

ON CHASTE BODIES AND PURE MINDS: *FRIENDSHIP*

INTRODUCTION

The ideas in this essay may be among the most idealistic you have ever read, but I am going to write them down anyway! It's my job! I am a Catholic priest! And a priest deals with the Ideal! As I pray and think and look around at the world and talk to people and listen to people – I say to myself: “There must be a ‘bottom line’ – there must be ‘something that is a *real* key to explaining and understanding everything else’”. Now, I am not saying that I have found *the* “magic key” – but I have found something that at least gives me something to filter a lot of what I see and hear through. It is helpful to me! Maybe it can be helpful to you.

This paper, I suppose, is written for Catholics – because the full ramifications of what I will propose is most easily understood within the context of the Catholic Church; but it is also written for Catholics and non-Catholics alike who have a less than full understanding of what is going on in the Church – and might find these words informative and instructive in some way – and perhaps also controversial. I pray that the Holy Spirit will do what he wants with each and every word, and every pair of eyes that reads them.

I have written other papers – and I seem to be saying a lot that, as human beings we come into this world for a stay that could last up to 70, 80 or even more years – comprised of various stages and experiences that for the most part we are not prepared – no matter how prepared we might think we get! There seems to be no “Owner’s Manual” for being human!

What I am proposing here might be a possible “Preface” to such a manual. You be the judge!

Most of what I say these days has something to do, in one way or another, with Pope John Paul II’s magnificent comprehensive work entitled “The Theology of the Body” or “The Gospel of the Body.” A lot of what I will say here reflects my reading of Christopher West’s

explanation of the work – which, frankly, was a whole lot easier to read than the original work as the Pope wrote it! (I tried that but found it a bit too technical for me!) It will be clear, though, when I express my own opinions and put forth my own synthesis and application of what the Holy Father has so brilliantly shared with us.

I must say here too, that this particular essay is what I consider a “Prequel” to the paper I wrote just before this entitled: “ON LIFE,” in which I discussed three of the many major moral issues of our day – in which I proposed a possible solution: yes, Pope John Paul’s **Theology of the Body!** After writing that, some important ideas came to me – and thus comes what you are now reading!

In the previous paper (ON LIFE) I purported the grave seriousness of the moral issues outlined because they had to do with the very “stuff of life itself” – *the eggs and the sperm and the contribution of human soul and personhood from God which went into the creation of a human being!* Tampering with these elements in any way is always a grave matter. Having the government of one’s country supporting the misuse of them is a grave moral evil which must somehow be resolved – quickly!

And so this paper begins where the other paper began as well – with our first parents (Adam and Eve) in the Garden of Eden! But this time, instead of beginning with the God / Adam and Eve / Marriage sequence, I would like to interject what came to me as a pretty astounding “prequel” to this process: **friendship**. How often we gloss over and undervalue the word *friend* in scripture: BUT ESPECIALLY AT THIS VITALLY IMPORTANT STAGE OF HUMAN CREATION. God created Adam and Eve TO BE **FRIENDS!** He created Eve to be Adam’s *friend*. He told them to “be fruitful and multiply” in a family of *friends*. He created ALL OF THEM to be **HIS FRIENDS!**

FRIENDS FIRST! This is an amazing, if not astounding concept and reality – when you really stop to think about it! And this is precisely what we are about to do: stop and really take a look at this primordial

relationship of *friendship* on which all other relationships seem to be built! (This concept is mentioned in John Paul's TOTB – but I am purposely highlighting it here – because I feel that it might be a “way in, “an irresistible point of interest” to get people reading that work which no doubt was a gift of the Holy Spirit; at the end of this paper I will also highlight a couple of topics that John Paul left out of TOTB in its initial stages, but which are quite relevant to this topic I am purporting).

If we look at two ends of a bookend scenario: God created us to be *friends*; one day we will be joined with him in one great *communion of friendship* at the Nuptial Celebration of his Son Jesus – the theme of *Friendship / Friendship Lost / Friendship Regained / Friendship Fulfilled* – runs through it all.

The initial source of *friendship*, God himself, is an **eternal ecstatic exchange of love** – this is the **FRIENDSHIP OF LOVE** in which we were created and in which we will participate fully in the end!

What intervened, of course, between the beginning of *friendship* and the end of it was mankind's refusal of God's *friendship* and all that went with it! God respected man's freedom of choice and sadly accepted the condition of broken *friendship* between himself and his beloved creations. Right away, though, he formed a plan to restore the *friendship* – and it meant sending his Son, *his Friend*, Jesus – to be *our Friend*, our Teacher and our Savior.

Jesus then, is our Lord, our God and our *Friend*!

What is interesting here to note is that even before the actual reconciliation took place and the restoration of the *friendship* between mankind and God the Father – Jesus “prophesied” loudly and clearly his purpose on earth: **HE CALLED MOSTLY EVERYONE FRIEND!** which was an amazing thing due to the fact that technically we were all still ENEMIES OF GOD and certainly not his *friends*. He died for us while we were still enemies in order to re-

establish the broken *friendship* and give credence to his prophecy of calling us *friends*! He clearly wanted us to EXPERIENCE *FRIENDSHIP* WITH GOD (with him) AND WITH ONE ANOTHER!

