

The Gift of Celibacy: A Semantic Exploration of a Divine Gift

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Abstract

Semantics is a major branch of linguistics devoted to the study of Meaning in language (Crystal, 1999:310). Meaning is so important in understanding linguistic features which indeed occupies a significant position in human language. Without Meaning it is difficult to comprehend verbal and non-verbal messages. It is the Meaning that leads the flow of discussion in all aspects of linguistics and literary studies. My aim in this essay is to explore 'celibacy' and 'virginity' with a view to seeing how its dynamics can explain its meaning and how its meaning forms an enabler that empowers us to give due expression to those unique divine gifts. Often in Nigeria, official forms are presented to me to fill in the dotted lines with the titles of 'Mr.' 'Mrs.' 'Dr.' Married, Single or things like that but never the title 'celibacy,' or 'virginity' simply because there is no title like that in an official Nigerian form. Whenever I fill in Celibacy, there are always questions and reactions in this regard. To some I explain; to others I leave it for them to find out themselves. But whichever way I handled it, it is obvious that neither 'celibacy' nor 'virginity' is a common vocabulary to the Nigerian public. It is against this backdrop that this essay searches for the fulfillment of the quest.

Key Words: Celibacy, Virginity, Sex, Eunuch, Marriage, Communities, Priests, Continenence.

1. Conceptual Explanations

Starting with the word 'virginity' the latest iPad dictionary explains 'virgin' as "a person who has never had sexual intercourse." This is corroborated by the Merriam Webster's English Dictionary. Both dictionaries agree to the fact that 'virginity' is a noun and the state of never having had sexual intercourse. Celibacy on the other hand is the state of being unmarried. But while both celibacy and virginity have similar meaning to some extent, celibacy is used to explain the situation of males who remain unmarried for the sake of the kingdom and virginity in this context is used to explain the situation of females

who remain unmarried for the sake of the kingdom. The two words may be used generally for people who have decided to be single for no other purpose than their self-interest. Also, the words could be expressed as 'not previously exploited, cultivated, tapped, or used. It also expresses, 'without experience of, not previously exposed to something etc.' In this essay celibacy and virginity will be used interchangeably to mean persons who have freely chosen not to marry or deal with anything pertaining to marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. While a good number of such a group of persons have simply decided to vow celibacy to God; many others have decided to do so under a religious community submitting all their wills about marriage to God for the sake of the kingdom in service of God and humanity. Explaining the type of needed service, the Decree on the Priestly Ministry, no.16, maintains that celibacy signifies and stimulates pastoral charity. It shows forth the consuming love of the shepherd for the sheep and his total availability to them. The celibates more readily minister to his Kingdom and to the work of heavenly regeneration, and thus, become more apt to exercise paternity in Christ and so to a greater extent. At the same time it is a symbol, that is, a sign which both communicates and signifies. It enshrines in life's experience the dedication and utter self-gift of the priest to the flock and serves as a perpetual reminder and goad towards this self-gift (Cited in Okoye, 1974: 67-68).

The recipients of this great gift are those people who have heard and responded to the call of lifetime virginity/celibacy. They practice what is technically known as perpetual continence. In itself, 'continence' may be defined as abstinence from even the licit gratifications of marriage. The people who take this vow necessarily belong to religious communities. However, it is the experience of Morgan (2012) that they do not all reside in monasteries or conform to one particular church or denomination. In fact, said he, this unique gift (as all other gifts from God) transcends all genders, ages, cultures, races and economic backgrounds. The celibate gift captures a person's heart in such a manner that the idea of permanence is embraced wholeheartedly, just as in a Christian marriage. It is radical because it is in direct opposition to world standards. It stands in stark contrast to our material and entertainment oriented society. Above all, it renounces all self-gratification for a different calling. "It is a purposefully chosen counter-cultural way of life" (2012:1).

