vow of chastity, taken first by monks and then by religious, did much to generalize the law of celibacy, while more and more religious came to see ordination to the priesthood as part of the religious life, at least in the majority of cases.

What remains true is that which, over the centuries, has become what we now call "the religious life" included from the very beginning that renunciation of marriage proposed by Christ in his famous allusion to the "eunuchs": "*there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it*" (Matt 19:21). Some of the first disciples did "receive it": there were "virgins of Christ" among the first communities, and St. Paul can write that "the unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord" (I Cor. 7:32) and say "I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another" (I Cor. 7:7).

Such motivations and charismatic invitations are an essential part of the religious life, and are present throughout its whole evolution in the history of the people of God. A married religious has never been seen and can hardly be imagined.

Married priests, on the other hand, there are and always have been, or rather, married men having received ordination to the priesthood. There is a certain basic similarity between

the motives of the celibate priests and the religious, and celibacy is particularly suitable in view of the practical requirements of the ministry of a priest. *But in law, as in fact, celibacy is not an essential prerequisite for the priesthood, as we are reminded in the Vatican Council's Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests.*¹ History shows us the motives for clerical as evolving in a variety of cultural contexts and undergoing certain modifications springing from the development of Christian thinking on the specific functions of the priests.²

Until the beginning of the third century the functions of the Christian minister were not, unlike those of his pagan or Jewish counterpart, specifically connected with "the sacred". The minister of the new alliance "*feeds*" the flock, "*oversees*" it and "*presides*" at the breaking of the bread. He is the "*minister*" (*leitourgon*) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, in the priestly service (*hierourgounta*) of the gospels, so that the offering of the gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16).

According to Fr. Paul Audet³ it is only towards the beginning of the third century that the vocabulary of the sacred (*hierus, sacerdos, consecratio, etc.*) appears in Christian language, and the priestly function becomes "*the service of the altar and the sacrifices*" rather than *the service of the people and the word*.

Are we to see in this a return to an Old Testament⁴ or even a pagan notion of the priesthood? Does it represent the revival of a more ancient feeling for and religion of the sacred? Or is it, again, the result of an increase in the number of Christians, increase entailing a greater area of *qualitative mediocrity*, a higher degree of institutionalization and a progressive hierarchization of ecclesiastical structures?

¹ It [perfect and perpetual continence] is not, indeed, demanded by the very nature of the priesthood, as is evident from the practice of the primitive church and from the tradition of the Oriental churches (no. 16).

² Although both the motives for religious chastity and the manner in which it has been lived have also been influenced by historical factors, yet the institution itself has undergone no essential modification.

³ Cf. Paul Audet, *Structure of the Christian Priesthood*, Sheed & Ward 1967, Chapter V, pp. 125-51.

⁴ In the Old Testament abstinence from sexual intercourse is an essential prerequisite for the performance of any sacred action, cf. for example, Genesis 19:15 and I Samuel 21:5.

Whatever the answer to these questions, the fact is that the reintroduction of the notion of the sacred into the sphere of concepts concerning the priestly function brought with it the notions of pure and impure, especially in relation to sexuality, which tended, under certain cultural influences active in the Greco-Roman world, to be considered as impure even in married life. The Platonic, as the stoic, cast of mind, gnosticism, mazdeism and manicheism all show a tendency to refuse and to condemn the body, with its passions and sexuality and this tendency could not but influence contemporary Christian thought. From Origen to Clement of Alexandria, from Tertullian to St Augustine, these profane influences were to lead Christians to see in the use of marriage a "concession" (I Cor. 7:6).¹ The use of marriage thus appears incompatible with the exercise of the ministry, which is seen as something sacred and priestly."

St. Ambrose gives a clear example of this attitude: "Thou unclean in mind and body," he asks, "wouldst thou dare to pray for others and minister to them?"² Convinced that the priesthood would be profaned by conjugal relations, he esteems that the sacred ministry requires one to approach the altar with one's body free from all "impurity", particularly that involved in married life.

If celibacy has become an obligation for priests in the Western church, it would seem to have been for this type of motive in which the notions of purity and impurity are dominant, without, of course, forgetting the obvious economical advantages of celibacy.³ Celibacy is not so much "for the kingdom of heaven" as for the altar and the sacred things.

