

# LOVING

## AND TEACHING OTHERS TO LOVE

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### THE FORMATION OF AFFECTIVITY IN PRIESTLY LIFE

Francisco Insa & Dale Parker (eds.)







Loving and  
Teaching Others to Love  
The Formation of Affectivity in Priestly Life

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*What do we need priests for? We need them, quite simply, because we need God.*

*[...] the priest's task is to teach people to love. To love love and to teach them to love. For, indeed, we must learn it. After all, love does not consist only in the first great moment of being swept away. Love consists precisely in the patience of accepting one another, of becoming ever close to one another from within. It consists in the fidelity of putting up with one another; it consists in walking together. Love, like the Gospel, is not sugar water, not comfortable, but, rather, a great challenge, and, for this very reason, the purification and transformation and healing of our life, which leads us into the big picture.*

*Teaching and learning love. This is the real task of someone who speaks about God. And this is what we need most, for if we do not become loving in the right way, we separate ourselves from God and from ourselves, and life becomes dark and pointless.*

*J. RATZINGER, Homily on the occasion of the Fortieth Priestly Jubilee of Monsignor Franz Niegel (Unterwossen, 1994), in J. RATZINGER/BENEDICT XVI, Teaching and Learning the Love of God. Being a Priest Today, Ignatius Press, San Francisco (CA) 2017, pp. 315.317-318.*



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# FOREWORD. HUMAN AFFECTIVITY AND CHRISTIAN CHASTITY

Francisco Javier Insa Gómez\*

## 1. A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lk 10:27). Jesus refers to two texts of the Pentateuch in his dialogue with the doctor of the Law (cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18). The two commandments summarize what we have to do to win eternal life: love God and love our neighbor.

Matthew and Mark narrate the story in a way that differs slightly from Luke (cf. Mt 22:37-39; Mk 12:30-31). In their versions, the answer is in response to the question, “What is the first commandment?” In all three gospels, we see Jesus challenging us to live a radical, complete love, because that sort of love not only fulfills all that God asks of us but at the same time opens the door for us to live a happy life and enjoy God for all eternity.

This kind of relationship with God contrasted with some proposals offered by Judaism but especially with pagan religions. They tended to emphasize adoration, submission, and obedience, attitudes born from consideration of God’s absolute transcendence. Before God, man could only prostrate himself and recognize his nothingness.

Christ revealed God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the God Christians are invited to form a relationship with. It’s a

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relationship with a specific character – the relationship that Jesus Christ himself has with the Father. In fact, baptism makes us sons in the Son, and the more we identify ourselves with Jesus, the deeper we know, relate to, and love the Father and the Holy Spirit. In short, the Christian will end up having a personal relationship with all three divine Persons.

Is it possible to bridge the gap between God and the creature? Humanly, no. But God does so by freely giving us the infused virtue of charity. He renews us from within, and in a way where we don't stop being human, as grace doesn't destroy nature but perfects it.<sup>1</sup>

This love goes on to permeate the whole of our lives, in each of our actions. As a result, we can convert everything we do into a loving worship of God, into a continuous dialogue with the Trinity.

At this point we could ask ourselves a bold question: “Does God have the right to command me to love him?” Or, we might add, “to love him so radically?” The answer's yes, for two reasons.

The first reason is that “he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). Pope Francis coined a term for this fact, the Spanish neologism “primerrear”.<sup>2</sup> If we wanted to English it, we could say “God *firsted* us.” We can only second God's love, and that in a very imperfect way. Before we loved him, God created us, gave us a family, gave us our capacities and talents... and prepared a place for us in heaven (Jn 14:2-3).

The second reason is that we can only find satisfaction for our deepest longings in the love of God, “our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 1, art. 8, ad 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., *inter alia*, FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, November 24, 2013, n. 24.

<sup>3</sup> SAINT AUGUSTINE, *The Confessions*, I, 1, 1.

God's not a tyrant. He doesn't force us to submit and love him, but reveals himself as the Father who loves us, who cares for us, who watches and waits for us. He is the only one able to satisfy our need to love and be loved. The double command of love is not an imperative imposed from without, but a clarification of what will make us happy.

