

Towards the integration of human sexuality in the project of religious life.

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Thirteen points formed the framework of the session.

I. IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

Because we are sexual beings. We cannot deny our sexuality. Our sexual urges and fantasies need to be catered for. The goal is to become a GIFT in relationships through **chastity**. Sexuality is a force that must be oriented towards availability to others and to God! The word sex comes from “*secare*”: to cut, we remain cut to the grave. Sexuality valorizes human love: the love of reciprocity (confident) and generativity (gratuity). We renounce biological motherhood/paternity, procreation!

II. NEGATIVE WAYS OF EXPERIENCING SEXUALITY

Dependence of sexual impulses is a lack of integration. Repression of impulses is a strong **defense mechanism**. Consequences of repression: **Compensation** (in drinking, eating, having, knowledge, power, reputation) and **Somatization** (discomfort in the body, without medical cause following the drive not integrated, but repressed). There is also a half-measure of **sublimation**: transforming drives into social values.

III. ERRONOUS CONVICTIONS ABOUT SEXUALITY

What makes integration difficult: that sexuality is perceived as a **dangerous** reality. We often protect ourselves with **laughter**. Sexuality is **evil** (dualism: body-mind, body-soul) the body is negative! To the child we say: we do not touch the sex.

It is seen as a **sin**. While it's normal to feel the urges! It is sometimes perceived as on the **impure sphere**, this may also be linked to religion, what can be an obstacle to fulfillment (phariseism). Some perceive sexuality as a psychopathology, to be treated! The only way to protect yourself is to forget, depression, aggression or violence! This session encourages us to be responsible!

IV. SEXUALITY INTEGRAL PART OF THE PERSON

There is a link between sexuality, **affectivity and morality**. Moral distortion leads to hurting oneself and others. The benchmark: stable values and ideals. It is linked to **spirituality** to discover the meaning of life! It places fidelity and chastity higher than pleasure. There is a connection between **sexuality and freedom**. Anyone who loses his freedom in one area (power, having, knowing: I exist because I possess!), is incapable of directing his sexuality. Badly experienced sexuality can lead to attitudes of perversion (masturbations: unshared pleasure devoid of any meaning; homosexuality).

V. INTEGRATION, RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SEXUAL BODY AND OUR FEELINGS

Integration goes through recognition, here the person seeks acceptance through approval. The child who has been recognized, easily accepts criticism! **Affective memory**

(the black box) records everything. While **cognitive memory** is weak. The structures in which we grew up, the prohibitions, the taboos have an impact on sexuality. The child needs: cuddles, abundantly and freely. The more he has a positive view of his sexuality, the more he integrates and understands his body!

VI. THE FUNCTIONS OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

Sexuality plays three functions: function of relationship, the man and the woman welcome each other in their differences. Function of pleasure, it is not only about orgasm but also about seeing, touching, being seen, being touched. Fertility function. Give life in everything: psychic, spiritual and pastoral.

VII. INSTINCT, PULSION, FANTASIES, TEMPTATION, FALL AND DREAMS

It is scientifically recognized that animals mate by instinct. But human sexuality is due to impulses. It is oriented towards different parts of the erotic body. Everyone has an “**erotic sensitive geography**” unique in the world!

To MANAGE the impulses you have to name them; we manage by a motor discharge, a sensory relaxation, above all, to resituate ourselves in the commitment. The fantasy is voluntary but the dream is unconscious. For women, fantasies are more sentimental, they create the atmosphere. For men, they are about sight. The most dangerous temptation for the consecrated is: “**the temptation of temptation**”. We say to ourselves: “I do today and tomorrow I give up”.

The dream: It is an unconscious experience that arises during sleep. Dreams allow the manifestation of the sexual character. Indeed, the more you repress aggression, the more violent it becomes. Dreams are not sins, they sweeten sexuality. Sexual dreams are secondary products of celibate chastity. They convey a message of a great desire to love and be loved. It is therefore necessary to know how to grasp the meaning of the image.