¹ Cf. J. T. Noonan, Jr., *Contraception*, Harvard U.P., 1965, Chapters II to IV.

² *Tu illotus mente pariter et corpore audes pro aliis supplicare, audes aliis ministrare?* " *De Officiis Ministrorum*, I, 50.

³ At the beginning of the fourth century, the Spanish Council of Elvira (which is the first known document in which the marriage of priests is forbidden) makes it illegal for Bishops and priests to travel outside the limits of their own provinces with a view to undertaking the more lucrative kinds of business transaction (necessary for the support of their families). Later on, reminders about the obligation to celibacy are motivated by the dangers of somny and of the transmission by heritage of Church property to the children of the clergy. Cf. Henry Charles Lea, *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church*, first edited 1867, reprinted by the University Press, U.S.A.

Together with the accent on the priest's function of serving the altar, this complex and ambiguous ensemble of motives for clerical celibacy has been handed down through the centuries. To this must be added the consequences of a mentality which became generalized in the western world from the fourteenth century onwards, mentality which produced a peculiarly *legalistic and voluntaristic type of morality, which the basis was obligation as such without any reference to the internal laws of human nature and reason*: Kant's categorical imperative is very much in this line. *An action is morally good because God has so decided it in his absolute freedom: it is for man but to obey what has thus been commanded. The moral categories are reduced to two: that which is allowed and that which is forbidden: to which category the different possible human acts belong being decided by the authority of God or of his representatives on earth.* Such a moral system was at once the cause and the effect of excessive sentiments of culpability in the sexual sphere, which became riddled with scruples and obsessional anxieties, being dominated by social constraint rather than a concern for internal authenticity. Even outside the Church, sex was treated as a forbidden subject, surrounded by silence and hypocrisy. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, considered that children should be kept in a state of complete ignorance about such things until they grew up. Adolescent masturbation was held responsible for all the very worst evils, both for the individual and for civilizations.

In such a climate, one can well understand that celibacy should be presented to future priests as an obligation coming directly from God, to which it was sufficient and necessary to submit. Paradoxically enough, a vocation was presented as something imposed by God on the subject. In 1925 the superior of a seminary wrote that "one does not choose a vocation, it is an act of authority from on high, an act of possession by the Divine." The junior seminarist who did not persevere to the end was threatened with compromising his eternal salvation. If he "lost" his vocation, this could only be a defection, a lack of generosity. The great concern was to preserve such young adolescents, the "future priests", from the dangers of relationships with the opposite sex. There was little concern for information, still less for any real formation in *the theological*

light and inspiration which alone can promote the growth of the authentic virtue of Christian chastity as St Thomas understands it: it was fear that was inculcated rather than the evangelical motivation of the Kingdom of God

There is no question here, of course, of attaching blame to any particular individuals: such a way of presenting and of living the celibacy of the priesthood was too closely connected with both the Christian and the secular mentalities of the nineteenth century for things to have been otherwise. But it is quite understandable that clerical celibacy should not have been as fruitful as it might have been, that it should, further, have entailed a certain emotional immaturity among many priests, making it difficult for them to avoid becoming obsessional in this sphere, or even leading them to complete failure

It is also understandable that, at a time when sexual taboos are beginning to disappear, when Christian thought no longer associates with married love the taint of impurity it has received since the third century, and when not only has the proclamation of the Gospel been restored to its rightful position, but the whole pastoral action of the Church as well has appeared to need rethinking so as to pass from the fight against de-christianization to an acceptance of the fact of secularization, that at such a time, the law of celibacy should be called into question both by priests and by the laity themselves.

One must also take into account the fact that, throughout the ages, celibacy has been associated with a certain social category, that of the "clerk" or cleric, who, throughout the history of mediaeval Europe, had a quasi-monopoly of education and a decisive influence in the social and political spheres. *The clergy, indeed, came to constitute a distinct social stratum: thus, in pre-revolutionary France they constituted the first of the three orders of the Etats Généraux du Royaume. Nowadays on the other hand, the clergy are ceasing to have any recognized social position. Many of them deliberately seek to appear less "ecclesiastical" in order to be better priests.* Now one of the major factors that can contribute to the development of a man's emotional maturity is the ease which he feels in his situation in his milieu. He needs to be recognized for what he is, both in his own person and in his functions. Among priests

there is, at the moment, a basic feeling of insecurity precisely on this point, feeling revealed in the various movements for the "declericalization" of the clergy.

