



## PRESIDENCY OF THE OFS INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

### ONGOING FORMATION PROJECT

### MONTHLY DOSSIER

No 42

### THEOLOGY OF THE BODY -

By Blessed Pope John Paul II

*Dossier prepared by the CIOFS Ongoing Formation Team*

*Ewald Kreuzer, OFS, Coordinator*

*Lucy Almiranez, OFS*

*Mike and Jenny Harrington, OFS*

### Session 6 - Celibacy and Religious life TOB 73 - 86

Reflecting on our glorified humanity we learnt that in order to be human, we are called to communion - communion with God and one another, a call to eternal ecstasy.

Blessed John Paul now reflects on the charism of celibacy, where the celibate vocation can only be properly understood from the viewpoint of the heavenly marriage between God and his people.

He shows us that another way in addition to marriage is open to fulfil the vocation to love and respect the spousal meaning of the body. This life of consecrated celibacy, does not devalue marriage, it is meaningful only in the light of marriage and also deepens our understanding of marriage.

***"Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person, in its entirety, to love; marriage and virginity or celibacy. Either one is in its own proper form and gives the most profound truth about man, of his being 'created in the image of God'" (Familiaris Consortio 11.)***

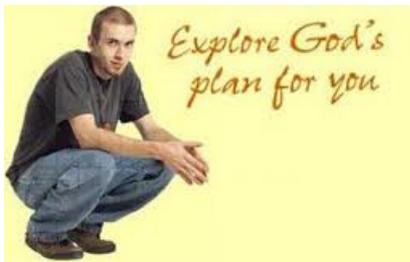
#### Christ's Words and Rule of Understanding

TOB 73.1 The question of the call to an exclusive gift of self to God in virginity and celibacy plunges its roots deeply into the evangelical soil of the theology of the body. To show the dimensions proper to it, one must keep in mind the words by which Christ appealed to the "beginning", and those by which he appealed to the resurrection of the body. "When they rise from the dead, they will take neither wife nor husband" (Mk 12:25) indicates that there is a condition of life without marriage, in which man, male and female, finds at one and the same time the fullness of personal giving and of the intersubjective communion of persons, thanks to the glorification of his whole psychosomatic being in the eternal union with God. When the call to continence "for the kingdom of heaven" finds an echo in the human soul, in the conditions of temporality and thus in the conditions under which persons "take a wife and take a husband" (Lk 20:34), it is not difficult to perceive *a particular sensibility of the human spirit that seems to anticipate*, already in the conditions of temporality, what man will share in the future resurrection.

*"Not all can accept this word, but only those to whom that is granted. Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so, some because they were made so by others, some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it".*

#### 3 Kinds of "Eunuchs" - Why?

TOB 73.2. Christ, however did not speak about this particular vocation in the immediate context of his dialogue with the Sadducees (Mt 22:23-30), when he appealed to the resurrection of the body. He had spoken about it (earlier) in the context of the dialogue with the Pharisees about marriage and its indissolubility, ..... (Mt 19:3-9) ... "If this is the condition of man in relation to woman, it is not advantageous to marry". Christ gives them the



following answer, "Not all can understand it, *but only those to whom it has been granted*. For there are eunuchs who were born this way from their mothers' womb; there are some who were made eunuchs by men, and there are others who *made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven*. Let anyone understand this who can" ( Mt 19: 11-12)

When Christ uses the term **Eunuch**, He refers to the **self denial** which is involved in embracing a call to celibacy. This vocation involves a renunciation and Christ wanted to emphasise that fact. Continence for the Kingdom is a charism, a gift with a particular value, which God bestows on whom He wills, inviting them to **freely** accept it.

St Paul (1 Cor 7:7) states that those who receive this gift are so deeply moved by the love of Christ, the divine Bridegroom, that they desire to respond in an extreme way. They do not reject their sexuality, rather they make a complete gift of their sexuality to God, by embracing their femininity and masculinity

TOB 73.3,4. In the dialogue that Christ has with the disciples.....but in view of the particular value which is connected with this choice and which one must discover and welcome as one's own vocation. ..Christ precisely and clearly states a rule for understanding his words. In her teaching, the Church is convinced that these words do not express a commandment, but a counsel that regards only some persons, namely those who are able to understand it. *"Likewise the holiness of the Church is fostered in a special way by the observance of the counsels proposed in the Gospel by our Lord to his disciples. An eminent position among these is held by virginity or the celibate state (1 Cor 7:32-34). This is a precious gift of divine grace given by the Father to certain souls (Mt 19:11) 1 Cor 7:7), whereby they may devote themselves to God alone the more easily, due to an undivided heart, in virginity or celibacy."* Vat II, Lumen Gentium, 42.



