

Does God care about sex(uality)?

Ideas from the 'world'

- ❖ Sex as necessary for fulfillment as a human being
 - ❖ Freud to now
 - ❖ New Age and Tantric(esque) beliefs have taken a prominent role in society.
 - ◆ Sex as an expression of the Divine itself
- ❖ Sexual expression as a main identity marker, which that is/was being repressed by social systems
 - ❖ Sexuality is a performance that must be supported
 - ◆ Multiple Identities based on partner choice or attraction or support for this sexual performance
 - * Polyamorous? Asexual? Same Sex/Gender? Creation of many identities *ad infinitum* based on attraction and arrangement.
 - * Desire and its ambiguities become an identity that demands recognition by society.
- ❖ Attraction Wars
 - ❖ Innate disposition vs Free Partner Choice
 - ◆ Contrasting definitions of sexual identity
 - * One defined as ability to find and pair with partners.
 - * One about having fate determine your actions.
 - ❖ My attraction is a need that requires satisfaction (pending the other's consent)
 - ◆ Effects are: Rise in divorce, rise in non-married cohabitation, rise in purposefully open or negotiated forms of household arrangements with accompanying 'contractual' sexual access.

The Place of Sexuality in Orthodox Teaching

❖ Erotic human energy

❖ Orthodoxy is not a sexual spirituality and has no visions of sex as a means to spiritual progress. That activity is related to the animal side, not the Spirit.

◆ “In contrast to the above [new age] teachings, the Holy Fathers consistently warn us not to mingle the carnal with the spiritual, for it interferes with spiritual growth. Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov writes the following about the union of the mind with the heart (the goal of spiritual life, and the condition for true prayer to God): “Not only does every sinful emotion and every sinful thought disrupt this union; even all natural thoughts and feelings, however subtle and disguised by an appearance of righteousness, destroy the union of the mind with the heart, and set them in opposition to one another” (*The Arena*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1991, p. 87). St. Mark the Ascetic advises, “If we no longer fulfill the desires of the flesh, then with the Lord's help the evils within us will easily be eliminated” (*The Philokalia*, vol. 1, London: Faber and Faber, 1983, p. 122, no. 181). St. Nilus of Sinai instructs, “If you desire to pray in the Spirit, depend on nothing carnal” (M. A. Novoselov, *Mysticism of the Church and Mysticism of the Western Confessions* [in Russian], Moscow: 1995, p. 59).” (Archimandrite Luke of Jordanville, *New Age Philosophy, Orthodox Thought, and Marriage*)

◆ Sex is part of our bodies and therefore part human nature, so it is not inherently sinful. But it must be guarded.

* “Let us look at it in this fashion. Movement occurs in the sexual organs not only of young children who cannot yet distinguish between good and evil, but also of the smallest infants still at their mother's breast. The latter, although quite ignorant of sensual pleasure, nevertheless manifest such natural movements in the flesh. Similarly, the incensive power exists in infants, as we can see when they are roused against anyone hurting them. I say this not to accuse nature of being the cause of sin — heaven forbid ! — but to show that the incensive power and desire, even if implanted in man by the Creator for a good purpose, appear to change through neglect from being natural in the

body into something that is unnatural. **Movement in the sexual organs was given to us by the Creator for procreation and the continuation of the species, not for unchastity; while incensive power was planted in us for our salvation, so that we could manifest it against wickedness,** but not so that we could act like wild beasts towards our fellow men. Even if we make bad use of these passions, nature itself is not therefore sinful, nor should we blame the Creator. A man who gives someone a knife for some necessary and useful purpose is not to blame if that person uses it to commit murder." (St. John Cassian "On the Eight Vices" *Philokalia* 1)

❖ Eros and God

❖ "And let no one think that we venerate the name Love (*erotos*), in a manner contradictory to Scripture (*Logia*). For truly it is foolish and senseless, it seems to me, to pay attention to the letter, and not to the sense of the discourse. This is not an attribute of people who desire to understand the divine, but characteristic of those who only accept sounds [i.e., they assume "love" (*erotos*) always refers to something carnal] but do not allow the meaning of the sounds to register in their ears and have no desire to know what a particular expression might mean and how one might illumine its sense with the help of other similar expressions." (St. Dionysios, *On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, 11, p. 121)