All this is not without its effect on the affectivity of the priests, particularly on his feelings towards celibacy. It appears to many that the value of celibacy as a sign, explicitly mentioned by Vat can II,¹ runs the risk of passing unperceived by our contemporaries.

The traditional motives for priestly celibacy, then, are seriously lacking in credit and in force. The future belongs to the new motives, which are also the oldest, those formulated by Christ and by St Paul.

If, nowadays, priestly celibacy is so generally questioned throughout the world, and that in an atmosphere of some confusion, this obsolescence of the "classical" motivations, which have gradually increased in rigidity since the third century, particularly during the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, is one of the main causes. *To it may be added certain serious deficiencies on the part of those responsible for the formation of priests and religious, deficiencies apparent both in the discernment of vocations and in the education of candidates with regard to consecrated chastity.*

The transformation by which a celibacy still intimately connected with the "sacred", experienced primarily as a prohibition, becomes a celibacy lived "for the Kingdom of God" will, of course, present difficulties to many priests. Their emotional life, previously regarded with deep suspicion as a source of transgressions, must be brought under the regime of charity and of the Holy Spirit.

It seems that what St Paul wrote about the "curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13) is particularly applicable here. "The command-

¹ On priestly celibacy, the Decree on the ministry and life of priests expresses itself thus: "In this way, they [they clergy] profess before men that they desire to dedicate themselves in an undivided way to the task assigned to them . . . they evoke that mysterious marriage which was established by God and will be fully manifested in the future, and by which the Church has Christ as her only spouse. Moreover they become a vivid sign of the future world . . ." (no. 16).

ment was meant to lead me to life, but it turned out to mean death for me, because sin took advantage of the commandment to mislead me, and so sin, through that commandment killed me" (Rom. 7:10, 11), but "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (II Cor. 3:17). In the measure that the emotional life of the priest comes to benefit from this freedom, this going beyond the law, he is likely to experience great confusion as long as the more fundamental motivation is not fully in possession in him. "For me," says St Paul, "there are no forbidden things . . . but I am not going to let anything dominate me" (I Cor. 6:12). "If you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence" (Gal. 5:16).

This basic re-motivation of priestly celibacy will not, then, be easy, but it is inevitable and it is good. It demands a re-education and lived re-invention of the particular kind of emotional life which follows from the voluntary acceptance of celibacy as a means of total consecration to God's work. This is the essential problem that celibacy poses for the priest in the modern world.

THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Man is not only a mind, he is also a heart. The latter too must live, not only through the activity of reason (that reason of the heart, or better that rational desire that has come to be known as the will), but also through the affectivity and the passions which the stoics mistakenly sought to eliminate rather than to humanize and control.¹

This human affectivity is nourished and developed by the experience of human relationship in the context of a given social and cultural milieu. Experimental psychology throws into sharp relief the importance of such relationships from early infancy onwards: the concept of relationship is prominent in the works of contemporary philosophers, for example, Buber and Sartre.

Love, of course, is the essential relationship. The child reaches awareness of self through the love of its mother, which

¹ Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, Q. 24.

it gradually learns to reciprocate. Now it is through its body and with its body that it experiences this love. The gestures of tenderness and affection, the care that is lavished on the satisfaction of infant needs, the very nourishment that it receives are all physical realities which are experienced, and whose meaning is gradually perceived, through the senses.

Thus the relationships of the child, however "spiritual" they are to become later on, remain "physical" or at least "incarnate", so that in adult life no relationship with another is possible without the words, the facial expressions, the gestures that are the physical and sensorial manifestation of one human body faced with another.

But these human bodies are not asexual. On the biological level, they possess not only the appropriate organs but a whole sexually determined somatic structure and functioning. This physiological basis is the foundation of two different forms of presence in the world, two complementary approaches to total humanity in the milieu that conditions its realization.