VIII. MEN AND WOMEN

1. Way of loving: the woman loves, is totally committed, attracted by tenderness and emotional need. She seeks depth and duration. Jealousy is the feeling of losing! For man, the body is carried to go quickly towards the goal, without attachment nor depth. He is conqueror and hunter. **2. Way of reasoning:** The woman is intuitive (Observation, Conservation, Decision). The man relies on principles, theories, proofs and solutions. **3. Way of reacting:** The woman keeps everything (birthday dates, etc.), loves fine words and hardly forgets! The man, on the other hand, needs more time to decide and forgets very quickly. **4. Way of dialogue:** The woman is sensitive to speech, she needs to communicate. She appreciates compliments, the well-being of others. The man talks little, he looks at the whole rather than the detail. He must learn to say “thank you” and “sorry”! **5. Way of engaging:** The woman engages all her heart, her body, her mind, her intelligence. The man, with a crossed heart, he concentrates on one place, while the woman is everywhere! Also the man when he listens, he looks for the solution. But when the woman listens or says “yes” it is to say that she is there, women speak to communicate; men, to solve.

IX. THE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT, THE EROGENOUS ZONES OF THE BODY

Here the emphasis is on the RELATIONS between the child and the parents.

1st stage of 0-1 year, stage of incorporation, **oral stage**: the mouth and the skin are objects of pleasure. Dissatisfaction causes frustration! The **challenge to be met** is that of confidence which, is the basis of the body. The mother is **the “caregiver”**. ***From 0-4 months**, the child’s organ functions as **passive-receptive**. ***From 5-12 months** (teeth). Mode of operation: the organ of incorporation is more **active-captivating**. Incorporation is in the social modalities.

*** Towards his 8 months** the child relates to his mother as **an object of pleasure**: touching her, looking at her gives him pleasure. At this stage the child chooses the **libidinal object**. ***Towards the end of the 1st year** the child begins to walk. This is the stage of **individuation**. He leaves the maternal universe, towards the outside: The role of the father is important and mom must accept that the child grows apart. To discover the mode of behavior, the child relies on the **cognitive schema** and the **sensorimotor schema** (colored and moving objects).

For the reappropriation of the 1st stage, we will be attentive to **self-confidence and recognizing the needs of others**. Pay attention to the basic rhythms (sleep, wakefulness, food, elimination)!

2nd stage from 1 to 3 years old, elimination stage, anal stage. It is the beginning of the processes of **separation** and **individuation**. The child detaches himself and moves away. Thanks to the **musculature**, he enters a new world: the family universe. The challenge is one of **self-esteem**. It is the psychic birth characterized by Papa giving the Name. Through this ritual, dad recognizes the child as his child and the child responds, symbolically, with “yes”: obedience. Thus those who have not known their dad find it difficult to obey.

Mode of operation of the object of pleasure? The child experiences “retaining and letting go” through the anal elimination organ. Here the caregiver will have to help him/her understand the laws of the family. *How* we do it: the family has its own way of doing things. *When* to do it: the family relies on time, regularity. *Where* to do it: The family has a code for the order. The child learns all this through the mode of approval and disapproval. If the child is respected in his mode of operation: **retention-let go**, he will also respect the laws of the family!

Affective object: Help the child to build self-esteem, conquer his autonomy through parental dictations: permission and prohibition!

The lack of mutuality causes relational difficulties, **narcissistic** compensations: autoerotic satisfaction (**masturbation** which is the elimination of the other). Yes, the values are static, but the expressions change! Tendency to **obsession** (in thought, ideas, it is **paranoia**) and compulsion. **Hostile elimination**: harsh speech, tendency to isolate oneself, to sulk, cut between feeling and acting. One overwhelms others with anal power.

A. Perversions are deviations rooted in the hurt of early childhood. Those who commit evil acts suffer from evil impulses. It explains, but it does not excuse! There are two types of perversions:

1. The perversions which affect the sexual object, towards whom the drive is directed and what is the object which feeds the drive? We can cite: Pedophilia (pleasure with the child), Gerontophilia (pleasure with an elderly or disabled person), Necrophilia (with the corpse of the same or opposite sex), Zoophilia (with animals), Fetishism (the partner is replaced by an object belonging to him), Cross-dressing (perversion of dressing in the clothes of the opposite sex to have sexual satisfaction).

2. The perversions which affect the sexual goal, towards which act pushes the drive?

a) Anatomical transgressions: the person seeks another organ to satisfy his drive: fellatio (the male organ in the partner's mouth). Cunnilingus, (oral excitement of the female genital organ: vulva, clitoris). Sodomy (the sexual use of the anal orifice)

b) Fixation on foreplay: perversions consisting in experiencing sexual satisfaction in the preparations: caresses, kisses, nudity. No further! Exhibitionism, Voyeurism or scopophilia: watching organs or films, sadism and masochism!

