

MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY IN THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the dangers in speaking of marriage and celibacy is that there is the temptation to go in two different directions. Our topic at the moment is, "Marriage and Celibacy in the Service of the Church." The temptation is to plunge into a discussion of marriage and then a discussion of celibacy, and finally to see the relationship of each to the Church. In my own opinion this would simply create artificial problems. Rather, I am going to begin from a unified view of Christian life and only then will I consider marriage and celibacy as separable.

The human person, by the very fact that he is human, is both temporal and spatial. Time and space are not just outside influences on the individual. They are modes of his existence. It is, therefore, really almost a truism to say that the human person is an evolving person. His very existence is existence in time and space. At no one point in that existence does he have full and complete possession of the totality of his own existence. It is an existence always in movement from past to future. Man is in full possession only of that tenuous point which divides what he has been from what he will be.

At the same time, he is truly a person with freedom and responsibility. He can make himself what he will be or what he ought to be. But in so doing he must accept himself as he is. He must, in other words, assume the personal responsibility of making the free choice of becoming what he should be in order to be a person. To put it another way, by the very fact that he is a person he must be somehow creative of his own self. He has no limits but the intrinsic limits of his own humanity.

God's revelation to man is actually the transformation of man into the realm of the transcendent—into the trinitarian life which is God. Yet even the supposition of his elevation into the order of the transcendent does not deny man's responsibility for himself. It

increases it. Even with expanded horizons, he still has the responsibility and freedom of his self-creativity.

The individual, in the course of his life as a person, is in constant contact with other persons, all of them under this same obligation of the assumption of personal responsibility for themselves. In so far as he prevents their own free creativity he makes himself less a person, because he is reducing them to the level of things and through this reduction begins to remove himself from the concept of what he also is as a person.

The assumption of personal responsibility for one's own personal evolution can, therefore, include a responsibility to others. In fact, since contact with others is an essential part of human existence, there is a necessary assumption of responsibility for others. One assumes a responsibility not only for the creative evolution of himself, but for that of others as well. It is this assumption of mutual responsibility which is the concrete manifestation of Christian charity. One assumes responsibility for his neighbor, because he does indeed love his neighbor as he loves himself.

It is at this point, perhaps, that the question of differentiation becomes most apparent. How is one both to assume responsibility for himself and to assist in the fulfillment of the self-responsibility of others? One's own situation, circumstances, personality and potentialities will open up a variety of possibilities. Among the numerous choices that have to be made, one of them is the choice of being married or unmarried. This is quite clearly a question that will have to be answered on the basis of one's own capacities as well as his relationship to God and neighbor.

II. MARRIAGE AND ORDINATION

The evolutionary creativity of the human being and its characteristic mutuality appear quite clearly in marriage. Each of the partners begins to assume responsibility not only for the creative evolution of himself, but for that of the other as well. The creativity of marriage also includes not merely the creative evolution of a new person and the assumption of responsibility of the evolution of that person from his inception.

This mutual concern for creativity is the central focus of Chris-

tian self-sacrifice. One "gives himself" in order to become what he is and ought to be. His self-giving is the result of the recognition that his own finiteness is unintelligible without reference to the transcendent which is God.

This element of self-giving and self-sacrifice is present in all of the sacraments. In Baptism and Confirmation the Christian submits himself to God so that he may be transformed. He sacrifices himself as he is, so that he may receive himself back in a newness of life in union with Jesus. In the Eucharist the element of sacrifice is evident. Man offers his gifts to God and these gifts are transformed. They represent man and their transformation is a symbol of the transformation of man himself. In penance the Christian offers himself to God, but this time he offers himself as a sinner seeking forgiveness. Again he must sacrifice himself and return to submission to God. In the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, the Christian gives himself entirely to the will of God, and is willing to give even his life if God should wish to take it.

