

# STUDIES

## in the Spirituality of Jesuits

BOSTON COLLEGE

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**St. Paul on Apostolic Celibacy  
and the Body of Christ**  
by  
**William C. Spohn, S.J.**



Published by the American Assistency Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality,  
especially for American Jesuits working out their aggiornamento  
in the spirit of Vatican Council II



## THE AMERICAN ASSISTANCY SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

consists of a group of Jesuits from various provinces who are listed below. The members were appointed by the Fathers Provincial of the United States.

The Purpose of the Seminar is to study topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and to communicate the results to the members of the Assistancy. The hope is that this will lead to further discussion among all American Jesuits--in private, or in small groups, or in community meetings. All this is done in the spirit of Vatican Council II's recommendation to religious institutes to recapture the original charismatic inspiration of their founders and to adapt it to the changed circumstances of modern times. The members of the Seminar welcome reactions or comments in regard to the topics they publish.

To achieve these purposes, especially amid today's pluralistic cultures, the Seminar must focus its direct attention sharply, frankly, and specifically on the problems, interests, and opportunities of the Jesuits of the United States. However, many of these interests are common also to Jesuits of other regions, or to other priests, religious men or women, or to lay men or women. Hence the Studies of the Seminar, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

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# ST. PAUL ON APOSTOLIC CELIBACY AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

by

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## I. INTRODUCTION: IMAGERY AND UNDERSTANDING

A few years ago *The Critic* published a memorable cartoon. Two wizened monsignors in a sumptuous rectory were musing over their martinis. One complained, "What ever happened to the living witness of celibacy?" *The Critic* died; the question has not.

Since the Vatican Council each of the vows has undergone a historic transformation. Jesuit General Congregations charted the way for a poverty that integrates faith and justice and an obedience that stresses discernment and dialogue. Although their official statements on chastity seem less radical, this vow has not escaped a similar transformation.

The practice of Jesuit chastity has changed even though our articulated spirituality has not caught up with our practice. Jesuits of all ages have witnessed changes in the context of chastity: the move to small communities, the virtual disappearance of cloister and clerical dress, new social patterns between Jesuits and women, and the shift of formation programs into coeducational settings. New ideas accompany this change of practice: the conviction that psychosexual development is necessary for celibates, public discussion of problems of intimacy and loneliness, and suspicion about older notions of affective distance and sublimation through work. We are still trying to make sense out of our current practice as we search for some wisdom to link our convictions about sexuality with the values of the tradition.

Recent General Congregations developed Ignatius' few references on chastity in the *Constitutions* in communal and apostolic directions. Ignatius' own reluctance to treat chastity as fully as religious poverty or obedience was not unusual: the Rule of St. Benedict likewise treats chastity as self-evident.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Ignatius envisioned distinctively Jesuit ways of being poor and obedient but not a distinctively Jesuit way of being chaste.



Hence, the Sixth Part of the *Constitutions* devotes only a brief paragraph to chastity followed by extensive treatments of the other two vows. If the Jesuit meaning and practice were not different from those of other religious, they needed no further elaboration. The 31st General Congregation stressed chastity's apostolic meaning "as a special source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world."<sup>2</sup> The succeeding Congregation mentions chastity under community, the union of hearts and minds that nourishes brotherhood and motivates our ministry.<sup>3</sup>

I believe that this communal and apostolic appreciation of chastity reflects the New Testament witness, especially that of St. Paul. In this essay we will examine the images Paul uses for apostolic celibacy to supplement and support these new emphases. Paul's writings are promising for this project on several scores. He is the only explicitly celibate writer in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians he provides the only extended treatment of sexuality in the New Testament. He claims that the community of Christ's Body is the place where human sexuality is redeemed. Sexuality is no private matter for Paul because both marriage and celibacy become fruitful only through loving and serving the community of faith. He values celibacy not simply because it makes him more available for ministry but even more because it is a life-giving love that gives birth to the community. Apostolic celibacy leads to a special intimacy and "generativity" between the apostle and those Christians he has brought to life in Christ.

Like Paul, Ignatius' understanding of celibacy finds expression more in images than in theory. These images can shape our self-understanding and guide our practice by the values that they convey. Ignatius understands himself to be a pilgrim, committed to a holy journey, traveling without extra baggage, joyfully embracing the hardships of begging and sexual abstinence. He wrote that Jesuit chastity should imitate that of the angels, because they exemplified a willingness to be sent anywhere and total dedication to communicating God's word.<sup>4</sup> These images evoke apostolic attitudes: dependence on God's providence and freedom for mission.

Paul's images for apostolic celibacy bring out a more communal sense. Christian sexuality draws meaning from the body, the Risen Body of the Lord and its extension into the world in the ecclesial Body of Christ. In addition, Paul views his own celibacy as allowing him to be a parent who gives life to Christians and nurtures them to maturity. He sees himself as



both the nurse of infant converts and the nervous father of the bride that would present her to her fiancé (1 Thess. 2:7-8; 2 Cor. 11:1-2). We will concentrate on the images of body and parent because they set the communal foundation for his other metaphors that interpret Christian sexuality, namely, discipleship, detachment in a world that is passing away, and athletic training. Although these latter three images are better known, they need to be understood in a communal sense lest they convey an image of celibacy as a private pursuit of perfection or a solitary asceticism.

When he writes on sexuality, Paul does not merely state the law to the congregation; rather, he tries to educate his readers to take a fresh look at themselves. He appeals to their imaginations by using images and metaphors so that they can literally re-image their sexuality as part of their Christian life together. Conversion of behavior is rooted in a conversion of the imagination because a new sense of identity will lead to renewed moral practice. By following the development of the key Pauline images, our own self-understanding as apostolic celibates can be enriched and our discernment of how to express this gift sharpened.<sup>5</sup>

We may experience a collision between images of sexuality as apostolic and communal and our own culture's individualistic approach. Is sexuality a private possession or a gift for the community? The New Testament considers all moral issues, including sexual lifestyles, as community issues first and foremost.<sup>6</sup> This stance may appear as foreign to us as it did to Paul's audience. Religious often seem to share our culture's presumption that sexuality is a private matter. If our private behavior contradicts our public profession, we may be acting out of the conviction that our psychosexual development is strictly our own business. Ironically, a similar individualism about sexuality may lead to the repressed affectivity of the crusty bachelor or the escape into activity of the workaholic. Either course withdraws us from the community where sexuality can be healed and integrated. Paul's images do not provide a program for psychological growth; they may, however, suggest how our celibacy can become life-giving for others and be experienced as a personal gift that enriches our life together.<sup>7</sup>

Paul's images on apostolic celibacy occur in his two letters to the Corinthians. We will sketch the development of these images and invite the reader to enter into the fresh look at Christian sexuality that they evoke, leaving exegetical support for this interpretation to the notes. First we



will examine *body* as the image of connection with Christ and others. Then we will see how the Apostle cares for the community as a *parent*. Third, we will consider the other Pauline images for Christian sexuality in the communal and apostolic framework established by "body" and "parent." Finally, we will test this communal and apostolic interpretation of apostolic celibacy against Paul's theological touchstone: Does it conform to the dying and rising of Jesus Christ?