The pervert is a hurt person. He is a child of God. Only the act is hateful, the person is a sinner and God desires to grant him his mercy!

Questions: In my journey have I ever had the opportunity to talk about these perversions? Will I continue or stop?

B. Masturbation: inverted sex. In the normal sense, sexuality is turned towards the other, but here, one satisfies oneself. It is the negation of relational pleasure. Masturbation disintegrates the person and prevents his harmonious development. The more it is practiced, the more it lets the drive control the will and the reason. The signs:

Masturbation is **egocentric** the person cannot be admitted to religious life since he is incapable of relationships. It can be **compulsive**: this obsession is a strong defense mechanism! It can also be a sign of **neurosis**: where the person suffers from inferiority complex. Such a person cannot be admitted to religious life. It can be the symptom of **hidden psychosis**: product of what has been experienced in the past. The generalized fear makes one unfit for religious life. It can be the consequence of **trauma** (the monastery is not a hospital).

Masturbation can manifest in a very **emotional person (manic-depressive)**, a bipolar person, showing great joy and great sadness!

C. Homosexuality. It's a sexual orientation, same-sex attraction. Until 1980, it was considered a mental illness. But, due to social pressures, it is no longer on the list of perversions. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) n°2357 gives a very clear definition. Today it is understood as an identity, a sexual state of the individual at the same level as the heterosexual.

1. The term “**homophobia**” goes further and reverses the situation. It is perceived as an imaginary neurosis which affects all those who are hostile to homosexuality. Is homosexuality innate? Nope! The genetic argumentation of 1990 and 2010 does not talk about that anymore! It is more the doctrine of "gender" that is accepted, according to which everyone can choose their sex!

2. Here are some reasons that can lead to homosexuality: *Disgust or fear of the sexual act. *Rape, incest, fondling, voyeurism, exhibitionism. *The awareness of the child that his sex does not correspond to the expectations of the parents. He perceives himself as rejected and not received! *Inability to compete with other children!

3. The latent homophily of the adolescent: It is an affective attraction towards his fellow man. In adolescence, this is temporary towards adulthood. It is a stage of confirmation of his identity, without any eroticization. Some “modern” parents accept the homosexuality of their children.

4. What does the Bible say? Lev 18:22; Lev 20:13. This practice is considered an abomination which should be punished by capital punishment. CCC No. 2357-2359 qualifies it as an objectively disordered state. We must avoid any possible discrimination!

How to get out of all this? The person must believe that it is possible. To be accompanied, to accept that the path is long and marked by falls. Community and group support is essential.

D. The reappropriation of the anal stage. It’s about taking control of your body through your **muscles**, having **confidence in your body**, through manual work, dance or sport. It is a question of **rediscovering one’s tendency** by managing time, space and order, to open up to others. It is knowing how to master the inorganic laws.

After which the child is ready to enter the third stage of opening.

3rd stage, openness to the other. From the age of three, the genital area becomes **erogenous**. The child opens up to another world, he attends kindergarten, but always remembers the **representation of his parents**. The child exists as a person, the others too. He stops looking at them as objects. And for the first time, **the child falls in love with the parent of the opposite sex**. The genital organ changes the mode of operation. By touching his sex the child experiences a feeling of pleasure. At this stage children enjoy role-playing. Torn away from this game, the child is inconsolable, he feels the pleasure of **“being with”**.

How does the genital organ work?

- For the boy: This is an **intrusive time**. He rushes against the body of mom. He is curious about the sex of the other. He plays fireman by urinating as far as possible. He likes contact games (box, karate, football, etc.)
- For the girl: she creates the atmosphere, wears makeup to seduce dad. She wears mom’s shoes. She invested her energy in the look to attract the attention of the object of her love which is dad.

Children at this stage have intense relational pleasure. They must be encouraged not to fixate solely on the organ of pleasure.

The oedipal situation

- The girl wants the disappearance of mom to attract the object of her exclusive love.
- The boy, likewise, wants his dad gone to marry his mother.