In each of these sacraments there is sacrifice, but notice that the sacrifice in each case seems to be in direct relation to the individual's relationship to God. The basic emphasis seems to be on man's direction to God. There will, of course, be a new relationship to neighbor, but this seems to follow as a corollary of the basic and primary direction. In the other two sacraments of matrimony and holy orders there is a difference. While both of these sacraments direct the individual to God, their basic emphasis seems to be on the direction of the Christian to others. Through others he is directed to God. It is because of this similarity that I think both sacraments must be treated together.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul uses the unity of marriage as an example of the union between Christ and his Church. Even though this text is not intended as an explanation of marriage, there is something about marriage that we can learn from it. Why did Paul see marriage as an appropriate example? He had been speaking of the relationship of Christians to each other, and he was making the point that there must be mutual service among the Christian people. Each must treat himself as one who is at the disposal of others as his superiors. Each must subordinate himself to the needs of the

others. Paul says that this service is founded in union with Christ. "Subordinate yourselves to one another out of reverence to Christ" (Eph 5,21). It is this which leads him to the example of marriage. He says:

"You married women must subordinate yourselves to your husbands, as you do to the Lord, for a husband is the head of his wife, just as Christ is the head of the Church, which is his body, and is saved by him. Just as the Church is in subjection to Christ, so married women must be, in everything, to their husbands. You who are husbands must love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her, to consecrate her, after cleansing her with the bath in water through her confession of him, in order to bring the church to himself in all her beauty, without a flaw or a wrinkle or anything of the kind, but to be consecrated and faultless. That is the way husbands ought to love their wives—as if they were their own bodies; a man who loves his wife is really loving himself, for no one ever hates his own person, but feeds it and takes care of it, just as Christ does with the church, for we are parts of his body. Therefore a man must leave his father and mother and attach himself to his wife, and they must become one. This is a great mystery, but I understand it of Christ and the church" (Eph 5,22-32).

Note that in this whole text the most important element is that of mutual service. The wife is to obey and respect her husband, but the husband cannot demand of his wife anything which does not proceed from love and his own self-sacrifice on her behalf. Marriage, by its very nature, is directed to another. This is what makes it a symbol of the relationship between Christ and his Church.

The foundation of marriage is, then, the self-sacrificing love of both husband and wife, a love which goes far beyond the superficial love of physical attraction. Even beyond their mutual concern for each other, the husband and wife will subordinate themselves to the needs of their children. The direct result of the sacrament is a mutual giving of one to the other. Its final result, for the Christian, is the giving of husband, wife, and children to God. It is a sacrament of sacrifice and mutual holiness. It is a sacrament in which one person is sanctified, not simply for his own good and not through efforts directed primarily at his own sanctification, but in and through the

good of another. Marriage is an eminent sign of the Christian's love of neighbor.

In this sense the sacraments of matrimony and holy orders are quite similar. Ordination is also directed to the good of others. The fact of a man's ordination is not something that is intended to enhance his own holiness. By his ordination he becomes more committed to the service of others. It is not as though he now has a benefit which is not enjoyed by those who are not ordained. What I mean is that he has no advantage over them in the leading of a Christian life. He has instead now been placed at their disposal, because his priesthood itself is for them. This is the result of the sacrament. He is deputized for the service of the whole community and the good of his ordination is for the benefit of others. Again a change has taken place in him, a change comparable to that in baptism and confirmation. There he became a new being, a new reality. This happens again in ordination. The new being received in baptism is further specified by confirmation and orders. He is again new with the possibility of new activity. Primary in this new activity is the power to offer sacrifice (the sacrifice of Christ on behalf of the people) and to forgive sin, and both of these powers are for the good of others. His offering of sacrifice on behalf of the Church is not a private privilege, and the offering of the Mass is not "his" Mass. It is the re-presentation of the sacrifice of Christ for the good of Christians.

The offering of the Mass is the offering of a sacrifice, but this is not the whole meaning of the sacrificial aspect of the life of the priest. A man who offers the sacrifice of the Mass and does not offer himself is being hypocritical. And I do not mean that he should offer himself by including himself in the prayers of the Mass. I mean that his whole life must be a life of self-offering. This giving of self must be in the service of others. The priest is to be at the service of all men. He must sacrifice himself in all that he does. He cannot withdraw from others and still consider himself a good priest. The priest who works in a parish and just sits in the rectory and waits for calls is not giving himself to anyone. He is merely tolerating disturbances in his orderly routine of self-satisfaction. The priest who teaches and who gives himself to his class hours and then draws

back from his students in order to retire to the privacy of his non-working hours might just as well have never been ordained.

In reality marriage and the priesthood are much alike. In both there is the reception of a sacrament, but it is received more for the benefit of others than for the benefit of oneself. In both sacraments one gives himself into the service of others, and in both sacraments one begets new children of God. Both priest and parent are subordinated to the needs of their children. In both sacraments the eminent virtue of Christian self-giving is central, and is specified into a particular way of giving.