From Melody (1908) we learned that a good number of world cultures practice continence. According to him, while, among the primordial human communities as indeed in African communities today, every one, as a rule, seeks to contract a marriage to fulfill an unwritten ancestral law that says: "you are begotten by someone, you must beget another person so as to keep the human race ticking without diminution; yet among the *bona fide* members of the same communities continence is frequently practiced by a lot of people, of

whom some discharge the public duties of religion as espoused authorities cited by Westmarck testifies. According to the citation, the male wizards of Patagonia embraced a life of continence, as did the priests of the Mosquito Islands and of ancient Mexico. According to Chinese law such condition of abstinence is made obligatory upon all priests, Buddhist or Taoist. Among the Greeks continence was required of several orders of priests and priestesses, as it was of the vestals among the Romans. The continence extensively observed among the Essenes, the Manichæans, and some of the Gnostics, though not confined to a priestly class, was reckoned the means to a greater sanctification. Such widespread practice offers evidence of an instinctive feeling that the indulgence of our sensual nature is in a measure degrading, and that it is particularly incompatible with the perfect purity that should characterize one consecrated to the worship of the All Mighty God (cited in Melody, 1908: 1).

2. The Attitude of Some Sects and Libertines

That the attitude of a number of sects towards the lower side of human nature has taken on a character of unreasonable, and even absurd severity is clear. This is observed especially in the case of the Manichæans and branches of the Gnostics in the past and of the Shakers and other unimportant communities in our time who literally inflict inestimable injuries on their bodies in the name of total abstinence from marriage. Coupled with this is the redefinition of the traditional morality by the libertines in this pluralistic, liberal times, to include marriage without children. In this kind of marriage these libertines have upheld the immorality of cohabitation and dedication to sex without control; that is to say their main purpose of marrying is to live together for the purposes of having sex and plenty of it anytime any day. They have this loose idea of stressing that sex is meant for celebration only. Some of these new fleeing priests settle for this obnoxious system of life. They erroneously create a “kinder and gentler” god who is infinitely more tolerant than the One revealed in Scripture. One who is less demanding and less judgmental, one who will tolerate many lifestyles without placing guilt on anyone's shoulders.

Moreover, the current language used to describe the celibate gift presents a unique problem in today's society. Because, the term “celibate” which is designated for men who have never engaged in marriage and have decided to remain in this state, is also often used today to refer to someone who is either abstaining from sex for a period of time or has recommitted to abstinence, hence, it does not capture the essence of virginity. “Permanent virginity” as noted earlier is an accurate description, of females who have never engaged in marriage, but generally, this understanding leaves men out who have the calling of perpetual continence; since society's current use of language associates virginity with women. That is why “Eunuchs for the kingdom” gets right to the heart of it, since it affirms the permanence of the men's calling, and is

biblical. So, using the terms “celibacy” and “virginity” to mean one and the same translates to addressing people who do not engage in sexual activity is quite appropriate. And celibate Chastity is also another term / phrase that refers to the fidelity of the celibate to this calling.

3. Two Objections to Continence

Two general objections are frequently urged against the state of continence. First, it is said that the condition of continence is detrimental to the well-being of the individual. In such a statement, it will be frequently found, continence is understood as an unchaste celibacy, and such surely is not only a moral but a physical evil most pernicious. However, it is certain that the self-sacrifice and control involved in true continence finds fruitage in a greater measure of moral power. The words of Jesus Christ in Matt 19:12 on the reasons why some do not marry readily comes to mind here. Moreover, the abstinence of which we speak is a condition of increased physical vigor and energy. On this many ancients are not unmindful; for among a number of these, continence is imposed upon the braves during times of war as a means of fostering and strengthening their courage.

