

Celibacy

“Nor can we overlook the immense ranks of men and women in religious life, of laity and of young people too, united in the faithful observance of perfect chastity. They live in chastity, not out of disdain for the gift of life, but because of a greater love for that new life which springs from the Paschal mystery. They live this life of courageous self-denial and spiritual joyfulness with exemplary fidelity and also with relative facility,” **Pope Paul VI, June 24, 1967.**

“The Church’s holiness is fostered in a special way by those who devote themselves to God alone more easily with the undivided heart (1Cor 7:32-34) in virginity or celibacy. Their perfect continence for love of the kingdom of heaven has always been held in high esteem by the Church as a sign and a stimulus of love, and as a singular source of spiritual fertility in the world,” **The Church in the Modern World, 42.**

“Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to the affairs of the Lord, celibates give themselves entirely to the Lord and to others. Celibacy is a sign of this new life to the service of which the Church’s minister is consecrated; accepted with a joyous heart, celibacy radiantly proclaims the Reign of God,” **Decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests, 1965.**

Celibates “should learn how, with suitable natural and supernatural safeguards to weave their renunciation of marriage into the pattern of their lives, so that not only will their daily conduct and activities suffer no harm from celibacy, but they themselves will acquire greater mastery of mind and body, will grow in maturity and receive greater measure of the blessedness promised by the Gospel.” **Training of Priests, 10.**

“The chastity of celibates and virgins is a unique reflection of that love "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5). The Spirit, who gave the Virgin Mary a share in the divine fruitfulness, also ensures that those who have chosen virginity for the kingdom of heaven will have numerous descendants in the spiritual family formed of all those who "were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God"(John 1:13).” **Pope John Paul II, May 27, 1988.**

"A love for Christ, which overflows into a dedication to everyone, is of the greatest importance in developing affective maturity. Thus the candidate, who is called to celibacy, will find in affective maturity a firm support to live chastity in faithfulness and joy," **Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, On the Formation of Priests, 1992.**

"Throughout the Church's history, consecrated life has been a living presence of the Spirit's work, a kind of privileged milieu for absolute love of God and of neighbor, for witness to the divine plan of gathering all humanity into the civilization of love, the great family of the children of God". The Church has always seen in the profession of the evangelical counsels a special path to holiness, — the school of the Lord's service, the school of love and holiness, the way or state of perfection — indicate the effectiveness and the wealth of means which are proper to this form of evangelical life.”
Ninth Synod of Bishops, 1992.

“From the very beginning of the Church there have been men and women who have renounced the great good of marriage to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, to be intent on the things of the Lord, to seek to please him. “ **CCC, 1618.**

Charity is the form of all the virtues. Under its influence, chastity appears as a school of the gift of the person. Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self. Chastity leads each person to become a witness to all of God’s fidelity and loving kindness.” **CCC 2346.**

“Celibacy is really a special way of conforming oneself to Christ's own way of life. This choice has first and foremost a nuptial meaning; it is a profound identification with the heart of Christ the Bridegroom who gives his life for his Bride.” **Pope Benedict XVI, The Eucharist, 24.**

Celibacy and Virginity

Celibacy and virginity are choices and ways of life which conform a person to Jesus' own life of love and service. As a spiritual gift, celibacy or virginity is a state of consecrated life in which a person embraces the single life as a path to holiness. The love of the Trinity motivates and activates this gift of chastity with a mastery of mind and body so that each person with this gift grows through the evangelical counsels in the love of God and the service of the Church. All who possess this gift dedicate their lives to serving the Lord in charity and humility.

Questions to share

- 1. Which passage touches you or burns in your heart the most? Why?**
- 2. How have you exercised this gift in the past?**
- 3. How are you now exercising this gift in ministry?**
- 4. Do you see new ways you can exercise this ministry in the future?**