I would like to emphasize the fact that I am not distinguishing layman and priest on the basis of the nearness of each to God or to sanctity. I have no desire to imply that the layman should be defined in the merely negative way of one who is neither priest or religious. By the very fact of unity in Christ in baptism every Christian has the privilege and obligation of the highest sanctity. It is simply a question of the way that this sanctity is to be specified and lived by each individual. It is a question of different modes of expression of the basic Christian detachment and direction to God.

III. CELIBACY

On the background of the concept of human self-creativity and of the similarity between marriage and ordination, I will now proceed to a consideration of priestly celibacy.¹

¹ The primary books and articles consulted in the preparation of this section were the following:

- Paul VI, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, June 1967.
 Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Celibacy, Ministry, Church*, Herder and Herder, 1968.
 David P. O'Neill, *Priestly Celibacy and Maturity*, Sheed and Ward, 1965.
 Joseph Fuchs, S.J., *De castitate et ordine sexuali*, Rome, 1959.
 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Celibacy*, Sheed and Ward, 1968.
 Karl Rahner, S.J., *Servants of the Lord*, Sheed and Ward, 1968.
 Michael Gallagher, *Ave Maria*, Nov. 2, 1968, pp. 9-11.
 Louis J. Putz, C.S.C., *Ave Maria*, Nov. 2, 1968, p. 12.
 Eugene C. Kennedy, M.M., *Ave Maria*, Nov. 2, 1968, p. 12.
 James Mahmer, *Ave Maria*, Dec. 7, 1968, pp. 22-24.
 Thomas W. Klewin, *Pastoral Life*, Nov., 1967, pp. 605-609.
 John A. O'Brien, *Pastoral Life*, Nov., 1967, pp. 611-614.
 William P. O'Connell, S.J., *Pastoral Life*, May 1968, pp. 275-279.

In the last few years we have been faced with a great deal of publicity given to priests who have left the priesthood because they are discontented for one reason or another. The reason given has frequently been a discontent with the life of celibacy. It seems at times that some of the popular magazines have turned breaking one's solemn word into a stepping-stone to immediate literary fame, even if the authors had nothing to write about other than the presentation of a vivid account of how well they had broken their word.

The play, *A Man for All Seasons*, revolved around Sir Thomas More's struggle with his conscience. He finds it impossible to take an oath that he cannot keep. At one point he says that taking an oath is like taking possession of yourself. It is like cupping your hands and filling them with water. If you break your word, you open your hands and lose yourself. The real point of our discussion, however, is not that it is wrong to break your word. What I want to discuss is why a man should be expected to give his word in the first place in the matter of celibacy.

Basically celibacy is an expression of Christian love. If it is entered into with the intention of maintaining this state for the rest of one's life, it becomes a permanent choice and is a lasting expression, just as the love of marriage is a lasting expression. It is a giving of oneself to others, and the later rejection of celibacy is as much a sign of rejection of love as is divorce. It is a sign that one has turned back in on himself and has somehow begun to reject others. He has turned from selflessness to selfishness.

There are two points that I would like to consider. The first is the relationship between priesthood and celibacy. The second is the relationship between celibacy and love.

It seems to me that there is frequently a misunderstanding about the nature of a vocation to the priesthood. It is often looked upon

Raymond A. Tartre, S.S.S., *Emmanuel*, June 1966, pp. 242-246.

Bishop Alfred Ancel, *Catholic Mind*, Nov., 1967, pp. 27-37.

Robert T. Gill, O.S.A., *America*, June 10, 1967, p. 837.

John J. Evoy, S.J., *America*, July 29, 1967, p. 114.

Editorial, *America*, Dec. 24-31, 1966, pp. 821-822.

Editorial, *America*, Nov. 12, 1966, pp. 576-578.

Eugene C. Kennedy, *America*, Jan. 28, 1967, pp. 147-148.

Joseph H. Fichte, *America*, Jan. 21, 1967, pp. 92-94.

simply from an internal point of view. It is treated as though God inwardly calls a man to the priesthood in some secret, internal manner, and the man then makes this vocation known to the bishop who will call him to orders when he has determined that the candidate does have this internal call. This attitude, however, makes the call to orders quite subjective. It would mean that the candidate does really have this call in some private way. It would then be entirely possible that there would be many who would have this internal call from God, but who were not called to orders by the bishop. This would certainly seem detrimental to the Church and its welfare. Yet it would be totally unavoidable unless every bishop were considered infallible in his judgement about the vocation of a candidate.