All effective relationships are, therefore, at least in a wide sense, sexual. Human affectivity is sexual in so far as affection for another human being differs in kind depending on the sex of the persons concerned. It is, of course, in married life that the affective relationship finds its highest expression.

Thus the man who is celibate, even when his celibacy is a consecration to God, *lives in a state of profound emotional deprivation*, and it is not by refusing to look this fact in the face that it can be coped with adequately. The man who is living a celibate life *must still have an emotional life*: if he does not, there is not only the risk of the slow death of his heart to be considered (slow death that will reduce a priest to a mere functionary or a religious to an "observant" automation), but also the vain search for effective compensations (activism, authoritarianism, marginal occupations that assume too great an importance, eccentricities, a spirit of contestation or revolt, etc.).

Ultimately there is always the possibility that a man will be forced to seek to escape from an intolerable situation. An American doctor who, over a period of time, had to examine about a hundred priests in a psychiatric clinic, mentions, in a published report,¹ the cases of several "model" priests who abandoned the priesthood. In all the cases there was a very real search for perfection, a conscientious performance of all the duties of the priestly life, and a complete repression and denial of the true life of the affections. The impulses of aggressivity and sexuality, the most primary emotional needs, were regarded, in each case, as intolerable: all the subjects gave the appearance of having completely rid themselves of such things. But that which was denied finally pierced through the wall of denial and repression. *The desire for priestly perfection had led these men to refuse all that made them human, so that the eventual rediscovery of their humanity led to a rejection of the priesthood.*

These observations lead us to the very centre of our problem, a problem that may be resumed in two propositions:

- 1 — it is necessary that the man who lives a life of celibacy should reach some sort of emotional fulfilment.*
- 2 — the renunciation of marriage and paternity deprives a man of the basic relationships through which emotional fulfilment is normally achieved.*

It is easy enough to state the solution of this problem: but putting it into words will be easier than putting it into practice. The statement of the solution may be given in the following terms: the man who lives a life of consecrated celibacy must live out in the sphere of his affectivity the development in himself of the supernatural virtue of charity.

Like the religious life, the vocation to the priesthood has no other foundation than charity. "Simon, Son of John," asks the risen Christ three times, "do you love me more than these others do?" and Simon Peter replies, "Yes Lord, you know, I love you": it is then that Jesus says to him "feed my lambs" (John 21: 15-17). It is true that this triple ques-

¹ Cf. *Journal of Religion and Health*, July 1965, p. 335.

tion is intended to teach Peter a lesson in humility, but it is his love for Christ that is the basic factor in the vocation in which he is confirmed.

As for the religious life, we know that its specific characteristic is to offer to those who enter it the most suitable means for the growth of charity by the practice of the evangelical counsels.¹

Priest or religious, the man who accepts a life of consecrated celibacy has found a treasure hidden in a field and "in his joy sells all he has to buy that field" (Matt. 13:14). The fundamental and, in a sense, exclusive love of his life is the love of Christ inseparable from the love of men, all men. But such love is not "natural" for man, it is beyond his powers. It is a gift of God, for "the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us" (Rom. 5:15).

This "love that is in Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 1:13), this divine way of loving, described by Christ himself when he tells his disciples "Just as I have loved you, you must love one another" (John 13:34), is the fruit of the Holy Spirit: it is grace. Accepted and lived by a man, on the level of his spiritual affectivity or will, it must progressively penetrate his heart, with all its reserves of human tenderness. "Love each other as brothers," says St. Paul, "in tenderness of heart"²

Growth in charity does not necessarily mean loving a greater number of people, but allowing one's love to be penetrated more deeply and more extensively by this supernatural reality. The affectivity and the passions must be animated by charity, and in the man who loves thus, charity itself becomes a passion. For St Paul, charity can mean a burning anxiety for the Church (II Cor. 11:19). St. Dominic's love of God, too, was not without clear emotional manifestations, according to his biographers. This is the meaning to be given to the classical adage that charity is the "form" or "mother" of all the virtues.³

¹ Cf. Vat. II, Decree Perfectae Caritatis on the renewal and adaptation of the religious life.

² Cf. Rom. 12:10. St. Paul uses here the Greek word *Philostorgos*

³ Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica* IIa IIae, Q.23, Art. 8.

