

Is Celibacy 'Impossible'?

(Continued from Page 6)

without love, no new life is kindled without fire, no children are begotten without a flame. But in her case, the love would be supplied by Love, or the Holy Spirit, Who would overshadow her. As the Spirit brought re-creation of the cosmos by hovering over chaos, so the Spirit would re-create humanity by hovering over the Lady. It is very likely that at the moment of conception by the Spirit, Mary felt an ecstasy of love which surpassed in intensity all the ecstasies of all the conceptions of all women in history. How did the conception take place? It was conception by reception or the total acceptance of the Word of God. The Word of God begets life.

Generation is twofold: carnal and spiritual. We are born of the flesh, but we may be "born again by the Word of God" (1 Pet. 1/23). Every conversion is by the Word of God; every increase in holiness is by the Word of God. It was humanly impossible that a virgin conceive, but Mary received in faith the Word Himself. If the preaching of the Word works wonders in the heart, shall not the reception of the Word work an enfleshment in her body? No wonder the Fathers of the Church taught that Mary had already conceived in her soul what she conceived in her womb. The angel gave the final assurance: "Nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1/37). God would unite in her virginity and motherhood as He united in Sarah sterility and motherhood.

The response of Mary was immediate: "Be it done to me according to Thy Word". The Word here is *Rema*, which means not a syllable, or an idea, but a promise, the totality of the prophecy of redemption. *Rema* was the very word, or promise, given to Abraham that he would have a son. As Abraham would accept the *Rema*, and have Isaac, so Mary would accept the *Rema*, and have Jesus.

A parallel exists here with Abraham who was naturally incapable of generating a son through Sarah: "Abraham refused either to deny it, or even doubt it, but drew strength from the faith" (Rom. 4/20). What blood and reason could not attain, faith could. Where there is no faith, God is without honor or majesty. God demands that we

take Him not as an empty idol, or a "dead God", but as One Who can do the impossible.

Abraham was made the father of all believers of the Old Testament, so Mary was to be the mother of all believers in the New Testament. Abraham received the "impossible" promise for old Israel, and Mary received the "impossible" for the new Israel. As Abraham was the eschatological personification of Israel, so Mary is the eschatological personification of the new Israel, the Church.

Celibacy Is As Unnatural As Walking On Water

I can understand the hundreds of arguments given against celibacy:

"It makes me a spirit instead of a man"; "it dehumanizes"; "it alienates me from the world"; "it forces me to be unnatural"; "it distorts the mind by drowning the fountains of life", etc. Instead of answering these statements, they should all be admitted on the natural and human level.

But is there not another layer to life, one which involves the Word and faith in Him? Could it not be that the impossibility of celibacy intensifies as faith weakens, for what makes the impossible possible is faith in the Word.

We said at the beginning that celibacy was as impossible as walking on water. Now has any man ever walked on water? Any man? The Son of God has! But man? Yes, Peter did! One night he recognized Our Lord coming towards his boat. Peter, ever impetuous, asked the Lord to bid him come to Him by walking on the waters. The Lord bade him to do the impossible: "Come" (Matt. 14/28). Peter began walking on the waters. He did the unnatural!

He went contrary to every survey, poll and test that had ever been made about man's capacity to tread the deep, and he walked not for ostentation or trickery, but to go to Jesus.

Suddenly, Peter begins to sink! The impossible is no longer possible! "The Spirit of poverty is a snare!" "Celibacy is unpsychological." Why did Peter not swim? He was a fisherman, and we know that once he swam 100 yards in that same lake (John 21/7).

What turned the swimmer into a sinker, the poor man into a miser, the celibate into "my beloved wife Jezabel agrees with me"? The answer: he took his eyes off Jesus and began to take account of the storm and "felt the force of the wind" (Matt. 14/30).

Nature was against him! He was on his own! In the days of sailing vessels where a new hand climbed the narrow rope-ladder to the crow's nest, the old sailors would shout: "Look up! Look up!" If he did not, he might become dizzy, and fall. Peter now looked down at his feet, his body, the drifts and the storms.

The Lord had given him a vocation. He could not deny that. He distinctly heard: "Come", and he knew it was a vocation to the impossible. But the air was full of anti-impossible talk, so he began sinking. He could not even swim. When the Divine is abandoned, not even our nature left to itself functions properly, as the senses of an LSD youth are less keen than when guided by reason.

Has there ever been a sacerdotal drowning in the Sea of Sexuality without first turning from Jesus and a turning to the terrible impact of Galup Polls, circulars, statistics and hot sirens of hebdomadal theologies that celibacy is unnatural and unachievable?

Divine Help

But when Peter cried out to be saved, "Jesus then immediately reached out His Hand and caught Him". He saves even those who, in loss of faith, cry to Him. But the reprimand followed: "Man of little faith". All the psychological and sociological motivations for poverty and celibacy snap when there is no longer trust in grace. "Why did you doubt"?

Why has celibacy suddenly become the pre-occupation of the press, the clergy and the religious? Does it trouble the priests in Hungary suffering under Communism, as it does us? Did it trouble our missionaries in China when the Reds sought them out as rats? Has it anything to do with our affluence, our secularism, our crazy, mixed up drive to negate and to protest and to find fault?