Mankind now has available to it the merits of the reconciliation, the redemption, the restoration of *friendship* that Jesus accomplished for us all. There is only one condition that goes with it: **belief and action!** Believing that it is so, that Jesus is the One who accomplished these amazing things; the action of living like we believe it to be so – having his teachings and his presence make a profound difference in the way we approach and live out our daily lives. We must apply what happened on the Cross and in the Tomb – or else what good are they to us or to anyone else?

A couple of interesting references from the Roman Missal: In Eucharistic Prayer IV we read: “Even when he disobeyed you and lost your *friendship* you did not abandon him to the power of death, but helped all men to seek and find you.” This, of course, refers to Adam and Eve’s broken relationship of *friendship* that needed healing by God himself for it to be valid, true and lasting. (This same notion is evident in the Preface: Sunday in Ordinary Time VIII: “When your children sinned and wandered far from your *friendship*, you reunited them with yourself through the blood of your Son and the power of the Holy Spirit.)

Again, in the First Reconciliation Eucharistic Prayer we read: “At the end of the meal, knowing that he was to reconcile all things in himself by the blood of his cross, he took the cup, filled with wine. Again he gave you thanks, handed the cup to his *friends*, and said: Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood...which

will be shed for you, and for all.” In these very words of consecration the word *friends* is used.

Previous to this Jesus said: “I no longer call you servants, I call you *friends*, for I have made known to you all that the Father has told me.” And, “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s *friends*. He said to them too: “You are my *friends* if you do what I command you!”

Jesus, we know had many *friendships*, some of them very close: with John the Apostle, with Mary Magdalene, with Lazarus, Martha and Mary, with Zacchaeus, with the Samaritan Woman, with each of his Apostles – with many others! And I would imagine that he made each one feel like they were his closest and dearest *friend* – because he treated them with great dignity, great respect and wanted nothing from them, *but rather desired always to be allowed to give something to them in service!* They laughed, cried, had good times and shared the bad times! They were REAL ecstatic *friends* – (and what do you know, there was no “sex” involved – no “orgasmic” expression of *friendship*).

There are many other Scriptural references that back up the notion that *friendship* is of prime and primary importance. For example: Exodus 33:11 “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his *friend*.” 1 Samuel 20:42 “Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, for we have sworn *friendship* with each other in the name of the Lord, saying “The Lord is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.”[This is a classic model of true and real *friendship*. It also foreshadows the experience that the members of the Christian community would have with one another). Job: 2:11 “When Job’s three *friends*

heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their home and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.” Job 12:4 “I have become a laughingstock to my *friends*...though righteous and blameless” Job 42:10 “After Job had prayed for his *friends*, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.” [Job praying for his *friends* who deserted him is a prophecy of Jesus praying for his *friends*, the Apostles, who deserted him after his Last Supper with them.] Proverbs 17:17 “A *friend* loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” Proverbs 18:24 “A Man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a *friend* who sticks closer than a brother.” Proverbs 27:6 “Wounds from a *friend* can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.”

Ecclesiastes 4:10 “If one falls down, his *friend* can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up.” Song of Solomon 5:16 “His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my *friend*, O daughters of Jerusalem.” [This is an amazing reference of the relationship of *friend* that ought to exist between married lovers!] Jeremiah 3:4 “Have you not just called to me: ‘my father, my *friend* from my youth?’

The gospels are filled with references to *friendship*, including these: Matthew 11:19 “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a *friend* of tax collectors and sinners.’” Jesus is constantly calling people: “*friend*” Matthew 20:13 “*friend*, I am not being unfair to you. Did you not agree to work for a denarius?” Matthew 22:12 “*friend*, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?” Matthew 26:50 (to Judas) “*friend*, do what you came for.” Luke 5:20 “When Jesus saw their faith, he said, ‘*friend*, your sins are forgiven.’” Luke 21:16 “You will be betrayed even by

parents, brothers, relatives and *friends*, and they will put some of you to death.”

There are many references to *friendship* in the writings of St. John: John 11:11 “Our *friend* Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” John 21:5 After the resurrection “Jesus called out to them, ‘*friends*, haven’t you any fish?’” [This is enormously significant: Jesus reaction to the desertion of his best *friends* after the Last Supper and at his Crucifixion was to offer them peace, and to call the more than ever *friend*! Amazing!]

In the writings of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James and St. Jude and once again in the Letters of St. John there are numerous references to the Christian community itself as being a “community of *friends*.” The whole notion of “communion of saints” as a “communion of *friends*” begins here: more about this later.

Let it suffice to say that in the early centuries of the Church: the term *friend*, the concept of *friendship* and the activity of BEING *FRIENDS* **had a very special and even sacred meaning**: after all JESUS HIMSELF – CAME TO BE OUR *FRIEND* – AND TO RESTORE *FRIENDSHIP* TO ITS ORIGINAL DIGNITY!

The Fathers of the Church including St. Ambrose, St. Augustine and St. Jerome all had something to say about *friendship* (as no doubt did or do all of the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church). Jerome said: “The *friendship* that can cease has never been real!” [St. Jerome also is said to have considered a lion his own *friend*; opening the possibility to the reality of the special relationship that man can and certainly does have with animals, especially domesticated pets. “A man’s best *friend* truly could be his dog!]