I would suggest that the correct understanding of vocation is that it is a call to serve the Church. Men are called to serve as they are needed. The candidate presents himself to the bishop for judgment, but it is very much a judgment of the candidate's qualities and capabilities. He presents himself to the seminary both for formation and consideration. On the basis of the judgment of his capacities, he is either called or not called by the bishop, and it is this call which is the real vocation. It is in this that the candidate is called to serve the Church as a priest. Ultimately, then, the call is external and is based on the needs of the Church as expressed in each diocese or religious community.

When we apply the notion of celibacy to each of these notions of vocation we are left with the possibility of two very different attitudes. Celibacy may be looked upon in both a positive and a negative manner. The negative viewpoint would see celibacy as a giving up of something. It would be the rejection of marriage and family and would seem to be a form of Christian penance. From this viewpoint one gives up home and family and looks forward to reward in the next life. Celibacy is a burden, but it is accepted willingly and from high, spiritual motives. From the positive viewpoint celibacy is something quite different. The conjugal act, of itself, is an intimate expression of personal, conjugal love. This love is mediated through a human "materialization."² It is an expression of love essentially

² cf. Fuchs, *op. cit.*

related to the function of human generation. Celibacy expresses this love in another way, and without a means essentially related to human procreation. It seems obvious that this is not a dichotomy between the material and the spiritual, nor between natural and supernatural. Certainly the celibate must "materialize" his love and use the things of this world to express his love of God and neighbor. Likewise, the married person must surpass the limits of mere "materialization" if he is to accomplish the same end. However, while the expressions of love may differ, in both instances the primary element is the giving of oneself to God and to neighbor.

The primary element of celibacy, therefore, must be that of self-giving. Because this is full and personal self-giving, the intention of a life of celibacy may be solidified by a vow or a solemn promise of some sort. This self-giving is of such a nature that it consequently excludes conjugal relationship. Therefore, the sacrifice of wife and family is not the essence of the state of celibacy, but is merely a negative consequence. Abstinence from sexual activity is not the essence but the effect of celibacy. It is the consequence of a free and positive choice. Therefore, the negative motion of celibacy is not sufficient and is intelligible only if seen as the natural consequence of a free and positive choice. Therefore, the negative notion of celibacy is not sufficient and is intelligible only if seen as the natural consequence of the positive notion.

Celibacy is, therefore, a charismatic vocation with positive value. It is, like marriage, a true human value. Its negative consequences flow from a positive and overwhelming dedication to a goal which excludes all else. "Celibacy, like marriage, is meaningful primarily in human terms. Both can be lived for the sake of the kingdom of God. Thus both can be undertaken as states of life that have Christian significance, too. This means that, in the first instance Christian celibacy is not the giving up of a natural value (marriage) for the sake of, and with one's eye on, a supernatural value. In the first instance celibacy is not a 'supernatural value' but a possible state of life on a human level, which involves a special dedication to a particular value. It is not a matter of a choice between God and a possible marriage partner. God and the marriage partner are not competitors for our religious love; they do not set up a choice for

our love, as if a true and pure love of God were possible only if one relinquishes a human partner."³

If we treat the vocation to the priesthood as purely internal, then we must, of course, say that it is charismatic in the same way as is celibacy. If, then, we find a person in the Western Church who is called to the priesthood but not to celibacy, we must conclude that something is wrong. Since the mistake is obviously not on the part of God who imparts the charismatic vocation, it must then be in the position of the Church. Our logical conclusion is that celibacy should not be imposed upon clerics, since to do so may be to thwart a charismatic call to the priesthood. It may put a man into a situation that he will eventually find impossible. On this basis we can say that the requirement of celibacy for all clerics is not justified and that it should be made optional. I would contend that this argument is fruitless from its inception, because its foundation is the concept of the purely internal call to the priesthood.

