

Reflections on Chapter XI - *Our Life in Consecrated Chastity* Ns. 169 – 173
by Campion Baer

The law of chastity is imposed on every human, in marriage and outside of marriage. Unchastity in thought and desire as well as in word and in deed, is seriously wrong primarily because it transgresses the law of God.

Our vow of consecrated chastity, which we have voluntarily chosen from the preferential love of God and in Him of every person, adds the obligation of the virtue of religion to abstain from all indulgence of sexual pleasure. In addition it imposes the obligation of celibacy, the state of being unmarried. Oftentimes, in church usage, celibacy refers to one who has never been married.

The Constitutions urges the cultivation of an intense relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary. She alone has not inherited a tainted nature through original sin. Original sin and its consequences in our fallen nature manifest themselves more in inclinations to unchastity than in any other way. The Constitutions remind us that a life of chastity always involves a certain privation. We are to use the plentiful means of supernatural grace that have been given us and also follow the natural counsels of prudence and right reason.

The Constitutions assert that the virtue of temperance takes on particular importance, because our capacity to love chastely depends strictly upon it. Cardinal Meyer added modesty, “which is so important for the preservation of perfect chastity, and which is truly called the prudence of chastity.” While chastity deals with the regulation of difficult things such as powerful passions and strong desire for pleasure, modesty is concerned with the regulation of easy things, the remote and proximate occasions and conditions that lead to unholy desires.

Whether we are conscious of it or not, we are influenced by books, magazines and papers we have read, by movies and television programs we have seen, as well as by various forms of internet communications and conversations we have had. As a result of original sin, our imagination can storm the will by conjuring up pictures to solicit and entice. It can reproduce whatever our senses have experienced. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ condemned not only adultery but everything that leads up to it – all impure looks, desires, thoughts and actions. Our Constitutions in N. 171 reaffirms our need for recourse to supernatural and natural means to maintain equilibrium and avoid the dangers that threaten our celibate life, such as boredom, loneliness, a love of comforts and the immoderate and improper use of the media.

During the Constitution workshop I attended, reference was often made to Trinitarian theology. Chapter XI does so in N.169, 2, by referring to chastity for the sake of Christ as a reflection of the infinite love binding the three divine persons.... Unacquainted with the term, a little research led to the *definition* that Trinitarian theology is a way of doing systematic theology that understands the Trinity to be the foundational doctrine that permeates all areas of theology. It

emphasizes the self-communication and revelation of the nature of God as revealed in God's actions in history rather than the study of the Trinity as one point of Christian doctrine.

The late Dr Catherine LaCugna of Notre Dame University believed that Christian men and women should seriously submit their sexuality to the intimate partnership of Love known as the Trinity. The very nature of the Trinity means that God seeks out "deepest possible communion and friendship with every last creature." As such, sexuality is the dynamic that draws human beings out of their individual isolation and feeling of loneliness into relationships with other. It compels one to see that "sexuality is a vital path of holiness, creativity, friendship, inclusivity, delight and pleasure." The late Stanley Grenz observed that "maleness and femaleness made in the image of the Trinity "impels persons to come together in many relationships that characterize human community."

Isn't the logical conclusion that this "deepest possible communion and friendships" can exist not only in marriage, but also for the vowed celibate person in male-female and male-male friendships also?