These early Fathers of course based their ideas of

friendship – in addition to a theological basis gotten from the Church itself, also on the writings of Cicero and Aristotle – who based their notions on pagan ideas of *friendship*. This in itself ought to prove that the basic elements of *friendship* transcend philosophy and theology to what is essentially true, good and holy – to God the Author and Origin of *friendship*! Cicero in general, but Aristotle more particularly, categorized *friendships* into three types: *friendships* of utility, of pleasure, of virtue - the last being the most desirable and the most pure.

I would categorize them, based on the premise of this paper, into just two types: of the married, of the celibate – human persons. In the long run, men and women are either married or single. If they are married there is a manifestation of true and real *friendship* that differs to some degree from the manifestation of true and real *friendship* that occurs with the non-married, single and therefore, categorically sexually celibate person. Married *friendship* involves a sexual expression (adding the “orgasmic” to the “ecstatic” – because it participates in God’s intention to create another human person); non-married celibate *friendship* does not involve this dimension – it simply has the potential to be ecstatic. Yet, both are full, complete and meaningful experiences of real, true, genuine and authentic *friendship* – which originates in God and, if real, will lead back to God, the giver of the gift of *friendship* in the first place!

What Aristotle and others consider *friendships* of utility and pleasure – are not really categorical *friendships* at all, in my estimation. *friendship* necessitates as close as possible a full disclosure: the fuller, the more real the *friendship*. Scripture tells us: “I know my sheep and my sheep know me!” (They are my *friends*. I will lay down my life for

them”.) GOD certainly KNOWS all about us, for he made us – but in order for us to KNOW him he would have to REVEAL himself – which is what he did in sending JESUS, his Word, his Son, his *friend* – to be our knowledge, our Brother, and our *friend*! What we call “*friends*” (of utility and pleasure) are not really then *friends* at all – they are merely “acquaintances” with whom we have more or less intense usually temporary, although sometimes more extended bonds.

A *friend* is appreciated, loved and is a subject of our attention *for his or her own sake* – as purely and fully as possible – rather than for our own utility and pleasure. It is true, “a *friend*” is someone who knows all about us, and loves us anyway!” (Thanks be to God: otherwise, the Word of God would never have become flesh!)

What comes close to my definition of *friendship* is Aristotle’s understanding of *friendship* of virtue. These *friends* (between two or as I would believe, more than two) are each virtuous in themselves, they put the other(s) first: for the other person’s sake; they are interested in similar virtuous and Spirit-based ideas, discussions, activities and projects; there is a mutual respect and sense of helpfulness: they wish their *friend*(s) well for their *friends*’ sake, in a sense they are “soul-mates” – the other person becomes, in a sense an extension of oneself. This definition by Aristotle I agree with in general, but I sense that it can be a bit overly idealistic. For in that it is difficult to find anyone who is 100% interested in another person’s interests. However, I do subscribe to the intent of purity and the chastity and the self-less-ness that is intimated

here. These definitely tie in with the theological understanding that true *friendship* - as given by God - requires.

*I must insert here that for any of what I am saying to make sense there must be a clear, concise and precise use of the term "*friend*." For my purposes it requires a God-based, God-goaled dynamic relationship between two, or among more than two, persons.

So, what do we do with Aristotle's *friendships* of utility and pleasure – the very first thing is to NOT CALL THEM *FRIENDSHIPS* AT ALL. They do not fit into the pure definition of *friendship* that I am attempting to formulate here, and therefore ought not to be associated with *friendship* (for my purposes here). A true and real *friend* cannot be a person with whom we have minimal and or superficial contact – for utilitarian or self-gratifying purposes. Therefore, the supermarket clerk, the financial advisor, a teammate, a classmate, a barraksmate and a host of other useful, close and even necessary one-one or group relationships are more adequately described as "acquaintanceships" "companionships" "partnerships" or as parties who are "allies" "associates" buddies" "chums" "cohorts" "colleagues" "compatriots" "comrades" "confidants" "consorts" "cronies" "familiaris" "mates" "pals" "playmates" "sidekicks."

It would be helpful (for my purposes here) if "*friend*" were reserved and used only for those who are attempting to develop the above described God-centered relationship! Just as we then "misuse" the word *friend* (according to this construct) – which

ought to be a truly “sacred word” right up there with God the Father, and Jesus and the Holy Spirit – there ought to be as comprehensive but more “secular” one-word-term for the above named non-theological combinations of people. I have no idea what that word might be, but I hope, at least you can see my point, that it might be helpful to have one.

A *friend*, summarily, is a consistent and ever-present (although not necessarily physically present) person in one’s life for the pursuit of and mutual enjoyment of what is right, good and holy: that is: GOD. A *friend* is not an object in any sense, but rather a subject placed there most always by God himself] because everyone basically needs to “wash feet” - as Jesus commanded his *friends* to do – to prove his *friendship* with him – and to see to the welfare of the *friend*! Even the non-religious can no doubt see the logic in this! Everyone needs at least ONE TRUE *FRIEND* in one’s life, at all times!: everyone needs to “wash feet!”

