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# A Pastoral Approach to the Topic of Sexuality in Priestly Formation Programs in Parts of Eastern Europe

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**A Pastoral Approach to the Topic of Sexuality in Priestly Formation  
Programs in Parts of Eastern Europe**

*A thesis by  
Vitaliy Osmolovskyy, SJ*

presented to  
The Faculty of the  
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Committee Signatures

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# **A Pastoral Approach to the Topic of Sexuality in Priestly Formation Programs in Parts of Eastern Europe**

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*Vitaliy Osmolovskyy, SJ*

## **Abstract**

In this thesis, I explore a pastoral approach towards the topic of sexuality during priestly formation programs in parts of Eastern Europe, at the same time, identifying many elements that surround this particular topic in the different societies where the candidates were raised. In this world of rapid change, one in which life moves quickly and people often seek novelty, it is necessary to hold on to the fact that we are sexual beings, ones open to growth and maturity. Regardless of vocation, sexuality remains an essential component of who we are. This work engages relevant literature, ecclesial documents, some statistical indicators, and the views of seminarians and their formators, impressions forged in over ten years of my own religious formation and pastoral work among youth, particularly around pilgrimages.

The aim of this thesis is to underscore the belief that human sexuality is not only an integral part of each human being, but a gift from God, one which enriches the whole person and provides a pathway to the love of God, neighbor, and self. Far from emphasizing fear around this human aspect, it promotes an embrace of it, and in this way, puts forth an alternative view to what many have experienced in their priestly formation programs.

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Prof. Eduardo Fernández, SJ, Director

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I also wish to thank my friends, brothers, sisters, colleagues, and all those persons who came to my assistance with valuable materials, suggestions, guidance, and sharing of experiences, trusting me, and giving me their undying support. I also, likewise, want to acknowledge my helpful writing coaches Jerry Lindner, SJ and Sullivan Oakley. In the

same manner, I would like to express my gratitude and affection for my proof reader, Gabriela Martinez-Harding. Final appreciation and special wholehearted thanks goes to Father John P. McGarry, S.J., rector of the Jesuit Community. I remain grateful to you all.

## Introduction

“I want to ask you, as clearly as I can, to bear with patience all that is unresolved in your heart, and try to love the questions themselves, as if they were rooms yet to enter or books written in a foreign language. Don’t dig for answers that can’t be given you yet: you live them now. For everything must be lived. Live the questions now, perhaps then, someday, you will gradually, without noticing, live into the answer.”

Rainer Maria Rilke Worpswede, July 16, 1903

*Letters to a Young Poet*

The world of theology and the world of sexuality can often appear to be far apart from each other, but in reality, they are not. We are tempted to think about ourselves as beings divided into two parts, body and soul, and we generally consider good all matters pertaining to the soul, while things related to the body are seen as bad or evil. But then we have this: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them...” (Gen 1:27). In this paradigm, our sexuality, an inherent part of humanity and a gift from God, is a part of God’s plan of creation. If our sexuality comes from God, then, there is nothing in it to be ashamed of, but rather, it is something to enjoy.<sup>1</sup> It is so important for us as a people of God to receive and accept everything that God has given us. We are called to receive, develop and share gifts from God with our neighbors, rather than simply keep it for ourselves. A human being is an integrated whole and cannot be divided in two elements, body and soul, thus sexuality and our bodies are among these God given gifts that we are called to receive, develop, and share. For example, the Hebrew view of the human person was one of the person as an integrated whole. The Hebrews never divided people into body and soul, as did the Greek dualists, or into body,

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<sup>1</sup> Clifford and Loyce Penner, *The Gift of Sex. A Christian Guide to Sexual Fulfillment* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1981), 35-36.

soul, and spirit, as some of us would say today.<sup>2</sup> Stephen Sapp, summarizes this approach in a beautiful way:

“Once and for all, any dualistic view of the body as evil and less valuable than the soul has been laid to rest, and the Christian can affirm the body and therefore human sexuality, neither solely as a “natural” phenomenon nor as a regrettable necessity, but as a God-given gift to be used responsibly and to be enjoyed”.<sup>3</sup>

I have been asked frequently by many people (lay and clergy) if my thesis’s topic about sexuality is appropriate for “someone like myself,” i.e., a clergyman. My answer has been, most certainly; clergy and religious are human beings with sexuality, with sexual drives, desires, and orientations, and in order for those aspects to develop in a healthy and expansive way, we, too, must be thinking, writing and speaking on these topics.

I chose this topic<sup>4</sup>, first of all, because of the current moral and cultural context in Eastern Europe. There seems to be a significant lack of maturity regarding the complex reality of sexuality. Sexuality, everywhere, is often understood as the sexual behavior of people; however, in its fullness, sexuality is so much broader and deeper than this; it goes beyond the physical, into the psychological, the spiritual, the emotional, and the experiential. It is connected with sexual identity, desire, and ultimately, human flourishing. Sexuality is as innate to us as breathing or digestion. Each of us is born with

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>4</sup> I want to specify that some of my data referring to this subject was collected in a somewhat casual, non-scientific manner, at the same time, within professional, ministerial, and academic setting such as pilgrimages, workshops, academic and spiritual direction meetings, random encounters, and pastoral fieldwork.



a certain sexual capability that develops during our life, and this development is deeply influenced and shaped by the conditions and culture in which we are raised.

We can say that sexuality is comprised of psychic, socio-cultural and biological factors. It is a fundamental part of human life, including (and in some ways, especially in) the lives of those preparing for the priesthood. I consider this topic deeply important, not only because much of our work and ministry will be dealing with issues around sexuality in different contexts, but also because our own sexuality longs to find a healthy and integrated expression within our priestly vocation.

We serve many people as spiritual advisors, formators, confessors, and counselors; therefore, good, holistic training in the areas of sexuality should be an essential component of priestly formation.

Using an interdisciplinary approach, (disciplines such as ethics, sociology, psychology as well as moral theology). I will explore how sexuality is taught (or not taught) in seminaries in Eastern Europe, especially in Ukraine and Poland. In this work, I argue that sexuality, far from being a source of weakness and shame, affords the human being a particular, healing power. Given the post-communist era history of the Catholic Church in this part of the world, there are certain traits in regard to this topic that lend themselves to a deeper analysis. The presence of married clergy in Ukraine adds even more nuance and diversity to the topic, and how sexuality is taught in seminaries where there are both candidates preparing for married priesthood and those preparing for celibacy in priesthood creates space for a thought-provoking comparison.

I will argue that certain seminaries are not providing adequate training and formation in the area of human sexuality and provide some indicators for possible direction for growth in this area.

The methodology of my thesis will be a systems approach, adapted from political science.<sup>5</sup> This is a method of researching and analyzing an object within its own structure (object itself) and outside of it. In this case, the “object” being analyzed is the institutional Church compared to its individual branches, Eastern Catholics, as well as Orthodox Christians. My theoretical framework consists of a review of the relevant literature, a compilation of contemporary statistical indicators, ecclesial documents, and the views of casual conversations I have had with seminarians themselves in this region.

Despite the crucial role that sexuality plays in human life, not to mention how often comes up in the life and work of ministers, discussion of the sexuality in Eastern Europe (especially in seminaries) is still considered taboo. Two factors in this prohibition are, first, something I would call “Soviet inheritance,” i.e., an emphasis on the human being as worker, not as man or woman. This subsequently leads to a lack of attention to the role of sexuality and gender.

The second factor is that during the Soviet period, the official local Church in Ukraine, was cut off from the more universal due to the restricted freedoms of the time, thus the local Church demonstrated an acute, pre-Vatican II, highly individualistic rigidity around matters of faith, and especially around sexuality. I, therefore, wish to approach this need for more openness by attempting to construct a more realistic

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<sup>5</sup> Игорь Блауберг, Вадим Садовский, Эрик Юдин, *Системный подход, Новая философская энциклопедия* [Igor Blauberger, Vadym Sadovsky, Eric Yudin, *Systems Approach, New Philosophical Encyclopedia*] Москва: Мысль, 2010. Translation mine.

assessment of how human sexuality is understood in the church and society in Eastern Europe and the role that it plays in our human and religious lives.

For example, knowledge of one's own sexual orientation and its integration into one's own spiritual life constitutes an essential component for growth; however, this can only come about if there are persons serving as formators who have done their own work in this regard and can help create a space where seminarians or religious in formation feel free to explore these matters in a way which challenges these taboos. In Eastern Europe, there has been too much emphasis on sexuality's "darker" side, that is, its connection to sin, and it has thus been labeled dirty and unclean. This thesis' point of departure is that sexuality is a gift from God and that it is not only an integral part of our life, but also a graced aspect of who we are as human beings. It is a gift, not to be marked by fear and shame, but developed, integrated, and shared.

## Chapter 1

### *Social and Historical Context of Traditions, Convictions, and Stereotypes*

I am originally from Ukraine, a country where the majority of believers are Orthodox Christians. I was raised in the Roman Catholic tradition in the context of two Catholic rites: The Roman Catholic and the Greek (Byzantine Rite). Thus, within my own faith tradition, I have grown up between these two rites, East<sup>6</sup> and West, and it is a borderland that embodies as many similarities as differences. One example of an embodied difference is that within the Orthodox and Greek Catholic traditions, priests are allowed to marry; whereas, in the Roman Catholic tradition, priests cannot. A question often arises here regarding who is serving “better” or who is more “worthy” in the sight of God. Would it be the married priest or the celibate one? This traditional aspect of celibate life greatly affects one’s attitude toward sexuality, especially in regard to one’s preparation for the priesthood. Although both partake in the same sacrament of Holy Orders, the contours of everyday life are quite different for a priest depending whether he is living a celibate or a married vocation.

These differences can sometimes be the source of stereotypes or convictions that can be passed along to future generations. Some harbor the opinion, for example, that the Roman Catholic priest is somewhat “more pure” because he is celibate, unlike an Orthodox or Greek Catholic who might be married or have the option before him. Then *a priori* this uncleanliness, as it is seen by some, gets in the way of the married Greek Catholic priest being an *alter Christus*, that is, serving in the person of Christ. Some even

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<sup>6</sup>The notion of East rite includes Orthodox and Greek Catholic traditions.

hold the uninformed opinion that the Roman Catholic priests are often gay because they cannot marry, which was God's given plan as outlined in the Book of Genesis.<sup>7</sup> Another widely held belief in relation to celibacy is the notion that in order to understand the intricacies and complexity of family life, a priest should experience it in his own life, and not just in a conceptual way.

In my opinion, there is not a categorical answer for this important question about being married or celibate. We know that each society is a multi-level phenomenon that changes in the process of historical dynamics, context, time, and circumstances, etc. Thus, in order to ask questions such as these we need to analyze the historical, social and moral contexts and the traditions prevailing during the Soviet and post-Soviet period. This will give us a better understanding of how sexuality was transformed in parts of Eastern Europe.

During the Soviet period (1922 – 1991), the traditional sexual culture was based on patriarchal principles and was characterized by a puritanical attitude towards sexual interaction. The idea of female sexuality was determined through certain Soviet experts, legislation and popular literature, and this idea was comprised of a naturally subordinate female sexuality in which marriage and motherhood were glorified. Soviet sexual culture in this same period was characterized by the silence and personalization of the female sexual experience. There was no equality of the sexes in the USSR. Sexuality was totally ignored within education and by those in charge of it. This reality has helped legitimize

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<sup>7</sup> “God blessed them, and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth” – Gen 1:28. All biblical references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

the traditional East European patriarchal ideology, which denies the reality of premarital sexual activity for woman and prescribes a passive sexual role for women in marriage.

The traditional Soviet sexual culture upheld conditioned social and ideological social roles. According to researchers, sexual discourse within the family was absent in the Soviet tradition. Men and women were obliged to fulfill social roles prescribed by the state, and sexual pleasures were only allowed in marriage (especially for women). All sexual activity outside of the marital context received severe social sanctions.<sup>8</sup> Also, female virginity had a high value and significance. For those who had lost it before marriage, it was a tragedy; it meant that you had acquired a sort of “spoiled status” without the possibility of finding a good husband.<sup>9</sup>

To provide an example, in 1986, TV presenter Vladimir Pozner and Phil Donahue organized one of the first Soviet-American television “Space Bridges”.<sup>10</sup> During the conversation, the American female participant asked the question: “In our TV advertising, everything revolves around sex. Do you have such a TV commercial?” The Soviet female participant, Lyudmila Nikolaevna Ivanova, who was representing the public organization “Committee of Soviet Women”, replied: “Well, sex ... we do not have sex, and we are absolutely against it!”<sup>11</sup> This comment provoked jokes all around the

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<sup>8</sup> Екатерина Зайцева, “Сексуальные стереотипы разных поколений”, [Ekaterina Zaitseva, Sexual stereotypes of different generations] *Урал индустриальный. Бакунинские чтения: материалы VIII Всероссийской научной конференции*, (27–28 апреля), (Екатеринбург: АМБ, 2007), 289-290.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>10</sup> Phil Donahue, “We reached out instead of lashed out” *Russia, Beyond the Headlines*,” December 6, 2012, [https://www.rbth.com/articles/2012/12/06/phil\\_donahue\\_we\\_reached\\_out\\_instead\\_of\\_lashed\\_out\\_20867.html](https://www.rbth.com/articles/2012/12/06/phil_donahue_we_reached_out_instead_of_lashed_out_20867.html).

<sup>11</sup> Константин Душенко, *Словарь современных цитат*, [Konstantin Dushenko, Dictionary of modern quotations] (Москва: Эксмо, 2006), №. 582. Translation mine.

world, and the expression “there is no sex in the USSR”, became a common quip. To this day, this phrase is widely used in post-Soviet countries<sup>12</sup> to refer to the hypocrisy and the anti-sexualism of Soviet culture. Public discussion of sex-related topics continues to be taboo.

Much of this background and ideology correlates to Soviet thought of the period, exemplified in the teaching of (Aron Borisovich Zalkind).<sup>13</sup> For example, his Twelve Sexual Commandments of Revolutionary Proletariat:<sup>14</sup>

- 1) “There should not be an unnecessarily early development of sexual activity in the proletarian environment
- 2) It is necessary to abstain from sexual activity before marriage; marriage is to be had only when social and biological maturity is reached (20 - 25 years old)
- 3) Sexual connection is only a final stage of deep multi-faceted sympathy and attachment to the object of sexual love
- 4) Sexual intercourse must only be a final link in the chain of deep and complicated issues which connect the lovers during the current moment
- 5) Sexual intercourse must not repeat often
- 6) Do not change the sexual object often. Less sexual diversity
- 7) Love must be monogamous, monoandric (one wife, one husband)
- 8) With each sexual intercourse, it is necessary to always remember the possible birth of a child - basically remember about offspring
- 9) Sexual selection must be built on the line of social [class] revolutionary proletarian expediency. (No) Flirting, courting, coquetry and other elements of sexual conquest must not be a part of intersexual relationships
- 10) There must not be jealousy
- 11) There must not be sexual perversions
- 12) Society [class], in the interests of revolutionary expediency, has a right to intervene with(in) the sexual life of its members: the sexual should always obey the social [class], never be a problem for the latter, serve it in all ways”

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<sup>12</sup> Fifteen Republics of Soviet Union.

<sup>13</sup> Aron Borisovich Zalkind (Арон Борисович Залкинд), is a Soviet physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, psychoanalyst and pedagogue. Leader of the pedological movement in the USSR.

<sup>14</sup> Aron Zalkind, “Twelve sexual commandants of revolutionary proletariat,” [https://www.e-reading.club/bookreader.php/23237/Zalkind\\_Dvenadcat%27\\_polovyh\\_zapovedeii\\_revolucionnogo\\_proletariata.html](https://www.e-reading.club/bookreader.php/23237/Zalkind_Dvenadcat%27_polovyh_zapovedeii_revolucionnogo_proletariata.html).

In 1924, these 12 sexual commandments were published in the brochure "Revolution and Youth", and ever since that time, those concepts have been firmly rooted in the mentality of the society as sexual norms for the Soviet Union. For many decades, the whole Soviet society followed these teachings without any questions, reflections or inquiries. It is understandable that this ideology was followed without debate, as having any difference of opinion or thought would have resulted in negative consequences.

The Soviet, Russian psychologist, writer, and assistant professor at Moscow State Psychological and Pedagogical University, (Sergey Stepanov), who wrote on a wide range of psychology problems, responded to these "Twelve sexual commandments" as follows:

"From the standpoint of today, Zalkind's commandments sound almost anecdotal. However, we must admit that with all the subsequent bends of the official ideology, its main tendency in solving the sexual question was modeled by Zalkind with amazing perspicacity. Everyone remembers how years ago the participant of the Soviet-American space bridge pathetically stated for the fun of millions of viewers: "We have no sex!" What she had in mind, it is easy to understand, re-reading the commandments, firmly forgetting about their author, the Soviet society steadily followed more than half a century. And the whole theory and practice of sex education in the family and school was built on these commandments, more precisely on the idea of a sublimated libido. This, of course, is extreme, and its negative aspects are obvious. But is the other extreme, in which modern society fell by the principle of 'from the opposite', much better? After all, liberated sexuality is fraught with no less problems than strangled! Examples cannot be read".<sup>15</sup>

In the 1960s and 70s, the situation slowly began to change when progressive Soviet educators, doctors and psychologists began talking about the need for sexual education of youth and children. At the same time, "sex education" was perceived more

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<sup>15</sup> Сергей Степанов, *Век психологии: Имена и судьбы*, [Sergey Stepanov, *The Age of Psychology: Names and Fates*] (Москва: ЭКСМО, 2003), 169. Translation mine.



as a moral education. According to (Igor Kon),<sup>16</sup> there was a need to include a description of the reproductive system in school textbooks of anatomy and human physiology, which was currently absent. The reproductive cycle was discussed using the example of rabbits, but there was nothing regarding human reproduction. Any image of sexual organs, male or female, was considered pornographic. Therefore, the theme of sexuality was still difficult to touch on, even as a relevant topic in science. However, it had become more widely studied in the medical environment. For example, in Moscow in 1973 was created - The Union Scientific and Methodological Center for Sexopathology, as well as initial sex education "courses". In Saint Petersburg, a group called "Family and marriage" provided consultations for the newlyweds. They offered two lectures: one on the family economy and ethics and another on sexuality. Authorities had allowed access to this type of consultation, while at the same time, strictly prohibiting the group from any kind of advertising.

It was not until the mid-80s, though, when research began regarding the formation of gender identity and sex role stereotypes in children and adolescents. Between 1983-1985, some schools (in urban areas) in the USSR began offering a course on "Hygienic and Sexual Education" and "Ethics and Psychology of Family Life".