## II. BODY THEOLOGY

What images does our culture use for the human body? The body is no longer the cage that imprisons the soul or the structure that gives the invisible "self" an address. We are embarrassed by any hint of body-mind or body-soul dualisms. We prize the body as unique and individual and honor it as the irreducible human reality. The body is the metaphor of the person because it expresses a unique history. We are not surprised that most illnesses are psychosomatic; are most delights not psychosomatic as well? For better or worse, the body expresses to the world who we are. Personal meaning must get embodied in language, gesture, and action so that we ourselves can recognize our truth. We acknowledge, however wryly, that "after forty you're responsible for your own face." As the baby-boom generation moves past that milestone, it turns from Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body* to Dr. Sheehan *On Running* and *The Jane Fonda Workout Book*.<sup>8</sup> Because the body is the extension of the person, to abuse it is suicidal and to abuse another's body constitutes the deepest personal violation. For a culture indifferent to an afterlife, the body takes on enormous value. Health becomes the secular equivalent of salvation, and so people pursue fitness with religious intensity or else despair of "our bodies, ourselves."

### A. Paul's Communal Understanding

In contrast to this individualism, Paul offers a radically communal understanding of the body. He describes it as the person at the point of commitment, the whole person as defined by the ties which that person has made with others.<sup>9</sup> Body is not one part of us that contrasts with our spirit or soul; it expresses the entire self as it stands towards its



commitments. As body, I am ambiguous until my allegiances become clear. My commitments define me either as "flesh" or as "spirit" in this Pauline scheme. My body becomes flesh if I remain egocentric and worldly. If my existence is turned in on itself, the only possible outcome is death. My body, however, becomes spirit as it lives out the life of Christ in the saving community of his Body. This body that is alive in the Spirit acquires a radically different destiny than the fleshly body.<sup>10</sup> It will be raised by God with all those others who share in the risen life of Christ. Christian conversion transfers my basic allegiance to the Lord and his people; hence a life of service in community constitutes the natural Christian existence.

Unfortunately, Christians have not always recognized the distinction between body and flesh. A false spiritualism despised the body as earth-bound and inherently corrupt; this fear, however, applies only to the body that has defined itself as egocentric. If I am loyal only to my own projects, then I am in bondage to death. I will be terminated when they are terminated. The body of the Christian, on the other hand, is the very place where grace transforms the person. The healing of memory through forgiveness, the new heart that responds joyfully to God, the conversion of our affections through love, and the sensitivity to others leading to compassionate action are all aspects of Christian transformation of the body. The struggle for justice underscores the corporeal character of the Kingdom of God because the dignity of the poor as children of God demands the basic requirements for life. No spirituality that demeans the body can legitimately claim its origins in the New Testament.

In Paul's view, we are defined by the community to which we choose to belong. We are either in communion with egocentric humanity or with humanity enlivened by Christ. Our behavior will express our solidarity with one or other group. Body is not the metaphor of private individuality because it expresses a mode of belonging. Instead of asking "Who am I?" we would do better to ask "To whom do I belong?" We associate with those who are like us, who share our values and aspirations, and who in turn reinforce those values. For Paul, belonging to Christ means belonging to the people that extends his reality into specific locations. God calls this people to embody the healing life of Christ in the world through their life together and the service that flows from that life. When Paul uses the phrase



"in Christ," he does not distinguish between belonging to Christ and belonging to the Christian community since they are inseparable. If I share the hope and love of the community, I am participating in the Spirit of Christ; if not, my membership in the institution means nothing because I do not belong to the other people who make up the Body of Christ, and so I do not belong to Christ.

Christian conversion, therefore, is invariably social. When we give our body-selves to Christ, we do so by giving our body-selves to the members of his Body. Paul exhorts us to "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1). That offering takes place in the community where we identify ourselves with each other as members of the same body. Our lives and our concerns overlap: "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all the members have the same function, so too we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another" (Rom. 12:4-5). We are redeemed, purchased out of the slavery of isolation, by being joined to other Christians. We offer our gifts to help others, and they help us with theirs as we become radically interdependent in the Body of Christ. We can depend on others and they know that they can depend on us. Paul's language suggests that the organic unity of Christians is more than simply a convenient metaphor. If we operate on this metaphor we will discover an actual exchange of life among members of the community. Rivalry or dissension or withdrawal from community chokes off this exchange of life. Therefore, we must see that "there is no dissension in the body, but that all the members be concerned for one another. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy" (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

The 32nd General Congregation stressed the communal context necessary for the gift of chastity to flourish. Any gift depends upon the quality of love and support available in the community. When apostolic celibacy becomes privatized either through repression or irresponsible expression, we should ask whether the religious community provides the "union of hearts and minds" (to some degree at least) that enables the affectivity of individuals to flourish. Do its members have the freedom to give and receive support from each other to the same degree that they give and receive support from those outside their religious community? Do they know that they are cherished



by their Jesuit companions for their personal goodness and not merely for their productivity? Can they let themselves be known without fear of ridicule; and are they willing to commit time to let their Jesuit friendships grow deeper? If so, then the community itself can provide that exchange of life that will enable this gift of apostolic celibacy to deepen.

## B. Community, Body, and Sexuality in Corinth

### 1. Strict and Lax Corinthians

We now turn to 1 Corinthians, chapters five through seven, for the specific Pauline teaching on community, body, and sexuality. Two groups in the Church had interpreted Paul's preaching in opposite directions. The strict party held that husbands and wives should abstain from all sexual relations. The libertines thought that any form of sexual expression was irrelevant to those who were freed from the Law; hence, they could continue to visit the temple prostitutes as they had prior to their baptism. In response to these pastoral confusions, Paul develops the first Christian theology of sexuality.

These confusions caused a serious pastoral crisis because the actions of individuals affected the whole body of the Church. The organic unity of the Body of Christ meant that moral contagion could spread quickly, infecting the entire community. Christians had fled the alien world of pagan Corinth in order to escape an environment that was contaminated by the toxic pollutant of sin. If they brought their old practices with them into this new environment it would contaminate the whole because the system's interdependence would become deadly.<sup>11</sup> Just as surgery would be necessary to remove a cancerous growth, so excommunication might be necessary to preserve the health of the Body of Christ.<sup>12</sup> Paul counsels just such surgery when he tells the Corinthians to expel the man who has taken up living with his stepmother: "Do you not know that a little yeast has its effect all through the dough? Get rid of the old yeast to make of yourselves fresh dough, unleavened loaves" (5:6-7). Otherwise, the exchange of life will become an exchange of death.

Both the libertines and the misguided ascetics have forgotten that sexuality expresses belonging. Married people belong to the Body of Christ in and through their belonging to each other. If one partner in a marriage refuses to have relations with the other in order to seek spiritual perfection,



that partner misunderstands Christian marriage. Paul writes, "A wife does not belong to herself but to her husband; equally a husband does not belong to himself but to his wife" (7:4). Because the body is the medium of belonging, spouses cannot despise the bodily actions that express and deepen their commitment to each other. The married serve the Body of Christ by belonging bodily to each other. Belonging to Christ cannot negate their belonging to the spouse. Paul himself serves the community through the charism of celibacy because God called him to that state. Celibacy is not a mandate for all Christians, as some of the ascetics think (7:7). The more universal principle is "Use your gift to build up the whole community."