Why does the destiny of Oedipus move us? It is because it could have been ours and at our birth the oracle has pronounced against us this same curse. We may all have felt our first sexual impulse towards our mother, our first hatred towards our father; our dreams bear witness to this! Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother, fulfilling one of our childhood desires.

Both parents are necessary to solve the oedipal situation. The daughter is received by dad and oriented to mom. And the boy is welcomed by mom and oriented to dad. Gradually they are encouraged to give up exclusivity! But the unresolved situation causes a double identification: The daughter will have mum's body, but will identify with dad, **she would like to have a penis**. Once an adult, she will be aggressive towards men!

For the boy: Mom welcomes him then directs him to Dad. The latter receives him, works and plays with him. The Oedipus complex for the boy: he would not like to have the penis, **it is castration**. He lives in inhibition, and sometimes he flees into religious life. The father must confirm the boy in his masculinity and the mother, the girl in her femininity! In the third stage, the child is equipped with **intuitive cognitive schemas**. He also expresses himself in role-playing games by giving himself the goal to achieve!

Reappropriation of the 3rd stage. This genital stage lays the foundations for the balance of interpersonal relationships. It is important to move towards autonomy and harmonious relationships.

What are the consequences of the Oedipus complex?

- 1) Consequence of inhibitions, anxieties and shrinkage.
- 2) Presence of phobias (agoraphobia). Prohibition of initiatives, kill the rival.
- 3) Avoidance of responsibilities, stable commitments.
- 4) Pursuit of dual purpose (real and imaginary, to marry mom).
- 5) Guilt (self-love, suppression of rival), no collaboration.

The work of healing passes through the renunciation of hostility, hatred and badly experienced rivalries. However, rivalry is good for the growth of the child. **For man**, he must reclaim the intrusive world, live and inhabit his body, know how to make decisions, penetrate space with speed, jump, climb, swim, dive... But also intrusiveness in thought, language and work.

For the woman, she must reclaim her inclusive mode, create the climate, gather, appropriate of her body. Giving color to bodily experience. Become aware from within and give life.

Erikson talks about *Inner space*: the woman colors the perception of surroundings and relationships. Learn to play with, not against. The importance of the group!

4th stage - Latent period, from 6 to 12 years

From 3 to 6 years old, fantasies take a prominent place. If the child has not had this development, his sexual desire will not grow. At this stage the child wants to do like the grown-ups (read, count, write). His reference person changes from parents towards the masters and especially the mistress!

From 6 to 8 years old. The child reclaims his body. He feels pleasure in using the senses. He perceives the thresholds of tolerance and does so spontaneously (hunger, thirst, temperature, emotional charges). He learns to seek what is good. Cognitive **schemas are intuitively articulated**. He makes the link between time, space and means.

From 9 to 10 years old. It is more the musculature that is taken care of and the child experiences pleasure in using it: climbing, jumping, scaling... Thanks to the **concrete operational cognitive scheme**. He is able to respect the laws of matter.

The challenge to be met is that of cooperation and application. The child learns to understand his body. The reference is the parents, because after that the child will no longer have any intimacy with them. The mother must be well in her femininity to guide the daughter. The child becomes a woman by the 1st rule. It is celebrated!

The boy, a little later, must be prepared by dad for stability in his masculinity, the change in the body (hair, voice, muscle, ejaculation). The mutuality of the boy with the father is important. Latency finished, and everything wakes up!

5th stage from 12 to 18 years old, adolescence. We enter adolescence through puberty and everything we experienced in childhood is revitalized. To pass this stage well, the parents will allow the teenagers to experience the separation.

The challenge to be met: is to build one's identity, by living the psychological separation through oppositions. Parents **will avoid authoritarianism**. We do not understand the adolescent since he himself does not understand himself because he undergoes rapid changes. Parents **will avoid abdication** and **identification** (parent-buddies of their children).

The girls' groups and the boys' groups will live separately, but not very far from each other, because at this stage (14-15 years old) they need each other to measure up to. The transient homophilia is important, this friendship between girl-girl and boy-boy, in order to complete each other, identify oneself little by little and open up to the other sex. With the question "How do you girl, do you see me, boy"?

Cognitive schemes are **formal operatives**, through deductive hypotheses. It is about drawing conclusions from reality. From 15 to 35 years old they are "endless teenagers". He experiences the power of speculative and philosophical thought. He enjoys the seductive thought (*seducere* means, to attract to oneself).