When we see the vocation to the priesthood in terms of the external call to service in the Church, the whole line of reasoning changes considerably. In this instance the call to celibacy still remains charismatic. Yet the requirements for the call to the priesthood must be determined by competent authority within the Church, in accord with the needs of the times. What the Church is demanding, then, is that all its candidates to the priesthood have a charismatic call to celibacy. The ultimate call to orders is external. If a man is to present himself for this call, he should first be sure that he has all the necessary qualifications demanded by those whose responsibility it is to give that call. The present discipline of the Western Church is to choose its priests only from among those who have the charismatic call to celibacy. It is not, therefore, a demand placed upon those called to the priesthood.

"As a charisma, celibacy can only be accepted in freedom, never directly or indirectly imposed, not even by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The priestly office itself could certainly be imposed upon the faithful by church authority on the basis of Christian obedience. But in such a case, church authority could never impose celibacy as the

³ Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

condition for the reception of orders, for that would be an indirect way of making a charisma obligatory. In actuality, the church leaves her members free in their choice of the ministry. Can the Church in this case then decree that it will ordain only those who feel themselves personally called to religious celibacy, and in that sense establish a *law* of celibacy?"⁴ "Some people think that the *law* of celibacy is strictly an *obligation* to celibacy. From the foregoing, it appears that on close inspection this is an unfortunate, formally inaccurate expression, strictly speaking. The Church obliges no one to celibacy. It simply cannot do so; or if it tried, it would be overstepping its authority. This is evident in the canon providing that no one may receive higher orders unless he has previously stated (since 1931, in writing) that he *freely* embraces religious celibacy. And on the other hand, no individual member of the church has the *right* to an ecclesiastical office. Admission to the ministry is concretely, at least in the final instance, a matter for the church's hierarchy to decide (cf. Acts 1:24), guided by the Spirit (Acts 20:28)."⁵ Therefore, the relationship of celibacy to the call to orders is *ante factum* and not *post factum*.

Therefore, that the Church or any part of the Church would demand celibacy in its clerics is in no way contradictory to the true notion of vocation. Present discipline in the Western Church demands a double vocation, the one internal and charismatic in order for a man to present himself for consideration, the other external and sacramental in order for him to be ordained.

Priesthood and celibacy are not necessary correlatives. This is obvious in the fact that the Eastern Churches ordain married men. Yet even in the Eastern Churches there has been a constant tradition of the value of celibacy, although it is usually practiced in the monastic state. The connecting link between celibacy and priesthood would seem to be the sign value of celibacy-for-a-reason. It is not as though celibacy in itself expresses a value which does not exist elsewhere. Rather, it is a case of celibacy acting as a sign which points to a value applicable to all men. Schillebeeckx says: "If one puts oneself at the service of this value to such an extent that one

⁴ Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.

⁵ Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

wants to remain unmarried, this voluntary celibacy becomes a *sign* expressing a sensitivity to value which exists in all mankind. Such a celibate does not thereby claim a monopoly on this fundamental value, but on the contrary becomes an effective sign and exponent of a quality which ought to flourish in everyone. To the advantage of all, he thus keeps this universal sensitivity-to-value alive and activates it."⁶

Could the Western Church change its requirement of celibacy as a condition for candidacy to orders? Certainly it could. Should it? This can be answered only by practical needs and circumstances. In any case, this question should not be of personal concern to those who have already made this choice. Those who have already committed themselves to celibacy have done so freely and have chosen to express their Christian love in this manner. Any discussion is simply a consideration for the future needs of the Church. Any change in legislation would not make a change in the value of celibacy in itself, even though it would allow for a married clergy.

What then of the priest who is already ordained and has committed himself to a celibate life and who now wants to change that commitment? Father Karl Rahner writes:

"I do not inquire what the Church should do if a priest comes to her asking to be freed of his obligation for good reasons—or bad ones. Let us hope that the Church will feel she can safely be magnanimous in such cases. No doubt it is a great disappointment, and quite inconsistent with the sense of personal responsibility beyond all legalism (otherwise so much invoked nowadays), when a priest feels that everything is 'all right' once the Church has freed him of his obligations. There is a responsibility to God from which even the Church cannot deliver a man. But as I say, I am in favour of the Church's being really magnanimous. And I shall not enlarge on my view that the present vogue for getting emotional and melodramatic over the unhappiness, the distress, the torments, the frustration of many priests is craven and senseless escapism. Do not be dismayed or hoodwinked by it. Very often—I do not say always—such situations are not bare facts but the consequence, not antecedent, of a choice that must be answered for. The choice may be made tacitly and unawares, by