The libertines, on the contrary, forget that sexual intercourse creates a bond to the other person. It cannot be separated from a psychological and moral belonging to the other. Ironically, both the severe and the lax make the same mistake: they want to disembody their commitments, separating sexual expression from their connection to Christ. Perhaps a contemporary rendition of this disembodiment is in order. We have probably all heard this pattern of rationalization: "We can decide for ourselves what sex will mean for us. Just as long as we are honest about what having sex means to us, it doesn't have to express a lifelong commitment. Contraceptives have given us the option for greater freedom. Sexual intercourse doesn't have to be confined to marriage since we can now separate sex from pregnancy. If the two of us agree that making love means affection or playfulness and no more, we don't have to worry about permanent involvement." Most of us have also seen the toll that such rationalization can take on people. Somehow, deeper expectations do arise in one or both parties. Their fuller selves come to desire more than a casual or playful connection. Insofar as a sense of personal belonging to the other usually follows bodily union, we can see that genital sexual expression tends to effect a deep bond between the partners. Since the self is a bodily reality, we cannot separate gesture and meaning by facile rationalization.<sup>13</sup> Certain bodily actions express and invite a deep personal claim on us, and no amount of cerebral discussion can neutralize that claim. Our bodies are our selves--they do not lie.

The lax in Corinth had their own form of rationalization. They thought that liberation in Christ meant liberation from any responsibility for bodily actions. They had heard that they were already raised up in Christ; if so, everything is permitted since they are no longer defined by physical reality.



Their slogan expresses the irrelevance of the body: "Everything is lawful for me. . . . Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will do away with them both in the end" (6:12, 13). Those with a good ear for euphemism can catch the hidden premise: "and the genitalia are for sex. . . . If we are raised up already, then let's live it up! Surely we can still visit the prostitutes at the temples."

## 2. Paul's Position

Who takes the body more seriously, the libertines or the Apostle? They forget that their corporeal actions enter into their personal identity. Because the body is the medium of commitment, no Christian can engage in casual copulation. What we eat may not define the body-self, but sexual intercourse does. Although the stomach will not endure into the resurrected life, the body will endure because it is the self in all its allegiances. The entire body-self of the Christian belongs to the Lord. As Paul writes, "The body is not for immortality; it is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. God, who raised up the Lord, will raise us also by his power" (6:13-14). Because the Lord is committed to our entire personal reality, he will raise us bodily to be with him.<sup>14</sup> Belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ includes the conviction that the entire personal reality of Jesus of Nazareth was taken up into the divine reality forever. Nothing less will happen to everyone who is in Christ. Therefore, our present bodily experience has everlasting significance: we will always be what we have become by our actions and experience and commitments.

Now we can appreciate the Christian meaning of sexual intercourse by applying this notion of bodily belonging. Already our body-selves belong to the Lord in the community, and that union will culminate in the resurrection. Christians have embodied their union with Christ by becoming members--an organ, a limb, a cell--of the community of belief. Therefore, whatever the Christian does is an extension of the community. It is simply absurd to consort with prostitutes. Paul challenges the libertines, "Do you not see that your bodies are members of Christ? Would you have me take Christ's members and make them the members of a prostitute? God forbid!" (6:15). Note that this is not a legal argument. Paul does not merely say that these actions are morally or legally incompatible with membership in the Christian community. His images go further; these actions are an actual physical



absurdity because Christians' membership in Christ is an organic union. Hence, by turning the logic around, we grasp the importance of sexual intercourse. The partners become part of one another not merely for the moment, but their body-selves become united.

Paul compares the union of the Christian with Christ to the union of spouses expressed in sexual intercourse. He alludes to the Genesis teaching that when the spouses leave home to be married, "the two become one flesh." A new reality is born out of their individuality because their union reaches into their permanent self-definition: they become one. New claims arise from this union of the body-selves of husband and wife. They have left the authority of their own families and must restrict their sexual expression with others so that they do not violate their belonging to each other. Adulterous acts violate this bond since they violate the spouse of the adulterer.<sup>15</sup>

This understanding of marital union underlies the question Paul poses to the libertines, "Can you not see that a man who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? Scripture says, 'The two shall become one flesh.' But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him." (6:16-17). (The translation is rather pallid. Literally, Paul uses "cleaves to" where the New English Bible has "is joined to"<sup>16</sup>). The union of the Christian to the Lord by which they are "one spirit" creates a personal belonging analogous to the union of spouses who become "one body." A new intimate union has been created by baptism that creates its own responsibilities; that intimacy with Christ claims the Christian as surely as does marital intimacy. After being membered to Christ, we are no longer sexual free agents. We have become part of Christ's ecclesial Body, and hence even our most private actions have communal significance. The fornicator "sins against his own body" because violating the community is a violation of his own self (6:18). Misusing one's body violates the holiness of the Body to which the Christian belongs insofar as it profanes the holiness of the community, the "temple" where the Spirit dwells (6:19). Thus the image of body connects sexuality, the resurrection, union with Christ, membership in the Church, marriage, and the holiness of the Spirit. Each of these expresses a different way in which we belong to God, a belonging that becomes part of our personal identity and should guide our behavior.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, Paul invokes another basic Christian image to underscore the personal bond between the Christian and God. The Christian has been redeemed,



that is, ransomed from slavery and brought into the family of God. The sufferings of Jesus were the cost of that ransoming from bondage. Paul concludes, "You are not your own. You have been purchased, and at a price! So glorify God in your body" (6:19-20). Let the beauty and goodness of God be reflected in your entire selves and in all your commitments and relationships.<sup>18</sup> Like the other basic Pauline metaphors for Christian conversion (justification, sanctification, adoption), redemption connotes a social transfer from one society to another, from the solidarity of frustrated humanity into the solidarity of those who are alive in Christ.<sup>19</sup> Redemption also connotes healing and integration. Our human desires and capacities are not extinguished but transformed. The frustrated humanity that found expression only in the "works of the flesh" now bears life through the "fruits of the Spirit" (Gal. 5). Paul's own life testifies to this healing. He is every bit as passionate and intense as a Christian as when he was a Pharisee; yet now these drives are life-giving rather than murderous.

### C. Integrated Sexual Maturity

Sexuality provides the energies for human bonding and commitment, and the life of Christ heals and restores these energies. All our capacity for human devotion, for intimacy and caring, for personal warmth and fidelity is redeemed by being channeled into service in the Body of Christ. Through belonging to our brothers and sisters in love, the healing and integration of our body-selves occurs. Whether God calls us to marriage or to celibacy, our sexuality energizes our love and service. We do not glorify God in some "holocaust" of sexual capacity through repression. Quite the opposite is true. If we were to snuff out our sexuality we would be eliminating the richest human resource for caring and commitment. In effect, we would be saying that everything human is redeemed in Christ except sexuality.