The period after the collapse of the Soviet Union, i.e., the beginning of the 1990's, was marked by a sexual awakening from the underground, and this awakening came alongside a sharp deterioration of demographic and epidemiological indicators,

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<sup>16</sup> Igor Kon - Soviet and Russian sociologist, psychologist, anthropologist, philosopher, sexologist. One of the founders of the modern Russian sociological school, a popularizer of science and an enlightener. Member of several international scientific fellowships, such as the International Academy of Sex Research. Also, he was in the editorial boards of several scientific publications - including the journals "Man", "Gender Studies", "Andrology and Genital Surgery", Archives of Sexual Behavior, Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung, Journal of Homosexuality, Journal of the History of Sexuality, Childhood, Current Sociology, Sexualities and others.

vulgarization, commercialization, and the Westernization of sexuality itself. This period also brought the birth of elements of a new sexual culture and erotic art. Simultaneously, in the post – Soviet Republics during the mid-90s, the reverse reaction began against sexual education, the revival of sexophobia, a general homophobia and attempts to solve sexual problems by administrative means.<sup>17</sup> Despite all of this, whole society was showing very positive tendencies and a will for the introduction of sexual education in schools:

“In a survey in 1994, 81% of adults spoke in favor of introducing sexual education in educational institutions for 14 –16-year-olds, against were only 10% (categorically against were 2.7% of men and 4.4% of women). Among respondents younger than 25 years, 70% were for the introduction of this course, and among those, over 55 years old, 32%. The correlation of answers of people with higher education and with primary education was 61%-38%. Besides that, 42% of men and 37% of women agreed even that this course was given to 10 -13-year-old schoolchildren.

Sample surveys of schoolchildren, teachers and parents showed the same thing. In a survey of 16-19-year-old boys and girls in 1995, with the view that "sexual relations should be given no less attention than study or work", 59% of girls agreed and 60% of boys (21% and 23% did not agree). In 1997, more than 80% of teachers and about 90% of pupils of 7 - 9 grades and their parents expressed their opinion for the introduction of a special school subject regarded to sexual relations”.<sup>18</sup>

In that same year (1997), the Russian Orthodox Church opposed sexual education in schools, stating that sexual education courses "can radically change the moral atmosphere of society for the worse, harm the integrity of the human person, especially in childhood and adolescence." The Moscow priest and writer, (Artemy Vladimirov), wrote

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<sup>17</sup> Елена Догадина, “Как менялось отношение к сексу в России за последние 100 лет,” [Elena Dogadina, How the attitude to sex has changed in Russia over the past 100 years] accessed September 21, 2017, <https://news.rambler.ru/other/37958271-kak-menyalos-otnoshenie-k-seksu-v-rossii-za-poslednie-100-let/?updated>.

<sup>18</sup> Игорь Кон, *Клубничка на березке: Сексуальная культура в России*, 3-е изд [Igor Kon, *Sexual culture in Russia*] (Москва: Время, 2010), 583. Translation mine.

in 1997 that lessons of chastity should be introduced in school instead of lessons of sexual education, He also noted, nodding to the theory of telegony, that "A man who corrupts a virgin girl (as a rule, these people are cynical, depraved, impure and sick people ), will poison the whole subsequent life not only for her, but also for her children. Because the cells of the adulterer, who have penetrated into the bosom of the unlucky romantic girl, remain there for decades and they engage in a battle with the fruit that would at one time had conceived without this battered life of the soul".<sup>19</sup> Later, Russian schools began to study the "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture", but the lessons of sexual education did not appear.

This situation of fluctuation between these “two extremes” is still going on today. The Church and State cannot find a consensus or solution in this important area.

The generation of people whose adolescent years fell within the decade of the 90’s was in a difficult situation, not only because of the economic crisis that followed the collapse of the USSR, but also because they lived through a period when old authorities became illegitimate and new ones had not yet appeared. This situation marked the upbringing of young people in the 90s.

Everyone knows and remembers the slogan "There is no sex in the USSR", and indeed this topic was banned; only adults could talk about it, and only in their narrow circle, quietly at home. Since this generation was brought up by parents who were raised in the Soviet Union for whom the topic of human sexuality was taboo, then of course, the topic of human sexuality became "taboo" also for them. Scraps of information were

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<sup>19</sup> Артемий Владимиров, “Уроки Целомудрия, как Основа Нравственного Воспитания,” [Artemy Vladimirov, Lessons of Chastity, as the Basis of Moral Education] <http://librarium.orthodoxy.ru/uckonv.htm>.

drawn from a few sources popular science literature, like health journals, school biology textbooks, or home encyclopedias, from Wośłocka's book,<sup>20</sup> or "Justine" - novel of Marquis de Sade<sup>21</sup>, accidentally found in a home library, or from peers in the yard. Of course, fantasy in young people is prevalent, so there were many speculations and false truths about sexuality and sexual life. Since the topic of sexuality was very embarrassing for adults and funny for teenagers, both sides avoided an open discussion. Most often, young people silently held their problems during puberty and throughout the period of their hormonal changes. Not understanding themselves and those changes, young women and men secretly experimented with their body alone, usually with a sense of deep shame and remorse.

As previously mentioned, the 1990s brought a more free and steady flow of information from the West. The first commercials for hygiene products appeared on television and magazines were bombarded with images of people with a new controversial vocabulary, timidly debating about things like tampons and orgasms.

Video cassettes and pornographic magazines with overly pink, full-bodied women were coming in from the western border. Their licentiousness, their poses, their dissimilarity from the communist, crude reality were a culture shock and a scandal, but also filled with mystery.

Society learned new terminology such as orgasm, petting, G-point, penetration, etc. Letters written by teenagers for the editorial of youth magazines such as *Bravo Girl* reveal a pitiful knowledge of sexuality and contraception and a limited awareness of the

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<sup>20</sup> Michalina Wośłocka, Polish doctor, gynecologist and sexologist. The author of the best-selling guide "Sztuka Kochania"- (The Art of Love).

<sup>21</sup> The third edition of the novel was very erotic with a lot of sexual details.

dangers of sexually transmitted diseases. Sexuality comes out of the “shadows”, and it preoccupies, scares and pressures people. It appears in the music of foreign bands, in fashion, in the press, and on television.

We forget how complex and complicated the issue of sexuality is. How often has our subconscious concealed the transmitted trauma from generation to generation, from grandparents to parents and from parents to children? How easy is it to turn almost everything into an advertising product and sell it? However, there is also a positive side to sexuality coming out of the shadows the community regains gradual access to the secrets of their body; they begin to learn about themselves, openly teach their partners, and talk about bodily pleasure and ask questions.

Sexuality is the most delicate sphere of our psyche. Everything we do depends on it even our overwork, diseases, and the climate in which we live.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, though, some identify sexual freedom with promiscuity, which in my opinion is an error. Similarly, when the issue of sexual education is turned into a political matter, or the issue of abortion appears in the political discourse during the pre-election political campaigns, this is a mistake. Saint Paul says: Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Cor 3:16). Our body is us, it is the first thing that evokes our emotion, joy, fear, sadness. Thanks to it we know what it means to get tired, to be relaxed, or to feel excitement in the presence of another person.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, if our

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<sup>22</sup> Hanna Rydlewska, Marta Niedźwiecka, *Slow Sex. Uwolnij Miłość*, [Slow Sex. Free Your Love] (Warszawa: Agora, 2015), 11. Translation mine.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

body is the temple of God, where God's Spirit dwells, it means that all of what relates to our body is important, including our sexuality.

From the Second Vatican Council to today, we have experienced a huge change in mentality. For example, in the constitution "*Gaudium et Spes*", there is a new approach and recognition of the mystery of marriage. Marriage is not only for procreation, in contrast to the teachings before the Council, and it is no longer deprived to have pleasure within the marriage:

Marriage to be sure is not instituted solely for procreation; rather, its very nature as an unbreakable compact between persons, and the welfare of the children, both demand that the mutual love of the spouses be embodied in a rightly ordered manner, that it grow and ripen.<sup>24</sup>

Further, that spouses can express their love in body and mind:

This love is an eminently human one since it is directed from one person to another through an affection of the will; it involves the good of the whole person, and therefore can enrich the expressions of body and mind with a unique dignity, ennobling these expressions as special ingredients and signs of the friendship distinctive of marriage. This love God has judged worthy of special gifts, healing, perfecting and exalting gifts of grace and of charity.<sup>25</sup>

The Council changed the emphasis in the approach to marriage. There no longer exists a negative, pessimistic approach in which marriage is simply a remedy for lust.

Within this paradigm, the focus is not on the wedding but on the maturity of women and men to experience sexual lives. However, even after marriage, people can lack maturity.

Considering marriage under these Church guidelines could translate into "legalized sex," and this would generate more complications in our life. Formation in this context, then, should be continuous, especially for those preparing for priesthood.

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<sup>24</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 50. <http://www.vatican.va/>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, §49.

The clergy, nuns and parents who formed teenagers in the 80s and 90s in the Soviet Union did not know how to talk about sexuality. This topic was avoided, not only during public discussions, but also and very unfortunately during confessions, where the priest had nothing to say. Back then and still today, no one had prepared religious persons to handle such topics. There was very little accessible literature in the USSR and post-Soviet states regarding the topic and few translations of Western literature. After all, the Soviet Union and the entire socialist bloc had not been through the sexual revolution. There was a puritanical approach and a lack of education in the field of sexuality.

Often, the knowledge came from myths, stereotypes, or simply from a priest's personal opinions towards questions of sexuality. For example, there was the belief that the interrupted act<sup>26</sup> was not a sin and that the only way to make love was in a "missionary position". The role that pleasure played was also taken into consideration. It was relevant to know if the act was exclusively to seek pleasure whether it was done against the will, unknowingly, or maybe if it was wanted for itself. There was the need to know what was the "first impulse" that led to the sexual act, and what kind of thoughts each partner had at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the sexual act in marriage.<sup>27</sup> There was the common belief that it was impossible to get pregnant while a woman had her menstrual period or while she was breast-feeding. As consequence of this misinformation, many women had multiple children with minimal gaps between their births, some less than one or two years.

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<sup>26</sup> *Coitus Interruptus* – also known as a rejected sexual intercourse.

<sup>27</sup> Uta Ranke – Heinemann, *Seks odwieczny problem Kościoła*, [Sex eternal problem of the Church] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo RM, 2015), 150. Translation mine.

Neither the confessional nor the catechism included talk of sexuality. One could hear only scant information that everything related to our sexuality was sinful, very dirty, or a topic to be avoided.

To further the point, I would like to use an example of Jamie Oliver, a well-known British chef, who promoted a healthy diet at English schools, based primarily on fruits and vegetables. This example shows the difficulty for us to change our minds. Predictably, the children in these schools preferred fries, chips and sweets to “healthy greens,” as the healthier options did not delight their palates in the same way as the fried and sweet foods, but Oliver used an interesting but simple trick with the children. He blindfolded the kids and let them play with different kinds of food. In this experiment, the cauliflower and broccoli, previously regarded as disgusting, began to arouse interest, and eventually, acceptance. Why can children like broccoli only if they have not seen it? The key to solving this puzzle is the way we use the sense of sight. First of all, it serves us to assess: distances, time, people, and emotions. This is our first line of defense against an alien. Subconsciously, when we do our estimate, there are positive and negative convictions. And when we are already convinced about something, it is very difficult for us to change our minds, just like a five-year-old who thought that the carrot was nasty and would not take more of it in his mouth<sup>28</sup>.

An important element of sexual education of any generation is the issue of the culture of sex, which can be viewed from different perspectives and contexts. One of the approaches is the one related to the information acquired in a previous generation when it is passed to future generations. We define a generation as a sociocultural community,

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<sup>28</sup> Hanna Rydlewska, Marta Niedźwiecka, *Slow Sex. Uwolnij Miłość*, 55.



defined by socio-demographic criteria the importance of a community of values, ideals, cultural norms, standards, stereotypes, a common world view, and vocations.

There is no unified theory capable to give a strict definition of the concepts of the "norm" and "deviation" towards sexuality. Historically, the notion of "norm" regarding sexuality has remained and remains rather vague. Through the second half of the 20th century, it was generally accepted that if the mass considered the right criteria to follow then it would become the norm. Therefore, rare sexual drives were considered pathological and the most common behaviors were regarded as normal.<sup>29</sup> When analyzing the change in the value-normative attitudes of sexual culture, it is necessary to consider the attitudes' contradictory nature. Representatives of the middle and older generations are marked by conservatism and have difficulty abandoning the norms and values that they follow, and for a relatively long time, these norms and values served as the only guidelines for sexual behavior. The younger generation is much more open to the assimilation of new, non-traditional norms of sexual behavior (which the middle to older generations would consider a deviation). This younger generation is experiencing a serious socializing influence of the old concepts of the area of sexuality. In the analysis of the dynamics of sexual culture, the current moment is especially important, since it allows us to evaluate those forms of sexuality and sexual relations that are prevalent in modern society more objectively, despite their fairly recent condemnation as "sexual perversions."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Екатерина Зайцева, "*Межпоколенческая динамика сексуальной культуры (социологический анализ)*" [Intergenerational dynamics of sexual culture (sociological analysis)] (PhD diss., Екатеринбург: РГБ ОД, 2006), 113-120.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 114.

To my great regret, though, the upbringing in Ukraine today lacks instruction on sexuality, and it is still a closed topic. Adults rarely speak to their children about sexuality; therefore, children are forced to look for answers in other sources, and this information is often quite distorted. Priests and religious who are working with young people in the villages or cities often do not have the courage to speak about these important topics.

In the 2000s, the situation began to change for the better, thanks to access to information about human sexuality, the context of the moral theology in the Catholic Church, and the more widespread availability of Western literature. Many viewpoints should be improved and changed. For example, one realm in which change is needed is in the approach of how Catholic clergy are engaged in youth formation, but greater access to information on the topic of human sexuality is certainly a step in the right direction.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, in one of his last works, “The Future of Man”, wrote that the attainment of such a quality of sexuality is equivalent to fire being extracted again in the history of humankind. The discovery and use of fire has become a huge leap in the development of humanity. According to Chardin, a similar leap will occur if we finally understand the significance of our sexuality. It seems that one of the most urgent tasks of humanity is the realization and development of this mighty power.<sup>31</sup>

In my opinion, sex and sexuality are still closed topics. On the one hand, there is a great deal of curiosity around sexuality, and on the other, there is a sense of shame when addressing the topic. Unfortunately, though, we do not have a comprehensive education on sexuality. Adults (parents), are often either secretive or silent regarding the subject,

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<sup>31</sup> Юрий Рубенис, *Она и Он. Любовь, Отношения, Секс*, [Yuri Rubenis, *She and He. Love, Relationship, Sex*] (Riga: Zvaigzne ABC, 2018), 157. Translation mine.

and it is similar with representatives of the church. This silence causes difficulties later in family life and also in the church. Sexual matters can become a concern and turn into a troublesome issue for some people, who would then seek psychological help. It is important for younger generations to trust adults when they want to address the topic or feel the need to ask questions related to sexuality as well as when they approach religious members to discuss the topic.

Sexuality needs to be freed from prejudices, convictions, and stereotypes. In this respect, I agree completely with Pia Gyger,<sup>32</sup> who believes that modern spirituality must finally end the denial of sexuality, free it from false shame and stop the contemptuous attitude towards the body and suppression of it. It has to become a revered part of our development and growth. Humanity was created with sexuality which means it must be pleasing to God. Of course, the idea is not to imprint a spiritual nature to our sexuality in an artificial way but to include it as a part of ourselves and respect it in order that sex and spirituality become one. There are many ways to hurt our sexuality, and one of these ways is by artificially modifying our spiritualization of sexuality.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Pia Gyger was a Swiss specialist for special education, psychologist and Zen master of the White Plum Sangha lineage. She was co-founder of the Lassalle-Institute within the Lassalle-House.

<sup>33</sup> Юрий Рубенис, *Она и Он. Любовь, Отношения, Секс*, 157-158.

## Chapter 2

### *Case Study: Homosexuality and Formation for Priesthood*

*Our sexual affections can no more define who we are than can our class, race, or nationality. At the deepest ontological level, therefore, there is no such thing as 'a' homosexual or 'a' heterosexual; there are human beings, male and female, called to redeemed humanity in Christ, endowed with a complex variety of emotional potentialities and threatened by a complex variety of forms of alienation. (Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Community, 1998).<sup>34</sup>*

At the beginning of the book “Just Mercy”, Bryan Stevenson quotes his grandmother as telling him: “You can’t understand most of the important things from a distance. You have to get close”.<sup>35</sup> Whatever example we leave behind us, may serve to bring others to God or discourage them towards God Hans Urs von Balthasar once said; “who does not listen to God first, has nothing to say to the world”.<sup>36</sup>

The Bible the Old Testament and the New are the words of God addressed to humanity, those who lived several thousand years before us, as well as for the contemporary person.<sup>37</sup> It is clear in the Old Testament that love and mercy among people is dearer to God than sacrifice: ”For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice” (Hos, 6:6). In the book of the Prophet Isaiah, chapter one we read:

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?  
says the Lord;  
When you come to appear before me,  
who asked this from your hand?  
Trample my courts no more;  
bringing offerings is futile;  
remove the evil of your doings  
from before my eyes;

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<sup>34</sup> George Williams, SJ, “The World is Our Closet: Being Gay and Jesuit 1940-1960”, [Unpublished paper], December 6, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy* (New York: Spigel & Grau, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar was a Swiss theologian and priest who was nominated to be a cardinal of the Catholic Church. He is considered one of the most important theologians of the 20th century.

<sup>37</sup> Jerzy Zakrzewski SJ, *Zawsze Kochałem Życie*, ed. Józef Augustyn SJ [I have always loved life] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2016), 109.

cease to do evil, learn to do good;  
seek justice, rescue the oppressed,  
defend the orphan,  
plead for the widow.

No sacrifice or ritual can replace purity of the heart, love, or good deeds. On the one hand, we preach that we should accept each human being as our sister or brother, and that Jesus Christ is present in every person. On the other hand, when our neighbor appears or presents differently than we do, we tend to blame that neighbor and ignore the reality that Jesus Christ is most certainly present in him or her.

When thinking about sexuality, though, we should be focused on what unites rather than what separates. It is disappointing when the most relevant aspects of a topic become secondary and more secondary aspects adopt a primary role.

It is important to find a clear path that allows us to approach sexuality in a straight forward way. One that gives us the possibility to retrieve the rich human diversity as a whole, a diversity that should be considered a gift found within our historical tradition, biblical texts, culture, and human activity. Taking all this into account, we shall understand well that this step is very important. In front of us, there is always a human being, someone like me, my neighbor, a member of my family or member of the community. Each life matters. Of course, this way of understanding sexuality is not an easy one, it is difficult, but we have the promise of Jesus the “breath of God”,<sup>38</sup> the Holy Spirit.