Thus finished these 5 stages, we enter the adult period. As ADULTS we are sexual beings like man and woman. Around the age of 18 the sexual psychological identity develops. We make the choice of life (Vocation, profession). We acquire the capacity to love and be loved, generativity: motherhood and fatherhood. We develop spiritual, artistic and cultural life. We experience self-care. Through work, we give money a social value!

- What promotes fulfillment in celibacy?
- What place do you give to friendships? (Man-man; woman-woman; man-woman)?
The adult may have difficulties if he has been abused!

X. SEXUAL ABUSE

Many people have experienced situations of abuse. Thus, the abuse is like a cut in the story between a “before” and an “after”.

1. Definition: Abuse is any coercion of physical contact, of a child, an adolescent, or an adult, with a view to sexual stimulation. Any abuse constitutes a violation of integrity and causes trauma.

A. Types of constraints

* **Verbal constraint:** use of sexual terms, seduction, insinuation, solicitation of the other who does not want to. * **Visual constraint:** through pornography, undressing, sexual act in the presence of someone who does not want to see it. * **Psychological constraint:** the border between the relational and the sexual (dad who wants to check if his daughter is still a virgin). Attend the intimate toilet of a child!

B. Physical contact

- * Fairly serious: touching the body through clothing, emotional pressure.
- * Serious: touching or manual penetration, even without physical violence.
- * Very serious: genital, anal or oral rape, by force or not.

2. The abuser’s strategy: he plans and organizes his crime by:

a) Develop intimacy of a confidential nature, privileged relationships, to put the “victim” in a state of “trust”.

b) Seemingly “proper” physical contact or verbal incitement, friendly hugs. The victim is not afraid since 30% are family members, 60% of abusers are family or friends and 10% strangers.

c) Sexual contact is the abuse phase. The victim (like a rabbit) finds himself petrified, frozen, paralyzed, unable to react. The abuser knows it! He obtains the silence of the victim, either by shame, or by guilt (you liked it), or by threats or privileges (promotion). The silence is rarely broken and can last a lifetime. Silence suits the abuser because he fears being denounced.

We must help the victim to denounce by making him see that he is neither responsible nor guilty!

3. Why is it so hard to report?

- ❖ Since it takes a long time to admit **having been a victim**.
- ❖ Tact is needed, talking at their own pace, because the person **would like to forget the trauma**.
Expressions should be avoided: *“It’s a mistake like we all make”*; *“It only happened once!”*; *“It’s time to turn the page”*; *“If you were a Christian you would forgive”*!
- ❖ **The victim feels guilty**; because the sudden evil in impotence makes her feel guilty: *“isn’t it a little my fault”!* *“Someone else in my place would have managed to resist, to flee”*?

To help get out of guilt we ask questions such as: *“Who held the power? Who was an adult? Who can end it?”* The victim takes a look at the past with an experience of today. Now the person knows how to protect themselves. The victim confuses the weak point with the crime. The abuser took advantage of the legitimate need for trust.

- ❖ Talking about abuse is like **opening the wound!** Then the entourage pushes the victim to be silent, to forget. When the abuser is part of an institution, the latter protects him for fear of perversion scandal.
- ❖ **The victim suffers from shame**: which is the guardian of privacy, of dignity. Shame is a mixture of fear of rejection and anger at the abuser. It is necessary to help her express her anger because it frees her and brings her out of shame. She feels contempt for herself and for the abuser. She thinks that **“Every male (masculine) is evil”**.

Contempt is destructive, can lead to prostitution, even suicide! It gives the victim an illusion of mastering the suffering. The choice of life belongs to the person!

4. What damage does abuse produce?

Violent or not, once or several times it doesn’t change anything; the victim suffers in many ways!

- 1) Feeling of impotence, since the relatives did not protect her; the pain is there in solitude! Impotence causes serious damage: loss of self-esteem, one thinks oneself mediocre, foreign to one’s history, relationships are confused, one easily falls into other abuses!
- 2) The victim experiences the feeling of being betrayed, by the abuser, relatives or even accomplices. Consequence: distrust of trustworthy people. Difficulty entering into intimacy. She thinks she deserved that!
- 3) The feeling of ambivalence: the two opposite feelings intersect (suffering, shame and contempt = privileged relationship, sensual pleasure). Pleasure is accompanied by pain. The memory can come back in the couple and forbid the pleasure! Help the victim to understand that the pleasure is not guilty, but the crime!
- 4) Other symptoms: depression, sexual disorder and, for women, **frigidity**; for men, **impotence** or compulsive masturbation. The victim can destroy his body by drugs, excess of alcohol or food; recurrent gynecological infections. The abused child may lose all interest in studies!