Religious communities are increasingly aware that an integrated sexual maturity enriches both friendships and ministry. Apostolic celibacy makes religious not only available in terms of time, but, more importantly, available to give themselves wholeheartedly and passionately to service of those in need. Paul praised celibacy because it fostered "concern for the things of the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:34). Mature celibates do not need to seek self-worth in their work because they bring to the ministry an affectivity that is being healed by the love of God and of the community. At times



celibacy can be experienced as a void (as can marital fidelity), but even that form of dying can be fruitful for others, as we shall see below. That very emptiness can lead us to invest more in the local community, so that we belong to it more as friends than lodgers. Mature celibates bring a warmth and vigor to a wide range of relationships that invite many into friendship. They can cherish their friends of the opposite sex without being possessive. These friendships in turn enrich their friendships with those of the same sex, including their fellow religious. Because sexually mature Christians "do not belong to themselves," they are affectively available to others in ways appropriate to their calling.

We have stressed the communal side of apostolic celibacy, but it has a deeply personal aspect as well. The freedom to love others integrally usually develops from a growing intimacy with the Lord in prayer. Paul's analogy between sexual intimacy and union with Christ and the Church opens up the connection of prayer, affectivity, and sexuality. Cannot the maturing Christian expect a gradual transformation of *eros* into *agape*, or, better, an integration of *eros* and *agape*? Since the first great commandment urges us to love God with all our powers, should we exempt the potent resource of sexual energy from loving God? Classical spirituality gives some grounds for hope here. The Song of Songs and the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux, John of the Cross, and Teresa of Avila find that romantic love, espousal, and even elopement provide the richest metaphors of union with God. "Glorify God in your body" means far more than keeping sexuality under control; it also seems to indicate that our entire affectivity can express and reflect back the beauty of God, even if we are celibates. As the Church begins to rediscover the feminine aspects of God, male celibates may begin to appreciate a passionate depth to the love of God--a richness that has long been possible for Christian women. Although Paul does not develop these possibilities, we need to supplement his communal and apostolic focus with this more personal appreciation of celibate chastity.

### III. APOSTOLIC PARENTING

We turn now to the second image that expresses Paul's communal experience of celibacy: The apostle generates new life in the community like a *parent*. While the image of body indicates the intimate unity between the Christian



and the body of Christ, that of parent points to a special fruitfulness in Paul's ministry. He nurtures his new converts and raises them to maturity with the affections of a father or mother.

Erik Erikson's stages of psychological development clarify the connections between sexuality and ministry. When human sexuality matures, it normally moves beyond a quest for intimacy to the life-giving task of parenting. After the couple commit themselves to belong to one another, the movement of life extends through them to the children who come from their love. In the life-cycle, intimacy yields to "generativity." Erikson does not, however, restrict the generative task to having children. The adult needs extension of his or her life, "lest he suffer the mental deformation of self-absorption, in which he becomes his own infant and pet." The adult needs to assume responsibilities that go beyond the family unit:

I refer to man's love for his works and ideas as well as for his children, and the necessary self-verification which adult man's ego receives, and must receive, from his labor's challenge. As adult man needs to be needed, so--for the strength of his ego and for that of his community--he requires the challenge emanating from what he has generated and what now must be "brought up," guarded, preserved--and eventually transcended.<sup>20</sup>

The celibate faces this same challenge in his or her life. Paul discovered his own fruitfulness in taking responsibility for the communities he had brought to life.

Most Christians come to spiritual maturity through the countless acts of love demanded by raising their children. As one friend put it, "There's no purgatory for parents!" Children evoke both the fruits of the Spirit and parental anxiety and exasperation. The demands of parenting never quit as the infant's oblivion and the adolescent's ingratitude yield in turn to the combination of distance and dependence of adult offspring. Parents never get over their children, and children never get over their parents; every act of rebellion or possessiveness testifies to the fact that they belong to each other. Married Christians find the raw material of their satisfaction in the ceaseless task of generating these new lives that will always belong to them and yet never will be theirs. Is there a comparable challenge for the apostolic celibate who brings others to new life in the Spirit?

Paul frequently wrote to his congregations like a parent and voiced parental affection and exasperation. Even beneath his complaints we perceive



the special relationship he enjoys with them. He seems to be warning his obstreperous offspring at Corinth against alienation of affection by his rivals: "I am writing you in this way not to shame you but to admonish you as my beloved children. Granted you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you have only one father. It is I who begot you in Christ Jesus through my preaching of the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:14-16). He shows these affections only for communities that he himself had founded--and they had better not forget who fathered them.<sup>21</sup>

Later in the second letter to the same community he paints himself as the nervous father of the bride-to-be who is anxious lest someone seduce her before the wedding. "Put up with me, I beg of you! I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God himself, since I have given you in marriage to one husband, presenting you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11-12). Just as Eve was gullible to the serpent's wiles, this foolish virgin at Corinth seems too ready to welcome those who preach an alien gospel.<sup>22</sup> Paul goes on to nag the community for respecting these interlopers who demanded financial support whereas he himself had not been a burden to them: "Children should not save up for their parents, but parents for children. I will gladly spend myself and be spent for your sakes. If I love you too much, will I be loved less for that?" (12:13-15). We can judge the character of the Apostle's feelings by the images he spontaneously uses: he loves them and frets over them as a father over his children.

He also feels like a mother to his congregations--thereby claiming both roles in generativity. He cannot forget the tenderness of the initial care he gave the Thessalonians. That memory lingers in later years, and it adds a special fondness even when they have grown to maturity. He writes, "When we were among you we were as gentle as any nursing mother fondling her little ones. . . . You likewise know how we exhorted every one of you, as a father does his children. . . ." (1 Thess. 2:8-11). The apostle may have moved on to found other churches, but he still carries those he left behind in his heart. Paul's intense emotions portray in high profile what most Christian ministers experience. We have a special concern for those we have brought to Christ because we feel they remain part of us. For celibates, this sense of responsibility is the natural expression of their mature generativity.



In our culture we face particular challenges to developing this apostolic generativity, but it often occurs unnoticed. The ties formed in ministry can be frustratingly brief when we are transferred frequently. However, we do form unique relationships with those we have helped to life in Christ. We can discover an extended family in our alumni and parishioners, in our spiritual directees and those who have made retreats with us, and in the families whose children we baptize and marry. These bonds result from a generative celibacy that takes responsibility for the life of the next generation in multiple ways. Older Jesuits are probably more aware of the richness this brings than those who are young in the ministry. These special people become part of our lives, although we may appreciate these bonds only when we have to change locations. In Christ they have literally become part of us--we "embody" these relationships. Through them the celibate experiences the same affections Paul had: solicitude and caring, anxiety and pride.

Will this parenting approach lead to paternalism or to a clerical possessiveness that inhibits others' freedom in the Lord? Doubtless it could, and it has gone in that direction. Nevertheless, we are more likely to fall into an aloof professionalism buried in our career than into the excesses of paternalism. The parent image reminds us that the intimate contact we have with people ought to develop into committed responsibility for them.