If the topic of sexuality in the context of Eastern Europe is taboo, then the discussion of homosexuality is even more deeply taboo, especially within the context of

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<sup>38</sup> Jay Emerson Johnson, *Peculiar Faith: Queer Theology for Christian Witness*, (New York: Seabury Books, 2014), 49.

the clergy. It is not mentioned, and no one speaks about it, for reasons of the Soviet inheritance and the rigid faith so focused on the rules and the norms of the church.

In my thesis, I would like to present the current situation and the approach that the church has taken as an institution towards homosexuality and homosexual seminarians (candidates for the priesthood). I will also explore society's point of view of homosexuality and how the seminarians feel as they participate in preparation for the priesthood. I will do this within the Eastern European context. I also hope to compare the methods and approaches between different cultures and traditions, Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic, and how that appears in two distinct Catholic rites: Roman and Byzantine.

Specific to this topic, though, is the issue that those in formation are often afraid to talk about their sexuality or their sexual orientation. At some point, this topic creates a vicious circle. Since spiritual directors have not been taught how to address the topic of sexuality, then how can they teach or help those who are in formation? As outline in Chapter One, sexuality in the context of Eastern European cultures has been seen as somewhat sinful, dirty and unclean. However, the Catholic tradition affirms that sexuality is a gift from God, and that it is an integral part of our life and personality. Therefore, we need to talk about it and not be afraid or ashamed of it. I understand, also, that insufficient information because of hesitation to openly speak about sexuality might limit the scope of this work.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says this about homosexuality:

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.

These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.<sup>39</sup>

Here the focus is on the phrase that people with homosexual tendencies “must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity”. The second chapter of this section of Catechism is called “You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself”, a phrase which comes from the Gospel of Mark<sup>40</sup>, so the question is, then, why must we just accept with respect, compassion, and sensitivity all men and women who experience homosexual tendencies? What about loving them? What might that mean, and what might it mean for LGBT community to treat the church with “respect, compassion and sensitivity”?<sup>41</sup>

Of course, I am not negating the teaching of the church, but if Jesus said that we shall love all our neighbors, that means all of them. We shall love without caring about differences of color, race, sexual orientation, religion, culture etc. More important is not what we believe in, but how we live. We can say, as the Pharisee does, “God, I thank you that I am not like other people,” (Lk 18:11); however, the opposite of sin is not virtue, as Paul Evdokimov said, but the faith of the saints.<sup>42</sup>

Sexual orientation has, in the past, been understood as a binary, with people identifying as either homosexual or heterosexual. However, as conversations about sexuality, gender, sex, and sexual orientation have developed, it has been established that

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<sup>39</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 2358.

<sup>40</sup> The Gospel of Mark 12:31.

<sup>41</sup> James Martin, SJ, *Building A Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017), 18.

<sup>42</sup> Michel Heher, *The Lost Art of Walking on Water. Reimagining the Priesthood*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 35-36.

these categories, «homosexual-heterosexual, gay or straight» are inventions of particular societies, as social constructs which reflect the attitudes of a particular society or context. There is still no essential agreement in the scientific community about the nature of human sexuality. Whether humans are “heterosexual”, “homosexual” or “bisexual” by birth, by training, by choice, or at all is still an open question<sup>43</sup>, and still today is an open question in Eastern Europe.

As human beings, we are often tempted to decide what is natural or unnatural, right or wrong. Therefore, people’s views and opinions about sexuality, especially homosexuality, are quite varied in the church as well as in society. At times, homosexuality has been considered unnatural in itself or against nature God’s plan, because: “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (Gen 1,27-28). If we were to cite only this verse, though, the same logic could be used to say that the tradition of celibacy in the church is also against God’s plan or is unnatural. It is known that in the Roman Catholic church, priests must be celibate,<sup>44</sup> unlike the priests in the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Orthodox Church who may marry and have children.

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<sup>43</sup> John Boswell, “Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories” In Martin Duberman et al., eds. *Hidden History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: New American Library, 1989), 23.

<sup>44</sup> That is, diocesan priest and religious in the Roman Catholic Church must be celibate. Similarly, religious priests and monks also cannot marry in the Orthodox Church or that of the Eastern Catholic Churches.



A times the Church made choices which supposedly will please God. Another example that illustrates this is the choirs of *castrati*<sup>45</sup> in antiquity. It was a common practice in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to castrate boys in order to produce more soprano and alto voices. They were castrated without their consent. In Germany, France and Italy, the first castrates quickly found their place into church choirs, for example the Sistine Chapel Choir during papacy of Clement VIII (1592 - 1605)<sup>46</sup> They disappeared from secular music at the beginning of the 19th century, but they still sang in the Sistine Chapel Choir at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup> While there are certainly other examples of misunderstandings of God's will in our very human societies, it is not the point to blame or judge the past. Often what we see depends on where (and when) we stand.

The treatment of homosexuality during priestly formation in Eastern Europe is mostly based on "classical" examples from the Scripture, Church teaching, and tradition.

Both the Old and New Testaments have treated homosexual behavior as something deserving of death. Some examples of these scripture passages: "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death" (Lev 20:13), or "Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with a passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in

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<sup>45</sup> *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., s.v. "*Castrato* – a singer castrated before puberty to preserve the soprano or contralto range of his voice." (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 2003), 193.

<sup>46</sup> Uta Ranke – Heinemann, *Seks odwieczny problem Kościoła*, [Sex eternal problem of the Church], 141.

<sup>47</sup> Alessandro Moreschi, the last castrato singer, died on 21 April 1922.

their own persons the due penalty for their error.... They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die..." (Rom 1, 26a-27,32a). The consequence of that is the impossibility of inheriting the Kingdom of God, "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites" (1 Cor 6:9). Also, it is an abomination: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination" (Lev 18:22). This opinion has been and is still very popular among some people.

Here we might find an implicit condemnation of homosexual persons, but like many other examples, this insight generally is emphasizing the unseemly, unworthy acts. Further, extending a bit more the viewpoint, anyone who "curse father or mother shall be put to death... If a man commits adultery with a wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death" (Lev 20,9a-10). Or "If a man lies with a woman having her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow of blood; both of them shall be cut off from their people" (Lev 20:18).<sup>48</sup> If this is so, we would kill many people. Therefore, the question to be asked is, why according to these scriptures, some must die while others get a more minimal punishment?

In Eastern Europe, the teachings by St. John Chrysostom,<sup>49</sup> Father of the Eastern Church, are very popular. For example, one of his homilies is based on the passage from Romans (1, 26-27).

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<sup>48</sup> For more examples of death as a punishment, see the Book of Leviticus, Chapter 20.

<sup>49</sup> One of the founders of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. According to tradition, he is the founder of *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, the most celebrated Divine Liturgy (or "mass") in the Byzantine Rite. It is celebrated most of the days of the liturgical year in the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

For Chrysostom, it is very important to live in unity and full obedience with God, and when lust comes, to remember Sodom, specifically its fire. For Chrysostom, the sin committed in Sodom was not that of being inhospitable (the contemporary interpretation) but having same sex relationships. He claimed that all affections are vile, “but chiefly, the mad lust after males; for the soul is more the sufferer in sins, and more dishonored, than the body in diseases”.<sup>50</sup> Further “I say, are even worse than murderers: since to die even is better than to live under such insolvency. For the murderer dissevers the soul from the body, but this man ruins the soul with the body”.<sup>51</sup> Chrysostom seems to claim this because the men left their natural inclination with women, deviating from the plan and will of God – “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24).

An interesting fact is that Chrysostom considers it even more disgraceful when women seek such intercourses “they who should have more sense of shame than men”.<sup>52</sup> The intensity of lust, according to him, comes from an exacerbation of desire. What led to this desire was deserting God “...From the lawlessness of them that left Him”.<sup>53</sup> Also, according to him, intercourse with a whore, though illegal, is better because it abides by nature, whereas intercourse between two men does not. It is contrary to the law and nature.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> St. John Chrysostom: Homily IV. Romans 1, 26-27., 1.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 3.

Unfortunately, the situation of those with a homosexual orientation in the history of Christianity is full of bitterness. When Christianity came to power, many church leaders immediately tried to exterminate homosexuals. The Theodosian Code (8,7, 6)<sup>55</sup> constituted that all homosexuals should be burned at the stake. In time, that law became customary. Over 1,000 years later *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina*<sup>56</sup> art. 116 (CXVI) stated: “If a person indulges to debauchery with an animal, or a man with a man, or a woman with a woman, then they are subject to deprivation of life; following customary practice, they must be subjected to the death penalty by burning”.

Another important example of scripture texts that have become the basis for discrimination is the story of the destruction (or sin) of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19,1-29). When Lot, Abraham's nephew, speaks to the men of Sodom who are storming his house (v. 8), they want to have sexual relations with his guests Lot said to them:

“I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof” (Gen 19, 7-8).

This story not only shows how the father is ready to sacrifice his two young daughters<sup>57</sup> for any kind of rape and violation, you may do to them as you please, but

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<sup>55</sup> The *Codex Theodosianus* (Eng. Theodosian Code) was a compilation of the laws of the Roman Empire under the Christian emperors since 312. A commission was established by Theodosius II and his co-emperor Valentinian III on 26 March 429 and the compilation was published by a constitution of 15 February 438. It went into force in the eastern and western parts of the Empire on 1 January 439 ("Codex Theodosianus" in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1991).

<sup>56</sup> The *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* (short name Carolina) is known as the first German criminal law (*Strafgesetzbuch – Halsgerichtsordnung*, Procedure for the judgment of capital crimes) of Charles V. Also known as a *Sacrum Imperium Romanum*, (Ger. Heiliges Römisches Reich).

<sup>57</sup> Two daughters of Lot were already betrothed (v.14). They could have been 12 or 12.5 years old. Back then Jewish girls usually were betrothed at this age.

also, how the church tradition and prominent theologians use this story as an example against homosexuality. In the context of Lot's daughters, we can often hear some justification of this story, e.g., that at that time women did not have any rights and did not deserve good treatment. We find similar justifications for the story of Abraham and his wife Sarah. As they approached Egypt, Abraham says to her:

“I know well that you are a woman beautiful in appearance; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account” (Gen 12,11b - 13).

In consequence, Pharaoh's people took Sarah into the Pharaoh's house, and Abraham received his reward (sheep, oxen donkeys, camels, servants), (Gen 12,11-16). We know how important Abraham's role is in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. However, we cannot ignore the way he exploits his wife in this text.

While we can say that homosexuality was one of the possible reasons why God destroyed the two cities (it happened because the men from these cities wanted to rape two angels), the main context of that destruction is the lack of hospitality towards people of God. Using this example as the centerpiece that builds on that special theology only against homosexuality excludes the context of the rape and violence of the two minor girls. Considering the latter as irrelevant would be quite wrong. Once more, I am not arguing the teaching of the church, only trying to propose that we get closer in order to see all these questions from another perspective.

Throughout the history of the church and up to today, all of the examples that touch on homosexuality (especially during the formation for priesthood) concentrate on homosexuality being against nature (*contra naturam*). For example, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

“Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved”.<sup>58</sup>

Besides Sacred Scripture, much of the church’s teaching on this comes from Saint Augustine, Saint Albert Magnus, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint John Chrysostom, and many others. All of them are in agreement that homosexuality is *contra naturam*, a depravity, a disorder, contrary to natural law, etc. Within this paradigm, if a person is homosexual, then there is not much to do about it. “All difficulties they may encounter from their condition, they can unite this to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross” (CCC 2358). It sounds as if by being homosexual you acquire the condition of a modern martyr. Additionally, “homosexual persons are called to chastity” (CCC 2359). Does this mean that there are only two possibilities for your life - either to live alone and celibate or to become a celibate priest?

Homosexuals do not wish to be treated as lovable “sinners” subjected to paternalistic goodwill nor do they wish to be merely tolerated.<sup>59</sup> First of all, gay Christians and all of us are sinners, which means that their sexual orientation does not make them outstanding sinners. Secondly, “there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female”, as said apostle Paul in the letter to the Galatians. Here again we

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<sup>58</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 2357.

<sup>59</sup> Heather Rachele White, “Proclaiming Liberation: Christian Fellowship in Gay Communities, 1968-1973”, [Unpublished Chapter], 150.

find no distinctions in the eyes of God. According to Ronald M. Enroth and Gerald E.

Jamison:

“The only real difference between the gay world of the homosexual church and the secular gay world is that the former includes a religious or spiritual dimension that appears... to be tacked on in an attempt at securing moral legitimacy for homosexual behavior”.<sup>60</sup>

Gay Christians emphasize their gay identity; “we are who we are. We are not a gay church, we worship God like anybody else and the fact that we are gay has little to do with it. Gay Christians are worshipping God, like anybody else, what difference does their sexual orientation really make?”<sup>61</sup> These statements by gay Christians portray their understanding of homosexuality as an aspect of the human identity that is acceptable to God and the view of some that sexual orientation is as inconsequential to central matters of Christian faith as any human difference. Another interesting dynamic to note is that the vast majority of homosexual Christians remained members of congregations that held strongly condemning views of homosexual behavior.<sup>62</sup> As a gay Catholic religious they remain in the congregation to fulfil their calling.

Priestly formation is a fundament not just for the priesthood and ministry but for the whole human development. I would say it is a part of the existence of each of us. Priestly formation covers many dimensions of our development and life. It touches on the human, the intellectual, the spiritual, the cultural, and beyond, and it does not end with graduation from a seminary or ordination but continues during one’s whole life.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 125-128.

Therefore, it is very important to keep a balance between these dimensions. A priest is called to serve everyone, despite any differences. Unfortunately, though, what often happens is that the candidates or already ordained priests cannot seem to leave behind the rigid religiosity that they have inherited, even if it is quite antiquated. They carry this burden of rigidity, and it shows itself in their prejudices, biases, homophobia, and preconceptions. For example, in the Soviet Union, homosexuality was penalized by imprisonment.<sup>63</sup> Consequences of that historical reality are still present in the society and people's mentality and approaches towards homosexuality. The attitudes and approaches of who is responsible for priestly formation, then, are very important.

First of all, have a good grasp of their own sexual identity and be in touch with their own sexual orientation. They need to be fully comfortable with their own body, feelings, emotions, and attractions, and they should not be afraid of erections or emissions.<sup>64</sup>

Now I would like to present the view and context from the Greek Catholic Church perspective. The main aspects of formation in the seminaries of the Greek Catholic Church<sup>65</sup> are human, spiritual, intellectual, and apostolic. In all those aspects, the candidate prepares for the sacrament of the priesthood with the possibility to choose

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<sup>63</sup> Criminal liability for sodomy was introduced into legislation on March 7, 1934 and lasted until June 3, 1993. In the Soviet criminal law sodomy belonged to the crimes against the person and was punishable by imprisonment for up to five years, and under aggravating circumstances (sodomy with minors) – up to 8 years. (*Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, ed., by A.M. Prokhorov).

<sup>64</sup> M. Basil Pennington, “Vocation Discernment and the Homosexual.” *In A Challenge to Love. Gay and Lesbian Catholics in the Church.*” ed., by Robert Nugent, (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 237-238.

<sup>65</sup> The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the abbreviated (UGCC) – (*Українська греко-католицька церква (УГКЦ)*). Is one of the twenty - three Eastern Catholic Churches. Is in communion with the bishop of Rome and preserves the Constantinople (Byzantine) liturgical tradition. Number of believers (over 5.5 million), it is the largest in the world of all Eastern Catholic churches and the second after the Roman Catholic Church ([www.ugcc.org.ua](http://www.ugcc.org.ua)).



between a celibate or married priesthood.<sup>66</sup> These possibilities hold different dynamics for formation on sexuality for Greek Catholic seminarians. If we take a percentage, around 92% (or more) of seminarians are formed on the married priesthood track, which means they have the choice to get married or to remain celibate. It is difficult to determine this percentage with precision because it exists the possibility of getting married before the deacon's ordination. In Greek Catholic Church they can opt to not be ordained. When candidates finish the seminary, they are still able to choose between marriage or celibacy and then subsequently, they can apply to the bishop for ordination.

However, it is important to note that the attitude towards celibacy among the Greek Catholic seminarians is somewhat prejudiced because it is seen as something unnatural by many, but of course, not all hold this prejudice. There is no comprehensive formation focused on preparation for celibacy in the seminary, only what occurs individually during spaces of one-on-one spiritual counseling. The time frame for seminary studies is about 6-7 years, and during this time, the Greek Catholic seminarians can date and build their relationships. If they wish to marry their partners, though, they can only do so after graduating from the seminary. Sometimes dating has a double effect, for someone it stimulates and helps, for others, it creates an internal division.

It is sometimes the case that because of the dynamics of a relationship, a seminarian cannot concentrate on his formation. This might suggest that not all seminarian candidates of the Greek - Catholic seminaries are mature or well-developed

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<sup>66</sup> According to the Eastern tradition, the candidates for the priesthood have the choice to marry or live in the celibacy. In Ukraine are six Greek Catholic seminaries in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Uzhhorod, Drohobich, Kiev. The number of all seminarians is about 450 people.

enough to engage in human sexuality. Some of those who want to marry are not always ready for this vocation.

In general, the question of sexual maturity and its development in the seminary occurs mostly at the individual level. Only sometimes it is publicly discussed, and when it is, the discussion tends to focus narrowly on ideals of the priestly family, how to prepare for a married priesthood, or the various spiritual, practical, and moral guidelines towards relationships with women who are potential wives of priests.

The values of modern West Europe are very different in terms of sexual identity from the ones in Eastern Europe. In Ukraine, more historically traditional values are still prevalent, even more so than in Italy, for example, which is considered a relatively traditional country among the European nations. Therefore, the attitude of seminarians in Italy towards homosexuality and other questions of non-traditional orientation is often quite similar to those in Ukrainian society. The majority of these opinions reflect the society's mentality. In the seminary, there is the same biased and judgmental attitude towards homosexuality as the one found in society, and we can say, unfortunately, it is a negative, condemnatory, and critical one.

These gaps in the seminarians' own formation around sexuality often result in a negative or even aggressive attitude towards people of other orientations in line with biases, stereotypes, and biblical radicalism. In other words, even acceptance of a person with a different orientation on the basic level of human respect is absent.

This person is stigmatized and marginalized. Often, this approach is justified by the concept of the "condemnation of the sin and not the sinner", when in fact, it is the

opposite. However, this is not the case for all Greek Catholic or Ukrainian seminarians. Some have a better understanding for and acceptance of those with different orientations.