This, in effect, is the only way in which the man who is living a life of consecration by celibacy can keep his heart alive, the only way in which he will find genuine affective fulfilment. His prayer, in which his love for God is chiefly exercised, must be frequent, intense and "affective". His neighbour must be for him a "sacrament" of Christ, so that he can love the men and women whom he meets with a charity that is active in a truly human heart, giving without counting the cost¹ but being capable also of receiving just as much with his total human sensitivity and affection.

The community life of the religious, the carefully fostered social and pastoral relations of the priest with his colleagues in the diocese, his care for those to whom he is sent by God, such things as these, constitute the world of relationships of the man who is consecrated by celibacy. Through such relationships his emotional life can develop in the context of an affectivity which, while inspired by supernatural charity, does not cease to be as fully human as possible.²

This then, is the task of the man consecrated by celibacy: to integrate charity and affectivity. In this way, and in no other, can he grow in charity and in humanity: thus, and thus alone, will it be seen how perfect continence "simultaneously signifies and stimulates pastoral charity and is a special fountain of spiritual fruitfulness on earth."³

If this is the ideal, reality nonetheless obliges us to recognize that, for the man who is living a celibate life, charity

¹ Cf. I Cor. 13:14, and Matt. 6:3.

² It would seem legitimate to apply to this problem what St. Thomas says about the passions in general. He rejects the early stoic ideal of *apatheia*, declaring the passions themselves to be capable of becoming virtuous and thus allowing that the temperate man is not lacking in desire, for he desires what is fitting in a fitting manner (*Summa*, Ia Pars, Q.95, Art. 2, ad 3 um.). The manner in which the passions can thus share in the movements of charity is explained by St. Thomas in many passages the teaching of which has too often been neglected. Thus, when treating the question of the order to be established among the objects of charity, he remarks that blood-relationships and other natural affinities should lead to a growth in charity, thus family ties will be animated by charity (IIa IIae, Q.26 art. 7 etc.). Likewise he explains that mercy is a passion which, when animated by charity, becomes one of the greatest of virtues (IIa IIae, Q.30, Arts. 3 and 4).

³ Cf. Vatican II, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, no. 16.

cannot be as "natural" as would have been the love of a wife and children. Time, and a particular style of life will be necessary if the integration of the affective life into the movement of charity is to be successfully achieved. It must even be admitted that, where the heart is concerned, something will always be missing: to say nothing of the complete abstinence from sexual relations.

The fact that the man who is living a life of consecrated celibacy is, like other men, a sinner, does nothing to diminish the difficulty. He bears in himself the consequences of original sin; he is wounded from birth, and notably in this, that his sexuality and his affectivity are extremely difficult to harmonize both between themselves and with his spiritual faculties. Nor will grace eradicate totally the consequences of the original fault as long as he is still *in via*.¹

Freud had already noted that there seems to be something in the human sexual instinct that is opposed to complete fulfilment. *It is difficult enough for the married man to integrate his sex-life, his heart and his spiritual faculties: one need not therefore, be at all surprised if the man who lives a celibate life, whose psychological balance and emotional fulfilment depend on the integration of an affectivity that is sexuality frustrated into the movement of supernatural charity, should discover particular difficulties in this sphere.*

And yet such harmony and fulfilment are *not impossible*, although they suppose a particular kind of education, an education of the affections dominated not by interdict and repression, but by their submission to the power of Divine Love. The *government of the passions*, to return to the analogy favoured by Aristotle and St. Thomas² should be modelled not on the police methods of the political tyrant, but on the democratic principle that government should not reduce minority views to silence and condemn those who hold them to inactivity, but *persuade minorities to work for the good of the*

¹ Cf. St. Thomas, *De Veritate*, Q.25, art 7, in corpore.

² Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. I Chap. 3; St. Thomas, *Summa*, Ia pars, Q.83, art. 3, ad 2 um; Ia IIae, Q.56, art 4, ad 3 um; Q.58, art. 2, in corpore.

country according to the views of the majority: having recourse to police measures only in extreme and exceptional circumstances.