We have seen that Paul urges us to view our relationships in the ministry as forms of the deepest human modes of belonging, namely, sexual intimacy and the bond of parent to child. Apostolic ministry has the same finality that all human sexuality has because it invites us to generative responsibility and affectionate care. The celibate is called to express these energies in the broader sphere of the community because the normal arena of the nuclear family is not available to him or her. The loss of family can be redemptively turned into a gain if the caring and creativity that would be given to spouse and children find expression in the ministry. Paul's own testimony indicates that ministerial work is no mere sublimation of sexuality but a gracious expression of it.

Every stage of psychosexual development will present its distinctive challenge, and the losses and gains will assume different forms as the celibate matures. At each stage we must choose the Lord at a deeper level, as René Voillaume wrote to the Little Brothers of Jesus:



Different demands of the heart will awaken, which you knew little of before. At twenty, there is the simple spontaneous need for sentiment and feeling. A bit later, this turns into the need for a more reflective companionship with a helpmate, which also serves in developing a man's personality. Around forty, along with an imperative impulse towards fleshly pleasure which a man's body knows it will sooner or later lose the ability for, there comes the desire to see something of one's self in other beings. You will thus be challenged to renounce in turn the satisfactions of having a wife, the satisfactions of having a home and the satisfactions of being a father. . . . As [these needs] appear in succession, you must allow yourselves to forget neither that they are all good in themselves, nor that you have promised our Lord, not to repress, not to destroy them with some self-diminishing labor which I shall refrain from qualifying, but to offer them to Him in the chastity of a love which each of such offerings will make richer and more fruitful.<sup>23</sup>

Although neither celibacy nor marriage can guarantee that a person's sexuality will mature through intimacy into generativity, life in the Christian community provides the context for this redemptive transformation of sexuality. Loneliness and stagnation are possibilities for us all. All Christians, however, are called to the universal human task of giving life and taking the care to nurture it so it can flourish on its own. Repression is as alien to such responsibility as self-discipline is necessary to it, whatever one's state in life. Ironically, sexual expression can be simultaneously genital and ungenerative. While some forms of Christian sexual expression may be nongenital, they are all called to be generative.

#### IV. THREE OTHER IMAGES OF CELIBACY

When we examine the other images of celibacy used in the New Testament in light of Paul's communal and apostolic interpretation, they become less private. *Discipleship*, *living in the end times*, and *athletic training* have traditionally supported a celibate spirituality. Unless we see them in conjunction with *body* and *parent*, these images can be misunderstood as leading to individual perfection and private asceticism.

##### A. Discipleship

Discipleship is a central image of Christian spirituality because it links the Christian to the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth. We are called to follow his way of living and serving, not abstract ideals.



Discipleship also respects the authority of Christ since a disciple is one who is summoned by a master. The disciple comes to learn and obey rather than dictate to the master the terms of their relationship. When Jesus summons, the disciple responds with wholehearted obedience. Levi simply leaves his counting table and his profession behind and follows without question. When Jesus calls Saul of Tarsus, he overturns all the values dear to this proud Pharisee. From that moment on they will mean nothing in comparison with the attraction of following Christ (Phil. 3:1-16). Disciples have transferred their allegiance to the master, and their love for him must relativize all lesser loves.

Paul does not appeal to the historical example of Jesus to justify his celibacy or any other practice. Christians should imitate Jesus of Nazareth primarily in his dying and rising. This event forms the core of Christ's experience, and the Spirit of Jesus conforms our experience to this central event. The Synoptics portray Jesus as unmarried, yet having a high appreciation for women, children, and the state of marriage. Matthew's Gospel states that some will be called to leave wife and family for the sake of the Gospel (Matt. 19:29). Paul, however, does not refer to any detail of Jesus' lifestyle as a point for imitation. Instead, he concentrates on the charism of the individual as the path for Christian service. Apostolic celibacy is a charism for some that God calls to serve the Body of Christ. Like every other charism that is lived out, it will conform the celibate to the Cross and Resurrection of Christ.

The disciple can obey even a difficult command with joy because of the One who commands. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, neither actual poverty nor humiliations are presented as having any value in themselves. They are attractive only because they are the struggles in which we will discover Christ alongside us. Those who share the work and struggle of the King will find that He is with them. Unless celibate life provides the location where the Christian meets Christ, it cannot have any Christian value. Because Christ stands between the disciple and this costly command, it takes on an entirely different significance.<sup>24</sup>

Paul's own apostolic celibacy, therefore, is a gift but not an option. He is not free to shop around for his own way of serving the Body of Christ. He values this charism highly precisely because it enables him to love others and give himself to them (1 Cor. 7:7). It conforms him to the core of Christ's experience and thus helps him become like the One he loves. "He



died for all so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and was raised up" (2 Cor. 5:15). Jesus did not undergo the cross for his own benefit but for our sakes. That same radical gift of self to others ought to inform every Christian's life. Celibacy is a gift for me only if it benefits the community by enabling me to place the needs of others ahead of my own (Phil. 2:1-11). (No denigration of legitimate self-love is intended here; the mutuality of love in the Body of Christ affirms the value of each person.) Discipleship and service take our focus off our own perfection. Authentic Christian celibacy shows its origin in the Spirit when it enables the celibate to love others more richly.

#### B. The End of the World

Paul also interprets his celibacy as a way of proclaiming that the end of the world is imminent. This conviction frees him from any obligation to found a family and ensure his posterity. Because Christians live in a world that is passing away, they should move through its institutions with freedom and a joyful detachment. Time is running out for business and career, family and financial security; therefore, Christians should seek their security elsewhere. They should embody their hope in a common life that is free from anxiety:

I tell you, brothers, the time is short. From now on those with wives should live as though they had none; those who weep should live as though they were not weeping; and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing; buyers should conduct themselves as though they owned nothing, and those who make use of the world as though they were not using it, for the world as we know it is passing away.

While a life of discipleship freed us from the past, Christian hope should free us from the present where we seek too much security. Nevertheless, Christian detachment does not render us aloof because we are also called to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom. 12:15). Although all institutions are provisional, individuals have lasting value.<sup>25</sup>

I believe that this detachment-for-the sake-of-engagement comes out in a paradoxical way for Jesuits. Our spirituality urges us to take human accomplishments and talents seriously. A certain worldliness seems natural for Jesuits as we plunge into contemporary issues with urgency and passion. At the same time, Jesuits tend to relativize this intensity with a gentle



irony. Wherever two or three are gathered together, they are probably laughing at each other. Jesuit wit reminds us that we are less crucial to the advance of civilization and the Kingdom than we sometimes may think. If we forget that insight, one of the brethren will soon surgically deflate the balloon of self-importance. While humor may be abused as a form of social control or a device to avoid confrontation, it does keep us mindful that we ought to ride a little loose in the saddle. Being serious about what is ultimately worthwhile can help us smile at everything else.

A community that possesses this liberating hope can encourage its members to live with greater freedom. Paul found that the charism of celibacy allowed him a single-minded dedication to the Lord's affairs and lessened his anxiety. Our communities can encourage us to both of those effects. A community of hope and humor can prevent the celibate from turning career or clients into the ultimate sources of personal validation. Even while it works to change oppressive social structures, the community can acknowledge that even these efforts are provisional. A community of male religious can encourage positive relationships with women and thus help its members not to demand more of friendships within the community than they can provide. Our women friends can teach us to be affectionate and intimate with our brothers without asking for the level of complementarity which these male friendships cannot promise. And all our friendships can benefit from our taking them with the same freedom that we have towards our work; they are less than ultimate objects of devotion. The hope we celebrate together can enable us to love and work passionately but without anxiety or possessiveness.