In intellectual formation, seminarians are studying a range of academic courses on topics such as family pastoral care, psychology, moral theology, confession, Canon Law, and Bioethics, which all relate to the subject of sexuality. These courses also help to develop a certain pastoral approach, but still this remains more theoretical. However, practical experience shows, that the topic of homosexuality is of little interest in the Greek Catholic seminary. While seminarians sometimes broach the topic of women, they rarely discuss the topic of homosexuality. We can assume therefore, that the Greek Catholic seminaries are not “attracting” homosexual persons, and if something turns out, they are simply excluded from the seminary without any discussion. The only option, then, is to remain closeted. A big pressure will come from the authority to expel those who disclose a homosexual identity. It would be impossible to remain in the seminary, and to continue the studies once you disclose your homosexuality. It would seem, based on where the teachers put their time and energy, that the topic of sexual orientation is irrelevant. We know, of course, that this is not the case, but with so many seminarians being formed for the married priesthood, the topic of sexual orientation is virtually non-existent. This reality may weaken people’s attentiveness to homosexual seminarians, who may simply go unnoticed.

We should always approach this sensitive topic with care because it refers to the deep and intimate experiences of formation, on which the theory of person is built, and not just his sexual orientation. The profile of person is built by different dimensions,

characteristics, and factors of influence from the prenatal period up to the concrete here and now.

Generally speaking, it is a big challenge to prepare seminarians with homosexual tendencies for the pastoral ministry, because the persons with homosexual orientation are not accepted.<sup>67</sup> There is no end to the work, beginning from the realization that in society, among the believers, there are Christians with homosexual orientation who need spiritual guidance.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, “You must love your neighbor as yourself”. He did not explain how we should look at this neighbor or consider who he or she is. Neighbor simply means someone who is close to me. If I want to love my neighbor, I need to get closer to him or her, regardless of my feelings towards his or her sexual orientation. We as Christians need to know the world of our neighbors. It does not matter who they are; we need to learn about their daily life, duties, jobs, faith, religious beliefs, social activities, etc. Knowing and discovering the world of my neighbor helps brake the stereotypes, fears and the schemes of society, and this is the way to which Jesus points.

There is still in Eastern Europe a context of deep-seated homophobia, which has many causes: fear of being thought as homosexual by others, fear of a possible homosexual response in oneself, fear of “catching” homosexuality (as though it were a

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<sup>67</sup> Even today, a time when, in many societies, homosexuality is more accepted as part of sexual diversity, there exists a condition sometimes labeled internalized homophobia. Stemming from a negative judgement of this orientation, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals are subjected to society’s negative perceptions, intolerance, and stigmas towards them, and as a result, turn those ideas inward seeing in them a certain truth. This internalized homophobia has been defined as ‘the gay person’s direction of negative social attitudes toward the self, leading to a devaluation of the self and resulting in internal conflicts and poor self-regard.’ (Meyer and Dean, 1998). Or as “the self-hatred that occurs as a result of being a socially stigmatized person.” (Locke, 1998), <http://www.revelandriot.com/resources/internalized-homophobia/>

contagious disease), or fear that children will consider homosexuality as a viable alternative to heterosexual marriage and will choose a homosexual life-style.<sup>68</sup> Each of these fears and phobias separates us from people, society and even ourselves.

I am in agreement with the British psychoanalyst and author Donald J. West that a dualistic view of society in which some (usually us) are good, and some (usually others) are bad raises the possibility of a very complicated social coexistence. This verbal categorization and depreciation of the person categorized as “alien” or “other” brings even the alarming possibility of calls for physical extermination. One example is the extermination of those who presented with a homosexual orientation during World War II by Nazi Germany, or imprisonment the gay community experienced during Soviet period, as I mentioned before. Still some countries have death penalty and imprisonment in place for people who identify as homosexual or who are known to have sex with members of the same sex. And a heartbreaking fact is that some of these countries are officially Christian countries.

Continually we are reminded of Christ’s illustration of hypocrisy: “Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye” (Mt 7:3). It is also of note (and surely many in the Christian community would be shocked to learn this) that some of the most repeated attacks on homosexuality in the Church are coming from people who themselves engage secretly in homosexual sexual practices.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* (Harper San Francisco, San Francisco:1994), 104.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

According to psychiatry professor Richard Green, part of the confusion and fear about homosexuality is related to a failure to distinguish between three components of sexual identity. He noted these components as:

I – our basic conceptions of ourselves as being either male or female (our gender identities)

II – how we conform to expected gender behaviors as defined by our particular culture (our gender roles)

III – whether, in terms of a sexual partner, we are attracted to someone of the same sex or the other sex (our sexual orientation).<sup>70</sup>

When these fears manifest themselves as homophobia, it can keep us from expressing our love or care towards our friends and neighbors. In the Gospel of John, Jesus said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). But how can we expect the world to know that if we are afraid to love each other because somebody might think we are homosexual? People, especially those who are heterosexual, need to realize that affectionate feelings towards friends of the same sex do not necessarily entail physical attraction.<sup>71</sup> That fear can deprive us of our relationships with friends. A good scriptural example of this can be seen in Jesus’s relationships with his friends John, Lazarus, Maria and Martha.

During my novitiate,<sup>72</sup> one of my friends liked to get a hug before going to sleep. He acquired this habit from his family and his Mother. I can recall how much he worried about somebody thinking of him as homosexual. This situation gave him a lot of suffering and bitterness - simply because of a friendly hug.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>72</sup> Time (no longer than two years), which begins life in the religious community.

One of the biggest reasons for widespread homophobia is the social distance that heterosexual people sometimes maintain between themselves and the homosexual world.<sup>73</sup> But Jesus said directly: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13), then who is my neighbor, who is my friend? Could it be the Samaritan? Could it be the homosexual?<sup>74</sup>

The church of Christ must never forget that the homosexual has a little disposition to seek help while he associates only with queer cohorts<sup>75</sup> This is a result of them feeling comfortable in their environment. We need to move out of such homophobia and into an understanding of and care for our LGBTQ sisters and brothers.<sup>76</sup> Otherwise we will continue to pretend that there is one sexual orientation. This perpetuates the unhelpful and damaging belief that if a person we know identifies as anything other than heterosexual the most we can do as Christians is to pray for healing, thereby emphasizing that the person is sick or perverse. This creates an atmosphere in which many candidates in formation are afraid to say who they are, what they feel, and how they are living, because in the church as well as in society, homosexuality is presented as a sickness, as something sinful, dirty, and disgusting. We have to understand it is just an orientation.

This image in the context of Eastern Europe is seems to stem from the fact that when discussions occur about homosexuality, most concentrate on genital intercourse with no consideration of sexuality or orientation. There is the constant, unconscious

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<sup>73</sup> Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* 121.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>75</sup> Carl F.H. Henry, “*In and Out of the Gay World,*” in *Is Gay Good?* ed. W. Dwight Oberholtzer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 111-112.

<sup>76</sup> Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* 127.

feeling that: “If they knew who I really am, they would reject me and my work.” Often gay/lesbian religious, even those who have never been sexually active, will feel sinful because of their sexuality or sexual orientation. In some cases, this feeling of rejection can lead to alcohol or drug abuse as a means of relieving the anxiety.<sup>77</sup> For most gay woman and men in our context, coming out *in* the church has meant coming out *of* the church. For those who do not come out, the church has meant more than just a closet... the church has become for them a tomb.<sup>78</sup>

I would like to finish my research paper with the words by Jesuit theologian Michel Buckley, from the book of Donald Cozzens, “The Changing Face of the Priesthood”. When he was the rector of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, he proposed that what the Church needed in her priests were a few weak men. He asks of the seminarian who is ready to be ordained, “Is this man weak enough to be a priest?” His question takes us back to the humanity and personhood of Christ, who was judged as a weak and ineffective leader of a religious movement that was comprised of discouraged and confused Jewish peasants, to the weakness of a stammering Peter, to the ambition of James and John. Buckley continues:

“Let me spell out what I mean. Is this man deficient enough so that he cannot ward off significant suffering from his life, so that he lives with a certain amount of failure, so that he feels what it is to be an average man? Because it is in this deficiency, in this interior lack, in this weakness, maintains Hebrews, that the efficacy of the ministry and priesthood of Christ lies”.

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<sup>77</sup> Marguerite Kropinak, “Homosexuality and Religious Life.” *In A Challenge to Love. Gay and Lesbian Catholics in the Church.* ed. by Robert Nugent, 250-251.

<sup>78</sup> James Nelson, *Embodiment* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), 208.



Only a priest who is fundamentally mature can lead with wisdom and steady strength. Only someone who has looked courageously into his wounded depths and faced his weakness “in Christ” can preach with conviction and passion.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Donald B. Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 81-82.

### Chapter 3

#### *Sexuality and the Priesthood: Some Theological Consideration*

One of the main tasks of Christianity since its inception has been missionary activity “Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19a). We have many kinds of missions around the world - global, local, regional as is made clear in *Ad Gentes*,<sup>80</sup> the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church. Each of these missions has its proper goal and intention and each engages a specific theological field, e.g., canon law, liturgy, human sexuality, sacral music, moral theology, etc. The activity of the Church is not abstract, therefore knowing the background is so important for each mission and goal. This background of particular missions can be named as contextualization or inculturation. In this chapter, I would like to concentrate on presenting what could happen (the negative consequences), when this mission goes in a different direction and the topic of sexuality is permanently suppressed.

Human sexuality is an integral part of human existence; therefore, it should be a field of the church’s mission. When a human being can live in peace with himself or herself and can interact with his or her sexuality, this benefits everyone (church, society, family, itself).

Whenever we encounter suppression in this area of human life, we see that it leads to some negative effects for all, for the society and the people around us. It is much healthier to integrate our sexuality, and in order to integrate it, we must create space to explore how to experience our intimacy with God, as well as how we experience

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<sup>80</sup> *Ad Gentes* - is the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church.

intimacy with another... when are we able to stand before another without our usual defenses and masks, vulnerable and yet trusting?<sup>81</sup> Quite often we hear that our sexuality is our weakness why should it be our weakness, if instead it could be our strength?

In this chapter, I want to present, the negative effects of the suppression of sexuality, and to formulate a proposition for the good formation and preparation for priesthood as the church's mission. I will also present statistics regarding educational programs for seminarians from various locations. Because we are not called to only one place, we should be ready for our ministry in many contexts, between many cultures, and in dialogue with many traditions, etc. This is characteristic of our mission. In the Gospel of Mark, as in Matthew's cited above, Jesus says clearly: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news 'to the whole creation'" (Mk 16:15).

Jesus's words also point us to an important aspect of the mission, i.e., that the whole of creation is my neighbor, no matter a person's race, sexual orientation, or religion. Moreover, the notion (whole creation) reveals and presumes that our preaching and pastoral care and activity be directed not only to human beings but also to the non-human and to the earth itself.

In the Christian tradition, there have been saints who very clearly emphasized this reality and have taken a loving approach towards all of creation. One example is St. Thomas Aquinas, who held that all living creatures are beings with souls. By soul, Aquinas is referring to the Aristotelian notion of *anima*, that immaterial element which animates a living being or makes it alive. It is the *anima* that most fundamentally

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<sup>81</sup> Donald B. Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 29.

distinguishes a rock from a tree, or a rock from a goat.<sup>82</sup> For Aquinas, this view is the first principle of life. He emphasized a sort of union between soul and body, and for him, different kinds of beings have different kinds of souls. Another famous Catholic saint who had a special approach towards animals is St. Francis of Assisi.<sup>83</sup> He believed that animals are deserving of human goodness by the mere fact that they were the work of God; he called them our “our minor brothers”. He preached to birds and animals, as did Saint Anthony of Padova.<sup>84</sup>

The notion of *Imago Dei*, the theological doctrine held not only by Christians but also Jews and Muslims, maintains that all human beings are created in the likeness and image of God. This innate goodness and holiness in all of creation points to the importance of valuing human sexuality in all of its variety. Therefore, it is important to be present here and now, to be aware of our sexuality, as pertaining to the dignity of the human being as sharers in God’s creation.

To understand better how important specific treatment of sexuality is for the priesthood, we need to see this question from many views and perspectives. Human sexuality encompasses complex biological, psychological, and spiritual realities to the

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<sup>82</sup> John Berkman, “Towards a Thomistic Theology of Animality,” in *Creaturely Theology: God, Humans and Other Animals*, ed. Celia Deane-Drummond and David Cluogh, (London: Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd., 2009), 25.

<sup>83</sup> Saint Francis of Assisi (Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone), informally named as Francesco (1181/1182 – 3 October 1226). An Italian Roman Catholic friar and preacher. He founded the men’s Order of Friars Minor, the women’s Order of Saint Claire, the Third Order of Saint Francis and the Custody of the Holy Land. Francis is one of the most venerated religious figures in history.

<sup>84</sup> Cecylian Niezgoda OFMConv, *Kwiatki świętego Antoniego*, [Flowers of Saint Anthony] (Krakow: Klub Książki Katolickiej, 2003).

extent that these experiences and actions, reveal the presence of sexual desire.<sup>85</sup> Sexuality is an innate need and function of the human body, like breathing or digestion. A person is born with a certain physiological sexual potential, and this is then shaped within individual life experience. What is understood as human sexuality, then, is the product of the interaction of biological, psychic, and socio-cultural factors.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, physiological mechanisms that cause the formation and implementation of sexual reactions are inherent to us as humans, as a biological species, and the formation of these physiological mechanisms is genetically conditioned. At the same time, since a person has not only a biological but also a social nature, the formation of his or her sexuality is associated with conditions around their circumstances, for example, social environment, living conditions, etc. Also, various factors like nutrition, environment, culture, tradition, origin, social status, etc. play a role in the formation of human sexuality.

In the context of Scripture and classical Catholic Tradition,<sup>87</sup> sexuality finds its fullest expression in either the dedicated celibate lifestyle or sacramental marriage. Scripture<sup>88</sup> is quite clear that the Christian should not even entertain lustful thoughts in his or her heart. Adultery was condemned as immoral by Jesus, even though He forgives

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<sup>85</sup> Лариса Акимова, *Психология сексуальности. Учебное пособие*, [Larisa Akimova, *Psychology of Sexuality. Tutorial*] (Одесса: СМІЛ, 2005).

<sup>86</sup> Giuseppe Benagiano, Sabina Carrara and Valentina Filippi, "Social and Ethical Determinants of Human Sexuality: The Need to Reproduce", accessed August 2010, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20827251>.

<sup>87</sup> Lk 16:18; 1 Cor 7, 10-11, 1 Cor 6-9n; Jn 4, 15-19; Mk 10, 1-12; Mt 5, 27-32; Mt 19, 1-9; Eph 5, 21-33; Jn 8, 1-11; Heb 13:4; Mk 6:18; Mt 14, 3-4; Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18; Lev 20:10; Job 24:15; Prov 6:32; Wis 14:26; Sir 23:18; Ezek 16:38; Hos 4:2; Mal 3:5; Mal 2:16. Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 347, Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2384.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.,

those who repent of it. Sexuality is to be used to give life to children and to bind man and woman into a life-giving, permanent, faithful union. Thus, to engage in sexual actions for other purposes is to degrade human sexuality and compromise its integrity, alienating it from its destiny. Chastity<sup>89</sup> is imperative for stability in marital relationships as it promotes respect for the spouse. It also symbolizes one's dedication and moral integrity better than almost all other virtues.<sup>90</sup> According to Catechism of the Catholic Church, this is the classical position, however, I do not fully agree, as Scripture also points to other relevant virtues which are essential to Christian living, such as mercy, charity, and love towards your neighbor.

The history of Christian attitudes towards human sexuality has been influenced strongly by the concept of original sin. According to this perspective, rooted in an imagination focused on original sin, sexual attraction comes into the world with the Fall in Genesis, Eve having led her husband, Adam, astray. Prior to event, the lack of sin of the ancestors was interpreted as asexuality. The virginal female body, understood as being "intact" and unpenetrated by the male, was an icon of embodied holiness, prefiguring the resurrected spiritual body.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, the best condition for a person's salvation was overcoming his or her sinful sexual inclinations, and thus preserving his or her chastity. Lust was a sin and a serious impediment for salvation. However, the church

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<sup>89</sup> Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2337.

<sup>90</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia, ed. Peter M.J. Stravinskias, (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1991), 205.

<sup>91</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 64.

was forced to accept the permissibility of sexual relations, if it was with the goal of conceiving a child and it was free from lascivious motivations.

Catholic teaching consists of four main elements: Scripture, Magisterium of the Church, Tradition, and Experience. From all these perspectives, though, the context and approach to sexuality is not so univocal.

For example, Holy Scripture focuses on various questions about human life, including love between man and woman and their mutual erotic fascination. Sometimes we can hear the quite popular view, that Adam and Eve lived like naturists in the Garden of Eden, without any feelings or any movements of bodily nature, totally innocent and completely unaware of the difference between them sexually. In this version, we hear of a perfidious snake that induces them to eat the forbidden fruit from the tree, thereby opening their eyes and discovering their sexuality. We could say, then, that the serpent has been for them the first sex educator. This kind of thinking has a long tradition. For a long period of time, Christian (Catholic) tradition St. Augustine's point of view taught that sex was a sin, that every person ought to be ashamed of it, and people who were performing it, were sinners. There existed too the explanation that sex appeared as a necessary evil, because people somehow had to multiply after the fall and exile from paradise.<sup>92</sup> Currently, this way of thinking has evolved and the perspective changes depending on the context.

When one turns to the Church Fathers, such as prominent early Christian figures such as Gregory of Nyssa, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, John Chrysostom

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<sup>92</sup> Roman Zając, "Co Biblia tak naprawdę mówi o seksie?" [What Bible really says about sex] accessed November 16, 2016, <https://pl.aleteia.org/2016/11/16/co-biblia-tak-naprawde-mowi-o-seksie/>.

etc., more teaches around sexual morality emerge. According to Gregory of Nyssa, if God created humankind in God's image: in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Gen 1:27), then the man cannot have passion, passions not being proper to human nature, but rather, something characteristic of animals from the beginning. According to him, humans inherit their sexual passions not from their divine creator but rather from what they share with animals.<sup>93</sup> Further, St. Thomas Aquinas echoes the thought of St. Jerome, that is, that the ultimate goal of marriage should be to produce offspring, therefore whoever loves his wife with passion violates the good of marriage and can be called an adulterer.<sup>94</sup> For St. Augustine as well, the goal of marriage was only for human reproduction, not for pleasure. He said, when the first people disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit, they were ashamed and covered their hips by fig leaves. According to him, the parts they both wanted to hide were exactly the places from which the first sin emerged and was passed on.<sup>95</sup>

Of course, this way of teaching and regarding these matters has changed and, to a certain extent, they are incompatible with the biblical teachings. The Bible presents a different view, one in which sex was God's idea and part of the plan for man and woman from the very beginning, from the moment of their creation. God created us in a way that we would complement each other. The first commandment which people received from God in Genesis is: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28), which, put bluntly means,

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<sup>93</sup> Uta Ranke – Heinemann, *Seks odwieczny problem Kościoła*, [Sex eternal problem of the Church], 61.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.