A second objection rests upon considerations of the social good. It is contended that a state of continence means failure to discharge the social obligation of conserving the species. Hence, people who joined religious life or priesthood in sixties, seventies and even early eighties, knew the battle they waged with their parents and relatives who would readily accept the glamor of priesthood but would like to change the idea of not having a wife and children in the profession. While it is true that the atmosphere has totally improved in some parts of Nigeria like in Igbo dioceses in the South East of Nigeria where almost every family wants to have a priest in the family, so that the parents would become *Mama Fada* and *Papa Fada*, it is not fully settled in some other parts of Nigeria where it is still an uphill task. Even when the parents have accepted the idea; the would-be religious themselves and even the religious themselves still fight wars of attrition with the idea of celibate life and more still with the reality of it. This is why, now and then, some priests or religious call it a quit. While it is obvious that not all priests or religious who abandoned the profession blame their departure only on celibacy, the recent events in the Augustinian Order in Nigeria where some priests left after a stint and married without even waiting for dispensation is a ready conclusion from the reality of the inability to persevere in the vow of celibacy. Otherwise, how can we account for the departure of some highly priced priests of the Order, who unceremoniously flee the Order. The next you hear is that he is wedding in one Pentecostal Church or the other. Some have the audacity to become vocation directors or even bishops for their new found community who lost the battle of celibate

priesthood and settled down for married clerical lifestyle. Thinking that they are beginning something new, forgetting that Protestantism and clerical marriage were initiated in 1517 by Dr. Martin Luther, an Augustinian Friar, when he pioneered the exit protest and clerical marriage indulgence; and the Order did not disintegrate for it. They later discover to their chagrin that they are neither the first to dump the Order on the pretext of unbridled libido, nor the second not even the third. And from the look of things presently, it appears the war has no end in sight. However, empirical evidence has shown that people did not only abandon the celibate priesthood just because of unrestrained libido; but various other underpinning reasons; among which are desire to have children to perpetuate human kind. Or children who would continue their names after they are dead and gone. This is why the struggle to keep the family's name which translates to sustaining the village and perpetuating the human race spurs families to demand for sons. This explains the Igbo name *Afamefunna*; which ultimately means that the continuation of male issues ensures the immortality of the family, village or nation and indeed the human race.

However, Oduyoye (2001) redirects the traditional hopes of immortality built around the biology of women and family continuity, saying that it is the cultures of human societies that pinned the immortality of human persons, individuals or communities on the continuous birth of children. She claims that since women are the living beings with the consciousness and spirituality of who they are, where they came from and where they are going, which implies the knowledge of the meaning of life that engenders the knowledge of immortality, it is needless thinking that this hope of immortality should be achieved only by continuous birth of the human species. While it is true that human species could be perpetuated by continuous birth of its kind in this world, the human perpetuation which transcends that of worldly perpetuation is life with God which is achieved by diligence in living up to who the individual is in the image of God, female or male persons and not as procreators (p. 71). Thus, she writes:

In African Religion, the divine injunction 'to increase and multiply; is not that humans may fill the earth, but so as to ensure the immortality of the human community and in some beliefs even that of the individual. Fullness of life and immortality are won through procreation, hence the rituals and taboos associated with the human life cycle are all geared towards preserving and enhancing life and warding off evil ... The anthropology that women seek would de-emphasize our search for immortality through procreation and locate it in our diligence in living up to who we are as being in the image of God, for 'as God lives so we shall live (Oduyoye, 2001, p. 71).

4. Understanding the Marriage Institution

Furthermore, we think at this juncture that understanding Marriage Institution is necessary in order to understand fully the celibate gift. In the writings of St. Paul the Apostle, it is clear that sexual union is so important in marriage than a marriage license or the marriage ceremony, for he says in 1 Cor. 7:9: “for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” Obviously, from this understanding it becomes clear that a flame can be quenched with one drop of water, thereby creating a marital bond in God's eyes. Even in African understanding, the real marriage is consummated when the bride and groom surrender one another to sexual intercourse. So it is clear from God's Word that a past sexual history is not compatible with the celibate gift. In 1 Cor. 6:16, Paul states that: “Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.” At this time, there was no recognized state between virginity and marriage, so then the order to be fruitful and multiply is fulfilled when the bride and groom surrender to one another in sexual union which makes them one flesh (cf. Gen 1: 28). Therefore, It is the epicenter of biblical marriage. It is the act that signifies the quenching of the sexual flames referred to by Paul the Apostle in 1 Cor 7:9. However, it is reassuring that God's words are eternal and do not change with the times.