Thus, St. Dionysius speaks of *eros* as a Divine characteristic of the supernatural existence of the Creator Himself. St. Maximus the Confessor, in his commentary on this work of St. Dionysius, explains the term as used by Dionysius in this way: "...he [St. Dionysius] calls God the Bestower and Parent of benevolence (*agapes*) and of love (*erotos*). For having these within Himself, He extended them outward, i.e., into the realm of creation. And therefore it is said that God is love (I John 4:16), and in the *Song of Songs* He is called love (Song 2:4), and sweetness and desire (Song 5:16), which is love. (*On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, 14, note 84, p. 129; quoted by Archimandrite Luke of Jordanville, *New Age Philosophy, Orthodox Thought, and Marriage*)

Gender Roles and Order

❖ Women Roles in Church Services

❖ Head-coverings

◆ “Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, **let her be covered**. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but **the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.** Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought **the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.** Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.” (1 Cor. 11:5–12)

*Context for women prophesying is when “outside the assembly of the Church” not within the Church services that doesn’t begins at verse 17ff (Brian Patrick Mitchell, *The Disappearing Deaconess*, pg 41-42)

- Prophecy and prayer ‘outside the Church’ and apart from men, the veil is actually functioning as a sign of power symbolizing the headship of Christ. However, Paul is still desiring the men and women to be together in the services as the sign of the unity in the Garden pre-fall.
- The Fathers accept the head-covering universally as a thing to wear whenever women are ‘at prayer’ or prophesying or teaching the Faith whether the context is in the services or outside them.

❖ The Silence Command

◆ “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.” (1 Cor. 14:34–35)

◆ “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in

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childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.” (1 Tim. 2:11–15)

*Women are not ordained to teaching roles and rarely to spoken roles within Church, and then only to the reading or chanting that is prescribed by the Church.

*Out of a straightforward reading of St. Paul’s prescriptions in the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians and 1st Timothy.

- “The Fathers’ main concern was to preserve the gender order they had inherited from the Apostles, to which the Scriptures bore witness. The Apostle Paul prescribes silence for women on two occasions (1 Cor. 14:34–35 and 1 Tim. 2:11–15), and both times he relates silence to the subjection of the woman to the man. Twice also the Apostle bases this subjection on both the Creation and the Fall (1 Cor. 11:8–9 and 1 Tim. 2:13–14). (Brian Patrick Mitchell, *The Disappearing Deaconess*)

*For what women do outside the services that is covered in 1 Cor 11:5ff.

- That is they may pray and prophecy (teach and evangelize) but Paul says they should do so covering their heads, as sign of “power on her head because of the angels.”

❖ Marriage or Celibacy?

♣ I Cor 7 - the whole context is to “remain in the state you were called” and if something needs to change to remain a Christian, then here are ways to make those situations your salvation.

◆ “Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be “loosed.” Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife.” But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.” (I Cor 7:24-28)

◆ Celibacy has a positive and even a more exalted state when it is lived as dedication to God with vigor and to be free of the ‘cares of the flesh.’

❖ Marriage

♣ Eph 5:21-23 “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”

◆ Jesus Christ is head of the body of the Church the Husband is the head of the body that is the wife. Both are subject to Christ and there to serve the other, one as husband the other as wife.

* “It is the head that upholds the well-being of the body. In his other epistles Paul has already laid foundations of marital love, and has assigned to husband and wife each his proper place: to the husband one of leader and provider, and to the wife one of submission. Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ - and the Church remember consists of both husbands and wives— so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands, as to God.” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20* on Ephesians 5:22-23)

◆ Eph 5:25 “love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”

* “Do you want your wife to be obedient to you, as the Church is to Christ? Then be responsible for the same providential care of her, as Christ is for the Church. And even if it becomes necessary for you to give you life for her, yes, and even to endure and undergo suffering of any kind, do not refuse. Even though you undergo all this, you will never have done anything equal to what Christ has done. You are sacrificing yourself for someone to whom you are already joined, but He offered Himself up for one who turned her back on Him and hated Him. In the same way, then as He honored her by putting at His feet one who turned her back on Him, who hated, rejected, and disdained Him, as He accomplished this not with threats, or violence, or terror, or anything else like that, but through His untiring love; so also you should behave toward your wife. Even if you see her belittling you, or despising and mocking you, still you will be able to subject her to yourself, through affection, kindness, and your great regard for her. There is no influence more powerful than the bond of love, especially for husband and wife. A servant can be taught submission through fear; but even he, if provoked too much will soon seek escape... what kind of marriage can there be when the wife is afraid of her husband?” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20* on Ephesians 5:22-23)

◆ Eph 5:33 “Let the wife *respect* [reverence] her husband”

* “What does this “respect” entail? She should not stubbornly contradict you, and not rebel against your authority as if she were the head of the house; this is

enough. If you [the husband] desire greater respect, you must love as you are commanded. ...