### C. The Athlete in Training

Paul's third image for apostolic celibacy may be the one most vulnerable to a noncommunal interpretation. Too often the figure of the athlete in training conveys the impression that celibacy is "the loneliness of the long-distance runner." This image can portray the celibate as the ascetic who passes up life's enjoyments in order to win some distant gold medal. On closer examination we will see that Paul's use of athletic discipline has more social implications.

Paul uses his own example to counter the laxity of the libertines at Corinth. They see no restraint necessary in Christian life, but Paul



insists that he has willingly renounced some natural rights for the sake of the Gospel. He does not ask for financial support lest he place any obstacle between him and the congregation. He forgoes his right to take a wife so that he can be free to associate with anyone: "Although I am not bound to anyone, I made myself the slave of all so as to win over as many as possible" (1 Cor. 9:19). He admits that these renunciations have been costly. He makes his case in language that the sports-minded Corinthians can grasp:

You know that while all the runners in the stadium take part in the race, the reward goes to one man. In that case, run so as to win! Athletes deny themselves all sorts of things. They do this to win a crown of leaves that withers, but we a crown that is imperishable (9:24-25).

We can appreciate the same point when we recall Olympic swimmers or gymnasts who trained arduously from childhood in order to "go for the gold."

The analogy conveys several lessons. Anyone who wants to make it to the victory stand must reckon the cost and be willing to pay it. While the weekend jogger may settle for self-maintenance, the Olympic runner has a single-minded devotion to excellence. The serious competitor does not settle for mere fitness or the rewards of vanity like the narcissistic body-builder whose goal lies in the mirror. Paul's analogy, however, can be deceptive if we think that the Christian seeks individual victory over others. Paul is not driven by a competitive pursuit of perfection. He runs towards a person, because the "finish line" is union with Christ (see Phil. 3:12-14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8). Competition must segregate winners from also-rans but the Christian life aims at the union of all people in Christ.

Paul then shifts the analogy to the actual performance that puts the months of training to the test: "I do not run like a man who loses sight of the finish line. I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. What I do is discipline my own body and master it, for fear that after having preached to others I myself should be rejected" (9:26-27). The Apostle consciously limits his freedom so that others might come to Christ. He knows that conversion is a lifelong process and that it requires personal discipline to progressively integrate all his desires into the Lord's service.<sup>26</sup> Yet Paul cannot think of his own reward without thinking of his congregation. He is confident that he will eventually enjoy union with Christ, but for the present he willingly postpones his own fulfillment if it means that his people will flourish (Phil. 1:18-26). Even his asceticism has an apostolic purpose.



The images of discipleship, the imminent end of the present order, and athletic discipline portray celibacy as a single-minded devotion to the Lord and his people. When interpreted as communal and apostolic, these images do not portray an isolated or detached asceticism. Because it is a charism, celibacy must be ordered to building up the Body of Christ through its special type of love. It is focused passion for the Kingdom, not an antiseptic purity or a self-concerned perfectionism. Because it is a charism it is best not considered simply in terms of a legal precondition for ministry, a precondition that obscures our appreciation of the positive features of this gift in today's Church. Like every other charism, apostolic celibacy depends upon a community to support it and balance its contribution. Paul balances his perception of apostolic celibacy by understanding it in terms of married sexuality, which provides a healthy test for the celibate. Does this life lead to deeper intimacy with others and to a generative fruitfulness? Perhaps only a Church community that values both marriage and celibacy can appreciate how each of these gifts needs the other.

## V. WE DO NOT BELONG TO OURSELVES

In this final section we will run a theological test on our social interpretation of apostolic celibacy. Does it express the fundamental truth of Christian life which is found in the cross and resurrection of Jesus? Just as this event is the fundamental criterion for any Christian theology, so too it is the fundamental norm for our theological imagination. The dying and rising of Jesus serves as the dominant form, the basic metaphor of Christian life.<sup>27</sup> Do the five metaphors we have used for apostolic celibacy adequately reflect this basic metaphor? Only if these symbols conform to the master symbol that is the core of Christ's experience will they convey a vision of Christian celibacy. We will turn to the theology of 2 Corinthians for an expression of Christian ministry and see whether our view of apostolic celibacy reflects it or not.

### A. Cross and Resurrection

This epistle discovers that there is an exchange of life between the Apostle and the community which comes from the exchange of life in the cross and resurrection of Christ.<sup>28</sup> The dying and rising of Jesus continues



to occur in the relation of apostle and community. As he wrestles with his experience of being an apostle, Paul discovers an intimate bond between his struggles and the vitality of the people he serves. Everything he has undergone has benefited them. And conversely, everything that builds them up gives life to him. In the former letter to Corinth he had written that "we are not our own . . . we do not belong to ourselves" (1 Cor. 6:19) and had argued its consequences for sexual behavior. In this letter he expands that insight to cover the whole life of the Church: When the apostle struggles, the benefits do not accrue to him but to the people he serves. And he, in turn, receives life from them:

[God] comforts us in all our afflictions and thus enables us to comfort those who are in trouble, with the same consolation we have received from him. As we have shared much in the suffering of Christ, so through Christ do we share abundantly in his consolation. If we are afflicted it is for your encouragement and consolation, so that you may endure patiently the same sufferings we endured. Our hope for you is firm because we know that just as you share in the sufferings, so you will share in the consolation (2 Cor. 1:3-7).

The suffering and consolation of Christians are linked just as they are in the life of Christ because they are experiencing in themselves the same pattern of dying and rising that Jesus underwent. The Spirit of Christ reproduces in them the central event of Christ's life; they participate in the reality that forms the center of the human consciousness of the Risen Lord. Their conscious imitation of Christ flows from this participation in the experience of Christ through the Spirit which continues whether they advert to it or not.

Paul redefines this pattern of experience from the individual life to the community of Christians. Ordinarily we think that we ourselves both undergo the sufferings of Christ and will share his glory. Paul does not deny this, but he points out that the collectivity participates in the Cross and Resurrection. He writes, "If *we* are afflicted, it is for *your* encouragement and consolation." This must have shocked the Corinthians. They had been ashamed of Paul because of his physical infirmities and his many trials in the ministry. Should not a genuine apostle be strong and successful? Paul counters by asserting that they have been the ones to benefit from his sufferings, because the very events that scandalize them have been salvific for them.



## B. Primarily Social, Secondly Individual

If this exchange of life occurs at such a profound level between members of the Body of Christ, then we should perhaps consider Christian life as primarily social and only secondarily individual. Each member gives life to the others and receives life from them in turn. The doctrine of the communion of saints is not just an afterthought in the Apostle's Creed; rather our salvation occurs primarily in solidarity with others. The old saying that the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians reflects this saving solidarity. It follows that Christian ethics merely articulates the behavior that should embody this exchange of life. It commands love only because loving service and reconciliation are the most natural expression of this shared existence. Since Christ did not live for himself, those who are animated by his Spirit should find self-centered living unnatural. Nor should they be surprised that this exchange of life can be very difficult at times once they recognize that it came to them only through the dying of Jesus.

