



From A Bishop's Journal (612)

For the Kingdom of God (9)

In Part Three of my Pentecost pastoral letter on the vocation to celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, I invite you to support the celibate vocation. In looking at all that needs to be done to promote, esteem, and support the mission of single people in both Church and world, we could easily develop a defeatist attitude before a task that is immense on the short, middle, and long terms! It seems to me that we are invited to work at the simple human level and the level of faith, at the level of future singles and those of the present, and at the level of our Christian communities. This slow work includes appropriate sex education according to ages and times, as well as adequate formation as disciples of the dead and risen Jesus. I want to explore the four following paths.

Marvel

It seems to me that the first attitude to develop is indicated at the very beginning of the Bible. It is written that after creating man and woman, God saw that it was very good. Being able to recognise the beauty of creation, especially that of the human body, is the ABC of the discernment and affirmation of an eventual vocation to celibacy. It is not because of disgust for creation that celibates consecrate their lives, but it is in respect and marvel for all of creation, including the wonder of sexuality and its fruitfulness, and the wonder of life and generational development; it is knowing how to respect the nature of every being and his mission and his end, and acknowledging and respecting the most intimate and powerful impulses. "Glorify the Lord with all your life," Saint Paul says, "Glorify God in your bodies!" "Faithful God, your covenant continues to unfold its wonders. Open our hearts, that we be able to see them!"

Trust

In a world where everything is commonplace, where we tend to do violence to everything, it seems to me that trust brings a most positive note to our modern civilisation. It helps us admire life in all its forms both in and around us; it also helps us trust – though not naively – all those who have such a life potential. Choosing trust rather than suspicion and contempt is the enlightened path to the future. "Faithful God, your presence in us is a life-giving source: may it make fruitful our actions today."

Generosity

The vocation call being a call of God, a call to serve others in the Church and society, it is important

to educate every young person in the way of commitment and of surpassing oneself. Volunteering can be an unsuspected richness. In the family there are several opportunities for both short- and long-term services: doing dishes, cleaning one's room, doing housework, mowing the lawn, running errands, etc. As much as possible, rendering service without seeking reward. "Faithful God, your will is a lamp unto my feet: may our youth discover the joy of serving you."

Prayer

Marvel, trust, and generosity have the effect of attracting others, and they contribute to creating a more and more positive atmosphere for the birth, discernment, and support of every authentic vocation to celibacy. Prayer, too, is an essential and most precious aid. It is in prayer that one discovers the will of God in all things. The prayer of the whole Church and of each of its members cannot go unanswered. It is the prayer of the Spirit in the heart of every faithful, a prayer followed by the precious gifts of Wisdom and Strength, Knowledge, and Filial Affection. Prayer inspires every action and brings it to completion, because every vocation commitment has its source in God and receives its fulfilment in Him. Prayer makes us attentive to the signs of the times and the needs of our brothers and sisters. "Faithful God, watch over those whose life and commitment make them close to us: may their works show your wisdom and goodness."

Openness to the World

"I believe that I am more free than those who are married, and I have more time to share my talents with the most needy. I personally often work with the handicapped. To me, celibacy is first and foremost a greater possibility of openness to the world, with a greater capacity to serve others because we have fewer family responsibilities. I believe that celibacy is a real vocation, a special call of God to be at the service of those around me, especially the needy. The condition is that we be open to our milieu, and that we be available to serve others. A withdrawn celibate does not respond to these criteria of service and availability. Being celibate does not necessarily mean being an "apostle", but it gives the opportunity to become so. I believe that celibacy has more than ever a future in the areas of sharing and serving, in our society which is trying to find itself and which is more wounded than it ever was. I know several singles who work in the fields of education, in parish services and ministries, with the handicapped, with the elderly, and in youth and sports organisations... Single people are to be found in just about every field of endeavour in our society."
– Thérèse

"I shall be with you."

"It was on my First Communion day that I knew I would never marry. The Lord was near me and he said: 'I shall be with you, you will be my spouse, and you will work with the elderly. You shall bring them my body, and speak of me to them.' This is what I do. Besides, I continue my studies through adult classes. I always live in faith and in the hope that one day I shall peacefully see the Lord." — Edna

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