CHASTITY

A concept that ought to touch EVERY relationship of *friendship* is that of **CHASTITY**. When one hears the term “chaste” or “chastity” one immediately, most likely, thinks of sex: this “chastity” must have something to do with sexual activity. Well, this is only partly true, and one of the definitions. Chastity can have to do with the absence of sexual activity; but it can also have to do with the attitude of mind and heart that is open, free, clear, clean and pure of any sort of defilements, so to receive what a giver might have to offer. In our case here the “giver” is God, and the “gift” is

everything that has to do with life, holiness and goodness. A great much of the time sexual activity can bring with it all kinds of baggage that makes it closed, costly, cluttered and filled with all kinds of defilements, distractions and impediments to the open channel that is necessary for the experience of true sexual union – this is why **chastity is actually sexual activity's best ally!** And it is not only sexual activity's best ally in a relationship, but also non-sexual activity's best ally in a relationship.

In every day in age, including our own, there is a mistaken idea that sexual activity [and all kinds and degrees of 'foreplay activity'] – alone or with another – is a requirement for healthy living. It is almost as though "sex" is looked upon in the same category as "food" and "drink" and "air" and "exercise." "Sex" needs to be taken out of that line-up because **it is not absolutely necessary for a balanced life!** What is absolutely necessary however is to know how to deal with hormonal activity and energies that are produced in every body whether that body is destined for marriage or not!

Some may say: well, animals have food, drink, air, exercise *and sexual activity on quite a regular basis* so why can't I? Because, though you are "animal-like" on the one-hand; you have a rational mind, and a human will which animals do not have – you can conclude by your own study, reflection and prayer that sexual activity for the animal is *instinctual*, but for the human it is both instinctual and a conscious, decisive cooperative venture that includes consultation with the Creator of all – who is entrusting you with co-creative powers with him – to populate his household the way in which he wants it done and not you!

In the plan of God – who gave it – sexual activity in humans is meant to be used in a truly "sacramental" way – as an activity which is a sign of the "great mystery" of his own self, and his love for us – and his plans for our future with him; any other use of sex for human beings is misuse. Human sexual activity ought *never to be used* in an *experimental* kind of way – either alone or with another; in a *recreational* sort of way – alone or with another; in a *therapeutic* sort

of way – alone or with another; in an *exploitative* kind of way: no matter how well-intentioned – alone or with another. This ought to be taught “from the crib” – so that generations of children and young adults having a balanced, rational and prayerful approach to “sexual / hormonal feelings” which can be transformed into projects of selfless giving and true care for others in need.

The bottom line here comes down to the amazing freedom, happiness and even joy that comes from **chastely keeping the channels open between oneself and God** – so that grace can pass to and fro, inspirations can pass to and fro, and prayer itself can pass to and fro. With **GOD AS OUR BEST FRIEND**– he will show us how to live in the world as he has already chosen for us as the best possible way – either as a married person, or as a single person [or as a single person on the way to marriage]. Either way if we make it a top priority to preserve our **chastity of body and purity of mind** we will surely win out both now and forever in an eternity that is wonderful beyond our wildest imaginings!

CHASTITY AND THEOLOGICAL *FRIENDSHIP* – SALVATION HISTORY IN TERMS OF *FRIENDSHIP*

I have already mentioned this theme above, but I would like to restate it here in capsule form. God created mankind to be his *friends*. Mankind refused God's *friendship* and made *friends* with the world (Satan) instead. God desired to reconcile mankind and restore the *friendship* and so he sent his own beloved Son/Friend Jesus – to be our Savior and our *friend* – and to show us the way home – basically to *FRIENDSHIP HALL*! *Scripture, the life of the early Church, the lives and witness of the saints, and their reference as a communion of souls who help us still with their friendship, the references made to the salvific restoration of friendship between mankind and God the Father, by means of the blood of Jesus is found in the Roman Missal and in the Liturgy of the Hours all make it very clear that above all else there is the sacred, holy, pure, chaste relationship of friendship which seems to be of paramount interest in the mind of God*

himself, as well as in the mind of Jesus, and in the mind of the Church! Can we dispute such evidence?

Perhaps the relationship of St. John and Jesus can be mentioned here as an example of how God intends us to relate to him and to one another as members of the Church. John after all was Jesus' "best" *friend*. The other apostles knew that the "love of *friendship*" involved in their close FRIENDSHIP was especially deep. Jesus, of course, had, and continues to have his favorites. Why should he not? He loves us all equally in that he did die for us as *friends*, but there are some who interact with him in a personally more open, deep, trusting kind of way who can be considered DEAR, CLOSE *FRIENDS*! Throughout the ages of the Church many of the saints have pleased Jesus and his Father very much and have been considered great *friends*! And so, just as John was called to a special relationship with Jesus – there are two categories of people who likewise are called to a special relationship with him because of the witness value of the relationship: the first is the married couple; the second is the "confirmed" celibate. I would like to discuss both now!

CHASTITY AND THE *FRIENDSHIP* OF MARRIAGE

First of all: **only celibate *friends* ought to marry**. Then, just as the purity and chastity of John's relationship with Jesus led him to an ecstatic experience of love (we will see more about this later) so too the purity and chastity of married love can do the same thing. *Married love can be a participation in and experience of the ecstatic eternal exchange of love between the Father and the Son (which is the Holy Spirit)*. This eternal exchange is a definition of the Trinity! What is so wonderful is that here, in this context, God gives the go-ahead, the green-light to consummate the

marriage with the *marital embrace* [the physical, emotional, spiritual union of persons: bodies/minds/spirits] which is open to the creation of new life! **This is the “orgasmic” dimension of the “ecstatic” that is reserved for married couples only!** This is the only setting where all of the ramifications of such a union can be satisfied and met! If in the process, the husband and wife, in cooperation with God himself as the third contributor, create a new life: a child – then heaven rejoices, the Father is delighted and the parents can truly count themselves blessed in a special way! This is not the time to discuss the methods and conditions for limiting the number of births – let it suffice to say that the Church is not as out-of-touch as many people these days might think. Hopefully, reading on will supply some of the desired information.