The wife is a secondary authority, but nevertheless **she possesses real authority and equality of dignity while the husband still retains the role of headship**; the welfare of the household is thus maintained.”” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20* on Ephesians 5:22-23)

◆ The Authority of the Husband is tied to his emulation of Christ and his following of the Church’s ethos within his home and obeying the Church as a member of Christ’s body. The Wife lives out her whole as the body of Christ, by submission to Christ in and through her husband. If the authority of the husband is not within the commands of the Lord then it is not the headship of Christ.

♣ Mt 19:6 “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

◆ The permanency of the marriage bond, tied directly to keeping of the exclusivity of the sexual act to spouses.

◆ However, even so, there is the teaching that follows that celibacy is “better” and is a calling.

* “His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.” Mt 19:10ff

Reproduction and Marriage

◆ Preliminary Comments:

♣ Gen 4:1 is the beginning of human physical reproduction; it is the first time it occurs.

♣ Sexual reproduction does not occur until after *the Fall*, therefore there was no experience of the fulfillment of this command pre-fall. It also appears important to emphasize the lack of need to reproduce in the Garden and how immature Adam and Eve were while they were there. Their maturation on all levels, except being in adult bodies, took place outside of the Garden.

♣ Also, we must note that the Fathers assume marriage to be synonymous with sexual reproduction and use the term “marriage” to chiefly mean sex between

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spouses. The references to male and female that follow are a necessity for this sexual reproduction/marriage to occur. They appear to universally contemplate marriage/reproduction as we know it - in the sense of a male and a female being united and reproducing and "clinging" to one another - as a result of *the Fall*. All other, 'what ifs' in regard to 'unfallen reproduction' are not contemplated by the Fathers and are explicitly talked about when they do as unverifiable speculations. How exactly Adam and Eve were to obey and fulfill the command to 'be fruitful and multiply' with their bodies before *the Fall* is left in silence. Perhaps we will know how in great resurrection?

❖ "Thus the creation of our nature is in a sense twofold: one made like to God, one divided according to this distinction [male and female]: for something like this the passage darkly conveys by its arrangement, where it first says, "God created man, in the image of God He created him," and then, adding to what has been said, "male and female He created them,"? A thing which is alien from our conceptions of God. **I think that by these words Holy Scripture conveys to us a great and lofty doctrine; and the doctrine is this. While two natures — the Divine and incorporeal nature, and the irrational life of brutes — are separated from each other as extremes, human nature is the mean between them: for in the compound nature of man we may behold a part of each of the natures I have mentioned; of the Divine, the rational and intelligent element, which does not admit the distinction of male and female; of the irrational, our bodily form and structure, divided into male and female: for each of these elements is certainly to be found in all that partakes of human life. That the intellectual element, however, precedes the other, we learn as from one who gives in order an account of the making of man; and we learn also that his community and kindred with the irrational is for man a provision for reproduction.**

He Who brought all things into being and fashioned man as a whole by His own will to the Divine image ... **saw beforehand by His all-seeing power the failure of their will to keep a direct course to what is good, and its consequent declension from the angelic life. In order that the multitude of human souls might not be cut short by its fall ...** He formed for our nature that contrivance for increase which befits those who had fallen into sin, implanting in mankind, instead of the angelic majesty of

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nature, that animal and irrational mode by which they now succeed one another." (St. Gregory of Nyssa)

❖ "After the disobedience, **after the banishment from Paradise, then it was that married life began.** Before the disobedience, the first people lived like angels, and there was no talk of cohabitation. And how could this be, when they were free of bodily needs? Thus, **in the beginning, life was virginal;** but when, because of the carelessness (of the first people) disobedience appeared and sin entered the world, virginity fled away from them, since they had become unworthy of such a great good, and in its place there entered into effect the law of married life." (St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The Russian Wilderness Ascetic, George of Zadonsk, wrote to his spiritual daughter who was inquiring about Adam and Eve and marital relations:

❖ "...May holy truth enlighten you to the correct understanding of [Scriptural] words. I am pleased to cite an example from the 18th Discourse of St. John Chrysostom on the 1st book [Genesis] on your so unexpected [for me] statement, in which, incidentally, **St. John expresses the following words: *And Adam knew his wife Eve.* Mind you, when did this take place? After disobedience, after the exile from Paradise; then intercourse began; before disobedience, they lived like Angels, and nowhere is there any mention of intercourse.** Because previously we were not subject to physical needs, therefore from the beginning virginity was preeminent. But when, due to their weakness, disobedience occurred, sin made inroads and virginity stepped aside (retreated), as from those unworthy of so great a virtue. Then the practice of carnal union appeared. Please take heed to the **great merit of virginity, what an elevated and great deed it is, which is exalted above human nature and needs.**" You can read further in the book of discourses the correct explanation of the words cited, and see that **it is not by carnal union or intercourse that the human race multiplies, but by the unfathomable power of God's blessing. Is it clear to you now that there was no commandment about carnal union but that it took place after the transgression and disobedience which might not have occurred?"** (*Letters...*, Saint Petersburg, "Letter #115," p. 110)

❖ Union of Bodies mingled with corrupted desire

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❖ "For David, who said: *behold, I was shapened in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*, was not himself born of any illicit union, but in lawful wedlock. But knowing himself to have been conceived in iniquity, he grieved that he had been born in sin, like a tree bearing in its branches the sap of evil drawn up from its root. In saying this, he does not term the bodily union of married people iniquity, but the desire of such union.

...when lust takes the place of desire for children, the mere act of union becomes something that the pair have cause to regret; ...this carries a warning with it. For when the Apostle Paul said, If they cannot contain themselves, let them marry, he at once added, I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. This concession makes it **lawful, yet not good**; so when he spoke of permission, he indicated that it was not blameless." (St. Gregory of Rome, the Dialogist writing to St. Augustine of Canterbury in Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, London: Penguin Books, 1990, pp. 85–86; quoted by Archimandrite Luke of Jordanville, *New Age Philosophy, Orthodox Thought, and Marriage*)

◆ "not good" means that the act is not perfectly free of the passions, but is not a violation of the commandments of God.

❖ Summary of the Orthodox View of Marital Sex

❖ "Our view of marriage is this: that, while **the pursuit of heavenly things should be a man's first care, yet if he can use the advantages of marriage with sobriety and moderation, he need not despise this way of serving the state**.... Marriage is the last stage of our separation from the life that was led in Paradise; marriage is the first thing to be left; **it is the first station, as it were, for our departure to Christ**." (St. Gregory of Nyssa in *On Virginity*)

❖ "To keep the race from dwindling and being destroyed by death, marriage was devised, so that by the begetting of children the race of men might be preserved. But they may ask: What, then, does "male and female" mean, and "increase and multiply"? To which we shall reply that **the "increase and multiply" does not mean increasing by the marriage union exclusively, because if they had kept the commandment unbroken forever, God could have increased the race by some other means. But, since God, Who knows all things before they come to be, saw**

by His foreknowledge how they were to fall and be condemned to death, He made provision beforehand by creating them male and female and commanding them to increase and multiply.” (St. John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*)

❖ “Marriage is not instituted for wantonness or fornication, but for chastity. Listen to what Paul says: “Because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.” (I Cor 7:2) These are the **two purposes for which marriage was instituted: to make us chaste, and to make us parents**. Of these two the reason of **chastity takes precedence**. When desire began, then marriage also began. It sets a limit to desire by teaching us to keep to one wife.” (St. John Chrysostom, *Sermon on Marriage*)

❖ Not an end in and of itself, but a path to salvation

◆ [Conjugal union] is a union that is fulfilled in Christ with a view to the kingdom, being sealed both as to its nature and purpose by the grace of the Holy Spirit that is conferred by the sacrament of marriage. This understanding of the sacrament subordinates the sexual union, and all other forms of union between the spouses, to the spiritual dimension of their being and their love. Thus the sexual union must be preceded ontologically not just by an affective [emotional] union, but by the spiritual union which gives it its meaning and value. ...

