

+INTEGRATION OF OUR SEXUALITY AS A WAY TO GOD

17th July, 2024

The words I have shared about “consecrated chastity” in the notes I have given out about this chapter are worth repeating. “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.” Over the years I have come to realize how the integration of our sexuality is unique in each one of our lives, and essential for any one of our lives.

You all are more aware than I am of the many sexual aspects of advertising today, the way it is used selling cars, clothing, foods, sports events etc. etc. God has made us deeply sexual persons and after much reflection and prayer over this fact I have come to conclude that our sexuality reflects something profound about divine life itself. We are made for closeness with other human beings, made for intimacy and mutual enrichment. And isn't this what is going on within the very trinitarian life of God, where the three Divine Persons live in a constant communion with one another, where they are wonderfully, continually and mutually being enrich.

As with many precious gifts with which we have been endowed, they can easily be misused or abused. And so much depends on how we have been educated in this matter of our sexuality. It is meant to be seen in a very positive light, as a part of our human condition that is designed to bring about an ever-deepening relationship between the persons who engage in it for the purpose of generating new life, an increase of the human family as well as of expressing intimacy between those who engage in it.

There is a way I feel very inadequate in speaking to you about integration of sexuality since my way of life is so different than that of a married couple in this regard. On the other hand, as Augustine Roberts points out, whether we are celibate or married we are all called to live chastely. He writes of this on page 106 of his book:

“Chastity has a very broad meaning. It is the correct attitude and behavior in respect to sexuality in general. It is the aspect of the grace of temperance which controls and orients everything concerned with the sexual instinct such as thoughts, desire, acts and pleasures, both within

married life and outside it. Chastity is ordered, like sexuality itself, to either marriage or virginity. “The faithful are to practice chastity according to their different states of life. Some will live it in virginity or consecrated celibacy, which is an outstanding way of giving oneself more easily, with an undivided heart, to God alone. Others will live it according to the dictates of Christian morality, either in marriage or as celibates.” (Here he is quoting from Persona Humana, a declaration by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on Certain Questions of Sexual Ethics)

The last part of this, a quote from Persona Humana I would not fully agree with. Although it is meant to encourage those called to the celibate life, it tends to denigrate married life when it speaks of consecrated celibacy as a way of giving oneself “more easily, with an undivided heart, to God alone.” I think it all depends on what one’s calling is in life and being faithful to it. If called to the married life, though not without difficulty one can do so in a way that is without an undivided heart and for God alone.

On the second page of my presentation to the Junior monks on this subject I told of how “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.” I suspect that many of you have a better understanding of how our sexuality affects the whole of your lives. Our relationships are as profound as there is a mutual giving, a mutual receptivity and a mutual appreciation of one another. We are all looking for intimacy in our lives, to love and to be loved.

So much of what is happening right now in the Catholic Church in regard to preparing for the coming Synod in October, is built on mutual respect, an ability to truly listen to one another and the ability to enlarge our hearts. As I am writing this, the words of Jesus in St John’s gospel come to me: “Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.” What could be more intimate than Jesus inviting each and all of us to remain in him even as he remains in us. Isn’t this where the real Christian life happens, when we

remain in Christ even as he remains in us so that all that we think, will, do and say, flows from His own divine and abiding love.

On p. 111, Roberts has a whole section on human sexuality that is well worth reading but I feel I have said enough on the subject and am open to any questions you may have either now or after I deal with the next chapter in Roberts' book on Poverty.

Chapter 5 of Augustine Roberts' book deals with the whole issue and practice of Poverty. Many of the things that I would like to share with you this afternoon are already right in the notes I have given you from what I presented to the Junior monks. We are constantly being told by the media that we need this or that if we are really going to be happy in life. But what do we really need to be happy as Christians is very little, as persons who are called foremost to be loving and caring for the needs of those around us.

Gathering possessions often becomes a burden because they occupy so much of our time and energy. I've just realized this past Monday that something I had bought in care of our beehives for the treatment of what is called varroa mites that do a lot of harm to bees, has passed its expiration date and should be thrown out. How many of us have had to clean out our refrigerators of food that has spoiled or we no longer care to use? How easy it is to waste valuable energy by leaving cooling machines on or lights burning when no longer needed? It is so easy to buy another pair of shoes or some clothing I don't really need because they look so attractive in the store or as advertised on our computer screens! One could go on and on.

What do we really need to live joyfully and to be able to share with others? This is what our Christian faith is asking us all the time, and certainly what a monk's call to simplicity is constantly calling him to be honest about. There are millions and millions in our world lacking the basic necessities of life, to have happy and meaningful lives. In the face of this reality, how can we be wasteful or indulge ourselves in things we really don't need?

As I say in my notes, the more I read the Gospels the more I am becoming "aware of the intensity of Christ's witness to simplicity and His continual readiness to rely on the loving care of his heavenly Father." Just last Sunday we heard of how Jesus instructed the twelve apostles as they were being sent out

two by two to proclaim the gospel “to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick—no food, no sack, no money in their belts.” It is so easy for any of us to get caught up in making our lives comfortable and self-reliant than to trust in God’s loving care for us.

That does not mean we don’t have certain needs but to be careful not to create our own. On p.141 of Augustine Roberts’ book he writes about the **Dignity of the Human Person** and that the “cellarer,” the monk in charge of the practical needs of a community according to St Benedict “must show every care and concern for the sick, children, guests and the poor, knowing for certain that he will be held accountable for all of them on the day of judgement.”

Roberts would have the first duty of the monk or nun in the matter of poverty:

“To live it sincerely in their own personal life within the community. In practice this means going against the overwhelming value which modern society puts on wealth, money, worldly success, comforts, power and a superficial freedom of choice. This type of society is at war with the poor Christ.”

This is a very strong statement, but I think we have to admit, it is all too true! It demands a lot of honesty and careful discernment if we are going to be honest in our following of our Christian faith. If one has had the chance to live in a poor country as I did down in Venezuela, one has seen how the “poorer classes in these countries often have cultural values such as family life, hospitality and the art of living together, which are superior to those of richer nations” as Roberts points out.

And I suspect many of you have also found that living more simply has freed you from the burdens our society too easily imposes on you in keeping with the latest fads. Some of us older folks also know as we get older just how little we can take with us as we come to the most important passage in our lives.

Again, I am very interested in how you all deal with this issue of poverty in your own lives and hope that you will not only feel free to share your experience but realize what a blessing It can be for the rest of us. Enough of my comments.