“Copulate and make babies.” After placing the naked couple together in the garden, their Creator looked upon them and said, “Behold, it is very good”. The devil did not create sex and sexuality; God did.<sup>96</sup> Sexuality is not the original sin but, quite the contrary, the original blessing. That is, when God created a couple, God blessed them and their process of multiplicity (reproduction), and subsequently whatever relates to sex. Based on that, we can say that God blesses sex between a couple. I would like to say here sex between a couple rather than sex in marriage because marriage as a sacrament was not established until the XI-XII centuries. Before then, the union between two people was called by many names: union, contract, agreement, simple covenant, etc.

Unfortunately, the primary understanding and beauty of sexuality was distorted by the notion and perception of original sin. Otherwise, the realization of the first commandment in Genesis, according to God’s will, should have given people much pleasure. Other parts of Scripture encourage people to enjoy their sex and their sexuality as well. For example, the Book of Ecclesiastes: “Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that are given under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun” (Eccles 9:9). In the New Testament, the Apostol Paul says that “The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you

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<sup>96</sup> Michel Pearl, *Holy Sex. The Way God Intended*, (Pleasantville: No Greater Joy Ministries, 2002), 1.

because of your lack of self-control” (1 Cor 7,3-5). The Book of Proverbs says that sex has to be as a fountain of pleasure and joy: “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. May her breasts satisfy you at all times; may you be intoxicated always by her love” (Prov 5,18-19).<sup>97</sup>

It is a gift from God that we can enjoy our sexuality, that we can experience a physical ecstasy and mystical love. One of the famous examples is the statue of Ecstasy of Saint Teresa. It is a Baroque sculptural group made by Giovanni Bernini between 1647-52, ordered by Cardinal Cornaro for his family chapel at the church of *Santa Maria della Vittoria* in Rome. It presents Saint Teresa of Avila and an angel. This work has become the most controversial in Bernini’s achievements but also the most admired and acknowledged.<sup>98</sup>

Scripture is a wonderful guide towards human sexuality and beauty, but it depends on our perspective. In the Old Testament God reveals God’s self to us as a lover, who takes care of his people: “For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; the Holy One of Israel, is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like the wife of a man’s youth when she is cast off, says your God” (Is 54, 5-6). As well: “For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Is 62:5). In the Book of Ezekiel, God says, “I passed by you again and looked on you; you were at the age for love. I spread the edge of my cloak over you and covered your nakedness: I pledged myself to you and

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<sup>97</sup> Roman Zając, “*Co Biblia tak naprawdę mówi o seksie?*”, [What Bible really says about sex].

<sup>98</sup> Adam Bochnak, *Historia Sztuki Nowożytnej*, [History of Modern Art] (Warszawa-Kraków: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1985), v. II., 36.

entered into covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine” (Ezek 16:8).

And in the New Testament, the church is presented as the bride of Christ:

“Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind – yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. ‘For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church” (Eph 5, 25-32).

There are also moments where God shows his jealousy: “I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor 11:2). There are also many scriptural examples when prophets present God’s relationship with God’s people as a marriage (Is 50:1, Jer 2:2, Hos 2:18), and the entirety of the Song of the Songs.

Biblical scholar Dale Martin encourages us to remember, however, that inanimate objects like texts do not actually “speak.”<sup>99</sup> Nonetheless, we use this metaphor very often. According to him, when we do so with the Bible, we risk implying that God is the one speaking. Martin prefers to shift the focus of that ubiquitous question away from the Bible onto those who read it. Texts do not speak, but people do speak with texts. Taking that deceptively simple observation to heart can reorient God’s household towards a richer essence of biblical relations. Rather than asking who the speaker of each text is, people of God can more fruitfully analyze how people interpret those texts and discern

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<sup>99</sup> Dale Martin, *Sex, and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1.

better how they themselves might use them and what they want and need to say with them.<sup>100</sup>

Pope Francis, in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, notices:

“The ability of human couples to beget life is the path along which the history of salvation progresses. Seen this way, the couple’s fruitful relationship becomes an image for understanding and describing the mystery of God himself, for in the Christian vision of the Trinity, God is contemplated as Father, Son and Spirit of love... This Trinitarian dimension finds expression in the theology of Saint Paul, who relates the couple to the “mystery” of the union of Christ and the Church” (cf. Eph 5,21-33).<sup>101</sup>

This Trinitarian dimension, mentioned by the Pope and found in the Scripture, cannot be fulfilled without sex. According to Canon Law, Can. 1061 §1, “A valid marriage between baptized persons is said to be merely ratified, if it is not consummated; It is ratified and consummated when the spouses have in a human manner engaged together in a conjugal act in itself apt for the generation of offspring. Through this act, within the marriage the spouses become one flesh. Sexuality is not our weakness but our strength, a blessing and a gift from God. Of course, not every *actus hominis* is an *actus humanus*”.<sup>102</sup> By this, I refer to the fact that as a person you can still act inhumanly, because not every human act is humane. Therefore, we have to be very careful with such important and sensitive dimensions, especially in the context of formation for the priesthood. In my opinion, sexuality should be one of the main aspects throughout the

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<sup>100</sup> Jay Emerson Johnson, *Peculiar Faith: Queer Theology for Christian Witness*, (New York: Seabury Books, 2014), 47-48.

<sup>101</sup> Pope Francis, Post – Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, №11, 2016.

<sup>102</sup> Joseph Selling, *The Human Person*, in Christian Ethics. An Introduction, ed. Bernard Hoose (New York: Continuum, 2002), 96.

whole of formation. Also, it is a mission (New Evangelization) of the Church, the Church which is a pilgrim, not a static place or institution.

We cannot do Christian theology from a place of fear; the only way to do Christian theology is by being open to the possibility of joy.<sup>103</sup> The world and time in which we are living is not black and white, nor is it static. If we want to understand things, we have to get closer to them<sup>104</sup> and try to understand their nature, purpose and context. According to a German theologian, Johannes Gründel, all factors that influence the morality of sexual activity derive from the personal, social, and anthropological aspects of humanity. In this definition, faith also assists us:

“There is general agreement on the need for giving form and direction to man’s instincts, not, however on the criteria for providing us with norms of sexual morality. The factors making for morality in sexual activity rest neither on a purely biological foundation nor on any tendency towards development, nor can they satisfactorily derive from existing behavior patterns nor from a purely abstract concept of human nature. They must be derived from the personal, social and anthropological aspects of man. Just as in the case of sexual education, so too sexual morality presupposes a total view of the meaning and purpose of man and his sexuality. With this question of meaning is connected the question as to the nature and dignity of man, the significance of the human person, his social and religious relationships and the sum-total of his obligations. The Christian cannot answer it without the revelation of faith”.<sup>105</sup>

All the knowledge that we receive during the process of learning, in formation or in our life experience in general, helps us in grasping the revelation of faith and of God and in the understanding of truth. It is also the case that the truth of faith and the truth of reason are not contradictory; the knowledge that we gain through the revelation should be

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<sup>103</sup> Jay Emerson Johnson, *Peculiar Faith: Queer Theology for Christian Witness*, 36.

<sup>104</sup> Stevenson Bryan, *Just Mercy*, (New York: Spigel & Grau, 2014), Introduction.

<sup>105</sup> Johannes Gründel, *Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. Karl Rahner SJ, (New York: Crossroad, 1975), 1572-73.

complemented with the knowledge which we gain through reason. Therefore, it is helpful and integral to keep a balance between church teaching and science,<sup>106</sup> especially in the context of sexuality. This balance is particularly important during formation for the priesthood:

“Any explanation of the meaning of human sexuality must also take into account the newly gained insights of the empirical sciences, especially behavioral research and the convergence and divergence of human and animal sexuality. Precisely the specific qualities of human sexuality, its continuous activity outside the mating seasons, the possibility of isolation of sexual desire from conception, the generalized and uncertain nature of human instincts and the consequent possibility of sexual excess, demand for social living, if it is to be human and worthy of human being, an organic control of the heightened sexual energies. They point to the need for institutionally supported direction and order in sexual relationships. This is but another instance of man’s need of education”.<sup>107</sup>

In light of Johannes Grundel's approach towards human sexuality - one which takes into account the personal, social and anthropological aspects of humanity - one can glimpse the Church's understanding of tradition, with a small “t”. The Classical understanding of “Catholic Tradition”, generally speaking, has included church tradition, i.e., Magisterial teaching, plus scripture and its interpretation, the result of which revelation is.<sup>108</sup> Small t-tradition, however, is marked by a larger range of experience, which includes where we come from, the issues and questions of the time, the social teaching principles, empirical sciences, and the context, culture, and history. Tradition comes from the needs of people and interpersonal relationship with God.

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<sup>106</sup> Science denies basic principles of the church with theories as: Darwin’s theory, Big Bang Theory etc.

<sup>107</sup> Johannes Gründel, *Encyclopedia of Theology*, 1573.

<sup>108</sup> The teaching office of the Church. To safeguard the real substance of faith in Jesus Christ and to prevent the individual from being entirely left on this own, the Magisterium of the Church was established by Christ, and captures the very heart and essence of the Church, which is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus faithfully. (Catholic Encyclopedia, ed. Peter M.J. Stravinskias), 615.

The standard Catholic teaching on human sexuality is not working well, because it offers no guidance to people beyond telling them what is permitted or forbidden. It employs an exclusively behavioral model of morality, which is highly influenced by patriarchal models of sexuality and the family (perpetuated by a celibate, male leadership). This teaching disregards human emotion, desire, felt needs, and the ability of human persons to direct their own lives. It takes no account of human experience or the different human situations and contexts (population realities, persons with no options, ambiguity and conflict situations), factors on which the Church relies as part of its basis for other realms of morality. Additionally, when we speak about human sexuality, we need to have some kind of notion about the human person not the human nature. We also need to have some understanding of how sexuality works. The human person is an integral whole, never an individual but always in community and in relation to the material world to culture, history, and particular others.<sup>109</sup>

This reality of the human person is reflected in Jesus' approach, which was a personal and contextual one. He went first to the outsiders the people of different social levels, categories, and origins, disregarding the social norms of the day. He cared first about the person herself and, generally speaking, not about the intimate details of one's "sins" or the details on which the religious authorities were often so acutely focused. Otherwise we can easily focus on the specifics and disregard the relevant interpretation of the action.

For example, we have the question of sterilization. When someone subjects himself to this surgery and afterwards confesses it as a sin against the possibility to be

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<sup>109</sup> Materials and notes from the class of "Sexual Morality" by prof. Joseph Selling, March – April 2015, Nairobi.

open for a new life, would that mean that after the confession this person can live as a pure, sterilized man with unity of God and not worry about a pregnancy and just enjoy his life? All this could be a manipulation of circumstances to become free from the burden of a sin. Or, if a young couple after marriage decides they are not ready for new life, they have two possibilities: to live as brother and sister or to live in permanent sin, because they are not open towards a new life, using contraception or some other methods. Of course, the church proposes one plan, i.e., Natural Family Planning, which is the family planning method approved by the Roman Catholic Church for achieving, postponing or avoiding pregnancy.<sup>110</sup> The Catholic Encyclopedia states it as such:

“Natural Family Planning are methods for pinpointing the fertile time in a woman’s cycle. Current knowledge of this cycle is so great that careful use of the techniques available can considerably increase the chances of conceiving when there has been difficulty before, or highly reduce such chances when there is a very serious reason for postponing pregnancy”.<sup>111</sup>

In the history of the Church's teaching on sexuality, we have often missed the mark in egregious and damaging ways. For example, a contentious issue arises among theologians in the 12th century when discussing if it is a greater sin, when the action is performed with a beautiful woman instead of an ugly woman. Peter Cantor (Peter the Chanter), French Roman Catholic theologian believed that the sin with a beautiful woman is considered a greater sin because is more pleasurable. Apparently, the amount of pleasure experienced determines the level of the sin. Later on, according to this belief, Peter Cantor tried to disfigure the beauty of women by stating that women were not attractive, not appealing for men. His ulterior motive was to make men uninterested in

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<sup>110</sup> Encyclopedia of Motherhood, ed. Andrea O'Reilly, (London: SAGE Publications, 2010), 1056.

<sup>111</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia, 673.



women. We encounter a different approach by another French theologian Alain de Lille. According to him, whoever is sinning with a beautiful woman, sins less because by her beauty he is more compelled to sin, and where greater coercion there is less sin.<sup>112</sup>

All those examples show to us how many different approaches there can be to the same question, and that each of these approaches has consequences and implications. The opinion and understanding of what is important has differed enormously over time. When preaching to a Jesuit community, Father Adolfo Nicolas, former General of the Society of Jesus, said, “a static monastery does not serve us.” Here he emphasizes the importance to go to the frontiers, outside of the church towards new callings and a new evangelization. He considers that it is good when the church opens to Africa, Asia, and other cultures, traditions and peoples. It is good that the church wants to exceed the limits/frontiers that had been previously set by time and history (and by specific voices within that time and history). However, it seems that this approach is temporary, said Fr. General, as we do not know if it will remain in time. One thing is sure, we are people of hope and each openness is beneficial, because people have different experiences. It varies from each continent, country, culture, etc. and at times it can even be a bitter experience.

Some cultures have held too much space over time, like in the example of Europe. While it has made a great contribution to intellectual development, its influence has maybe been too great, and by rationalizing absolutely everything, here we could find the sin of Europe. By rationalizing everything, we have become rationalists. In the questions of faith and humanity, the attempt to explain everything in a rational way is not always

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<sup>112</sup> Uta Ranke – Heinemann, *Seks odwieczny problem Kościoła* [*Sex eternal problem of the Church*], 165.

and everywhere good. The context of Asia and Africa give us a slightly different perspective, tradition, awareness, and this can be helpful for us.

According to Adolfo Nicolas, we have two weak points in Europe: rationalization of everything and the schematic traditions in the Church. In Christianity we believe that God is a mystery. However, Christians wrote thousands of books about God, whereas in Buddhism, the focus is the service and detachment. Therefore, rationalization has a bad influence on Evangelization in the world. The second weak point: we have developed a ritual, a structure (Church's institution) with more than 2000 years of history, and then we were enamored with these forms, which we created ourselves, and we forgot where they came from and to whom they are supposed to lead.<sup>113</sup> Perhaps this is the reason why young people say yes to spirituality but no to religion. Spirituality is not connected with forms, while religion is going to the church and performing certain duties. People do not like it; we live in times of "choice."

People are looking for something more, for a deeper calling to spirituality, but they often do not know what that is or in what form it may come. The church must first listen to the needs of these people, and then establish a dialogue with them.<sup>114</sup> This personal and contextual approach is very important. Context can determine so many things, and it can reveal to us the current situation and lead us towards the path we will follow.

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<sup>113</sup> Interview with Fr Adolfo Nicolás SJ, Former Superior General of the Society of Jesus. Interviewer: Garry O'Sullivan, Editor, Irish Catholic, 13 September 2009.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

Context determines so much. Take something as ordinary and accessible as the Sun, for example, which can be perceived in many different ways depending on the context. In some cultures, the sun considered as light is a striking symbol for the coming of Christ into our world. However, in India, the sun is understood by some as an enemy. It is not something that brings refreshment but unbearable heat, and it has to be avoided by staying in the shade. The sun's heat makes men and women thirsty, and too much exposure to the sun causes sunstroke.<sup>115</sup>

Also, the Pope Francis indicates and encourages us in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, that the Church must be open and hospitable for everyone. It is supposed to be a place of mercy, not condemnation: "The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open... Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators, but the Church is not a tollhouse. It is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems" (№ 47). Pope Francis calls the Church to go out and offer the life of Jesus Christ to everyone:

"I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the center and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat'" (Mk 6:37).<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York: Maryknoll, 2002), ix- xix.

<sup>116</sup> The Holy Father Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, № 49, 2013.

In the novel, *Narcissus and Goldmund* by German – Austrian author Hermann Hesse<sup>117</sup> (set in the Middle Ages), we hear a story of the friendship between a monk-ascetic, Narcissus, and a poor sculptor and vagabond, Goldmund. According to Narcissus, the monastery is the perfect place to work for the man of intellect. In the monastery, you can get a balance between wisdom and humility, erudition and simplicity, hermitage and social existence. The monastery is a sanctuary of thought, but it is also an instrument used by the human spirit. A different perspective is shown to us by Goldmund (an opposite or alter ego of Narcissus). After many years of traveling, Goldmund returns to the monastery from which he once escaped. During his journey, he experienced fleeting love, the experience of mass death due to plague, the pogrom of Jews, and even killed two people in self-defense.

Without a doubt, the view from the side of the monastery is one of reason and morality, that there his own life was better, more clear, ordered, and exemplary. It was an ordered life, in strict service, and with constant sacrifice. But looking at it from the side of God, was it indeed the order and discipline of faithful life? Renouncing to the world of happiness, staying away from the mud and blood, plunging into philosophy and piety was this life of Narcissus better than Goldmund's? Is it true that humanity was created to live a regulated life, where the hours and activities were set by a prayer bell? Was like really created to study Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas? To be able to speak Greek, mortifying the senses, and run away from the world? Did not God create humanity with senses and desires, with the ability to sin, and to despair?<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Herman Hesse, *Narczyz i Złotousty* [Narcissus and Goldmund] (Warszawa: PIW, 2003).

<sup>118</sup> Eugen Drewermann, *Kler Psychogram Idealu* [Clergy Psychogram of the Ideal] (Uraeus: Gdynia, 2002), 17-18.

Our experience is not just about persevering but about growing. God sanctifies us and makes us saints in God's own way, with what is better for us, and not in our way. It never looks like sanctity to us. Very often it looks like madness, failure, or even sin.<sup>119</sup>

Church and church representatives clergy of every time should reflect on the attitude of priests as well as peoples' attitudes towards human sexuality. Sexuality, as previously mentioned, is not only a sexual act. Human sexuality is an integral part of each human existence, which at times includes a sexual act. It is impoverished when church representatives concentrate only on sexual intercourse or sexual activity, forgetting about the whole person, who is much more important. During the Synod on the Family,<sup>120</sup> there were many different opinions and positions of the Church hierarchy. It is integral and to the benefit of its members when the Church hierarchy, at this level, concentrates on the whole of human sexuality and not narrowly on certain physical actions.