How to help the person to live again? It takes a lot of listening. She will have to stop listening to the inner voices that make her feel guilty or ashamed. The truth sets us free!

Path of healing. There are people who suffer from perverse impulses and do not act out. The healing path is possible when we know the causes, the roots of the tendency. Healing comes through forgiving those who have hurt and regaining trust in God, asking the question “**Where was God**”? Confidence in the guide is essential (if he is not the executioner). Look reality in the face and rediscover memories: by meeting the abuser, the scene of the tragedy, by dreams!

Feel the feelings: guilt, shame, helplessness, hatred, and replace them with **anger** against the abuser and his accomplices. This sadness becomes an expression of life in a **real and symbolic way**. The victim decides to choose life for his body and his soul. Transform distrust of men into vigilance. Do not be afraid of pleasures and passion. Dare to love again. Receive the heart of flesh (Ez 36:26).

Who are the abusers? Sometimes they are part of the entourage, inside the family (intra-family incest), 80% of aggressors have themselves been victims; but that does not excuse! 80% of aggressors do not accept their responsibility. He wants to minimize.

Path to Repentance: The abuser must acknowledge all facts and take full responsibility. He must give up justifying himself by saying “*It was her who sought it out; she didn’t say no; I wanted to help her/him be more comfortable with his body!* He will have to put himself in good standing with justice by submitting to the law, even if he has to go to prison! Demonstrate the will to repair the evil, materially and morally. Engage in a serious therapy process! He must renounce the feeling of suicide!

Is forgiveness possible? We forgive those who ask for forgiveness (Lk 17:3-4). If he is able to produce fruits worthy of repentance (Mt 3:8). The victim can ask for the grace, because forgiving a rape is humanly impossible!

XI. CHASTITY, CONTINENCE, VIRGINITY

Continence is a behavior that contains one’s sexual urges. It is to abstain from any voluntarily provoked orgasmic genital pleasure.

1. Chastity is the regulation of sexuality. A chaste person is one who tries, under the Holy Spirit, to live his sexuality in a healthy relationship to things, to people and to God, in the recognition of differences. It’s a daily victory!

Chastity and the Virgin Mary. It is a gift of the Spirit within us, it helps us to live our relationships. She is present to Joseph and his Son. May her help us to live out our affections in a liberating way for ourselves and for others.

2. Offenses against chastity. Each offense wounds the other, because he is reduced to his body and the body to a part. And the person is objectified! The first victim against chastity is the sinner himself because guilt is devouring. The offense to chastity also hurts God. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The offenses are of an external order (masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution, rape) of an internal order (imagination, reverie, gaze-desire, speech, joke, obscene allusion, alienated freedom).

3. How to live this sexual energy?

a) By the practice of virtue in order to combat vices. Self-control is the fruit of the Spirit. Through it, man commands his impulses and obtains peace! Take a positive look at reality. Revisit the motivations by being passionate for God like Elijah. Engage the will *"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife"*.

b) Keeping his gaze and his tongue. Watch over the imagination. Avoid what promotes lust. Watch over curiosity (see St Bernard). The desire to know can be a doorway to temptation: *"once, just to see"*, it creates dependency. *"The lower abdomen makes it difficult for man to take himself for a god"* (Philosopher Nietzsche).

c) Rekindle hope. Do not identify with sin. Despair takes away the strength to fight! After the fall, mercy. From humiliation to humility. Meditate on the cross! Beware of obsessions with purity. Happy are those who become **pure** without becoming **hard**. (The two monks going to the sanctuary, and the woman by the river).

4. Virginité. This is the situation of a person who has lived in perfect continence. It fits in the long term. It is also a disposition, a tension of the whole being towards the offering of oneself. It is rooted in the past, lived experience and today. Chastity = virtue. Virginité = disposition. Continence = conduct. Celibacy = state.