5. Characteristics of the Celibate Gift

The spiritual gift of virginity/celibacy is a freely chosen positive response to God to live a life without marriage and without sexual activity, devoted to the Lord in body and spirit. As Apostle Paul describes it in 1 Cor. 7:34: “An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world – how she can please her husband.” And, in 1 Cor. 7:7 Paul states: “I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift, another has that.” Paul is making it clear that he has this gift of celibacy and affirms its validity.

Perhaps that is why John Paul II, insists that the choice of celibacy must be “personal choice” empowered by a “particular grace.” This is why this vocation must be understood as voluntary and supernatural, he asserts. This means that without these two specific characteristics, it does not fall within the scope of Christ's words – 'eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom.' This means further that continence for the sake of the kingdom must not be imposed on any person. The choice must be personal and freely chosen. In the words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, perpetual continence is a gift given by God that must be received and freely chosen (CCC, n. 1599). Hence, it means that even when continence is freely chosen, if it is not “for the kingdom” it would not

correspond to Christian celibacy. Hence, the Pontiff explains: Christ's phrase "for the kingdom" expresses not only the objective orientation of this vocation. It also indicates the need for a subjective motivation "that corresponds adequately and fully to [this] objective finality (270) (cited in *theology of body*, p. 280). Pointing out the often overlooked phrase in 1 Cor 7:34, Morgan asserts: Paul did not say that the virgin would be "more inclined" to be concerned about the Lord's affairs, he said she "is concerned" – a statement of fact. A person who has heard God's call to virginity and has accepted that call knows of no other way to respond, just as a person who is in romantic relationship knows of no other way to respond except "yes" to marriage. Likewise, Paul did not say that a married woman is "more inclined" to be concerned about the affairs of this world. She is concerned. Concern about how to please her husband and provide for her family takes priority over everything else. Even though she can have a Christian marriage and family, she cannot be wholeheartedly concerned about the Lord's affairs. Note also that Paul never used the phrase "more time" to explain the virgin's devotion to the Lord, and never attributed free time on her hands to her concern for the Lord's affairs. Thus, when Renee in Warren (2009) questions celibacy on the reason of aversion to marriage, her reason falls within the cracks: according to her "I asked a question on the gift of celibacy because I have no interest in marriage, cannot envision myself ever being married and the idea of living day in, day out with someone is rather frightening ..." This is obviously a choice of convenience and therefore not a right calling. If one is avoiding marriage just like Renee, simply because she/he fears it, or because one sees marriages falling apart all around him/her, that doesn't fit the biblical criteria for lifelong celibacy ..." (Warren, 2009:1) or put it the other way round, if a person were to choose celibacy out of a fear of marital intimacy or a disdain for sexuality, this would not be celibacy for the kingdom (*theology of body*, p. 280).

6. Rationalizations, Misconceptions and Appropriateness of Celibacy to the Ministry of Priesthood

Some may think that the gift of celibacy is an ability to live alone in the world, or that it is just an ability to repress sexual urges, living a life of loneliness and misery. Some even think that celibates have some pills that enable them to endure the sexual urges. Let it be clear in such minds that celibates have as many challenges to face, just as in marriage. But the person with the celibate gift does not condemn Christian marriage, is not afraid of physical intimacy, is not anti-social, is not irresponsible, is not immature, is not naïve, and is not a "loner." These are all stereotypes. The celibate lives a life of completeness and fulfillment that is just as real as the life of a married person. The sexual aspect of the gift becomes less and less of an issue as time passes. The celibate gift eventually becomes all encompassing, influencing every fiber of a person's being, every emotional molecule. Furthermore, there are some people who may

