

Needless to say, this chapter touches on one of the central aspects of our lives as monks. We live in an age when there is a lot of different perspectives on this issue, when there is a lot of apparent freedom of sexual expression but equally a lot of enslavement that prevents us from seeing its true and lasting meaning for our lives as a human family. The very thing that is most precious becomes something that is so easily abused.

Augustine Roberts helps us explore in depth the meaning of chastity, the integration of our sexuality that allows us to give ourselves entirely to God. Isn't this what we have all come here to seek, an abiding communion with God that allows us to become the loving persons we are destined to be. He shows us how "the Christian meaning of consecrated celibacy, which is based on an inner movement of the Spirit more than on any particular text of the Gospel. Christian tradition from the very beginning has been a constant witness to this lived interpretation of Christ's words and the desire to imitate his own virginal way of life." Our sexuality can only be understood and fully integrated by walking in the footsteps of our loving Lord Jesus Christ.

On p. 105, the second and third paragraphs can serve as a means into the wisdom Roberts wishes to share with us. Let's read these. His point is that through our practice of chastity we express our "commitment to belong only to Jesus." And I think any of us can say that this is what we felt when called to this way of life, the invitation to give ourselves entirely to Him. We sense that this is what will produce in us "an inner liberation in love." I know in my own life, I have come to see who I really am in loving, and think we are all most ourselves when we love and give ourselves untiringly in God's service.

All Christians are called to live chaste lives as is clear from the 2nd paragraph on p. 106 so let's read this, "*Chastity...celibates.*" No one baptized into the Christian faith is free to use the gift of his or her sexuality as he or she pleases. The 2nd paragraph on p. 107 highlights how the use of our sexuality is surrounded in mystery and initiates us into the world to come. Let's read that paragraph. It takes us, in fact, into the very mystery of the Triune God, into God's own trinitarian life.

Let's move from here to the **Practical Summary** of Roberts thinking on p. 126-7, it is a helpful overview of all he has written from p. 107 up until these paragraphs. First he says "**Accept your sexuality...**" so let's read this

2nd paragraph from the bottom. Our sexuality is “something beautiful and dynamic.” We have all had our struggles at integrating our sexuality and know how demanding these can be at times, especially because of the delicacy of the issue, its very personal and intimate nature. And yet we know that it is part of God’s “plan for the fullness of time.” It engages us at such an intimate level we hardly even dare to talk about it. There is something very personal about the whole matter that does not allow us to talk freely about it and yet it is very important to be able to do so with someone who can help guide us to its deeper meaning.

Roberts then invites us to **Order your sexuality**. In a sense our sexuality is to be a part of everything we do, our productive work, healthy visual symbols, our singing, our liturgical gestures, all forms of self-giving for the good of others. We don’t think of our frequent singing in choir as having a deeply sexual dimension but it does as we let it express our communion with one another and arise from a deep inner harmony with the praise of God. When our voices blend, they express something that goes on within the very communion of all the Saints.

Then Roberts invites us to **Channel this self-gift**. Our work is in the service of the community and by its very nature becomes a way of self-giving when done out of love for our brethren. It is a way of expressing “healthy interpersonal relationships.” This is what our sexuality is designed to accomplish, relationships that take us right into our communion with God. As we affirm one another in love, God’s kingdom is present right in the midst of our everyday lives. This can go on all day long if we allow it. Communion with one another deepens our communion with God and any communion with God in prayer is bound to deepen our communion with one another.

Our sexuality then helps us to **Develop communal love**. “Loyalty and peace are more important than a somewhat sentimental search for intimate relationships.” Learning to forget our own needs through *Lectio Divina* and participating in community life, especially during the Liturgy, open the gates to this deep and abiding love that reflects God’s own trinitarian life.

In turn, this helps us to relate to persons of the opposite sex. **Be your true self** means that in our relations with women, our chastity will then help us integrate aspects of our own personalities. Carl Jung, the great psychologist saw how integrating the masculine and feminine within us is what leads to wholeness, where we become persons fully alive for the good of all around

us. I think it is good that we have women nurses in our infirmary for they allow us to have a healthy contact with the opposite sex. They assist us in integrating the feminine side of our own lives.

Living **In Community**, we are to avoid manifesting special affections for certain members and not others. This will help us to have a real sense of community where we are in this together as beloved children of God. We are to make our own “Christ’s preferential option for the poor.”

Next, let us read the last paragraph on p. 127 that calls us to **Be transparent with your superiors**. To be open and honest with someone capable of giving us healthy spiritual direction can do wonders for our lives. It is a reliable way of presenting ourselves before Christ, bringing the whole issue out into the open and learning ways to integrate our sexuality and affective needs is a fresh and creative way. This will give us a wonderful sense of freedom, an ability to truly walk in the Light.

Let us now move into what he calls: **FRUITS OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY**. He tells us that “Greater insight into the nature of human sexuality can lead us to a more delicate sensitivity to the different dimensions of Christian chastity.” Let us read the section called *Sponsa Christi*. p. 128. In one way, this is a summary of his whole book. So much of our life is dedicated to prayer, an occupation of the monk that lasts a life time. His paragraphs starting on p 129 up to the last paragraph on p. 130 are as concise and beautiful a description of prayer as you will find anywhere.

He then gets into **AFFECTIVE MATURITY** so let’s read the last paragraph on p. 131 on through the 2nd paragraph on p. 132. Finally, to conclude, let us read the final paragraph on this page.