In brief: as we said above: sexual activity is *not* a daily requirement for “happy living.” In fact, such a practice would frankly be quite exhausting, I would imagine! The KEY therefore to a healthy married life and a reasonable number of children is the embracing of **marital chastity** as a very high priority. Yes, this includes abstinence, even a lot of it. But, with all of the other kinds of truly satisfying yet not physically arousing types of signs of affection – a much saner, tamer, refreshing quality model of married life would emerge. Lust will have taken a back seat, where it belongs [if not jettisoned from the vehicle all together] and real love will have taken front stage. How many couples secretly marry just to legitimize unbridled lust? This is no reason to be married at all. Only heartache and eventual dissolution could be the predictable outcome of such unions. Marital chastity, rightly understood and freely chosen could make a very big and positive difference in anyone’s marriage – and dramatically reduce the need to resort to divorce.

Married life and love are about inviting the presence of the Holy Spirit into each and every activity, so that each one brims with possibility, shimmers with enthusiasm, and exudes the sweet smell of the sweat of human kindness! If God is not carrying a large portion of the ups and downs of a marriage – then the

couple is simply “not doing it right,” not getting the most out of what can be there for the receiving!

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are *self control: chastity – balance of life – respect for all others – self-sacrificing giving to everyone in need – and a deep and gut level feeling of doing right and yes, even, feeling good – we call this JOY!* But if “feeling good” 24/7 is the goal of any marriage, then it is doomed to failure!

CHASTITY AND THE *FRIENDSHIP* OF THE CELIBATE

The relationship of St. John the Apostle with Jesus, and in fact, with Mary as well (both whom were at the foot of the Cross of Jesus on Calvary) speaks of the *ecstatic nature* of a specifically chosen celibate lifestyle. John experienced a very deep, joyful, tender and giving relationship with Jesus; he also had a similar relationship with Mary, his Mother, after Jesus gave him to her so that he could look after her – and for that matter – so that they could look after each other. There was nothing “orgasmic” about John’s relationship with either Jesus or Mary – but both relationships were, no doubt, quite “ecstatic” – a true earthly, created experience of the Uncreated non-sexual boundlessly joyful eternal exchange of love among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. John could not have written about love and *friendship* as he did [his Gospel and Letters are filled with these themes] – if he did not have this profound experience. But what is so amazing is that the experience was not just for him alone – it is for anyone and everyone who allows Jesus to be their *Friend*, to be their Savior, to be their Redeemer.

At the Last Supper, Jesus sat with his *friends* and gave them himself as Eucharist. This action, foreshadowing the events of the next day when he would give his life for these, his *friends*, to PROVE HIS LOVE – and to be their ransom and the forgiveness of sins for them and for all – was an astounding event. The Eucharist we celebrate at Mass in his memory as he asked us to do is a real rekindling and refueling of that ONE TREMENDOUS *FRIENDSHIP* that changed the

world forever! We receive Jesus as our Lord, our God, our Savior and our *Friend*! **We must never forget HE IS OUR *FRIEND*!**

Celibacy, then, as modeled by Jesus himself, frees a person to love all others as *friends*, rather than to love a family first and then as many others as one can. *Celibacy is a gift from God*. It is not, in its confirmed sense, for everyone, because only God can give the call and the grace to live it as it ought to be lived. But for those people: being fully engaged in the “business of ministering” to God’s people in the way God chooses using them – the celibate way can be an ecstatic and wonderful experience. The exchange of love between them and God’s people can mirror that of the Trinity itself – and that of the Christ of the Eucharist! Therefore, religious life – a calling to be a brother or sister, or priest in a Religious Congregation [or a priest in the diocesan setting] is God’s way of getting to a great many people to get his Word to them – using the generous donation of the life of the one called! There are also persons who likewise feel called to be celibate and chaste, but not in a formal religious setting. As ordinary single Christians [men and women] they can still be very much used by God to minister to others – in many small and even great ways. They too can reflect God’s desire to be *friends* with everyone.

This brings up an interesting but more difficult to reconcile fact. This has to do with “the real world” conditions that exist in the face of these ideal propositions. In the “real world” everything is not so simply “black and white” – there are, in fact, a vast amount of shades of gray. It takes a great deal of work to understand and maintain any degree of the living out of an ideal. I know this. Everyone knows this. But this does not mean that the ideals do not or ought not exist, or that they should not be held up as goals even though falling short of them is to be expected.

The real-world condition that I would like to address is the “sexual” dimension known as “homo-or-same sexual-orientation” that a person might be born with. No doubt the arrangement of chromosomes that results in a person being born with a homo-sexual orientation rather than a hetero-or-opposite sexual-orientation comes from a very long

history of genetic and breeding chance mixings and matchings. Sometimes we hear it said that “God made me gay so he must approve of me!” Well, this is both true and not true. Your parents actually made the physical body of a gay person; God contributed the soul and personhood (image and likeness) at the same moment of conception. So, technically, speaking God *indirectly* makes a gay person’s body, while God *directly* makes his soul and personhood as he does for everyone. And as far as approval goes – God most certainly loves and approves of the gay individual as the human being he is and who is born into the world! But, he cannot approve of same-sexed sexual activity – because, as was demonstrated above it does not correspond to the approved of use of the sexual parts by individuals – males or females – and in the context that God himself intended them to be used in: marriage of a man and a woman! This would simply be going against his own laws; and why would he do that?