In an interview with the Italian Jesuit journal, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn<sup>121</sup> said that “the Church should not look in the bedroom first, but in the dining room!” Schönborn also criticizes “intransigent moralists,” a category into which some of his fellow bishops fall, whom he accuses of having an “obsession with

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<sup>119</sup> Gerdenio Sonny Manuel, SJ, *Living Celibacy. Healthy Pathways for Priests*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 73.

<sup>120</sup> Synod of Bishops, *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World*, Vatican City, 24 October 2015.

<sup>121</sup> Austrian Dominican friar and theologian, he serves as the Archbishop of Vienna and President of the Austrian Bishops' Conference.

*intrinsece malum*<sup>122</sup> - intrinsic evil.” According to the Church’s moral teaching, certain actions are intrinsically evil, i.e., considered always and everywhere wrong, regardless of circumstance or intention. Included in these are certain mortal sins related to family life, such as abortion, divorce, adultery, contraception, fornication, and homosexual sodomy. According to Schönborn, however, the doctrine of intrinsic evils has been “misunderstood” by the defenders of the Church teachings at the synod, such that it now “suppresses discussion of...[the] complex circumstances... and situations in life... from a comprehensive perspective on the dramatic consequences of divorce: economic, educational, psychological, etc.”<sup>123</sup> Schönborn’s criticism of “intrinsic evils” and his understanding of Church teaching as “an ideal,” provides context for his advocacy of “lifestyle ecumenism” at the last synod. There, Schönborn “proposed an interpretative key” to revolutionize the Church’s approach to family life and sexual ethics by looking at Vatican II’s dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, which states that “many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its [the church’s] visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity.”<sup>124</sup>

Because marriage is a Church in miniature, Schönborn argues, just as the Church seeks to find elements of truth in different religions, it follows that “who are we to judge

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<sup>122</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, “Instruction. Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Person with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders”, <http://www.vatican.va/>

<sup>123</sup> Cardinal Schönborn, At Synod, Church should embrace ‘positive elements’ of gay unions and other sexual sins, accessed September 14, 2015, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/cardinal-schoenborn-at-synod-church-should-embrace-positive-elements-of-gay>.

<sup>124</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI, n.8, November 21, 1964.

and say that there are no elements of truth and sanctification in them [non-marital sexual lifestyles]?” Schönborn highlights the need for “accompaniment” and “being on a journey” as metaphors for his understanding of the pastoral strategy frequently called the “law of gradualness,” i.e., that people come to follow the moral law gradually over time.<sup>125</sup>

Such current thinking gives us hope and joy that each member of the church can be understood and has her or his own place in the Church. We are the same church over time and in different contexts, but also quite different by many particularities, e.g., history, tradition, language, approach to the celibacy, human sexuality, liturgical rite etc. This has been and will always be, and the church teaches that there is a unity in such multiplicity.

Within the Catholic Church, the Latin rite is the most widely spread and outside of that, there are the 23 self-governing Eastern Catholic Churches, with a combined membership of 17.3 million as of 2010.<sup>126</sup> In the Eastern tradition, as I previously mentioned, a candidate for the priesthood can choose celibacy or marriage. Therefore, the approach and the dynamic regarding human sexuality and celibacy itself should be different, during the formation and in the society. Therefore, behind the changing face of the priesthood, though, celibate or married, remains the saving face of Jesus Christ.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Cardinal Schönborn, At Synod, Church should embrace ‘positive elements’ of gay unions and some sexual sins.

<sup>126</sup> Ronald G. Roberson, "Eastern Catholic Churches Statistics 2010". CNEWA. Retrieved 30 April 2011.

<sup>127</sup> Donald B. Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*.143.

Chris Lowney, in his book *Heroic Living*,<sup>128</sup> reminds us that a principal aim for St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* is to invite us to look at the world as God would see it. Lowney states that this mental exercise is important because facing facts about the world right now can help us see more clearly how we want to lead our civilization forward. What kind of world are we living in, where is it heading, and what part has each of us played, or will play, in getting there? For an accurate perception of our world, we have to lift our heads a bit higher in order to see a bit farther. Very often, religious writers stop on the deification of the Lord, while forgetting the study of his path and teachings at the beginning as a human.

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<sup>128</sup> Chris Lowney, *Heroic Living*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2009).



## Chapter 4

### *Some Possible Implications for Seminary Formation in Eastern Europe*

In light of the research which has surfaced in the previous chapters, this section will focus on several possible pastoral suggestions that could be relevant for parts of Eastern Europe. The idea in mind with these suggestions is to help mold formation for the priesthood in light of the insights gleaned from other parts of the universal Church.

There is a need, first, to address two different archetypes that have played a role in discussions on sexuality. The first archetype is the one referring to Eve while in Eden. The narrative shows the image of a passive man, yet he is a subject who does respond to a stimulus. The woman in this archetype adopts a more proactive role in which she is the one that takes action by tempting the other subject. The actions of Eve are hidden proposals to which the man reacts to. In this narrative, we analyze a man who is primarily seen as a primitive being who shows none or little control over himself. This is a character who will respond only in reaction to a temptation. In this case, it is the woman who becomes responsible for the development of the scenario. She becomes the temptation. The woman is presented as the subject with dishonest intentions, and the man as the passive subject, who reacts automatically. The woman will be seen as guilty because she is the one who started this interaction. If one simply accepts this narrative, these characterizations are cognitive distortions, meaning that people who cannot or are not invited to see a different aspect of the situation or see it from a different lens simply accept these gendered and damaging labels as truth.

The second archetype I will analyze is that of the Father. Patriarchy has a strong influence in Eastern Europe, and the Christian religion, including and especially the Catholic church, is based on a structure with patriarchal roots. Its structure is conformed

to a certain humanly created order in which God, who is imaged as male, is considered as the father. In this structure, women are excluded from certain functions and areas of the Church's life. Men, in this respect, have been granted the right of choice, not only to participate as part of the structure but also to become priests, giving them the space and authority to administer sacraments, preach in any and all contexts, and participate in the governance, decision-making and structural transformation of the Church. Women on the other hand, have been denied the right to decide to be part of the structure, let alone to be priests. The argument that has been used for depriving women from having such rights relates to their biological characteristics:

“Only a baptized man (*vir*) validly receives sacred ordination.<sup>129</sup> The Lord Jesus chose men (*viri*) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry. The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason, the ordination of women is not possible”.<sup>130</sup>

Transmitting this image to the community of the faithful has had an influence on the Church. This path has instilled a strong primary socialization that teaches us the supremacy of men. We are dealing with a model based on a patriarchal structure that promotes this male supremacy. Generally, women have been assigned a place given to them by men, and in different areas of life, we can think of examples of women who have had to live and move in places, structures and relationships not freely chosen. However, it is also important to note that even within these structures, women have over and again

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<sup>129</sup> Code of Canon Law. Latin-English Edition, (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1999), can.1024.

<sup>130</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, (United States Catholic Conferences, Inc.: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), §1577.

exercised agency in the face of such oppression. It is still true, today, though, that women often find themselves caught in a strong dichotomy between society deems to be allowed and what it considers forbidden. This has its deep and damaging effects, as it leads both women and men to make automatic decisions and have certain predetermined opinions.

I want to analyze the image of the priest, which is also an image of Father and supreme person in the hierarchy. A Father (priest) is expected to represent the highest standard; it is expected that he shows wisdom, care, support and responsibility.

Unfortunately, this standard, too, brings its share of consequences, for example, the lack of equality between the position of a priest and the position of the people of God. It perpetuates an idea that no one can be expected to be equal to a Father. This is incredibly unhelpful and damaging for priests, the faithful and the Church.

It is this kind of narrative that gives our candidates for the priesthood a more conceited idea of themselves. Such ideas will be passed on to them during formation; it will be repeated to them by their teachers, spiritual guides, and superiors and very likely internalized into their identity as priests.

Among the clergy and the faithful, we have a specific perception, a tacit understanding of what the priesthood represents and a subsequent way of behaving, that fosters unhealthy power dynamics. This phenomenon, involving both clergy and laity, is referred as clerical culture, or clericalism. It is about the clergy's erroneous recognition of their own superiority over the rest of God's people, considering themselves "an exclusive clerical club." Therefore, the priesthood defends its achievements and protects its own good image.

The hierarchical priesthood, in the Catholic Church, is a complex phenomenon characterized by religious and secular qualities, and as such, its interpretations vary widely. Understanding its essence and its primary purpose or function requires a thorough, multi-faceted explanation. Catholic theology shows that the priesthood is an "office" and a "ministry" in the religious community. One of the main tasks of the priest is to help people satisfy their religious and spiritual needs and to foster the development of their faith and morality.<sup>131</sup> Then we have to ask clear questions, and to offer proposals and plans that can be helpful for the candidates for the improvement of their formation. This should be done not by detaching from their life circumstances and experiences, but in light of those things.

Therefore, it becomes necessary to figure out:

- To whom is this proposal addressed? Could it be to the candidates, or to the superiors or to the Church's authorities?
- Why should this proposal be done? What problems do we want to solve? For example: problems related to the sexual disorders, mental problems related to the sexual frustration, or problems related to the lack of competence in providing current and reliable help to the members of the community, seminary, question of celibacy, etc.
- How would this change take place? What specific actions can be taken and what methods should be used to introduce these proposals? How to ensure that these changes are not immediate, but rather that they become a systemic, extended plan of preventive activities?
- Who should be involved in the process of this plan (psychologists, psycho-sexologists, therapists, whose competences are better to help? What means does the church have and what resources does it want to intend for it?
- How to make out an outline of information for this proposal?
- What statistics to support the need for these changes?

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<sup>131</sup>Józef Baniak, *Rezygnacja z kapłaństwa i wybór życia małżeńsko-rodzinnego przez księży rzymsko-katolickich w Polsce. Studium Socjologiczne* [Resignation from the priesthood and the choice of marital-family life by Roman Catholic priests in Poland. Sociological Study] (Krakow: Nomos, 2001), 15. Translation mine.

In my opinion, the beneficiaries of these changes in formation for future priests goes beyond the clergy. This would happen as a result of the priest being better equipped to deal with sexual matters. The group of candidates benefit, the entire society in macro-scale, and every single member of the community in a micro-scale, which means that parishioners will benefit from it as well.

The question to address, though, is what the Church wants. Would the Church be interested only in the people who are involved with the Church's structure based on the mechanisms of "membership" and internalized norms, or would it be interested in a wider circle of believers? Does the Church care about quantity or quality? Generally, from the observations of social life, it seems that there is a shift towards universality and quantity versus quality. One of the reasons for this shift could be the lack of vocations.

Through this process of integrated and more holistic formation, the Church could prevent a whole array of difficulties and problems related to the taboo of sexuality and the suppression of sexual feelings and drives. This means that repression of these desires and drives can lead to serious sexual disorders and crimes. Some of the serious problems that come about from such repression could be: harassment, frustration, sleep disorders, depression, narcissism, sexual abuse, feeling guilty, blaming others, unhealthy and obsessive curiosity regarding sexuality of others, demonizing sex, hatred of women, addiction to pornography, self-harm, alcoholism, unhealthy sense of activity and power over others, etc.

I think that the most sensible way of addressing the topic of sexuality in formation, is to give an instruction on sexual education directed to both the interior development of the healthy expression and understanding of their own sexuality and the

other externally focused, which would explore pastoral activity and how to accompany others on topics of sexuality.

When talking about sexual education directed inwards, this would assume taking an active role. For example, before accepting their candidacy, the men could take an examination of their sexual education and knowledge, followed by a more free and open discussion. This might help to assess the psychological and developmental maturity of the candidates in question and create a space at the beginning of formation for the men to understand that their healthy sexual development as priests will be taken seriously throughout their formation. Of course, the psychological tests do not guarantee certainty, but they can give a helpful insight at this stage. It is also important to note that an integral part of sexual education is often the instructor / educator and how he or she introduces and creates space for these topics. An emergent question in this process, then, is how to educate those who are supposed to teach the candidates for priestly formation? And who should be in those teaching roles? How might we not fall into the cycle of repeated generational mistakes?

Inward-directed education could help the candidates face the topic of their own sexuality what it means, how to navigate it and often times, simply how to acknowledge its existence. Only an open discussion about sexuality will make these candidates more comfortable with the topic.

Sexual education with a more external, apostolic focus would address the preparation of candidates for the work they will have to do with others. They are supposed to help people with their spiritual and pastoral needs, included in this are

questions related to marriage, relationships, the meaning of sex in marriage, sexuality itself, fertility, management of fertility etc.

Today, as before in certain Christian environments, the questions about sexuality and sexual and erotic desire are avoided. These questions are often regarded as pertaining to a bad spirit or as a temptation that could lead a person to fall. Therefore, it has become a more comfortable position for the Christian to avoid all of these questions altogether, ignore the topic of sexuality as well as suppress his or her own sexuality. Christopher West, a lay Catholic author and speaker, points out that this sort of thinking and education is a “Gospel of the starvation diet”. This false Gospel posits, “Your desires are bad. You need to repress all of that and follow all these rules, and you will be a good, upstanding Christian person”.<sup>132</sup> During West’s talk at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Lancaster, he challenged the audience with the question: “How many of you would say that, in your Christian upbringing, there was an open, honest, normal, healthy conversation about God’s glorious, stupendous, stunningly beautiful, breathtaking, unbelievably astounding plan for erotic desire?”<sup>133</sup> For me, this question perfectly emphasizes how the Lord could rejoice when we, as humans, are able to enjoy God’s gift of sexuality, without any inhibitions, prejudices, biases, etc. Therefore, it is very important to have good formators who are responsible of the formative process for clergy and who can teach and explain human sexuality as God’s gift and not as a curse.

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<sup>132</sup> Earle Cornelius, *Spiritual hunger, erotic desire mesh in Theology of the Body*, Catholic High grad explains. [http://lancasteronline.com/features/faith\\_values/spiritual-hunger-erotic-desire-mesh-in-theology-of-the-body/article\\_fc855b02-be38-11e6-aceb-37e3f4d22469.html](http://lancasteronline.com/features/faith_values/spiritual-hunger-erotic-desire-mesh-in-theology-of-the-body/article_fc855b02-be38-11e6-aceb-37e3f4d22469.html) (accessed December 10, 2016).

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

Consequently, it is beneficial when this responsibility for formation is carried out by different specialists on the subject. For example, in the field of psychology, psychosexology, and spirituality, therapists can conduct open therapies, conversations, workshops, etc. Certainly, wise, experienced clergy could be the instructors and guides as well. The Church, particularly those responsible for formation, has to propose this kind of instruction for candidates. If it were possible to recruit specialists from outside to assist with problems and questions regarding sexuality and formation of the clergy, these specialists would need to be selected with great care, chosen by their professionalism, a sense of responsibility, a deep and exhibited human understanding and sensitivity, and very importantly, regardless of any affiliation or lack thereof they had to the church or the type of religion they profess. Having only one spiritual Father for the seminary as often happens, is simply not enough for the robust formation of the candidates.

A Polish Jesuit, theologian, psychotherapist and psychologist, Jacek Prusak S.J., draws attention in one of his interviews to the reality that in the Polish seminaries, everything often depends on the superiors. It is they who decide how much and in which ways sexual education should be addressed in the seminary. In practice, this often translates to a complete resignation of any kind of sexual education. When the topic of celibacy is mentioned, it is done through the prism of spirituality or canon law. The main responsibility, then, of sexual education lies with the spiritual fathers and their individual conversations or consultations with the seminarians. Spiritual Fathers are usually those who have a good opinion and is pious, while it is not enough to be helpful and appropriate. A Spiritual Father cannot be timid and shy while dialoguing with seminarians about how to navigate sexual desires and fantasies. He has to talk nuanced



and delicate topics such as about the mechanisms to control sexual bias, sexual identity and sexual orientation, and what responsibility and social roles are assumed by the person who wants to live in celibacy.<sup>134</sup> Jacek Prusak S.J, emphasizes too, that the seminary is not a psychological clinic.

In the church environment, there is a deeply rooted and false idea that psychotherapy is a dangerous thing. Many thinks that if a seminarian does therapy, he might lose his faith or have an approach towards everything only through the psychological point of view. This is often the way of thinking of many members of the Easter European Church. If you see a psychologist, it means that something is wrong with you, or that you have a lot of problems and you do not believe in the power of God's healing. After such an approach, it is difficult to expect a good result. It is not enough just to send a religious or seminarian for therapy, because he does not cease to be a clergyman, and he usually approaches everything only and exclusively from the ecclesiastical perspective.<sup>135</sup>

At this point, we can say there is a ramification of clericalism, i.e., that the clergymen cannot talk honestly during therapy for the fear of scandalizing the lay therapist. When the therapist is a clergyman there is a lack of trust towards the therapist and it becomes more difficult to open up from fear of the clergyman being biased.

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<sup>134</sup> Marcin Wójcik, *Zakochany kleryk. Jak wykształcić księdza, żeby nie bał się kobiet, a z ambony nie demonizował seksu?* [In love seminarian. How to educate a priest, who would not be afraid of women, and would not demonize sex from the pulpit] <http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/1,53668,18555282,zakochany-kleryk-jak-wykształcic-ksiedza-zeby-nie-bal-sie.html?disableRedirects=true> (accessed August 17, 2015). My translation.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

Another dynamic that occurs is a lack of confidence in the superiors. A survey done in one of the largest seminaries in Poland, in which the seminarians were asked whom they would turn to ask for help and support in times of crisis. The answers ranged from family to friends, but there was no mention of relying on superiors. They would not make reference to a parish priest, bishop or even their own classmates. This survey showed us that seminarians do not trust their superiors, or their peers, and that seminary formation is perceived as an impediment to openness. It was clear that the superior was not considered an authority but only a “Big Brother.”<sup>136</sup> If we do not trust the formation, we can say that there are flaws that must be addressed.

Seminaries should focus more on mature human and spiritual formation. In this process, it could be helpful to have a good information policy, i.e., a system that would inform the society about the current direction, developmental strategies, and decisions of Church authorities.