St. Thomas also makes use of other images, conditioned, of course, by the customs of his time, which all show a similar "respect" for the impulses of passion, which must be mastered for the sake of their own enrichment. He instances the authority of husband over wife¹ and of father or teacher over a child.²

We may sum up St. Thomas's teaching without images and in his own words by saying that a man's control over his passions is imperfect when they suffer violence and are condemned to a sterile inactivity: this control becomes perfect when it becomes, as it were, a second nature for the passions to participate spontaneously in the love of the intelligent affectivity, when passion itself becomes intelligent.³

It must be recognized that an *education in the virtue of chastity according to the principles of St. Thomas* has not been the custom in the past, especially in seminaries and novitiates. An attitude of silence and fear has been all too common. Often the educators themselves have not had an adequate formation. The only woman who was allowed a place in the life of the candidate for the priesthood and of the priest himself was his mother, which, in itself, could not fail to create as many problems as it was supposed to solve.

But whatever has to be said of this recent (and even present) past, it must be admitted that, even in the most favourable circumstances, the affectivity of the man who is consecrated by celibacy, an affectivity which cannot express itself in a normal sex-life, will only be *integrated into the movement of supernatural charity slowly and progressively*. In other words, such a man will be living in a continual fast of the affections.

¹ *De Veritate*, Q.15, art. 2, ad 9 um.

² *Ila Ilac*, Q.151, art. 1, in corpore.

³ In III Sent, Dist. 23, art. 1, ad 1 um.

Now one mistake that he will be tempted to make in these circumstances will be to allow a *sentiment of shame and culpability to be associated with certain desires*. But a man who fasts feels hungry: this hunger is a natural phenomenon and a sign of health. Hunger is perfectly normal when one has not enough to eat, either because there is no food available or because one is fasting. The man who is fasting finds in this hunger the material of his self-denial and his offering to God. Christ fasted and was hungry (Matt. 4:2).

Why, then, should the fast of the affections and sexual abstinence not lead to feelings of deprivation and need? The man who is consecrated by celibacy would be utterly mistaken were he to allow any culpability to be attached to his emotional and sexual hunger-feelings, interpreting them either as an infidelity to his vocation or as a sign that his vocation is in any way unreal or illusory. For such misplaced culpability is the effect of a morality of negation and fear: it will often lead to a struggle against "temptation" that simply exacerbates desire rather than giving it a *positive significance* and can easily bring into play psychological mechanisms of an obsessional character.

It would seem more authentic and more efficacious to accept such hunger in a spirit of interior peace, for it is only in such a climate that it can receive a positive meaning "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven". The only positive meaning possible is precisely that of the movement of charity, which alone can initiate the process by which, to use the Freudian language of sublimation, sexual impulses are attracted towards objects that are not, in themselves, sexual. This kind of sublimation is what is required to take over and perform far more effectively the task that was mistakenly entrusted to a regime of interdict and repression.

Such a solution, as Freud himself was willing to recognize, is only possible in the measure that man learns to appreciate what we may, in a wide sense, call *the pleasures of the spirit*. For the man who lives a life of consecrated celibacy

they can be identified with the joys of charity,¹ joys which can overflow into the senses through all that is soundly human in those relationships with others through which he lives out his "sacramental" relationship to God. *The more the celibate priest can find joy in his ministry, his way of life, his vocation,² the more he will be able to integrate these things into his emotional life, and the more fruitfully will he live his celibacy.*

If, on the contrary, the affective and sexual impulses have been suppressed rather than sublimated, forbidden and made objects of blame rather than made to share in objectives and satisfactions which surpass and inspire them, *celibacy will be more or less intolerable, especially if the subject suffers from some deep-seated neurotic tendency. Freud himself notes that the more a person is disposed to neurosis, the less able he is to support sexual abstinence.*

It is in the context of his own singular spiritual and psychological dispositions, dispositions that will tend to be of one of the two kinds outlined above, that a man who is more or less at ease in his celibate condition establishes relationships with the opposite sex. It is in such a context that he may well find himself falling in love, to use the everyday terms, with a member of the opposite sex, who reciprocates in some degree his feelings.