try to rationalize the existence of the celibate based on world standards. This is not possible. The celibate gift is not a reward, not a punishment, not something that is earned, and is not something that can be learned. Those who have received the gift will probably have difficulty explaining their choice, just as most women and men would have difficulty explaining why they chose their particular spouses (Morgan, 2012:1). Moreover, the argumentation makes sense only to the believing Christian: and it becomes all the more easier to understand when one sees the charisma of celibacy as something not extraordinary, but perfectly normal within the framework of God's gracious guidance. Furthermore, one may not think of this charism that is so deeply embedded in a man's life, as something self-contained, complete, and given all at once, as something a man either has or has not. It should be conceived, rather, as something put by God into a man's concrete historical, anthropological and psychological situation, itself possessing a history and being an adventure – the adventure of faith (Wulf, in Vorgrimler 4, 287) (Cited from the New Commentary on Canon Law, p357; commentary on Canon 277; See also: *The Glories of the Priesthood*, pp. 61-73; *The Catholic Voyage*, pp. 15-40).

7. The appropriateness of Celibacy to the Priesthood and the Obligation of the Charism on all Priests.

The appropriateness of celibacy to the priesthood rests on theological and spiritual grounds. It very effectively symbolizes the essence of the ministry. The priest is one entrusted with the ministry of Christ: the more complete his dedication, the more credible his work. Through celibacy the priest is consecrated in a new and excellent way to Christ, "for his sake and for the sake of the gospel" (Mk 10:29). "It is a special gift of God through which sacred ministers may more readily cling to Christ with undivided heart and dedicate themselves more freely in him and through him to the service of God and of men. The last section of article 16 of *Presbyterorum Ordinis* attempts to answer the question on how the charism of celibacy that God gives to some (Mt 19:11) can be made obligatory for all priests as follows: This sacred Council approves and confirms this legislation so far as it concerns those destined for the priesthood, and feels confident in the Spirit that the gift of celibacy, so appropriate to the priesthood of the New Testament, is liberally granted by the Father, provided those who share Christ's priesthood through the sacrament of Order, and indeed the whole Church, ask for the gift humbly and earnestly. In the words of one commentator: "Priestly celibacy cannot be fully explained purely theoretically; in the end it is a matter of faith and spiritual experience, otherwise it cannot be fully lived out (F. Wulf, in Vorgrimler 4, 283). (Cited from the New Commentary on Canon Law, p.357; commentary on Canon 277).

8. Celibacy – Past, Present, and Future

The gift of celibacy points towards a new frontier, towards eternal life, towards

the future when no man or woman will be given in marriage. As Mark 12:25 states: "When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven." The mere existence of the celibate is a permanent reminder of things to come. Even though the celibate gift points towards a new frontier, it has been there for ages. Matthew 19:12 tells us that: "For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it." "Born that way" refers to those born with genetic anomalies who have absent or malformed sexual organs (or mental anomalies; these people cannot marry nor given to marriage). Those who are "Made that way by men" refers to surgically created eunuchs, having historically served as guards for royal women and their jewels and as caretakers for ruling families. "Renounced marriage for the kingdom of heaven" refers directly to the gift of celibacy, someone who has freely chosen to forego sexual activity during one's lifetime.

The fact that eunuchs were identified and were held in esteem as uniquely qualified for certain tasks is in direct contrast to our present society – a society where many see inexperience as a liability. Our society places a high value on experience of all types. Inexperience is seen as a void, a negative trait. The celibate views sexual inexperience as complete fullness, as an integral part of the total gift. When a person first senses the call to celibacy, in my opinion there is a natural feeling of void – a holocaust of a person's soul, so to speak. And, yes, I opine there is a natural temporary feeling of pain and sorrow, that something has been lost. This is often made worse by holding on to cultural expectations, such as marriage and children. But what is received in turn is an inner strength and sense of purpose in this world. There is a profound sense of contentment and security, security in knowing that you are where God wants you to be, and security in knowing that there will be no regrets, no broken hearts (Morgan, 2012:1).