Paul takes part in the dying and rising of Christ precisely in living out his charism as an apostle. Each charism reflects some part of the ministry of Christ: prophet, consoler, proclaimer, healer, servant of the poor. As the individual lives out his or her charism and calling, the deeper experience of Christ's life and death works itself out in their histories. Nothing is irrelevant to this inner transformation; as Paul writes, even the failures are absorbed into it: "We are persecuted but never abandoned; we are struck down but never destroyed. Continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed" (2 Cor. 4:9-10). Gradually as he lived out his calling to be an apostle, his very body, his self in its commitments, becomes an expression of the life and death of the Master. His motivation likewise begins to resemble that of Christ, as he writes in the next verse, "Death is at work in us, but life in you" (4:11). At first this seems a surprising turn in the argument; should he not have said, "Death is at work in us and so too is life"? Paul breaks out of his individual experience as he turns to their common life. He states that the dying he incorporates occurs so that *they* may experience the rising that comes from that death. He is an apostle to the core because even his sufferings are not for his own benefit but for their sakes. Through his charism Paul is being conformed at this most personal level to Christ, who died not for his sake but for ours.



Every charism, therefore, gives life in this same fashion; it gives life to those we serve with our gifts. And the struggle that every charism brings with it is integrally related to that gift of life to others. No doubt those with the charism of apostolic celibacy are tempted to ask, "What am I getting out of this? What is it doing for me?" Although the question is understandable, it may be unanswerable because we are not meant to be the beneficiaries of our own gifts. On the other hand, when we experience that celibate life is a struggle, this may not mean that we lack the charism. It may mean that we are not the ones who are benefiting from our struggle, any more than Paul was the beneficiary of his shipwrecks, floggings, and rejection by his own people. I believe that using our gifts does make us flourish, but we do not use our gifts only in order to flourish.

I do not claim that the apostolic life is one of compulsive altruism. We are not called to live for others in a way that turns us into exhausted workaholics. If we respect the needs of others, we ought to respect our own needs for companionship, leisure, play, and renewal. The Christian should know that he or she is valued not because of productivity but simply out of the unconditional acceptance of God that cannot be earned or repaid. A legitimate sense of self-worth grows out of ministry as we begin to appreciate who we are. The ministry also brings affirmation from others who see more good in us than we often care to acknowledge. We learn to acknowledge our personal worth through the love they have for us, receiving their gifts as they have received ours. The exchange of life in community is possible only because all have something to contribute and because no one is self-sufficient. Therefore, celibacy that is apostolic must also be receptive of the affection and caring of others. The celibate must be able to name specific people when the question is asked, "To whom do I belong?"

This communal and apostolic interpretation of celibacy does reflect Paul's profound insights on the Cross and Resurrection. I believe that the images he uses for apostolic celibacy show that it is a charism, a participation in the saving love of Christ, which finds its meaning in building up the Body of Christ. Every aspect of the apostle's life contributes to the exchange of life in the Body of Christ. Sexuality, just like prayer, health, energy, work, limitations, and sufferings are not primarily ordered to personal fulfillment but are meant to give life to others. In all these we do not belong to ourselves.



## VI. A CONCLUDING WORD ON DISCERNMENT

A new form of discernment follows from this interpretation of apostolic celibacy. Most of our moral decisions do not come from applying moral principles but from a simple form of discernment. We gauge whether an action is right for us by examining whether it fits with who we are. We ask: "Can I live with this? Do I want to become the kind of person who acts this way? Do I feel peaceful with operating this way?" Moral principles usually set the outer limits of action, but they cannot instruct us specifically on how to act in our particular situation. Hence, we supplement moral norms with a rough-and-ready discernment.

### A. Sense of Self

Discernment examines the convergence between identity and action, between who we want to be and actions that will be consistent or inconsistent with our identity. The sense of self is deepened in Christian conversion as the Spirit consoles and guides us with an awareness of our vocation. Actions are tested against this felt awareness of our calling to see whether they fit with it or not.<sup>29</sup> Ignatius' rules for the discernment of spirits formally express this testing that usually goes on informally.

Our imagination and memory shape our identity because our unique personal reality can be known only in our history and in the images we have of ourselves. Every true conversion, therefore, changes my identity by providing new images of the self. Scripture conveys the identity of Israel and the Church by the rich variety of metaphors and symbols it contains: We are now ransomed slaves, adopted children of God, no longer servants but friends of Christ, lost sheep and prodigal sons who are welcome back home, ambassadors of Christ, members of his Body, living stones of the Spirit's sanctuary. If our imaginations are converted, we will have a new sense of who we are; and from that new identity will come behavior which expresses that new reality.

The images that we have presented for apostolic celibacy can reshape our sense of self, at least in part. As we enter into them, they shape our values and guide our actions. Already we are the Lord's disciples, living in the end times, racers in training, embodying intimate ties with others, fruitful of new life like parents. When these images take root in our feelings, they can become suggestive of appropriate actions in our relationships. Some ways of relating in certain situations will simply be



inappropriate to who we are and who the other person is. Prayerful reflection will make evident what is appropriate if our calling has taken root in our feelings and imagination. There are ways of belonging to others and expressing affection that are authentic to my vocation and appropriate to the relationship; and there are ways that do not harmonize with my sense of self as an apostolic celibate. Moral principles that are the distilled wisdom of centuries of Christian wisdom ought to guide us; nevertheless, sound discernment must help us fill in the particulars. In our day when rapid deregulation of sexual practice has occurred, we must rely on a renewal of the meaning of celibacy rather than simple reference to principles.<sup>30</sup>

### B. Community and Ministry

Paul provides a key test for Christian love: Does it build up the community? This social test can help us discern our desires and intentions on the matter of celibacy. For Paul every Christian virtue builds up the community, and the only habits that are vicious are those that attack our life together. The "works of the flesh" are objectionable because they fragment the solidarity where salvation should be found. The opposite of *agape*, therefore, is not hate (as one might expect) but greed.<sup>31</sup> Greed isolates me from others in community since they become my rivals for coveted resources. Greed seeks its security in self-sufficiency rather than in the exchange of life that animates the Body of Christ. When we view sexual infidelity as a form of greed, we begin to grasp its communal significance. Both the repressed and the sexually irresponsible are using body language to tell the rest of the community, "I want to have, not to give. I don't belong to you; you have no claim on me." Apostolic celibacy gives life away, but its breakdowns are forms of hoarding and self-reliance.