As an earthly marriage, consecration to Christ in a vow of lifelong celibacy is the expression of a total and exclusive gift of self. A celibate woman is united to Christ as His spouse and a celibate man is united to the Church as her spouse, in a way that is not compatible with spousal union with another person. There is total availability, self giving and total belonging.

A celibate person takes the deepest mystery of who he or she is, including sexuality, and gives it wholly to God. This vocation proclaims to others, **The love of God is real, and it is all sufficient**. To be **fulfilled as a person**, sex and marriage are not needed.

### **Continence for the Kingdom of Heaven and "Fruitfulness from the Spirit"**

TOB 75.1 Continence "*for*" the kingdom of heaven is related to the revelation of the fact that "*in*" the kingdom of heaven "they take neither wife nor husband" (Mt 22:30). **It is a charismatic sign**. To be a living human being (male or female) who of his own free will chooses continence "for the kingdom of heaven" shows that in this reign, that is the "other world" of the resurrection, "they will take neither wife nor husband", because God will be "all in all". This way of existing signifies "the risen man, in [whom] the absolute and eternal spousal meaning of the glorified body will be revealed in union with God himself, by seeing Him "face to face", glorified..... in the mystery of the communion of saints. "... Thus, continence "for the kingdom of heaven" carries **above all the imprint of likeness to Christ** who himself, in the work of redemption, made this choice "for the kingdom of heaven"

Proclaiming to the world that "the Kingdom of God is here"; the ultimate marriage has come. They forego the sacrament of marriage in anticipation of the heavenly reality, the "Marriage of the Lamb,"

Celibacy reveals that the ultimate fulfilment of solitude is found only in union with God. In a way the celibate person freely chooses to remain in the "ache" of solitude in this life in order to devote all of his longings to the union that alone can satisfy.

Mary and Joseph lived the exceptional calling to embrace both the celibate vocation and the marital vocation at the same time - the earthly marriage and the heavenly marriage. Their virginal marriage has affected the marriage of heaven and earth. For the fruitfulness of their total, virginal gift of self witnessed to and served the most perfect "**fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit:**" - Word made flesh - heaven come to earth (TOB 75.3). In this way Joseph and Mary "became the first witnesses of a fruitfulness different from that of the flesh, that is the fruitfulness of the Spirit: '*What is begotten in her comes from the Holy Spirit*' (Mt 1:20) TOB 75.2.

## Right understanding of the "Superiority" of Contenance for the Kingdom of Heaven

Christ says it is an "exceptional" vocation, not "ordinary". It is particularly important and needed for the Kingdom. The "two states" are called to Christian perfection (Mt 19:21), If you wish to be perfect, "*The perfection of Christian life is measured by the measure of love*". The evangelical counsels help one to reach a fuller love. "

Christ has not diminished the value of marriage to the advantage of continence. The importance of this renunciation in relation to the good that marriage and the family, is connected with a certain self sacrifice and further renunciation, in the breadth of one's entire earthly life.

Contenance for the Kingdom is a sign that marriage and procreation, good as they are, belong only to this life. There will be no marriage in heaven, because the heavenly wedding of which earthly marriage is a sign will be far better than it. Those who have the charism of celibacy anticipate, in a certain way, that heavenly wedding now. They are symbols of the life to which we are all called for eternity. St Paul explains, "*celibacy is for the sake of giving oneself wholly to God*". 1 Cor 7: 32-35

This total loyalty to the lord is made possible by the presence of the kingdom in Jesus Christ. His bringing us into the family of God, has given us a new image of human life that brings new meaning to the importance of the things of this world such as , family (Mt 0:37). This special vocation shows to all that "*the form of this world is passing away*" (1 Cor 7:31).



1Cor 7:38 "*The one who marries his virgin does well; but the one who does not marry her will do better*".

Married people symbolize the relationship that Christ has now to his church and the celibate person is an icon of that relationship as it will be perfected in heaven. Both married and celibate Christians are needed by the church, they are two complementary ways of serving God. Each vocation strengthens and elevates the other when they are lived with integrity. Both married and celibate people are called to practice **chastity**, the right ordering of their sexuality within an inner unity of body and spirit, which makes authentic self-giving love possible.

## Contenance for the Kingdom - Between Renunciation and Love

TOB 77.1 - .... in the call to continence for the kingdom of heaven, is an invitation *to solitude for God*, respects at the same time masculinity and femininity and also the dimension of the communion of existence that is *proper to the person*. .... Preserves the integral truth of his humanity, without losing... the essential elements of the vocation of the person created "**in the image and likeness of God.**"

TOB 77.4 Blessed John Paul II states that the continent person must submit "*the sinfulness of his humanity to the powers that flow from the mystery of the redemption of the body...* just as every other person does". This is why he indicates that the call to celibacy is not only a matter of formation but of *transformation*.