A good example of this is what Pope Francis is currently doing. He addresses problems and complex dynamics in an open and transparent way. He talks about them, affirms them, and admits that such problems exist! It is a very important step to talk about things openly. In this world where social media prevails, and new technology develops every day, there is no alternative. Pretending that there is not a problem is no longer an option. The Church would gain a lot if it revealed that its clergy is made of people with all kinds of problems, difficulties, and worries, just like the community of the faith. We are all just human beings.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

My personal experience during my Jesuit formation taught me that the formation of a spiritual person should begin with a human formation. Before being a good Christian or a good spiritual person, you need to become a good human. After that, it is necessary to have good and deep spiritual formation. To develop a young vocation, there is a need to establish a personal and intimate friendship with Jesus. Upon that foundation, one can organize and provide a solid intellectual formation with diverse experiences, experiments, and tests that will seek to integrate the human, spiritual and intellectual formation of the candidates. As Pope Francis says: “Priests should be shepherds living with the smell of the sheep”, because those priests “who do not go out of themselves” by being mediators between God and humanity will “gradually become intermediaries, managers.”<sup>137</sup>

Candidates who want to study and be formed in diocesan and religious seminaries are aware that in the Roman Catholic Church, the priests live in celibacy, which means that they cannot have a partner or family, as they do in some Eastern Catholic Churches. The candidates sometimes do not fully accept this fact. The acceptance of this reality depends on many factors such as: choice, vocation, and the deeper motives for joining a seminary or religious order in the first place. We could say that their knowledge at this point is not complete enough to make an informed choice.

Therefore, the moral, spiritual, and pastoral formation in each diocesan and religious seminary is aimed to enrich the knowledge of candidates for the priesthood or religious life in order to help them recognize their vocation, to assess if the candidate is ready to live alone (without the possibility of establishing a partner or children), and to

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<sup>137</sup> Carol Glatz, *Pope Francis: Priests Should Be ‘Shepherds Living with The Smell of The Sheep’*. <https://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/pope-francis-priests-should-be-shepherds-living-with-the-smell-of-the-sheep/13439> (accessed March 28, 2013).

settle oneself in one's vocation. This time of formation should also help to prepare oneself and fully accept a life in celibacy and sexual purity. Each candidate confirms and makes a promise to the bishop during his diaconal and presbyterate ordination in the presence of superiors, priests, lay people, and family, of his readiness for such a life. In this context, it is worthy to ask, how does education and formation take place in the seminary? What approach do the candidates themselves take during this vocation? What does the "isolation" from the world, family, and friends mean during the formation? Do they keep in touch with friends after joining the seminary? Are they always trying to live in sexual purity as seminarians preparing themselves for the priesthood in celibacy and chastity?<sup>138</sup>

I would like to present here, also, the statistics of Józef Baniak<sup>139</sup> regarding celibate formation in clergy seminaries. By analyzing these statistics, we can get closer to the approximate, current situation of sexual education during formation in Poland. Among his respondents are diocesan priests and religious, some who left the priesthood as well as those who continued to do this ministry. This phenomenon has been studied for 30 years. In the 80s and 90s, he surveyed around 300 former priests, and at the turn of the 1990s, about 800 priests.<sup>140</sup> These studies are ongoing. In his research, he counts with statistical and social error, all these percentages are referring to the persons who were surveyed by him and do not refer to the entire population. This data gives us a solid

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<sup>138</sup>Józef Baniak, *Rezygnacja z kapłaństwa i wybór życia małżeńsko-rodzinnego przez księży rzymsko-katolickich w Polsce. Studium Socjologiczne* [Resignation from the priesthood and the choice of marital-family life by Roman Catholic priests in Poland. Sociological Study], 124.

<sup>139</sup>Polish sociologist, professor of humanities and specialist in the field of sociology of religion. He is one of the main scholars, who is engaged in research related to the sexual life among clergy in Poland.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

ground to realize the scale of the phenomenon and to analyze the dynamics. It provides the opportunity to see the current situation. The majority of respondents (60.5%) were in the 30-39-year-old and 40-49-year-old ranges. Significantly less were respondents between the ages of 50-60, 61-70, and those under 30 years of age.<sup>141</sup>

Preparation seminarians for celibacy and chastity	Diocesan priest		Religious		Priests total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1. Valuation of celibacy education of seminarians in the Seminary						
- conducting incompetently, badly	136	72,2	54	54,0	190	66,2
- too selective issues	119	63,6	48	48,0	167	58,2
- omits the individuality of seminarians	128	68,4	60	60,0	188	65,5
- distorts the personality of a man	114	61,0	55	55,0	169	58,9
- omits the reality of life in loneliness	159	85,0	62	62,0	221	77,0
- reduces the value of marriage and family	104	55,6	46	46,0	150	52,2
- does not convince to keep chastity and celibacy	128	68,4	54	54,0	182	63,4
- causes astonishment and consternation	67	35,8	34	34,0	101	35,2
- it is conducted well and objectively	53	28,3	29	29,0	82	28,6
- teaches to understand the meaning of celibacy	62	33,2	34	34,0	96	33,4
- fits to be and live in loneliness for other people	58	31,0	33	33,0	91	31,7
- other observations and comments	26	13,9	12	12,0	38	13,2
- no rating	18	9,6	18	18,0	36	12,5

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 52.

2. The attitude of the seminarians to the chastity and celibacy						
- they see a meaning and fully, personally accept this condition	33	17,6	21	21,0	54	18,8
- they see a need and partially, personally accept this condition	45	24,0	28	28,0	73	25,4
- they depend on this condition by various factors and views	21	11,2	11	11,0	32	11,1
- they question a meaning and definitely reject it as unnecessary in life	36	19,2	13	13,0	49	17,2
- they have doubts about joining celibacy with the priesthood	32	17,3	15	15,0	47	16,4
- no rating	9	4,8	6	6,0	15	5,2
- no data	11	5,9	6	6,0	17	5,9
3. Keeping chastity and sexual purity by seminarians						
- completely keeping promises	108	57,7	60	60,0	168	58,5
- often brake the promise	40	21,4	14	14,0	54	18,8
- occasionally brake the promise	26	13,9	21	21,0	47	16,4
- no data	13	6,9	5	5,0	18	6,3
Total	187	100,0	100	100,0	287	100,0

According to Józef Baniak and his statistics, we can see that the formation about sexual education and celibacy in diocesan and religious seminaries is falling short of what would be expected. Those who are responsible for formation do not seem to have the appropriate and updated psychological, pedagogical, and ethical education, and are simply applying old conservative methods. The issues related to chastity and celibacy are still taboo, so the topic is not discussed often. Celibacy is often presented as the "will of God,"<sup>142</sup> to which one cannot be opposed. Practice shows that this kind of approach evokes and produces negative effects on both the instructors / formators and the

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 126.

candidates for formation. Such an approach also fails to consider the personal characteristics of young men who, generally have a natural production of sexual hormones (testosterone) which increase their sexual drive and attraction to the opposite sex. I think that almost everyone has the need to do this in a different way. There is a need to realize the existence of sexual energy or drive without necessarily having to exercise the sexual intercourse.

Sexual needs do not go away during formation or after ordination, and they do not silence themselves under the pressure of priestly vocation. Every young person, especially during adolescence, has her or his temperament and sexual character. Many factors have an impact on sexual needs, for example the type of parenting one was exposed to in the family in which they were brought up, the context of origin, traditions, and culture. These aspects should be considered by the formators. Also, by these statistics it seems that the proposed system of training and formation in seminaries does not convince, encourage, or assist seminarians to preserve chastity nor help them to accept and embrace celibacy in the Church and the life of the priest.

According to Michel Rondet S.J., psychological research emphasizes that there is a sexual need, and it is strongly and directly linked to the need for reciprocal love, which applies to all people women and men, lay and the clergy.<sup>143</sup> The priesthood and/or religious life certainly does not eliminate this sort of need from the hierarchy of needs or expectations of the priest or religious, who is first of all human.

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<sup>143</sup> Michael Rondet SJ, *Celibat ewangeliczny we współczesnym świecie* [Gospel celibacy in the modern world] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Księży Marianów, 1995), 62-63. My translation.

In this context, I would like to present another set of Baniak's statistics in which he presents the notion of chastity (acceptance, keeping) in consciousness during formation in the seminaries and after priestly ordination.

Attitudes and behaviors regarding chastity	Diocesan priest		Religious		Priests total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1. Acceptance of chastity during studies in the seminary:						
- total and implicitly	38	20,3	24	24,0	62	21,7
- partially and with conditions	20	10,7	11	11,0	31	10,8
- completely non-acceptance	66	35,3	34	34,0	100	34,8
- without seeing a meaning and purpose in the priest's life	32	17,1	16	16,0	48	16,7
- did not remember that attitude	17	9,1	10	10,0	27	9,4
- no answer	14	7,5	5	5,0	19	6,6
2. Keeping chastity during the seminary formation:						
- keeping through all period of studies	103	55,2	57	57,0	160	55,7
- frequent sexual contacts with women	18	9,6	9	9,0	27	9,5
- rare sexual contacts with women	27	14,4	11	11,0	38	13,3
- homosexual contacts	13	6,9	10	10,0	23	8,0
- does not remember these situations	12	6,4	8	8,0	20	6,9
- no answer	14	7,5	5	5,0	19	6,6



3. Acceptance and chastity in the priesthood:						
- always kept and accepted	43	23,2	26	26,0	69	24,0
- a permanent sexual partner in the parish of employment	38	20,3	12	12,0	50	17,4
- a permanent sexual partner outside of the parish of employment	39	20,8	22	22,0	61	21,2
- different sexual contacts with women at that time	26	13,9	20	20,0	46	16,0
- own homosexual partner	28	14,9	15	15,0	43	15,1
- no answer	13	6,9	5	5,0	18	6,3
Total	187	100,0	100	100,0	287	100,0

Based on these statistics, we see the large percentage of diocesan and religious seminarians who, during their formation, ponder the meaning of a life of celibacy and chastity. Therefore, a different question arises related to the percentage of seminarians who live or are living in accordance to the rules proposed in formation and the Church's teachings. Celibacy in the Church is seen as a complex phenomenon. Believers and non-believers have always been interested in the subject. Pope John Paul II considered celibacy a special "gift of God" and he linked it closely to the hierarchical priesthood; this gift was valued very highly by the Pope because it facilitates the functioning of the Church and the priests' care for the cult of God:

“Celibacy is precisely a ‘gift of the Spirit’. A similar though different gift is contained in the vocation to true and faithful married love, directed towards procreation according to the flesh, in the very lofty context of the sacrament of Matrimony. It is obvious that this gift is fundamental for the building up of the great community of the Church, the People of God. But if this community wishes to respond fully to its vocation in Jesus Christ, there will also have to be realized in it, in the correct proportion, that other ‘gift’, the gift of celibacy ‘for the sake of the kingdom of heaven’” (Mt 19:12).

“Why does the Latin Catholic Church link this gift not only with the life of those who accept the strict programme of the evangelical counsels in Religious

Institutes but also with the vocation to the hierarchical and ministerial priesthood? She does it because celibacy ‘for the sake of the kingdom’ is not only an eschatological sign; it also has a great social meaning, in the present life, for the service of the People of God. Through his celibacy, the Priest becomes the ‘man for others’, in a different way from the man who, by binding himself in conjugal union with a woman, also becomes, as husband and father, a man ‘for others’, especially in the radius of his own family: for his wife, and, together with her, for the children, to whom he gives life”.<sup>144</sup>

However, many priests question this gift and criticize its rationale, especially when the topic of Jesus’ celibacy is brought up. For many priests, Jesus’ celibacy cannot be the basis for imposing celibacy upon all priests because he did not impose it himself or on his disciples.<sup>145</sup> In some discrete fashion, some Roman Catholic priests agree that the Church should leave celibacy for the free choice of the priests themselves, as it is done in some Eastern Catholic rites.<sup>146</sup>

After many private conversations with seminarians, formators, and lay people of the Eastern and Latin rite, I would like to present the general approach and view that society has on this topic of sexuality in formation. In the current formation and preparation for priesthood, there is not a comprehensive sexual education for the clergy. From time to time, formators begin to think and in some places to talk about it. In general, the topic of sexuality has been avoided so far because for most of the Ukrainian seminarians, marriage is a possibility, and there is somehow the false idea that these questions and issues are solved within the family. Most of the respondents I spoke with

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<sup>144</sup> John Paul II, *Letter of His Holiness John Paul II to All the Priests on the Occasion of Holy Thursday 1979*, 8. <http://www.vatican.va/>

<sup>145</sup> Józef Baniak, *Rezygnacja z kapłaństwa i wybór życia małżeńsko-rodzinnego przez księży rzymsko-katolickich w Polsce. Studium Socjologiczne* [Resignation from the priesthood and the choice of marital-family life by Roman Catholic priests in Poland. Sociological Study], 145.

<sup>146</sup> Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, can. 192 §5, can. 374, can. 375, can. 762 §1 (3), can. 769. <http://www.vatican.va/>

emphasized the positive aspects of the married priesthood. Some pointed out that when you have a family, it really builds you up and you get to know yourself much better. The experience of paternity, though, is what seemed to create a radical change in the person, and it also helps the seminarian with his spiritual guidance and accompaniment; one can better understand the current needs of life and people. Not to mention that when you have a family, you have the support and the warmth of home, knowing there is a partner or companion to rely on at all times.

On the other hand, though, the ministry can turn into a job, something secondary because it is necessary to keep a family as the main focus. The seminarian has to find a bride before the ordination, which means that this can happen at an accelerated pace. There is the risk of a quick marriage, a union in which one or both members are not yet ready. Recently, more divorces are observed; social culture and customs are changing and *most*<sup>147</sup> more frequently abandon the priests. Therefore, some emphasize that celibacy is more meaningful because it gives candidates more time to develop an intellectual and spiritual life and have more time to devote to their faith. However, some alternately emphasized that many living a celibate vocation are out of touch with reality.

Fatherhood is an experience that could certainly modify your behavior and perspective therefore, those not having that experience could approach life situation in a very different way. Also, there is an opinion (mostly between laity of the Eastern rite) that among the clergy who choose celibacy, there are many people with homosexual tendencies, and it is for this reason that they chose celibacy. Many respondents of two rites strongly emphasized that the first thing that the Ukrainian seminaries need is to

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<sup>147</sup> In the Ukrainian Greek Catholics, the name of the priest's wife. Corresponds with the name of "matushka" (mother), in the Orthodox Church.

change the acceptance age for the candidate's entrance, noting that 17-18 years old is too early to make such decisions. This young age is not consonant with the context of their sexual education, and they should know themselves better (their strengths and vulnerabilities) beforehand. The system of the seminary often covers the problems in a very cursory manner, teaching the young person to adapt but not to learn. A more comprehensive education, for example two or three years in a co-educational college setting, would give the seminarian a better background for formation.

Many stressed that society in general, still has an outdated education system. In general, the candidates graduate from high school at 17 - 18 years old. Perhaps in the past, the candidate was considered a well-formed man at this age, but in today's world, a 17-year-old is still considered a child. It is too early to make a decision to accept celibacy. The majority of respondents emphasized that at this age, the young boy still does not know how to manage himself within the environment nor does he know much in the way of sexual education. Especially while in the seminary, there is practically no sexual education, and the questions are "muffled." Issues related to the sphere of sexuality are all addressed as a sin or as dangerous.

In my opinion, it is necessary to pay attention and reconsider the conditions set to enter in the seminary. This could give an opportunity to build relationships in a better way from the very beginning. As an example, I will present the conditions for joining one of the biggest Greek and Roman Catholic Seminaries in Ukraine. Currently, to join the Greek Catholic Seminary, the following is required:

- knowledge of the Catechism,
- the history of Ukraine,
- the history of salvation in the Old and New Testaments,

- the history of Christianity in Ukraine, the history of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
- knowledge of the Divine Liturgy, the theology of the temple and the theology of the breviary
- theory of music and singing,
- capacity to sing
- write a free work (Ukrainian language)<sup>148</sup>

In the Roman-Catholic seminary, for admission it is required:

- knowledge of the Catechism and the life of the Church (usually the history of the Roman-Catholic Church in the region).

- be able to answer such questions as: Do you know what the Lord expects of you today? Are you faithful to your vocation? Are you ready to make a sacrifice and to notice it? What value does virtue have for you? Do you know how to own it? What do you consider provokes a greater fear: the opinion of friends or the fulfillment of God's will? Who is Jesus Christ for you? Where do you plan to spend eternity? Do you pay attention to your behavior? Does your behavior trigger others to sin? Is there anything valuable for which you would give life? How much time do you sacrifice for what is important in life? Are you fighting for the virtue of your heart?<sup>149</sup>

It would be helpful in these initial stages, before candidacy, for the seminaries to offer and facilitate psychological tests and interviews with priests, monks, psychologists and lay people who could help in formation. A pre-Seminary probationary or trial period or some form of shorter experiments (working as a volunteer in hospice or with people experiencing homeless) would also be good and helpful in gaining experience to help one better understand oneself, one's own vocation, and one's potential to see if the seminary is the right step forward.

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<sup>148</sup> УМОВИ вступу на перший рік Семінарії [*Conditions for entering the first year of the Seminary*], <http://www.lds.lviv.ua/pages/1421342024> Translation mine My translation.

<sup>149</sup> УМОВИ вступу до семінарії [*Conditions for entering to the seminary*], <http://wds-gorodok.com/umovy-vstupu-do-seminarii/> My translation.

These requisites, though, are also something that the society should be interested on providing. Such a closed system of education for priests, this type of hermetic environment, is not beneficial. The difference can be seen in seminarians who have studied or worked elsewhere before entering the seminary; they tend to have a greater awareness when making decisions and choices.

Another important matter that requires special attention is the one about potential partners of seminarians and priests. Only recently did the Church begin to pay attention to this. For example, the Church now arranges retreats, meetings, and pastoral work.<sup>150</sup> This pastoral work translates into pastoral training for spouses of priests. Previously, the approach was very basic, assuming that their problems would resolve themselves or that there was no need for accompaniment within marriage. It seems that the increase of divorces was the main reason to change this approach, as the clergy and their wives do not want to talk about the matter.

Younger priests' wives seem to experience problems of adaptation in society. The spouses who are more advanced in age are experiencing problems with the rearing of children, as they try to raise them in the Christian tradition and to be an example for others. While some spouses feel that they face unique challenges within marriage to a priest, there are some wives who feel that being married to a priest is not markedly different than being married to another person and that the challenges of marriage that they experience are not unique to be a priest's spouse. Being a priest's wife is a big responsibility, though, within the community or parish because very often people direct

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<sup>150</sup> Реколекції для їмостей Одеського екзархату [*Retreat for wives of priests of Odessa exarchate*], [http://news.ugcc.ua/news/rekolekts%D1%96i\\_dlya\\_imostey\\_odeskogo\\_ekzarhatu\\_82026.html](http://news.ugcc.ua/news/rekolekts%D1%96i_dlya_imostey_odeskogo_ekzarhatu_82026.html) (accessed February 26, 2018). My translation.

their questions or concerns to her more than to the priest, and often quite delicate questions.<sup>151</sup> Therefore, it is helpful if one can prepare for this by continually developing her spiritual knowledge and self-understanding, which one can do in various ways. One example of this is a permanent League of Greek Catholic women, which is a space that gives Greek Catholic women (spouses) the opportunity to discuss important questions and problems that every Christian woman encounter, primarily focused on the experiences of being the wife of a priest.<sup>152</sup>

The period of engagement between seminarians and their future spouses usually flows fairly naturally; however, in some cases, the family or the spiritual father has a say in determining a woman or a couple's fate. For example, in Russia, the girls who want to marry a future priest come from several parts of the country to a village near the Sergiev Posad Lavra.<sup>153</sup> The local elder women then help these young couples get engaged. After both parties have had a confession, the spiritual father decides how things will move forward. The girl should be chaste, and it is desired that she has a particular kind of disposition (kindness, piousness). The spiritual father most often assesses if the candidates are suitable for each other and either blesses the marriage or does not.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Катерина Лабінська, *Покликання бути дружиною священника* [Kateryna Labinskaya, *Calling to be a priest's wife*]. <https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/exclusive/reportage/47361/> (accessed March 19, 2012). My translation.