## 2. HUMAN AFFECTIVITY

Every person is called to love God. And each person must love him in a way that's both human and divine. (The latter happens through the theological virtue of charity). Within the human side of this love we find affectivity. This is the set of emotions, affections, feelings and passions that find a home in man's heart. God asks that all these movements of our heart respond with a radical *yes* to his call. We have to love God with our all. "We do not have one heart to love God with and another with which to love men. This poor heart of ours, made of flesh, loves with an affection which is human and which, if it is united to Christ's love, is also supernatural."<sup>4</sup> The human emotions are loved by God, and are part of the divine satisfaction he expressed at the end of the first creation account. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen 1:31).

Our affectivity is what makes us enjoy life's pleasant moments: a good conversation with friends, spending time with family, a good meal, contemplating art, finishing a job that enthused us, hard work for a difficult goal, times of rest... all these circumstances are accompanied by pleasure, which can come from the senses (enjoying a meal) or the intellect (a nice conversation or reading a good book). Many of our problems come from the conflict of these two sorts of satisfactions.

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<sup>4</sup> SAINT JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ, *Friends of God*, Scepter, New York 2002<sup>2</sup>, n. 229.

Just after the creation account, Genesis talks about sin. Because of sin, Adam realizes that there is a disorder in his passions. He experiences embarrassment for the first time, even in front of God (cf. Gen 3:10). He realizes that his naked body can be looked upon with bad intentions, in a way incongruent with its dignity. In a word, as an object to satisfy the concupiscence of others.

The passions didn't become evil, but lost their proper order (they became "disordered"). They no longer have their internal hierarchy. Each passion seeks satisfaction without reference to the other passions, or to the holistic good of the person. This can escalate such that man becomes blinded. He loses sight of his final end (which never stops being the only true one), namely enjoying God for all eternity.

That's how we enter into an interior battle among all the partial goods out there. St. Paul puts the struggle in these words, "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (Rom 7:18-19). The apostle feels a tension within himself that makes him say: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?" (Rom 7:24). The answer that he receives in another moment is also a spur to our own trust in the Lord, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). Normally our life won't be so dramatic, but in the day-to-day we'll notice the conflict between our different appetites.

Christian asceticism consists in rebuilding the order that sin has broken. The term "asceticism" comes from the ancient Greeks, and was used in both civil and religious contexts. It referred to the soul's effort to open itself up to wisdom and reach it.<sup>5</sup> Many pagan philosophers, like the Stoics, exercised asceticism to reach two

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. GRIBOMONT, "Ascesis", in A. Di BERARDINO (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, Vol. 1, InterVarsity Press Academic, Downers Grove (IL) 2014, p. 253.

goals: absolute control over their tendencies and *apatheia*, or insensibility against pleasant and unpleasant affects. They thought that any affect would hamper self-control and frustrate the subject when left unfulfilled. The Stoics used to say, “better not to love in order not to suffer.”

The practice of Christian virtue has some overlap with these ideas, but the differences are far greater. First of all, Christians shouldn't do away with their affects. On the contrary, their desire is partly how they give themselves to God. We're supposed to love God “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” (Lk 10:27). But no one can give what he doesn't have. So, we need complete possession of ourselves to be able to give ourselves up to the service of God.

The pagan philosophers didn't have the tools to discover this love, the love that fills up all the necessities of man's heart. The mere continence of the Stoics and their honorable lives may have seemed like chastity, at least externally. But something's missing in the soul, which is love, and therefore it can't give satisfaction. God, on the other hand, never leaves anyone feeling cheated.

### 3. CHASTITY, A CHRISTIAN VIRTUE

This book understands chastity in a much broader sense than the mere dominion of the sex drive. The virtue puts our emotions, affections, feelings and passions in order, features we noted in the sections above.

If we form our affectivity, we'll give some order to our intellect and will, better understand the good and gain self-mastery. All this will make us want to grow in chastity, and to find the right means to do so.

We can't achieve a perfect balance in this life. We'll always be subject to concupiscence. On the other hand, we can always grow in chastity. It's a process, and one in which we can always move forward. But we have to remind ourselves that developing this



virtue is a *positive* struggle: to master myself in order to give myself, to act according to my personal dignity and vocation, and to respect people – others and myself – in our unity of soul and body.