XII. CELIBACY

Celibacy in itself has no meaning. It can be given various orientations. It can be decided or not; suffered for a service, a career, rather than a cause!

1. Who is celibate? According to the marriage *"he who not being or never having been married"*. But there are *"fake celibates"*, because the real one lives alone and not in a couple. The celibacy of "seduction" thinks only of oneself. The celibacy of the "forgotten", because no one is interested in them. Celibacy intrigues society, it is *"unjustifiable"*! The celibacy of seduction is a threat for couples! Forgotten celibacy is a misfortune!

2. For the consecrated. It is a celibacy experienced as a relational way of life. Its meaning is in the life project. It is a state that does not live and maintain romantic relationships. Someone, who is not bound to the other by a legal commitment. Who abstains from all genital expression in continence without vacancy!

3. The conditions of an authentic celibacy

- 1) It is chosen with responsibility and psychological and affective maturity, life project.
- 2) It is rooted in faith by mystical motivation, because there are non-believing practitioners.
- 3) Commitment to oneself, non-rigid asceticism that would hide sexual discomfort. It must be embodied in the culture, the non-erotized milieu, the non-suspicious entourage.
- 4) Celibacy is always attractive when it is resourced in Christ. It must not be privatized, we must talk about it between brothers and sisters in reciprocity, trust and freedom.
- 5) It is armed with emotional vigilance, the signs of attachments, tell someone about it.
- 6) It is lived in a community of tenderness, mutual aid, fraternal attention, a place of confrontation and stimulation, following the poor, obedient and chaste Christ!

By the vow of **chastity**, one commits to live in celibacy according to the plan of the Institute, renouncing amorous ties, accepting a type of sexual and affective solitude. There is no communion without solitude, for self-presence and openness to others!

XIII. FRIENDSHIPS IN CONSECRATED LIFE

Questions about friendship between consecrated persons and someone of the opposite sex accompany the period of initial formation. There is no single, objective answer!

Friendship being a deep relationship, must develop in a dialogue with God and others. Anyone who is not able to talk about his friendships or the lack of friendships condemns himself to isolation, an expression of hatred. Here are some models:

1) The friendship of Christ “I call you my friends” (Jn 15:15). God wants to be friend with each one of us, bringing us out of the slavery of bondage. Friendship builds community. Without it, the consecrated life is doubtful, it becomes “**crutches**” or “**wheelchair**” for some. Consecrated celibacy is not an escape, rather a renunciation of married life. Religious life is a vocation to love and to be connected to the source of love, the Christ who asks “*Do you want to love more than these*”?

2) The friendship of the disciples. Christ calls the twelve and makes them the mystery of friendly bonds. Even if they were accompanied by women, their friendship between them was privileged posing on the basis of clear rules: the gift of God **and** oriented towards the same goal.

3) Friendship comes from the ability to live the sexual relationship. Friendship is inaccessible to loners. It cares less about suspicion than trust.

4) Friendship is not exclusive. It is curious about the presence of others. It cares about the freedom of the other. The other does not have to be your friend!

5) It is built through the sharing of wealth. It is harmony in differences. It rejoices in the difference of the other.

6) Friendship deepens self-knowledge; through the friend people become more self-aware. “*I call you friends... All that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you*”. True friendship is built on discretion! The lover does not idealize his partner, the only result would be unrealized expectations and frustrations.

7) Friendship requires affective maturity. Emotionally thirsty people must first learn to live relationships with other men/women. The friend is not there to fill the void in me.

8) Friendship requires knowledge of one’s wounds and needs. It asks to be satisfied with little: a simple look, support, a simple meeting, encouragement, a prayer and knowing how to say thank you for all that!

9) Friendship deepens consecration, the desire to pray more. It is open to people of different ages. It is a mutual enrichment.

10) Friendship with the saints is possible (St Thérèse, St John of the Cross, St Francis of Assisi) is a gift for the consecrated person. Friendship being at the service of the Church; the latter has the right to look "*Is this friendship constructive*"?

Friendship with the opposite sex requires appropriate and meaningful gestures. True friendship may require geographic and physical separation. A true friend is an incomparable support. *Treatise on spiritual friendship* (Cf. Aelred de Rievaulx)!

Questions: 1. Which are my realizations?

2. What impact does this have on my journey?