<sup>152</sup> У Києві пройшла зустріч Ліги греко-католицьких жінок України, [*The League of Greek Catholic Women of Ukraine hosted a meeting in Kyiv*]. <http://ugcc.kiev.ua/blog/u-kyjevi-projshla-zustrich-lihy-hreko-katolytskyh-zhinok-ukrajiny/> (accessed February 29, 2016). My translation.

<sup>153</sup> The Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius (Russian: Троице-Сергиева Лавра) is the most important Russian monastery and the spiritual centre of the Russian Orthodox Church. The monastery is situated in the town of Sergiyev Posad, about 70 km to the north-east of Moscow.

<sup>154</sup> Жанна Голубицкая, *Быть женой священнослужителя: благодать или кабала?* [Zhanna Golubitskaya, *To be a clergyman's wife: grace or bondage*]. <http://www.mk.ru/social/2015/07/03/byt-zhenoy-svyashhennosluzhitelya-blagodat-ili-kabala.html> (accessed July 3, 2015). My translation.

The Catholic Church (both rites) in Eastern Europe comparatively is perceived as more modern and liberal than the Orthodox Church; although, there is a conservative approach to sexuality where it is not accepted to speak loudly about sexuality in private. Somehow, it is accepted to mention certain topic, like abortion, in a very open manner if it is a priest who raises the subject. Even if he does it with a broad public. Furthermore, the priest can raise the topic of abortion at the national level.

From my observation, many young families have very little knowledge of the Church's teaching about sexual life and sexuality. However, it is absolutely necessary for priests to talk to young families about these topics. Unfortunately, families can break up due to a lack of understanding of these topics. It is also important to note that for many people seeking this kind of counsel, it is not relevant to them whether a priest is married or not. They care more about the way he carries himself and the way he shows his faith and his education. People seem to appreciate if he has studied abroad or in diverse places because they can see that this changes his approach and perspectives. The whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation.<sup>155</sup>

John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, emphasizes that:

“The life and ministry of the priest must also adapt to every era and circumstance of life. For our part we must therefore seek to be as open as possible to light from on high from the Holy Spirit, in order to discover the tendencies of contemporary society, recognize the deepest spiritual needs, determine the most important concrete tasks and the pastoral methods to adopt, and thus respond adequately to human expectations”.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43. <http://www.vatican.va/>

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



Formation is more enriching if there is cooperation with various specialists in the field of sexuality, such as doctors who will teach anatomy and the physiology of men and women and will teach them about their bodies reactions, a psychiatrist-psychologist, who will teach a wider understanding of human psychology and the sexual development of children, adolescents, and adults. A Sexologist would also contribute greatly to this discussion, as he or she could instruct the men in the topics of sexual norms, pathology and so on. People come to the clergy with many different problems and questions; therefore, it is vital to be able to distinguish between a spiritual problem, a psychological dynamic or issue, and the instances in which it would be helpful to refer someone to someone who specializes in sexuality and sexual development. This knowledge and experience would allow for more frequent and open meetings at parishes or schools. It is deeply important for the Church to cooperate with doctors, psychologists, and spouses / families. This cooperation with experts and the laity will only enrich the Church.

In light of the need for these candid and self-aware conversations in formation, one of the important tasks of the formators is fostering a mature, free self-reflexive personality capable of acting reasonably in various life situations. Another task is to endorse the seminarian as active participants in their own educational process, (aware of their needs during formation but at the time willing to accept the formation they are receiving) to achieve a successful training and development<sup>157</sup> of the seminarian.

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<sup>157</sup> Тетяна Левченко, *Розвиток освіти та особистості в різних педагогічних системах* [Tetyana Levchenko, *Development of education and personality in various pedagogical systems*] (Вінниця: Нова Книга, 2002), 391-93. My translation.

One of the most prominent Ukrainian scholars, Grigory Skovoroda,<sup>158</sup> has emphasized that "Every child is gifted in his [or her] own way. Discover yourself and your self - being." He believed that only on this basis can great success be achieved in the pedagogical formation process. By this formation, we make the student happy and benefit society. Skovoroda also believed that the task of the formation is to help everyone to know himself, because through this process, personal happiness can be found; it is an effective work for people and society. Therefore, teaching about sexuality and sexual education is a value in light of the reality that it is God's gift to humankind and an integral part of the human experience; it is of great importance.<sup>159</sup>

Later, these moral values will be embodied in a variety of spiritual ways, and this will help actualize the seminarian's personality. The aim is to be able to establish interpersonal relationships through kindness, tolerance, sincerity, conscience, mutual respect, and responsibility.<sup>160</sup>

This formation process also interacts with spiritual values, which are the highest in the hierarchical structure. Spiritual values should be the true meaning of the life for the seminarian. These values reflect one's personal attitude towards the world; they are the heritage of the individual, and they stimulate and regulate (the existence of the individual,

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<sup>158</sup> The most prominent National Ukrainian educator-humanist, philosopher, poet, and pedagogue. He wrote primarily in the Sloboda Ukraine dialect of the Ukrainian language. Cf. *Skovoroda's Language and Style*. In book: Richard H. Marshall; Thomas E. Bird, *Hryhorij Savuč Skovoroda: An Anthology of Critical Articles*. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (Toronto: CIUS Press, 1994), 131.

<sup>159</sup> Тетяна Левченко, *Розвиток освіти та особистості в різних педагогічних системах* [Tetyana Levchenko, *Development of education and personality in various pedagogical systems*], 393.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 429-31.

his behavior and deeds).<sup>161</sup> Spiritual values inform one's very approach to the human race, to God, and to one's self.

Throughout the centuries, the Catholic Church suffered from a misunderstanding of sexuality and sexual education, I am talking about everything that was not contained in the norm of a particular rule or context, culture, or the Scriptures. God approves of human sexuality "God saw everything that he made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31), and sex is God's gift to us "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28), not only for the purpose of reproduction but also for our enjoyment. As we can see from the Scripture, "Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden that its fragrance may be wafted abroad. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its choicest fruits. I come to my garden, my sister, my bride; I gather my myrrh with my spice, I eat my honeycomb with my honey, I drink my wine with my milk. Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love" (Song 4, 16-5, 1), sexuality is a gift that God wants us to enjoy.

Further, "When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be charged with any related duty. He shall be free at home one year, to be happy with the wife whom he has married" (Deut 24:5). These excerpts exemplify the way by which a partner can bring physical pleasure to another. Everyone should have elementary knowledge of the anatomy of the male and female body, etc. The phrase from the book of Hosea (4:6) "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge!" the same is true for sexual education as for the spiritual.<sup>162</sup>

I like an example in the book of Virginia Samuel Cetuk, where she says:

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 431.

<sup>162</sup> Selwyn Hughes, 10 Principles for a Happy Marriage [Ukrainian edition] (Cherkassy: Stefanus, 2005), 27-28.

“A very wise rabbi told me shortly before I was due to give birth to our first child that when the baby was born and forever after I would know the highest highs and the lowest lows it is possible to know. Such was the landscape of parenthood. In the thirteen years since my friend made that prediction I have found the truth of his words over and over again. I have found similar highs and lows in ministry as well”.<sup>163</sup>

I totally agree that parenthood and the process of formation are ministries that resemble each other. During formation, one will know highs and lows. The seminary experience is filled with stress, but it is also an exciting one.<sup>164</sup> The role of formators is a capstone for the seminarian’s future work and is a way of providing a human approach to his neighbor. It is vital to create a thorough and dynamic theological, scientific, and human program, which will be helpful and useful to those in formation and to the future of the Church. Because of the unity of the Catholic priesthood, this kind of formation is necessary for all priests, diocesan and religious and of every rite.<sup>165</sup>

Jesuit John O’Mallye, S.J. emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the basic model for Christian ministry and formation, but which of these images?

“Which “portrait of Jesus” does one look to? Is it “Christ the priest,” with its implicit ecclesiology of the church as sacrament, or Jesus the itinerant preacher in search of the lost sheep, which suggests a different ecclesiological appreciation? More proximately, does not Francis layman (later deacon) embody an ideal different from that of Vianney, parish priest at Ars? What do we make of discrepancies like these?”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Virginia Samuel Cetuk, *What to Expect in Seminary. Theological Education as Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 18.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>165</sup> Vatican Council II, *Optatam Totius*, Preamble. <http://www.vatican.va/>

<sup>166</sup> John O’Malley, SJ, “Diocesan and Religious Models of Formation – Historical Perspectives,” *Theology of Priesthood and Seminary Formation: Issues of Assembly II*, (1989): 17.

In the Church's theology and teaching, we have many perspectives, understandings, and approaches. However, the lived experience of human sinfulness and human conversion are vital to understanding the central attribute of God in relation to us, and this central attribute is mercy.<sup>167</sup> It requires that the mercy of God, which is the primary gift of our salvation in this earthly pilgrimage, be a foundation for every form of theological reflection and inquiry.

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<sup>167</sup> Bishop Robert W. McElroy, "The Pastoral Theology of Pope Francis" (Commencement address at the Jesuit School of Theology), May 20, 2017.

## Conclusion

“Finding God in all things”  
St. Ignatius of Loyola

As I indicated in the introduction of my thesis, sexuality, and more precisely the area of sexuality during the formation for priesthood in Eastern Europe, has become an unavoidable contemporary issue. The question of how candidates are prepared and how the church ought to prepare them for priesthood and religious life needs to be an urgent concern. In my research, I tried to present that our sexuality is a part of God’s plan and an integral part of our life and existence, and I attempted to express how our body and soul should be considered a whole that cannot be divided. Subsequently, I tried to present the current situation and approach towards sexuality during formation for priesthood in the diocesan and religious seminaries in Eastern Europe, especially in Ukraine and Poland. That approach towards sexuality often prevalent in these seminaries displays a lack of maturity, as sexuality tends to be understood simply as sexual behavior, excluding its expansive spiritual, emotional, and psychological aspects. Additionally, I hoped to present some of the reasons for and sources of this perception of sexuality. This understanding and approach is not the same in each seminary in Eastern Europe; the dynamic and formation varies. However, this difference or variation is often quite small. Therefore, a central question in this process, then, is: what would make a seminary or place of formation an excellent place to prepare for priesthood, good ministry, service, etc?<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> After concluding my studies in the United States, I realize the importance of having something like the *Program of Priestly Formation*. This document put out by the U.S. bishops is a necessary tool as it provides certain guidelines and innovative propositions for priesthood formation and covers such a topic as

The following consideration, made by Katarina Schuth, is quite helpful:

“Faculty need initial and ongoing education and formation themselves about topics that have not been part of their specialized academic backgrounds. In particular, those who are not familiar with all aspects of formation should be apprised of how to work more effectively with both seminarians and lay students”.<sup>169</sup>

This example shows us that the process of teaching and learning always go together, both require inquisitiveness, self-discovery, hard work, and the willingness to be self-critical.<sup>170</sup> It means that theology and science should collaborate and fulfill each other, especially in the context of the human sexuality. Disregarding this interconnection could have a negative effect. For example, under the influence of the Age of Enlightenment and rationalism, theology turned into a one-sided, sterile form. As a result, only an autonomous science freed from religion could (to some extent) correct the mistakes made by a bad theology that continuously produced fears. The task of the true religion is not to intimidate people, but to release ourselves and our communities from inner duality and fears, to teach members and leaders how to trust God and their formators, and to restore the integrity of each human.<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, another task of religion is to prepare candidates for the priesthood to make the decision in their life of a life of celibacy or a chastity’s vow.

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sexuality which, as my work has demonstrated, is often not integrated into such training. “Program of Priestly Formation”, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Washington, D.C. 2006.

<sup>169</sup> Katarina Schuth, *Seminary Formation. Recent History. Current Circumstances. New Directions* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2016), 119.

<sup>170</sup> Thomas Walters, “Generational Differences: A Crucial Key,” in *Seminary Formation. Recent History. Current Circumstances. New Directions* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2016), 142.

<sup>171</sup> Юрий Рубенис, *Она и Он. Любовь, Отношения, Секс* (Riga: Zvaigzne ABC, 2018), 157. (Yuri Rubenis, *She and He. Love, Relationship, Sex*).

It is also important for people to have relationships and friendships with diverse communities of people across the spectrum of gender, sexual orientation, and identity. These relationships will deepen one's maturity and understanding around sexuality and will be an important step in pastoral formation.

One of the prominent philosophers and historians of religion of the 20th century, Mircea Eliade, proposes that before any important life decision-making, it is important to familiarize one's self with three important principles:

- knowledge of sexuality power
- cognition of the divine - experience of the unity of all that exists
- cognition of death - the pattern of dying and resurrection<sup>172</sup>

According to Eliade, these principles can be very helpful in understanding our human nature and ourselves more fully.

To summarize, I would like to say that the basis of all priestly formation is a human formation and approach. It is important that the priest should be formed in such a way that he becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of humanity.<sup>173</sup>

James Martin, SJ, in one of his articles writes:

“For Ignatius, God is not confined within the walls of a church. Besides the Mass, the other sacraments and Scripture, God can be found in every moment of the day: in other people, in work, in family life, in nature and in music. This provides Pope Francis with a world-embracing spirituality in which God is met everywhere and in everyone”.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>173</sup> *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43.

<sup>174</sup> James Martin, “How might Jesuit spirituality influence Pope Francis’ papacy?”, *America* (April 29, 2013), <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/04/17/his-way-proceeding-how-might-jesuit-spirituality-influence-pope-francis-papacy>.



It is very difficult to predict what changes or development to the formation of seminarians for priesthood and religious life will take place in the future in Eastern Europe. The formative centers have to respond to many challenges and questions. However, we are called first to “find God in all things”. Sometimes this can be receiving the call to priestly ministry or religious life, and at other times, it manifests as a call to another type of vocation or way of life, but always with it comes the hope that our spirituality and these calls lead us and our communities to being more fully human, more fully alive.<sup>175</sup>

### **Final words**

In this study I have addressed certain pertinent topics related to human sexuality, particularly in priesthood formation in parts of Eastern Europe, especially in Ukraine and Poland. I took these two countries as a sample because the methodological level of education and formation inside these seminaries is similar. I am familiar with both contexts because of my family and upbringing.

As mentioned before, sexuality does not end with puberty, celibacy, marriage, or at certain age. Sexuality is an area in which each person must seek to integrate both the physical and the spiritual.<sup>176</sup> It is an important area of our life, first of all because we have been created as human beings, not as angels, which means we are both sexual and embodied. Secondly, we are dealing with a gift from God, one which includes our physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, ethical, and psycho-emotional sphere. Moreover,

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<sup>175</sup> Katarina Schuts, *Seminary Formation. Recent History. Current Circumstances. New Directions*, 153.

<sup>176</sup> “Human Sexuality. A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning”. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Washington, D.C. 2002), 5.

the Paschal Mystery, the story of our redemption in Christ is a further affirmation of this body/spirit unity as manifested in our sexuality:

The incarnation of God's World, the divine becoming fully human, adds even greater dignity or divine approbation to our being corporeal, sexual beings. The annunciation, birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ serve as a divine affirmation of the goodness and loveliness of humanity. Jesus of Nazareth, as revealed in the gospel stories, was fully embodied, like us in all things but sin. He was single and chaste, but he was not neuter. Jesus was a man of deep feelings, love, and commitment – to God, the Father; to his mother; to his disciples; and, in a particular way, to personal friends like Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, Peter, James, and John, “the beloved disciple”. Likewise, we who bear the name Christians are called to experience and express human love as whole persons – body, mind, and soul.<sup>177</sup>

The responsibility for the education in human sexuality falls on the cooperative shoulders of parents, schools, Church, and the wider society.<sup>178</sup> Throughout history, moreover, many saints even engaged erotic language to emphasize this closeness to God. Saint John of the Cross's poem, “The Dark Night of the Soul” exemplifies this passion.<sup>179</sup>

On a dark night,  
Kindled in love with yearnings  
--oh, happy chance!--  
I went forth without being observed,  
My house being now at rest.

In darkness and secure,  
By the secret ladder, disguised  
--oh, happy chance!--  
In darkness and in concealment,  
My house being now at rest.

In the happy night,  
In secret, when none saw me,  
Nor I beheld aught,  
Without light or guide,

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>179</sup> St. John of the Cross, “The Dark Night of the Soul”. Accessed 17 June 2008.  
<https://josvg.home.xs4all.nl/cits/lm/stjohn01.html>

save that which burned in my heart.

This light guided me  
More surely than the light of noonday  
To the place where he  
(well I knew who!) was awaiting me  
-- A place where none appeared.

Oh, night that guided me,  
Oh, night more lovely than the dawn,  
Oh, night that joined  
Beloved with lover,  
Lover transformed in the Beloved!

Upon my flowery breast,  
Kept wholly for himself alone,  
There he stayed sleeping,  
and I caressed him,  
And the fanning of the cedars made a breeze.

The breeze blew from the turret  
As I parted his locks;  
With his gentle hand  
He wounded my neck  
And caused all my senses to be suspended.

I remained, lost in oblivion;  
My face I reclined on the Beloved.  
All ceased and I abandoned myself,  
Leaving my cares  
forgotten among the lilies.

In my opinion, this sensual poetry embodies such an integrated, comprehensive, human spirituality. An important element is the fact that St. John of the Cross wrote this poetry on behalf of a woman. According to Juris Rubenis, mystics have long been convinced that the relationship of the soul with God is always feminine. This relationship creates an environment conducive to development and it becomes the emergence of something completely new. Therefore, in order to achieve a communication with the divine a mystic man needs to engage the right side of his brain, the intuitive, feminine

side of the soul.<sup>180</sup> I am firmly convinced that such alternative approaches could open many doors and possibilities regarding current priesthood formation in parts of Eastern Europe.

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<sup>180</sup> Yuri Rubenis, *She and He. Love, Relationship, Sex*, 154-155.

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