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How can I understand celibacy?

Is it a the condition of not being married? Yes, celibacy in general is not marrying, for the celibate person does not get married. However, that is not all.

A bachelor does not get married either, but there is a great and basic difference between the bachelor and the celibate.

Let us review the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Him be glory, when he taught about celibacy after he had discussed marriage and divorce. "His disciples said to him: 'If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.' But He said to them, 'All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it!'" (Mt. 18: 10 - 12).

Thus, the celibate person is the one who made himself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake

Can everyone accept these words?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, to Him be glory, said: "but only those to whom it has been given..... He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."

We wonder why He did not say this when He taught about prayer, or charity, or fasting, or when He completed the law of the Old Testament. The answer is clear; everyone has to accept these virtues and pursue them as they are necessary and useful for their salvation. But as for those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, not everyone is able to do it, but only those to whom it is given.

Celibacy is a Gift of God

Those who think that it is merely a struggle on the part of the individual are wrong, no

matter how holy that struggle is.

Otherwise our Lord would not have said: **“but only to whom it has been given .. and he who is able to accept it, let him accept it.”**

Therefore, it is a gift granted by God to individuals whose hearts He has examined, whose ardent love that pervades their life He knows.

They have made eunuchs of themselves for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. This reveals the extent and greatness of their surpassing love.

The celibate offers his life as a holy sacrifice, a sacrifice of love, on the altar of celibacy. It is true that everybody is invited to the kingdom, and everyone longs for the kingdom, and all are members in the body of Christ, but the soul of the celibate is a special bride of Christ's.

The soul of the celibate has gone out after its Lord and is attached to Him. It lays all its life wholly in the hands of its Lord, and so Jesus Christ becomes its groom.

The Real Bridegroom of the Soul

Celibacy, as well as being a gift granted by God, is also a holy marriage, a strong and holy bond with Christ Who sanctifies all the bonds of marriage.

This holy marriage is totally confirmed, first of all, by the element of love which gives determination and purpose. It is this love that gives all future striving meaning and value; it grants to those to whom it is given a pure will that does not rebel. It gives them a strong faith and great boldness that make them turn their back on the whole world with all its pleasures to desire Christ and to be enlightened by His love.

The celibate, who has fixed his eyes, his emotions, and his will as a special bride on the Beloved, devotes his life for the sake of Christ Himself. He does not consecrate it to any work or service however great, but, as the Lord says, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

This holy objective gives the service of the consecrated celibate the power of witnessing. St. Paul the Apostle was a celibate and served and ministered as the greatest minister in Christianity. Fiery Elijah, who was celibate, carried out the greatest of tasks; the secret of his power was that he fixed his eyes on the God of his holy fathers and was jealous with the

jealousy of the Lord.

The soul of the celibate, which has become the bride of Christ, can confirm and witness to the surpassing beauty of Christ. It abandons everything to follow Him; its thought is free of all sense of the world. It separates itself from the world to unite with the Only One; it abandons many to unite with the One Who is fairer than the sons of men.

How beautiful are the words of one of the celibates:

O sweet and greatly beloved Jesus, grant that I may rest in You.

Above every creature

Above every health and beauty

Above every glory and honor

Above every wealth and prosperity

Above every knowledge and intelligence

Above every fortune and art

Above every happiness and joy

Above every sweetness and comfort

Above every promise and hope

Above every deserving and desire

Above all You give as gifts and talents

Above every happiness and joy; for my heart cannot really rest or walk well unless it rests in You, rising above every gift and every creation.

Lord Jesus Christ, my greatly beloved bridegroom, O great and pure love, the Master of all creation, grant me the wings of real freedom so that I might fly and rest in You.

Let others ask for whatever seems good to them other than You, but as for me, nothing is or will be good to me except You alone.

You are my God, my hope, my eternal salvation.

Celibacy is a gift, a holy marriage, and a bond of pure love; in it, the celibate soul sings a hymn of praise saying: "I am my beloved's; and my beloved is mine."(Song6:3).

Just as the bride leaves her home, her family, and her people to belong to the man who has become her head, all her love, and all her people, so does the soul do the same, if not more. The celibate soul becomes a special bride of Christ's, leaving all its interests and business to walk in the way and in the light of its Bridegroom. It knows the paths of its Lord and His footsteps as He climbs the mountain of Golgotha. So it follows Him fearlessly and without hesitation. It drinks with Him the cup with delight and tastes suffering with Him happily. In spite of this, it is drunk with love and rejoices with hope. When it contemplates the glory that awaits it in the Beloved, its suffering is made lighter. Its whole being is emptied of the love of the world with all its beauties and pleasures because it has become the bride of the Victorious One Who has victory over the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, the real Bridegroom.

This holy marriage and living bond is completely apprehended by a mind that is open and aware of its nature. That is why the celibate individual does not despise or look down on marriage, for he did not become celibate in an attempt to escape marriage.

His life overflows with love and sweetness; he has all the potential to live a married life. Therefore, his attitude to marriage is a holy and humble one.

However, he follows the teachings of St. Paul the Apostle when he said: "But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord -- how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world -- how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about both the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But he who is married cares about the things of the world -- how she may please her husband." (1 Cor. 7: 32 -34).

Marriage has its duties and responsibilities, and in the face of this demanding love, the love of the husband or wife is divided.

For the sake of the undivided heart and of the surpassing love that fills the heart of the celibate, he consecrates his celibacy to Christ so that Christ may become all his preoccupation and all his love, and that he might become wholly, body, soul, and spirit, a temple of the Lord and a holy dwelling place for Him.

When he offers all his life a sacrifice of love, he cannot boast or feel that he has done anything greater than the married person. This is for the simple reason that he is aware of

the truth, which is that celibacy is a grace and a free gift from above. If the celibate makes the error of boasting, he falls from this lofty love and distorts the beauty of celibacy.

Christ continues to bless the Sacrament of marriage; a sanctified marriage does not prevent a person from fellowship with God and from reaching the highest levels of worship.