TOB 81.2 - Christ's words allude doubtlessly to a conscious and voluntary renunciation of marriage. Such a renunciation is possible only when one admits an authentic consciousness of the value constituted by the spousal disposition of masculinity and femininity for marriage. In order for man to be *fully aware of what he is choosing* (contenance for the kingdom), he must also *be fully aware of what he is renouncing*.

TOB 81.3.....*renunciation is at the same time a particular form of affirmation of the value.*

The person who lives this **transformation** is able not to indulge his lusts. He is free, with the freedom of the gift. For such a person, sacrificing sexual union for the sake of the kingdom not only becomes a possibility, it becomes extremely attractive.

## Spousal Meaning of the Body as the Foundation of Christ's Call to Contenance

The spousal meaning of the body is "the fundamental component of human existence in the world,.....in its whole truth as a sign of the "image of God."(TOB 15.5). It reveals that the human person is created to be a gift "**for**" another. Christ's words about celibacy show that this 'for' which has been present from the beginning at the basis of marriage, can also stand at the basis of continence 'for ' the King of heaven. Therefore on the basis of the same spousal meaning of the body... there can be formed the love that commits man to marriage for the whole of his life, but there can be formed also the love that commits man for his whole life to continence, 'for the kingdom of heaven' ...Man fully finds himself through a sincere gift of self (Gaudium et Spes, 24:3) TOB 80.6

Our sexuality calls us to give ourselves away in life-giving love. The celibate person doesn't reject this call; they just live it in a different way. Every man, by virtue of the spousal meaning of his body, is called in some way to be both a husband and a father. Every woman, by virtue of the spousal meaning of her body is called in some way to be both a wife and a mother. As an image of Christ, the celibate man "marries" the Church, and through his bodily gift of self he bears numerous "spiritual children." As an image of the church, the celibate woman "marries" Christ, and through her bodily gift of self she bears numerous "spiritual children." This is why the terms husband, wife, father, mother, brother, and sister are applicable both to marriage and family life and priestly and religious life.



TOB 86.7. In his everyday life, man must draw from the mystery of the redemption of the body the inspiration and strength to overcome the evil that is dormant in him in the form of the threefold concupiscence. Man and woman, bound in marriage, must daily undertake the task of the indissoluble union of the covenant they made with each other. In addition, men and women who have voluntarily chosen continence for the kingdom of heaven must give a daily living witness of faithfulness to such a choice, listening to Christ's directives in the Gospel and those of the Apostle Paul in (1 Cor). In any case, what is at stake is the hope of everyday, which in the measure of normal tasks and difficulties of human life helps to overcome "evil with good" (Rom 12:21). In fact "in hope we have been saved"; the hope of everyday shows its power in human works and even in the very movements of the human heart, clearing a path in some sense for the great eschatological hope tied to the redemption of the body.

The redemption of the body helps man, in daily life, with the dimension of human morality, to rediscover the whole good in which he achieves the victory over sin and over concupiscence. Christ's words, which flow from the divine depth of the mystery of redemption, allow us to discover and strengthen the bond that exists between the dignity of the human being and the spousal meaning of his body. They allow us to understand and bring about the mature freedom of the gift, which expresses itself in one way in **indissoluble marriage and in another by abstaining from marriage for the Kingdom of God.** In these different ways, "*Christ.. reveals the mystery of the Father and His love, makes man fully clear to himself and makes his supreme vocation clear*" (Gaudium et Spes 22.1). This vocation is inscribed in man according to his whole psychophysical compositum precisely through the mystery of the redemption of the body. TOB 86.8



Tradition has maintained that the celibate way of life is the "*better part*" in that it more closely resembles the goal of our life (1 Cor 7:38). But, what is best for each individual is to embrace the vocation to which God has personally called him or her. "Each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another" (1 Cor 7:7). It is living out our vocation with sincerity and perseverance that we grow in holiness and are prepared for "*what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him*". (1 Cor 2:9)

### Questions for reflection:

1. How does the passage (1 Cor 6:13-14) help us understand Christian chastity?
2. What are some ways that the charisms of celibacy and the sacrament of marriage complement each other in the Church? (1 Cor 7:29-31)
3. Have you or did you have thoughts of renouncing the earthly marriage for the sake of spousal union with Christ (for a woman) or with the Church (for a man)?
4. What are the different ways to achieve the right ordering of sexuality within an inner unity of body and spirit that we may achieve authentic self giving love.
5. Is there any difference between a married couple and celibates for the Kingdom experiencing the sin of concupiscence?
6. If a person has difficulty in ordering their sexual desires, would marriage be an outlet for their lust?

**References:** 'Love and Responsibility' - Fr Karol Wojtyla, 'Man and Woman He Created them' - John Paul II, 'Letter to the families John Paul II, 'Ubiqumque et semper' Lumen Gentium - Vatics II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Gaudium et Spes - Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the church in the Modern World. , Familiaris Consortio - John Paul II, Catechism of the Catholic Church