When sexual unions take place outside any spiritual context with the sole intention of seeking sensual pleasure, this inevitably has a damaging effect, profoundly distorting the normal pattern of one’s relationship with God, self, and neighbor.” (Jean-Claude Larchet, *Theology of the Body*)

◆ “When Christ, as a sign of His power, clearly changed the water into wine all the crowd rejoiced, for they considered the taste marvelous. Now we all partake at the banquet in the church for Christ’s blood is changed into wine and we drink it with holy joy, praising the great Bridegroom, for He is the true Bridegroom, the Son of Mary, the Word before all time who took the form of a servant, He who has in wisdom created all things.” (St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakion on the Marriage at Cana 7:20*)

❖ The Passionless Union of the Ancestors of God - A Vision of St. Paisios the Athonite

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◆ Once, on Sinai, the Elder beheld a heavenly event in the Holy Spirit: the holy and temperate marital relations of the Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, by which the Holy Theotokos was conceived and born. The Elder related to us the revelation he received: “Saints Joachim and Anna Were completely spiritual people, without any carnal-mindedness at all. They were the most passionless couple that has ever lived. First, they prayed to God separately, with tears, that He would give them a child, and then they came together, out of obedience to God and not out of any carnal desire. And, since the conception happened without self indulgent pleasure, the Panagia was all-pure and chaste. Of course, she was not free from ancestral sin, like the Papists falsely believe, because she was conceived in the usual or natural way [that is, not without seed, like Christ]; but still [it was] totally without passion, as God wanted people to be born.” Once the Elder was stressing these truths during a discussion. Seeing that the other person was hesitant and reluctant to accept his words, he stood up and in a decisive tone declared, “I experienced what took place!” He wanted to make clear that he was expressing, not the content of his own reverent thoughts, but a Divine revelation.

(An account in *Saint Paisios of Mount Athos* by Hieromonk Isaac, pg 144-5)

* This is a hint at how in the body, being fruitful and multiplying may have occurred ie without any passions, sinful inclinations, or carnality, only thinking of the gift of God.

Chastity, Celibacy and Virginit

◆ Chastity and the Spiritual Life — Two expressions of Chastity: marital and celibate (virginity or “widowhood”)

♣ Marital Chastity

◆ “Chastity is indeed an imperative for marriage as well [as monasticism]. Marriage entails remaining monogamous and faithful to one’s spouse; attempting to refrain from sexual relations during fasting periods; and even to refrain from looking with objectifying lust upon one another, even in thought or intention.” (Arcm. Sergius Bowyer, *Acquiring the Mind of Christ*)

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*When pleasure and bodily desire is the sole or even dominant aim it is carnal and not a true union.

- A consequence is that the “center of their being is no longer the image of God but their own sexual function.” This person makes their body an “instrument of sexual pleasure” instead of communion of love and in the Spirit and reduces the other into a “mere object of fantasy.” (Larchet)
- We ought to have a detachment from the pursuit pleasure, not to mean an avoidance of it, but not to make it the aim. The aim is an expression of the sacramental union given at their marriage, a spiritual union to fulfill the command “be fruitful and multiply”

*Marriage has an openness to one’s spouse as the other and the openness to procreation of new life by union as the fullness of the sacrament.

- “When a husband and wife are at odds with one another, their household is in no better shape than a storm-tossed ship in which the captain and the pilot disagree. This is why Paul says: “Do not refuse one another, except by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourself to prayer.” He is referring to unusually intense prayer. Otherwise, if he forbids those who have marital relations to pray, his words about ceaseless prayer would have no meaning.” (St. John Chrysostom *Homily 19* on 1 Corinthians 7)
 - This is the mystery reflected in marriage that is spoken about by St. Paul in Eph 5:32 - union and new life.
 - it is also reflected in the gender roles of male husbandly headship and female wifely submission.

◆“If the union of Adam and Eve is a great mystery in Christ and in the Church, it is certain that as Eve was bone of the bones of her husband and flesh of his flesh, we also are members of Christ’s body, bones of His bones and flesh of His flesh.” (St. Ambrose of Milan, *Letters to Laymen* 85)

*Christ is the head and the church is the body of Christ.

- We obey and submit to Christ as His Body and know that he as our Head has emptied himself for our sake.

❖ Two paths with a single heart

- ◆ “The monastic takes vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We have already spoken about how chastity is to be attained and maintained in either the married or monastic state. Poverty in the married state is exhibited by stewardship of our time, our talents, and our resources (whether monetary or otherwise) to the Church and to those in need. Obedience is lived out in the married life through obedience to the Church’s teachings and to her way of life, as well as obedience to the bishop, one’s spiritual father, and one’s spouse.” (Arct. Sergius Bowyer, *Acquiring the Mind of Christ*)
- ◆ “You certainly deceive yourself and are greatly mistaken if you think that there is one set of requirements for the person in the world and another for the monk. The difference between them is that one is married and the other is not; in all other respects they will have to render the same account... For all people must reach the same point: [the full measure of Christ; to become perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect]. And this is what throws everything into disorder — the idea that only the monk is required to show a greater perfection, while the rest are allowed to live in laxity. But this is not true! (St. John Chrysostom, *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*)

❖ Sexual desire comes from two sources: body and soul.