Does this mean that the gay person is then to be denied the experience of love? *By no means!* Gay persons have the same rights as everyone else has **to respond to God’s gift of love by experiencing the ecstatic exchange of love that comes from a deep and abiding relationship with him, and with other persons, other friends!** The “orgasmic” ecstatic is reserved for the married couple! Gay persons then – finding themselves in a “genetic situation” over which they have no control can find an enormous amount of satisfaction in participating in the celibate, non-sexual but very real, helpful and personally rewarding invitation to *genuine friendships* [with one or more persons] that can last for life – and beyond. This is discussed much more fully in my previous paper (ON LIFE) – but having this entire paper as a prelude to it (or a reference after reading it) should make it all much clearer.

Again, *friendship* does not have to be “orgasmic” to be real and “loving”; but every *friendship* has the potential to be a dynamic, life giving, ecstatic exchange of love that can see us through life and into eternity!

CHASTITY AND THE *FRIENDSHIP* OF THE CHRISTIAN

This brings me to the first of the last three points that I want to make. Since Jesus came to restore *friendship* to its original status and power – and since the Church he founded is a community of his disciples, his *friends* – and since all of the sacraments have to do with the *friendship* (one way or another) – and since the Church is to be our guide through life: then the real authority on this *friendship* that is our origin, our companion and our goal ought to be the CHURCH! If Christ is our *friend*! then the CHURCH TOO OUGHT TO BE OUR *FRIEND*! and it is up to all of us to regard it as such, treat it as such, respect it as such, love it as such – which means starting with all of the people we see each week when we go to Church: the Church is the people in the pews, the Church is the priest at the altar, the Church is the Bishops and the Pope in Rome!

All of us – if we are true to our divine origins - are meant to be *friends* with God and with one another – come what may! This sounds very idealistic – but, it has to start somewhere – belief in this idea, and willingness to put it into practice! And then once we are *friends* within our own walls – in our own parishes – in our own families – in our own circles – then we have the obligation to take that *friendship*, that other-centered outlook, that JESUS - to everyone, everywhere! He asked us, his *friends*, to do that! Can we deny him his last request before ascending into heaven! Empowered by his subsequent gift of the Spirit – **WE CAN DO IT! WE CAN BEFRIEND THE WORLD! and prepare it for eternal life!**

CHASTITY AND THE COMMUNION OF *FRIENDS* – SAINTS

Yes, those who lived Christian lives and have gone before us, most especially the saints, the Church considers still to be alive and our *friends*, able to help us with their prayers until we one day join them in the great communion of saints: the great communion of *friends*! In the Preface for the

Feast of All Saints we read: “Father...in our communion with them [the saints], you give us their *friendship*.”

“This actual companionship within the kingdom is available to everyone, and it is not extraordinary. The great gift of the saints is they each bring something. They offer their lives as *wells of nourishment*, as *complete circles of schools of prayer*. They are like our true *friends* on earth. They are filled with love; they love to be with us; they love to love us. They remind us that ‘the only requirement for the kingdom of God, is an emptiness only God can fill.’”[G.B. Caird]

CHASTITY AND THE WEDDING FEAST OF THE LAMB

At last, one day Christ will come again! He will come as JUDGE for those who need judging. There are some, who will just never want to be his *friend*, and they will not be forced to do so, but they will be faced with the consequences of their rejection of him and his *friendship*. It will be eternal separation from God and from everyone else forever – there are no *friends* in hell, *friendship* does not exist there! It is only just. The misuse of freedom must be punished!

But for the rest that will be a grand and glorious day: it will be JESUS’ WEDDING DAY: IT WILL BE THE LONG AWAITED WEDDING FEAST OF THE LAMB OF GOD. The Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world: who gave himself up for his Bride: the Church, will at last marry that Bride, marry that Church: marry US – his *FRIENDS*! [It all fits in: the *FRIENDSHIP* CAME FIRST!] This is what it has all been leading to: GOD DESIRING TO MARRY HIS PEOPLE!

And this would not be a bigamous relationship, because all who are in Christ form just One Body, One Bride, One Christ - so Christ will actually be marrying One Bride – who is actually himself – so that ALL WILL BE ALL IN ALL – as God said it would be! This is the heart of the “great mystery” that is right in the middle of this whole discussion. A mystery that is not “too

mysterious,” because God chose to tell us all about it, and invite us to participate in it fully, by means of his legate: Jesus!

And it will be as it was in the beginning, with Adam and Eve: *FRIENDS* MARRYING! This time the **ecstatic exchange of love** that we only experienced in shadow images on earth: in Marriage and in Eucharist, will now explode into a sense of wonderment, joy and awe that will be “beyond orgasmic” – it will be a constantly erupting experience of outpouring, self-donation and gift, that will be “exchanged” with God and with all forever! It will be astounding!