It would be simplistic and wrongminded to limit the formation of affectivity to the control or repression of certain human tendencies. That kind of formation won't produce people of virtue, those who can love with all their heart. Instead, we would find only continence, an external sort of chastity. It would lack the soul of the virtue, love, which ought to be both the origin and goal of their actions.

At first glance, our approach may seem too abstract, too distant from the daily difficulties of living chastity. However, we'll quickly see that we need this broader horizon if we hope to integrate sexuality with the whole of the human person. And, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* the virtue of chastity is precisely an expression of that integration.<sup>6</sup>

It's true that this vision needs another component, something more concrete, as we humans are also material beings. In other words, chastity means loving God with the *body*, knowing how to discover the image of God in man (as a whole, and not just in his soul), recognizing him as a temple of God where the Holy Spirit dwells (cf. 1 Cor 3:16). The body therefore enjoys a great dignity that leads us to treat it as something sacred. Therefore, we can offer a little addition to the first commandment that the Lord proposed to his followers: to love God with the whole heart, with the whole soul... and with the whole *body*.

#### 4. FORMING THE AFFECTIVITY OF CANDIDATES TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Everything we've said up to this point applies to everyone, even to non-Christians: men and women, young and old, single

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2337.

and married, lay and priest, etc. But the priestly vocation has a special way of living chastity. The priest (at least in the Latin Church) is called to celibacy, that is, to live out his affectivity while renouncing marriage. By his vocation, he has received the grace to do so. This isn't just a matter of giving up sexual relations. The priest also must forego having a "life companion" with whom to share affective experiences.

Celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Mt 19:12) doesn't mean denying one's sexuality or attempting to extinguish all passions and emotions associated with it. Rather, the priest must *integrate* these phenomena into his vocation.

The third edition of the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionalis Sacerdotalis* echoes the need to provide adequate affective formation to candidates to the priesthood. "Psychologically it focuses on the constitution of a stable personality, characterised by emotional balance, self-control and a well-integrated sexuality."<sup>7</sup>

These three points will serve as criteria for verifying whether a candidate to the priesthood—or someone entering the seminary—has reached the level of "sufficient maturity"<sup>8</sup> that the Code of Canon Law considers necessary for entering holy orders. This discernment should not just be based on the formators' external observations of the candidate, but also on their conversations of trust with him.

The vision of priestly celibacy that emerges from the *Ratio* is quite positive. Celibacy doesn't come off as a burden or some sort of tribute to be paid, but as a gift in its own right. It's a gift that the

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<sup>7</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, December 8, 2016, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2016, n. 94. You can find a more complete study on the human dimension of formation in the new *Ratio* in F.J. INSA GÓMEZ, "L'uomo, il discepolo, il pastore. La formazione umana nella terza edizione della *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*", *Annales Theologici* 32 (2018) 11-44; pages 24-32 refer to formation in affectivity.

<sup>8</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, c. 1031, §1.

priest gives to God, but even more so, one that God gives the priest. It allows him to love Christ with an undivided heart and to dedicate himself more and more to the service of God and others. It also makes the priest readier to accept from Christ the role of *father*. Seen in this way, celibacy is not an impairment to full human development—rather, “develops the maturity of the person, making him able to live the reality of his own body and affectivity within the logic of gift.”<sup>9</sup>

The lack of an adequate integration, however, would make it inadvisable to proceed with ordination: “It would be gravely imprudent to admit to the sacrament of Orders a seminarian who does not enjoy free and serene affective maturity. He must be faithful to celibate chastity through the exercise of human and priestly virtues, understood as openness to the action of grace, rather than the mere achievement of continence by will power alone”.<sup>10</sup>

Only a man with a balanced affectivity—meaning, someone attracted to women, with normal passions, etc.—who lives this affectivity with naturalness and according to Christian morality can assume the celibate life in a healthy way. In other words: a man who has achieved self-mastery, who doesn’t let himself get dragged about by his passions. Only this kind of person can offer up his sexuality to God. On the other hand, it will be quite difficult for a man who has not achieved this self-dominion to make a total gift of himself.