The delivery of the gift, though, may not overwhelm your neighbors. There is no public ceremony to mark the occasion, except for certain orders in the Catholic Church. There are no wedding showers to plan, no church to decorate, and no cake to bake. All of these are affairs of the married person, affairs of the world that are fading away. The celibate replaces all of these social traditions with higher expectations and delights in making arrangements for eternity's sake. For most people, the celibate gift is not an instant awareness, but rather a process. The process the Catholics spend in the seminaries and nunneries not only studying Philosophy, Theology and the charism of the religious founder, but also spending time alone, laying heart open in prayers searching for the will of God on the gift of celibacy. Gradually one becomes acutely aware of God's intentions for one's life. And, just like in marriage, the bond gradually grows

stronger over time (Morgan, 2012:1). Accepting the gift of celibacy puts one in the same par with other world cultures in history with a rich celibate heritage where the institution of celibacy was held in equal value with the institution of marriage, as noted earlier. It is a pity that in today's culture, the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme to where family concerns have been elevated to the point of representing the pinnacle of Christian values (Morgan, 2012:1). Unfortunately, a middle ground that recognizes both set of values does not exist. Churches today are reinforcing this phenomenon. Even if a church identifies its congregation as being open to all, there are usually still strong underpinnings of the earth-bound nuclear family that do not recognize the existence of a state of being between: for example, "youth group" and "young couple's class." Most churches today also have "singles groups" which popularly refer to those who are in a holding state until marriage. All these are viewed as a challenge for celibacy today (Morgan, 2012:1).

9. The Challenges of Accepting Celibate Values

There was never a time accepting permanent continence as a way of life has found an easy acceptance. Even in the biblical experience it was as hard as anyone could imagine. An indirect case in point here could be the challenge faced by Lazarus and his sister Martha accepting the seemingly celibate posture of their sister Mary when she demonstrated peculiar interest in the affairs of the Lord. Luke 10: 38-42 tells the story of Jesus' visit to the Bethany home of Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary. The family hospitably welcomed Jesus. While Martha went quickly to the kitchen to prepare the food, Mary sat at the feet of Jesus listening to His every word. Martha complained and said to Jesus: "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

In this story Martha can represent marriage and family values which are temporary and include duty, competition, conformity, compartmentalization, self-fulfillment, pleasing her spouse, providing for her children, earth-bound communication, and other affairs of this world. These concerns are legitimate Christian values, Jesus did not condemn them. Rather he said in reply to Martha's concerns: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." This response then presents Mary as representing the celibate gift and its values which are eternal and include the unlimited affairs of the Lord. Here, Mary's heart is tuned in to Jesus' desires, not the desires of a spouse or children or other things of the world but to the Lord's needs. We have to bear in mind that when Jesus said that Mary had chosen what is better, He was not saying that Mary had chosen a superior way of life; rather he was saying that Mary was a superior person as valued by Christ. A married person's heart is divided, a celibate person's heart is totally devoted to Christ. Mary was

there at His feet ready to jump at a second's notice if He needed anything, no matter how trivial it may have seemed to the onlookers (Morgan, 2012:1).