And what is the price of the ticket to get into heaven: **BELIEF! BELIEF IN GOD! BELIEF IN FRIENDSHIP! BELIEF IN MARRIAGE AS IT WAS GIVEN! BELIEF IN CELIBACY AS A FORESHADOWING OF THIS GREAT NEW DAY IN ETERNITY** - and a life on earth living like we really did **believe** these things!

Of course, the doorway into the marriage feast of heaven is DEATH! There is no other way to get there: but, as Pope John Paul intimated in the Theology of the Body (but did not have the space or time to develop fully there), **the redemption wrought by Christ on the Cross has robbed death of its sting**. Jesus is longing to share the fruits of his resurrection – newness of life – with everyone in the world. If we just remember the ecstatic, more-than-orgasmic sense of living that awaits us on the other side of that brief moment of transition: we will see it as a welcome moment in life, for life – even in the midst of all kinds of pain and suffering that might be part and parcel of both living and dying! We need fear nothing at all!

As I said at the beginning of this paper, what I have written is very idealistic and would allow for slim chances for implementation, but if anyone can glean anything from what has been said here and apply it at all, perhaps many of the moral and social problems of the day can find the smallest beginnings of a refreshing new approach to age old problems! These are all, as I have stated, ideas stemming from Pope John Paul II’s magnificent work: *The Gospel of the Body* – “The Theology of the Body.” I recommend reading at least a synopsis of it. We have everything to lose if we just keep

on going the way we have been going or we just give up; we have so very much to gain, if we begin by making true and lasting *FRIENDS* WITH GOD!

It would seem then, that, if we truly were his *FRIEND* WITH CHASTE BODIES AND PURE MINDS what he commanded us to do would make much more sense to us – as would the loving prohibitions that he places on us for our own good and the good of others who deal with us!

In this way: moral issues such as the ones I discussed in (ON LIFE): abortion, embryonic stem cell research, gay marriage and other social issues such as war, hunger, disease, and the like - can more calmly, clearly and easily be dealt with!

***FRIENDS* TAKE CARE OF *FRIENDS* – ESPECIALLY THE LEAST OF THEM!** Jesus told us of this REQUIREMENT FOR HIS WEDDING FEAST: **the activity of *friendship* is the WEDDING GARMENT** that we all must be wearing on the Day when the gates of heaven are opened to us and it is time for the FEASTING to begin!

“Whatsoever you do to the least of my brother and sisters, to the least of my *friends*, you do unto me! – Come, blessed of my Father, yours is the kingdom prepared for you!”

In summary:

What I am proposing for consideration is that *FRIENDSHIP* precedes MARRIAGE AND FAMILY, CONFIRMED CELIBACY and unconfirmed celibacy as well. *Friendship* is not only the key relationship in this life, but it is also the key to life in the Kingdom of God in the next world itself. It's all about REAL *FRIENDSHIP*!

From our earliest years we need to be taught that the basic stance in life is TO GIVE, and to receive only what is freely given to us – this is what REAL *FRIENDS* DO.

We need to be taught TO BE A “FOOTWASHING” *FRIEND*, rather than a collector of useful, self-gratifying acquaintances – we need to be very careful about how we used that holy and sacred word: *friend*!

We need to be taught that those who are CHASTE IN BODY and PURE IN MIND are the ones who find the most amount of ecstatic joy in real, true, genuine, authentic and GOD GIVEN *FRIENDSHIPS*. Often times this leads to married *friendship*; sometimes it leads to celibate *friendship*!

We need to be taught that in the end all God will want to know is if are his *friend* or not; and can we prove it by how well we were got to know and love him, and were *friends* with those he put us on earth with!

What will YOUR answer be?

Father William Dinga, Jr.

December 8, 2008

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Addenda:

Since December 8th, in the ordinary course of the journey through my days I have run across these three items that support what was presented earlier in this essay. No doubt there are a great many more examples and causes for support that are “out there” for the “recognition.” These three are noteworthy!

- Article #374 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “The first man was not only created good, but was also established in *friendship* [emphasis mine] with his Creator and in harmony with himself and with the creation around him, in a state that would be surpassed only by the glory of the new creation in Christ.”

- January 2 is the Feast of two great friends of the Eastern Church: Basil and Gregory [Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen]. Both were bishops, both were doctors of the Church. Both like the “ecstatic *friends*” mentioned above in this document. The following is from a sermon by Saint Gregory Nazianzen:

Basil and I were both in Athens. We had come, like streams of a river, from the same source in our native land, had separated from each other in pursuit of learning, and were now united again as if by plan, for God so arranged it.

I was not alone at that time in my regard for my *friend* [emphasis mine], the great Basil. I knew his irreproachable conduct, and the maturity and wisdom of his conversation. I sought to persuade others, to whom he was less well known, to have the same regard for him. Many fell immediately under his spell, for they already heard of him by reputation and hearsay.

Such was the prelude to our *friendship*, the kindling of that flame that was to bind us together. In this way we began to feel affection for each other. When, in the course of time, we acknowledged our friendship and recognized that our ambition was a life of true wisdom, we became everything to each other: we shared the same lodging, the same table, the same desires, the same goal. Our love for each other grew daily warmer and deeper.

The same hope inspired us: the pursuit of learning. This is an ambition especially subject to envy. Yet between us there was no envy. On the contrary, we made capital out of our rivalry. Our rivalry consisted, not in seeking the first place for oneself but in yielding it to the other, for we each looked on the other's success as his own.