⁶ Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

falling away from a firm will to really operative faith, sacrifice, renunciation, prayer—a will to resist our hunger for tangible happiness.”⁷

It seems, unfortunately, that in the case of some priests who have left the priesthood on the grounds that celibacy was the problem, they have been mistaken in their diagnosis. The actual problem seemed to be a loss of the meaning of the priesthood in itself and a consequent loss of the place of celibacy in the life of the priest. It is sometimes all too easy to forget why we have been ordained. And as we forget this, we drift further away from the dedication that gives meaning to celibate love. We will then, quite naturally, begin to look for a love to take its place. There is here also another danger. The disillusioned priest may decide that in the priesthood he has not found personal fulfillment. He may lose sight of the fact that his own fulfillment as a person can only come with the giving of himself to others. It is quite likely, then, that if he expects to use marriage to fulfill himself, he may also fail in this. If he marries because he sees in the woman the means to *his* fulfillment, then he has reduced her to the level of a means and may find that she has begun to be for him a thing rather than a person.

The call to Christian self-giving is the call to Christian love. It is the call to give oneself totally to God and to neighbor. It is a call to selflessness. The question that each individual must decide is how he is to answer that call. One of the choices that he must make is whether he will answer it in marriage or in celibacy. This is not a decision that can be made in the abstract. One cannot look at celibacy as an ideal in itself and on that ground alone decide that it is for him. He must see the values of both marriage and celibacy, but he must see them in relationship to himself. He must decide which is better *for him*. This is not a choice that can be made without real self-knowledge. “Hence it is clearly incorrect to pose the following dilemmas: God or mankind; nature or supernatural; human or Christian; flight from the world or concern for the world; direct or mediated relation to God. These things are not opposed to each other in Christianity. So a life presenting itself as directly and exclusively

⁷ Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-151.

dedicated to God, without human or worldly intermediary, is an unchristian illusion."⁸

"Celibacy is a choice, but it is a choice between two possible states of Christian life, not *formally* between a natural and a supernatural value. Because the value in question is as such a religious one, the choice of this kind of celibacy actually implies that one gives up a human value because one wants to realize another value. Any voluntary celibacy implies a giving-up, but celibacy 'for the sake of the kingdom of God' concerns religious value in itself: that is its specifying characteristic. Directly religious celibacy thereby acquires a transcendent quality, incomprehensible from a purely secular point of view: the transcendence of the religious dimension itself. *Religious* celibacy is for this world an insoluble question mark; that is why it brings (negatively, in and through that actual giving-up) the eschatological world-transcendence or gratuity of grace into visible expression."⁹

In marriage the Christian expresses his selfless Christian love in his devotion to wife and family. He is directed to God through them and they are directed to God through him. He finds that by concentrating his love in one person or in one family he is better able to open that same love to others. Many persons who get married are, before their marriage, a bit selfish. And many find that in marriage they had discovered such love in husband or wife that it changes their lives. They wanted others to share in their happiness. Their love became expansive. They were now willing to become involved in other people's problems, because they had become selfless and were quite willing to give of themselves to others.

On the other hand, there are those who find that the best way for them to express their selfless love is in a more general way. They find that they can best express their love by not centering it in one person. And this you have seen in truly holy priests, religious and laity whose lives are totally dedicated to others. They spend themselves in the service of others and in this they find their true happiness.

In both lives there are risks. The married couple run the risk

⁸ Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁹ Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.

of becoming so centered in each other that they become selfish and neglect others. They may even begin to treat each other as things instead of persons, each being interested only in what the other can give. This is a risk that is always present when love is centered in one person. It is a risk that can be overcome and is overcome in a truly happy marriage.

The celibate runs the risk that by not centering his love in one person he may become impersonal. He can become selfish and self-centered. He can begin to look to his own welfare and neglect others. This is a risk that is always present when love is not centered in one person. It is a risk that can be overcome and is overcome by the truly happy priest.

If we insist on seeing celibacy in a purely negative fashion, we can easily become selfish. If we insist on seeing celibacy as imposed from without, we can live with it as a burden. If we see celibacy as an expression of selfless love, then it becomes productive and no burden at all. It becomes truly Christian.

Celibacy is not a life for the one who is totally unattracted to marriage. The person who would not make a good husband or wife will find the same problem as a celibate. These problems must first be overcome before he can make an intelligent choice. Celibacy is for the person who has made a mature decision between two possible ways of expressing his Christian love.

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