What we’re looking for is the candidate’s (or future priest’s) own good. A rushed decision could lead him to make commitments that he may not be ready to live. Mental and affective conditions can make his sacrifice burdensome, and can even threaten his fidelity to the charism he has received. Further, the concern goes beyond the individual priest. The good of the faithful is on

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<sup>9</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, n. 110.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

the line. They have a right to expect that their pastors not only have solid doctrinal formation, but that they are also mature enough to carry out their duties.<sup>11</sup>

The means offered by the *Ratio* for forming the affectivity of candidates to the priesthood, and fostering their human maturity will be thoroughly studied throughout this book. However, there are a few points that I would like to mention now. The document highlights the idea of “personal accompaniment” on the part of the formators;<sup>12</sup> spiritual direction (considered “a privileged means for the integral growth of the person”<sup>13</sup>); the life of prayer; and the grace gained through the sacraments of the Eucharist and penance. Finally, it mentions certain cases in which it would be advisable to turn to a specialist in mental health, a topic that will also be covered in this book.

## 5. SYNOPSIS OF THIS VOLUME

Between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2018, the Pontificia Università della Santa Croce in Rome hosted the “Fifth Study Week for Seminary Formation Staff”. The theme selected, and title of the week, was *Teaching and Learning to Love. Human Affectivity and Christian Chastity*. There were about 100 priests from 17 countries who came together in the Eternal City to think about the affective formation of candidates to the priesthood. The question was treated from many points of views: theological, philosophical, pastoral, psychological, etc. Amid the presentations and informal conversations there arose a variety of useful ideas on how to present chastity to the candidates in a way that would be more joyful, integrated, meaningful, paternal and apostolically effective.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, n. 41.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, nn. 44-49.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 107.

The present volume has put together some of the conferences that were given on that occasion. The hope is that these pages will help those working in seminaries in their task of making the candidates more and more conformed to Christ, the Good Shepherd, in their human and spiritual aspects. We also are persuaded that the advice found herein will be applicable to those who have already been ordained and for young people who are trying to live a more authentically Christian life.

The conferences have been collected into three groups that form the structure of this book. The first group has a more philosophical-theological bent, the second is more psychological, and the third may be called existential, that is, it shows the fruits of a chaste life, a life spent in the service of others.

### *Theological and Anthropological Issues Related to Chastity*

The first section presents the theological and anthropological bases of chastity. By this we mean a virtue necessary for deepening our relationship with God, for the harmonious development of our personality and for achieving a healthy relationship with others. We'll see that this virtue is joyful, positive and always open to growth.

The book begins with the reflections of Bishop José María Yanguas (Cuenca, Spain) on the relationship between chastity and the three theological virtues. He begins the discussion by considering Christian life as it begins in baptism: a new way of being that implies a new way of acting. Hence the need for a moral life that allows him to act like another Christ. Chastity, without being the most important virtue, is necessary to accept the love of God, so that we might open our minds to the light of faith and place our hope in spiritual goods.

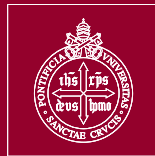
Fr. Julio Diéguez (Moral Theology, Università della Santa Croce) presents chastity from the perspective of the cardinal virtue of temperance. A formation that takes this approach should not

The faith reaches the peripheries of the world by the attraction of love. That's why Pope Francis has recommended that we all embark on a "revolution of tenderness". Priests have a special role in this revolution, by loving and teaching others to love. They do so by the virtue of chastity, "a sign of purity in relationships and in the gift of self", as the new *Ratio* on the priestly formation (no. 21) has put it.

In February 2018, the Center for Priestly Formation (Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Rome) organized the Fifth Study Week for Seminary Formation Staff, with the topic of *Teaching and Learning to Love: Human Affectivity and Christian Chastity*. Priests from 17 different countries attended the congress, sharing experiences from a variety of disciplines on forming the emotional life or affectivity of seminarians.

This book brings together some of the presentations given during the Study Week. It will be a great tool for any seminary formation staff and will help their seminarians to love God and men with ever purer hearts. That's how they'll become priests able to teach others to grow in this love.

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