We seemed to be two bodies with a single spirit. Though we cannot believe those who claim that “everything is contained in everything,” yet you must believe that in our case each of us was in the other and with the other.

Our single object and ambition was virtue, and a life of hope in the blessings that are to come; we wanted to withdraw from this world before we departed from it. With this end in view we ordered our lives and all our actions. We followed the guidance of God's law and spurred each other on to virtue. If it is not too boastful to say, we

found in each other a standard and rule for discerning right from wrong.

Different men have different names, which they owe to their parents or to themselves, that is, to their own pursuits and achievements. But our great pursuit, the great name we wanted, was to be Christians, to be called Christians!

[These notes of Gregory are an amazing affirmation and confirmation of everything that I have proposed in this essay! There truly is nothing new under the sun. Jesus Christ – his Way, his Truth, his Life – are the same yesterday, today and forever!]

- The third addendum I would like to add also corresponds to a concept in the above essay: the church is a *communion of friends*. The saints are our *true friends* who have gone before us to be proof of the existence of the afterlife – and also great intercessors, companions along the way. *Friendship* with them can take classic for such as the one between St. Joseph and Blessed Brother Andre Bessette, CSC. – whose feast is celebrated today!

Blessed Brother Andre was a French Canadian who joined the Congregation of Holy Cross as a brother much to the consternation of the members of the order. In 1870, Alfred Bessette's pastor sent him to them with a note: "I am sending you a saint." The Brothers found that difficult to believe. The young man suffered from chronic stomach pains and never could hold down a job for very long as a youth. The Holy Cross Brothers were teachers, and at 25 Alfred still did not know how to read or write.

It seemed like a desperate situation but Alfred prayed very fervently to God and to St. Joseph that God's will be made known. The Brothers took him in to the novitiate but it was soon evident that he was not strong enough to do his work. However, the bishop promised him that he could remain there and so he took vows.

After his profession Brother Andre was sent to Notre Dame College in Montreal (a school of boys) where he took up duties as a porter: the doorman! He lived in a tiny, cold cell near the door! He later joked saying: "After my novitiate my superiors showed me the door, and I stayed there for forty years!"

Brother Andre's devotion to St. Joseph increased and he wanted nothing more than to make devotion to the "forgotten member of the Holy Family" known! To this end he buried a small statue of St. Joseph across the street from the College on a hill in Montreal – and then waited to see what would happen. Soon the idea to build a small chapel on the mountain to honor St. Joseph came to him and he approached the Archbishop of Montreal. The prelate told him that he was free to build what he could fund – no outside funds would be available. And so gathering nickels and dimes, Andre built a small wooden chapel to honor St. Joseph. From the outset miraculous things began to happen – all from intercession of St. Joseph.

People would come soon from miles around to see "the Wonder Man of Mount Royal." Andre was always adamant in making it clear that it was his dearly beloved *friend* St. Joseph who was the cause of the miracles!

Soon, so many people were coming to the Shrine of St. Joseph to hear Mass and to offer prayers for healing that Andre asked the Archbishop if a larger chapel could be built. Again the Archbishop told him that he could keep building so long as there was no debt. Plans evolved in time for what is now known as St. Joseph's Oratory – a very large, copper-domed worship space built near the original wooden chapel (that is still in existence!)

All the while Andre would work tirelessly as porter at the College, as well as barber and gardener. Finally at the age of 91 Brother Andre was near death and so many of those who had come to love him and experience healing from St. Joseph through his intercession wanted to make sure he saw the large statue of St. Joseph that was to be placed atop the unfinished roof of the Oratory. They took him to see it and he was filled with joy – but he knew that the Oratory really never would be finished as there would always be need for more devotion to this beloved saint and more expressions of gratitude would be forthcoming!

Shortly before his death, in the night, an attendant came to minister to him – he was in so much pain. He rubbed a medal of St. Joseph on Andre's chest and then told him that he had had a dream. "I saw Heaven in a dream, Brother Andre." And he began to describe the dazzling beauty of God, the splendor

of the angles, the elect, the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph, somewhat in the manner in which Brother Andre had often spoken about it: "Near Saint Joseph," he said, "there was a fine armchair. Approaching it boldly I asked for whom this fine seat was reserved." "For my *best friend* on earth," replied Saint Joseph. "Do you not fear another will occupy it?" "No, I have engraved his name on it. Look at it closely." "Guess, what it read, Brother?" Brother Andre, who had listened to the tale with interest, without suspecting the hidden snare, said: "What was it?" "I read, "Brother Andre." "Oh, don't say that; I wish only to be Saint Joseph's little dog." "Yes, but that little dog will bark so loud that the whole world will hear it!"

Brother Andre died on January 6, 1937. Over a million people came to pay their respects to the Miracle Man of Montreal! Brother Andre is a primary example of trusting in God's astounding *friendship* that can help us to what we are intended to do in life – no matter what our health situation or other external circumstances might be! And it is an amazing example of the *friendship* that does exist between Saints in heaven and saints on earth. This saint on earth was beatified in 1982 by Pope John Paul II. Soon the prophecy will be fulfilled and Congregation of Holy Cross will have its promised saint!

Addenda given:
January 6, 2009
Feast of Blessed Brother Andre Bessette