10. How to Know if One Has this Gift

One of the hardest things in life is to discern the will of God. St Paul already highlighted this point when he asked in Romans 11: 33-34, Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" The only thing we can hold onto is what St. Paul in 1 Cor. 12:4 tells us: "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same spirit." And 1 Cor. 12:11 states that: "All these are the work of one and the same spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines." In this way, we come to know that the allocation of different gifts is a divine mystery. And I maintain, "we do not know why God allots his gifts the way he does and why he gives some people some particular gifts" (Chidili, 1992:5). But empirically we can say that there are some common factors that lead a person to the call and acceptance of this mysterious gift. For example, a nonconforming disposition is a notable factor. From the story of the Bethany family of Lazarus, Mary and Martha we can certainly deduce that Mary exhibits the character of nonconforming disposition. Martha being Mary's sister was not surprised at her nonconforming stance at the arrival of Jesus. If Mary had been the conforming type, she would have already been back helping her sister making the preparations during Jesus' visit. But because she was nonconforming, her sister's complaints did not move her. She was hesitant to what others may think. They might be thinking that she was lazy, slothful or wasting time, but it did not bother her. She was also quick to put herself below the level of others — she was sitting at Jesus' feet, not looking at His face across a boardroom table.

It is also within the character of the would-be celibates not to feel comfortable following the masses, they generally dismiss cultural norms and expectations, and follow their heart at all cost. Nothing in this world seems to be totally satisfying and she/he is constantly glancing off to the horizon, meditating on things to come. They have a strong sense of discernment. They also have a strong sense of identification, an identification that is not derived from a spouse, parents, job, and children. They do not require a husband/wife for their sense of femininity/masculinity. They also have an unusual capacity to love their neighbor, perhaps that is why many of them are missionaries; they are more sensitive to other peoples' needs, they can communicate in a way that shows Jesus' love, and respond with patience and kindness when the world does not understand. With this comes a very strong focusing ability, continual prayer, and awareness of God's presence. An ability to rechannel energy as St Paul rechanneled his Judaic energy to Christianity — a willingness to delve into projects wholeheartedly. They also have the ability to appreciate creation and

aesthetics. An example of this is that some of the greatest works of art have been created by celibates throughout history and are on display in monasteries around the world (Morgan, 2012:1). Some are still invited by other people “we have found the Messiah (that is Christ) and he brought him to Jesus. “Come and see”: John invited Andrew and Andrew invited his brother Simon and then brought him to Jesus (John, 1:35-41). So, even today some priests or nuns were invited to Jesus by their cousin brothers or sisters or friends or real brothers as in the case of Andrew and Simon. However, we must note that while these traits generally appear in most of the candidates, some candidates may have one or more traits. Those who have them may not have all of them at the same time. Some may have just only one trait or at times up to two or three or even more; but never all at the same time. We must also note that God works in mysterious ways, at times he may call somebody without any of the mentioned features. So the most important thing is that we listen to the voice of God always, whichever way he calls us, we respond with our whole energy as blind Bartimaeus answered in Mk 10:50. He threw his cloak aside; jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

11. Conclusion

From the forgoing, we can conclude that celibacy or permanent continence is a gift from God to some chosen people in this world. Since the beginning of the world God has been giving people this unique gift; to the extent that it is not confined to monasteries, or some religious communities. But what is obvious from this work is that while there is a general gift to be single; to be single for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is particularly biblical and accepted only by those who have thoughtfully and freely chosen the gift. This singular gift, when chosen, makes those who make this choice somewhat special human beings who have chosen to remain unmarried for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 19:11-12). In this way they enact a peculiar type of way of life which is directly opposite to all human desires and expectations such as marriage and begetting of children. By choosing this gift, it is assumed that the one who makes this choice has started living the biblical eschatology where people are neither marrying nor giving to marriage (cf. Mk 12:25). This type of lifestyle, obviously, portends totally different lifestyle-values that needs a lot more encouragement from Christian communities; though, it looks special but it is just as biblically legitimate as Christian marriage, and is taken as seriously as the vow of marriage by the people who have accepted it. Now, note that it does not condemn marriage values, rather it is saying that there is another legitimate lifestyle values which are equally attractive and worth living. So the word 'celibate' or 'virginity' has as legitimate existence as Mr. or Mrs., Single or Married, or others alike. And I recommend that those who prepare forms at various levels should include the celibate state among the options to be selected.

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