Experience shows that the significance and outcome of such a relationship will depend in a very large measure on the affective and sexual maturity of the man and woman concerned. If the man concerned, in particular, has been unable to harmonize his affectivity with the positive motives for his celibacy, if he does not find a large degree of emotional fulfillment in the activities of his ministry, if, most of all, he

¹ What the Spirit brings . . . is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23). "God's gift was not a spirit of timidity but the Spirit of power, love and self-control" (II Tim. 1:7). On the joy of charity, cf. *Summa Theologica* IIa IIae, Q.28.

²The joy of charity does not, as St. Paul points out, exclude tribulations. Cf. II Cor. 4:7, 12; 6:1-10; 12:7-10.

suffers from neurotic tendencies cultivated by an education that has been built upon repression and fear, then the relationship will be contaminated by ambiguities of various kinds¹ and be unlikely to lead to any real growth in maturity. *The final outcome may well be sexual relations and a marriage which, though it can be sacramental, will not always prove stable and happy*, for the primary aim of matrimony is not therapeutic. On the woman's side, certain neurotic tendencies may also be operative. It is possible that Szondi's thesis, which gives neurotic complementarity an important role in the choice of a marriage partner, would be particularly applicable in such cases.²

If, on the contrary, the two partners in such a relationship have already achieved a happy condition of emotional maturity, each in his or her own condition, there is every hope that the relationship will lead to a further enrichment of the affectivity on both sides, which will make it an even better instrument of supernatural charity. The example of the saints and the experience of many devout Christians, priests, religious and lay people, allows this conclusion to be drawn. It is impossible not to quote here what St. Francis de Sales wrote to the Baroness de Chantal:

. . . this, then, is the bond that unites us, these are the ties that hold us together, and the closer they draw us, the more ease and freedom will they give us. Know then, that I hold myself closely bound to you, and seek to know no more, save that this bond is incompatible with no other, whether of vow or of marriage.³

¹ The ambiguous elements may include a dissociation of the affective and the sexual, a latent and unconscious homosexuality, a search for a mother-substitute, sentiments of neurotic aggression against authority, narcissism, etc.

² L. Szondi, *Schicksalsanalyse. Wahl in Liebe, Freundschaft, Beruf und Tod*, 2nd edition, Basle 1948. It is to be feared that, while capable of maternity, the woman will suffer from frigidity and have, in fact, a maternal attitude towards a partner who, in his turn, may well have remained in a state of over-dependence on his mother. The woman may also have had difficulties in solving the problem of her relationship with her father.

³ St. Francois de Sales, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Tome XII, p. 285.

In such conditions, the heart of the man consecrated by celibacy will *remain undivided*¹ and his affectivity will be truly enriched. Such a heart, being more alive, can be filled with yet more charity towards all men.

If this sexual but not sexually active relationship is *not allowed to become an absolutely vital and essential need*, if both partners, according to the recommendation of St. Paul, *do not become engrossed in it* (I Cor. 7:31), accepting it rather as one of the added gifts that can accompany the search for the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 6:33), then it will be highly beneficial to both.

In the other kind of case that we have mentioned, one can only insist on posing the problem of the real meaning of the relationship and invite both partners to face up to what is really happening in the hope that they will discover or renew at a deeper level the impact of the evangelical and pastoral motives of chastity.

A dialogue with some suitable confidant would seem indispensable and is likely to favour the sort of authenticity that is required to counterbalance an immature culpability. The confidant too must, of course, be personally at ease with such problems, in order to be able to help those concerned to discover the truth. *The absence, and most of all, the refusal of of such a dialogue indicates an attitude of irresponsibility and revolt² against authority which augurs ill for the future, whatever it may be.*

In conclusion, we may rate highly the chances of genuine happiness arising from a particular friendship between two people who are already making satisfactory progress towards emotional maturity. *For others, it is liable to prove a grave misfortune.* Thus it would seem that, in this sphere, the enigmatic words of Christ are verified: "I tell you, to everyone who has will be given more, but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken" (Luke 12:26).

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¹ Cf. I Cor. 7:32-34. Speaking of priestly celibacy, the Council's *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (no. 16) contains this statement, concerning priests consecrated to Christ by celibacy: "They more easily hold fast to him with an undivided heart."

² This attitude of irresponsibility and revolt is often manifested in a certain psychological exhibitionism, a need for the support of public opinion and various other attempts to escape feelings of misplaced culpability.