- ◆ Asceticism helps temper the body to achieve *continence* (control of sexual impulse)
- ◆ Celibacy is not a rejection of creation nor of the life of the body that the material world requires of us. It is a call to put sex in its proper role as it was meant to be before *the Fall*. It is the striving to live ‘as the angels.’
- ◆ “We know and understand that at the creation of the world, God looked upon it and said it was good. Adam and Eve in the Garden had an ascetic command: to fast from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Only when they broke the fast, misusing the creation, did they find themselves separated from God.

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Therefore, it is not the creation that is to be rejected but the misuse of it, just as it is not food which is bad, but gluttony; It is not money that is evil, but greed for it. This ascetic ethos of the Church applies equally for all people and is exemplified in monasticism.

The ascetic life is one of the central keys to understanding the deep mystery of the Christian faith. Just as the Cross is the heart of our salvation, so asceticism lies at the heart life of the Church. Asceticism *is* our Cross. To reject asceticism is to reject Christ, Who commands us to carry our Cross on the narrow way.

Asceticism is the door to life with God." (Arcm. Sergius Bowyer, *Acquiring the Mind of Christ*)

*The soul requires the "guarding of the heart" and rejecting "impure thoughts, memories, and imaginings as soon as they arise" before you "consent and take pleasure in them." To remain chaste and celibate one needs to embrace that asceticism and spiritual discipline.

❖ The Married and Celibates are both called to chastity as commitment to Christ and to reflect Him.

◆ The married to reflect the relationship of Christ to the Church and the celibate to reflect the total pouring out of their life for the world. Both reflect the Cross in different embodiments.

❖ Celibate Chastity

❖ The greater and harder path as it unreservedly embraces "the next life"

❖ But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord (I Cor. 7:29, 32)

❖ "In St. Paul's time, there were many who consecrated themselves to a life of virginity or abstaining from marriage, such as the houses of widows that were spoken of by St. Paul and other early Fathers. Even before this time, we see those who strayed praying and serving in the Temple, such as St. Ana the Prophetess and

St. Symeon the God Receiver, who met the Lord in the Temple.” (Arcm. Sergius Bowyer *Acquiring the Mind of Christ*)

- ❖ The Cross is the for both marriage and celibacy are ways to ‘take up your cross’ and provide ways to decide to follow Christ or the world.
- ❖ “The level of commitment that is required of monastics is no different from those who are married. Our marital status is not the issue. Rather, for us, the concern is the disposition of our hearts and the willingness we have to follow the Lord.” (Arcm. Sergius Bowyer *Acquiring the Mind of Christ*)
 - ◆ Rhythm of church attendance and prayer rule may be different, but the commitment to Christ is the same.
- ❖ The Church looking toward Christ’s teaching that ‘being given in marriage’ doesn’t exist in heaven and at Paul’s explanation above calls for the unmarried to practice *total continence*.
- ❖ This is so that all one’s concentration is on the ‘work of the Lord’ in and through the activity of the Church. It is a matter of degree and the means of reflecting Christ to the world and not of type.
 - ◆ “Now, the virgins should listen to what follows: virginity does not simply mean sexual abstinence. She who is anxious about worldly affairs is not really a virgin. In fact, he says that this is the chief difference between a wife and a virgin. He doesn’t mention marriage or abstinence, but attachment as opposed to detachment from worldly cares. Sex is not evil, but it is a hindrance to someone who desires to devote all their strength to a life of prayer.” (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 19 on 1 Corinthians 7*)
- ❖ Monasticism
 - ◆ A recovery of the *Paradisical State* and prefigures the life in heaven.
 - ◆ “The life of monasticism is an icon of the kingdom which is present among us, and yet is to come. It reveals the commitment that every Christian everywhere should be making to God, no matter what their vocation or work.” (Arcm. Sergius Bowyer, *Acquiring the Mind of Christ*)

Saturday, June 5, 2021

◆“Since monasticism seems highly impractical to the world and doesn’t fit society’s criteria of ‘productivity,’ it is easy to discount it when taken at a superficial level. The main work of monasteries is not to make jelly and candles, but rather to ceaselessly pray for the salvation of all mankind, both the living and the dead.” (Arcm. Sergius Bowyer, *Acquiring the Mind of Christ*)