One thing is certain: It has something to do with our loss of faith, our unworn prejudices, the infrequency of visits to the Blessed Sacrament, our growing skepticism, our rosary-less pockets, our night meetings of rebellion, our un-crucified walls, our jibes and darts against the Holy Father, our dread of appearing as priests among the worldly and our unopened Scriptures.

The impossible will always be hard, but it is possible among those who "are not of the world and whom the world hates" (John 17/4); "who save their lives by losing it" (Luke 17/33); who hate the Cross as much as the Cyrenian did, but learn to love it by hugging it; who stumble, and yet know their Lord fell three times and stumbled to His Throne; who even in their weakest moments, when they pierce the tender heart of Christ, nevertheless feel the trickle of His Redemptive Blood on their hands, and like the centurion, intensify their faith in the Savior. Such is the beautiful impossibility of celibacy made possible by the "Love we fall just short of in all love".

Celibacy is Faith on its knees.

—Lester Shear

Deaths

Mrs. Hubble

Mrs. Marie Bolger Hubble of Hilton, one of the oldest members of the Nazareth Academy Alumnae Society, died Sept. 14, 1969. Her son, Passionist Father Niles W. Hubble, concelebrated the funeral Mass in St. Leo's Church with nine members of his order. He is serving the Navy as a chaplain, with the rank of commander.

Mrs. Hubble was born Dec. 3, 1889, in Lyons, and had lived in Hilton since 1912. She was graduated from Nazareth in 1908 and was a past president of the alumnae group and member of its executive board. Her marriage to Earl Hubble, former county sealer of weights and measures, took place 55 years ago Sept. 26.

Surviving besides her husband and son are a daughter, Mrs. Donald Foster; three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren; a sister, Mrs. Catherine Stanbushy of Rochester; a brother, James Bolger of Los Angeles and several nieces and nephews.

Sister Louise

Mass for repose of the soul of Sister Mary Louise Kiefer, SSND, former teacher at St. Peter & Paul, St. Michael, Holy Family and Holy Redeemer

JESUIT EDUCATOR DIES

San Francisco — (RNS) — Father John F. X. Connolly, S.J., died Sept. 16 in the chapel of the Jesuit residence at the University of San Francisco on the day he was to assume the newly-created post of university chancellor.

The 54-year-old USF vice-president for university relations, who had served as president from 1954 to 1963, succumbed to a heart attack.

A native of San Francisco, Father Connolly was ordained in June 1946. He was provincial of the California Province of the Society of Jesus from 1963 to 1968.

CCD CLASSES SET FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

Saturday morning classes for mentally handicapped children will be held again this term at St. Ambrose and St. Charles Borromeo Schools under the auspices of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD). Parents may obtain information by telephoning Mrs. Marian Claus at 482-7882.

Schools, was celebrated Wednesday in Holy Family Church, Rochester.

Sister Louise, who died Sept. 21, 1969, in St. Mary's Hospital, is survived by a sister, Sister Mary Ludwig, SSND, of Holy Family Convent, and several nieces and nephews.

Mr. Quinlan

Frank M. Quinlan, architect of several structures connected with the church, died Sept. 16, 1969, at his home, 1400 East Ave. The funeral Mass was celebrated last Saturday at St. Augustine's.

Mr. Quinlan, 77, retired 10 years ago. He had designed a number of buildings for Nazareth College, Aquinas Stadium, St. Andrew's Seminary, now Kings Preparatory School, and various rectories, churches and convents in the Rochester area. He also designed homes and industrial buildings.

He was a graduate of old Cathedral High School and Notre Dame University. During World War I, he served in France with the Army Engineer Corps.

Surviving are two sons, Thomas and Frank, Jr.; two daughters, Mrs. Richard T. Bateman and Mrs. J. Thurman Pierce; 13 grandchildren and one sister, Mrs. Marguerite Muckie.

Adult Education Courses Set in 5 Diocesan Areas

Several hundreds of persons throughout the Rochester Diocese are expected to begin eight one-weekly adult education courses in five diocesan areas.

Besides courses in Rochester, West Webster, Elmira and Ithaca (detailed in last week's Courier-Journal), a program also is scheduled in Geneva.

All the courses, sponsored by the Office of Christian Formation's Adult Religious Education Program, are slated to begin next week on the evenings of Mondays through Thursdays.

The Geneva series, scheduled from Sept. 29 to Nov. 17, to be held in De Sales High School, will include:

7:30-8:20 — "Who, What, When, Why — The Church," Father Sebastian Falcone, OFM, lecturer in Sacred Scripture, St. Bernard's Seminary.

8:50-9:40 p.m. — "Penance: Meaningful or Meaningless?" Father Cyprian Rosen, OFM, codirector, Adult Religious Education Program.

Sept. 29, Oct. 20, 27, Nov. 10, 17, 24, 31 — "Teaching Sex to Children," Diocesan Committee on Sex Education. (Primarily for parents.)

Information on all the courses may be obtained through the Adult Education Program, P. O. Box 231, Geneva, (716/789-1991).

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By Sarah Chi...

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