Religious chastity, therefore, is a community and a ministry issue. Our sexuality is redeemed in and through belonging to others. That includes those we serve and those with whom we live. If I withdraw from this exchange of life, I move back into the isolation of the world even though I may continue to wear the trappings of religious life. Sexual integrity means willing entry into a "union of hearts and minds" with others. Mature celibacy is the capacity for relationships with others that are both affectionate and trustworthy. If I flee close relationships with others, including those of the opposite sex, then celibacy has not matured in me. If I live an



isolated existence, this may be as unchaste as if I were to withdraw myself bodily from the community through irresponsible sexual expression. Most religious communities benefit from those older members whose celibacy has become a gift for others. They bear in their own bodies the proof that celibacy can become generative. Often they bring life back to the religious communities from the families whose lives they share. It should be no surprise that Jesuits who relate well to women friends bring a special openness and affection to the men with whom they live. They more fully belong to the religious brotherhood because they belong to others outside the community.

It may seem ironic to speak of "belonging" as the key to a celibacy that is so often experienced as loneliness. I cannot claim that using our imaginations to take another look at apostolic celibacy will eradicate feelings of emptiness or isolation. Even more ancient biblical images indicate that emptiness is not incompatible with fruitfulness. The barren woman is the one to whom the Lord will give many children; the exiles from Jerusalem will find that the Lord will make a lush garden spring up in the desert. Our own emptiness may impel us to discover the social character of celibate love. As Paul writes, "This treasure we possess in earthen vessels, to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but we are not crushed; full of doubts, we never despair. . . . Death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor. 4:7, 8, 12).

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FOOTNOTES

- 1 Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970) p. 245, par. 547. Ignatius links chastity to apostolic community in the earliest draft of Formula of the Institute *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, Monumenta Ignatiana* (Rome, 1934) I: 16-20. Translation in Appendix III of *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 106.
- 2 *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), no. 248, p. 149.
- 3 *Ibid.*, nos. 223-225, p. 149.
- 4 Joseph Conwell, S.J., "Living and Dying in the Society of Jesus or Endeavoring to Imitate Angelic Purity," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, Vol. XII, no. 3 (May, 1980).
- 5 See William C. Spohn, S.J., "The Reasoning Heart: An American Approach to Christian Discernment," *Theological Studies*, March 1983 (vol. 44, no. 1) for the relationship between self-understanding, biblical images, and discernment.
- 6 "My thesis is that, for the Christian, sexual 'lifestyles' (and the moral life in general) find their significance in terms of communal self-understanding, and in terms of the way relationships among individuals constitute the community. . . . Christian ethics often uncritically assimilates pluralism and individualism to Christian symbols or language (e.g., 'love,' 'fidelity'), so that they become cut off from their foundation and lose their force." Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Sex, Marriage, and Community in Christian Ethics," *Thought*, (March 1983), pp. 72, 73.
- 7 For more individualist readings of chastity that stress its role in the self-development of the person, see Donald Goergen, *The Sexual Celibate* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979), p. 118; and James B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publ., 1978).
- 8 Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York: Random House, 1966); Jane Fonda, *Jane Fonda's Workout Book* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981); George Sheehan, M.D., *Dr. Sheehan on Running* (New York: Bantam Books, 1978).
- 9 John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), pp. 26-30.
- 10 "While Paul promises no resurrection of the flesh, he proclaims it for the body; whereas man as *sarx* cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50), man as *soma* can." *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 11 Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., *Becoming Human Together: The Pastoral Anthropology of St. Paul* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1982), p. 183.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.
- 13 See André Guindon, *The Sexual Language* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1977).



- 14 "Sexual intercourse, unlike eating, is an act of the whole person, and therefore participates not in the transiency of material members but in the continuity of resurrection life." C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 148.
- 15 See Walter Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 128, 132.
- 16 Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., *1 Corinthians* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1979), p. 53. See Brendan Byrne, S.J., "Sinning Against One's Own Body," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, vol. 45, No. 4, Oct. 1983.
- 17 "Only together can Christians demonstrate the authentic humanity that Christ embodied because creative love binds those who give and those who receive into one. Those who display such love are as God intended them to be, and so 'glorify God in their body' (v. 20)," Ibid., p. 54. This community is not exclusively ecclesial but also familial. The community of the spouses and children formed in Christ has worth in itself but also as a subset of the larger community. The family community needs the larger social reality for its full flourishing, although we cannot develop that issue here.
- 18 "The Commitment of the Corinthians to Christ is spiritual; they become one spirit with him (v. 17) because they are committed to what he desired. In order to enable them to achieve this goal they were given the holy spirit who empowers them to en flesh that unity of intention. . . . 'You are not your own' (v. 19) is the complement of 'You are Christ's' (3:23)." Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, p. 54.
- 19 See John R. Donahue, S.J., "Biblical Perspectives on Justice," in John C. Haughey, ed., *The Faith That Does Justice* (New York: Paulist, 1977), pp. 88-103.
- 20 "Once we have grasped this interlocking of the human life stages, we understand that adult man is so constituted as to *need to be needed*, lest he suffer the mental deformation of self-absorption, in which he becomes his own infant and pet. I have, therefore, postulated an instinctual and psychosocial stage of 'generativity' beyond that of genitality." Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), pp. 130-131. For the generative aspect of one major religious figure, see Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), pp. 395-409. For a comparable analysis of women's psychosocial development, see Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), ch. 6.
- 21 "According to *Sanhedrin 19b*, if a man teaches his neighbour's son Torah, Scripture counts it to him as if he had begotten him." Barrett, *First Corinthians*, p. 115.
- 22 "The presentation to Christ will presumably take place at his coming; the betrothal correspondingly refers to the conversion of the Corinthians and the establishing of their church. In the meantime, during the period of engagement, it is the duty of the Corinthians to keep themselves completely loyal to the one to whom they are to be united--within Paul's metaphor, to preserve their virgin status," C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 272.



- 23 René Voillaume, *In the Midst of Men* (Notre Dame: Fides Publ., 1966), p. 132-133.
- 24 See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 139.
- 25 Paul seems to ignore the role of children as signs of Christian hope and the expected outcome of marriage. His lively sense of the imminent end of history may have contributed to this oversight. See Cahill, "Sex, Marriage," p. 75.
- 26 "Paul's concern is not with the body as such . . . but with the body as the instrument of commitment. . . . The inherited 'desires of the flesh' are not silenced by a contrary intention (Gal. 5:1-26)." Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, p. 92.
- 27 See Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 36, 38.
- 28 "To put it another way, the Christian demand, implicit in even the most crudely presented version of the teaching of the New Testament, was for a free response of love, a fervent giving and receiving, an openness, in fact an exchange of life which had to be, somehow, physical-yet-spiritual." Rosemary Haughton, *The Passionate God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 41.
- 29 See Karl Rahner, "Experience of the Spirit and Existential Commitment," *Theological Investigations*, vol. xvi, trans. by David Morland, O.S.B. (New York: Seabury, 1979), pp. 24-34.
- 30 "Nothing is more futile than to speak on sexuality by beginning with norms and prohibitions. Norms do not help anyone who does not first understand meaning." Bernard Haring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, Vol. II (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 493.
- 31 "The concrete expression of 'covetousness' is 'anxiety' or 'care' for 'the things of the world' (1 Cor. 7:33). . . . To 'care' in this way is to be committed to the thing as an end in itself; one's whole being is focused upon it." Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, p. 111. I am grateful to John L. Boyle, S.J., for pointing out the centrality of greed in Paul's list of vices.



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