

Reflection Session

The Fraternal Charism of Chastity

Prepared by David Songy, O.F.M.Cap.

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davidgsongy@gmail.com

In speaking of the specific nature of celibacy, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* asserted that this consecration to God with an undivided heart “transcends the natural order” and “involves a total personal commitment,” which can only be maintained with the help of God’s grace. However, it is also a fact that the celibate state of life is embraced by many who are not priests: vowed religious men and women, consecrated laity, and a variety of others, including some people who live celibately for non-religious reasons. The Scripture texts supporting priestly celibacy can be applied just as easily to other forms of celibacy in the Church. Therefore, it is essential to consider the *particular purpose of this undivided love in relation to the Capuchin calling*. Reflecting on this distinction is not in order to distance ourselves from other particular vocations, but to better understand and embrace the rich nature of our own.

To prepare for our reflection, first read the following sections of the Capuchin Constitutions regarding the topics of fraternity and chastity: 83, 84, 168. Then take time to look at the various footnotes and references and read the original sources suggested. One could also look at *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* or *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* to identify basic underlying principles for a theology of priestly celibacy.

Use the following questions to prepare for a discussion on celibacy as a fraternal charism of Capuchins and be ready to articulate the unique nature of our vow in relation to other religious communities and diocesan priests:

1. When one applies the principle of an “undivided heart” to Capuchin chastity, where is the locus of that heart?
2. How does a Capuchin express a “total personal commitment” in the context of fraternal life? What is the “person” in the Capuchin context?
3. Give concrete examples of how chastity can be lived out through a fraternal expression of this charism.
4. What are aspects of priestly celibate chastity that would be distinct from Capuchin celibate chastity?
5. How has this process of exploring the fraternal nature of Capuchin chastity affected your own personal view of living out this vow?