

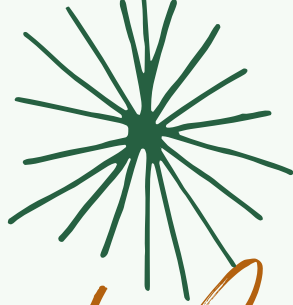


# svd brothers FORUM

december 2021 | volume 2 issue 4



our CALL to be  
**CHASTE**



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*SVD BROTHERS FORUM is a digital forum written by its readers. On behalf of its Publisher, Fr. Rogelio Bag-ao, SVD-PHS Provincial Superior, we asked the member of the Arnoldus Family to reply to the questions below.*

*Our theme is the following:  
VOW OF CHASTITY*

*1. How does my lifestyle manifest the vow of chastity?*

*2. How does chastity fit into my relationship with Christ?*

*3. How does the vow of chastity support my missionary freedom?*



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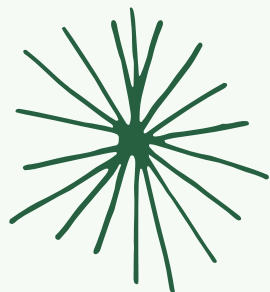
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# Foreword



BR. DARWIN LORO (PHS)

I find hope in the thought that Jesus himself was celibate. He undertook an itinerant ministry of preaching and healing. He is an epitome of what it means to be chaste, for he understood well his life and purpose — to give witness by proclaiming the reign of God in word and deed.

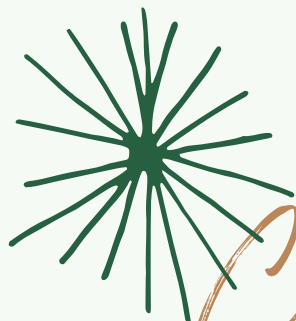
Despite being counterculture at the present time, consecrated chastity is a way of life. It is a gift and should not be a burden. An immense joy is felt as I discern every now and then by asking myself, “What have I publicly professed?” “Do I still promise to live the vow of chastity with the same vigor now?” The life of Christ is intended to give us examples we can follow and learn from. Emulated by the first Christian community, it reminds us to reexamine our calling in life as professed religious. When we meet our dialogue partners in our ministries and communities, we have to open our hearts to receive them generously. A call to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ can allow us to commit to a life of celibacy, daily prayer and service to the Church. We become fully alive and loving all.

In spite of the challenges of celibacy, it can be a source of great joy if we live it faithfully and open-handedly. The more I know myself, the best way I can find bliss even in moments of solitude. It is a day to day renewal of my vow of chastity that makes me called to consecrated life, a gift to the Church and a gift to the world.

In this season of Advent, I wish all a meaningful and grace-filled celebration. Have a joyful Christmas 2021!



IMAGE CREDIT: BR. MARK PAGLICAWAN



# Chastity in my Lifestyle



BR. STEPHEN BONSU (GHA)

The vow of chastity is a call to love. We are called to love the poor, the unwanted, the marginalized, the migrants, and the excluded. Consecrated chastity life is beautiful and meaningful if it is lived for service and commitment. It is a joyful and loving life! It is the vow of love. In this fragmented and fractured world, we are called to create relationships with nature, God and others through the vow of consecrated celibacy. It is a commitment to equality in a discriminating society.

This vow frees us to be available at any time and for any ministry and even to die for others. Celibacy is not about being perennial adolescents whose lives are controlled by the superior. Our loving and happy life must be seen by others in our service to the unwanted poor. The positive meaning of the vow of chastity is a quest for expansive love, loving God and the people in one's ministry. Choosing celibacy makes sense only if God is real for us. A person can stay unmarried for a variety of reasons, family obligations, work, escape from family obligations, love of power, dedication to a profession. None of them is what the Catholic Church understands as celibacy.

Celibacy makes sense only if Jesus and the Gospel way of life attract a person's heart. Without this central attraction, it does not make sense to give up two of life's best things—spousal love and parenthood. We should learn to relate to others in a mature way. We must not put ourselves in situations that might lead to sexual activity, such as being at close quarters with someone to whom we are physically attracted and not to be together in secluded spots, unless we absolutely know that we are fully in control of ourselves. We all need love, compassion, and respect. If we do not find this in the community, a vowed celibate life can be hard.

So we may be tempted to watch immoral movies and TV shows, wrongly engage in social media like the 'Facebook' and even venture into pornographic websites. These are the temptations that we should firmly reject. A chaste celibate life is for mature people, not protected by someone watching over us. It is a life lived by adults. One of the gifts of the Spirit is 'self-discipline' (cf. Gal: 5: 23-24).

The key to a fruitful life lies in opening oneself in prayer to God. A celibate who does not pray, closes himself to the Holy Spirit. Transcend yourself and resist the temptation.

Chastity fits into my relationship with Christ during the time I prepare myself spiritually to attend mass, prayers and visit the sick people at the hospital and helping the poor and the needy. Chastity is sexual purity and involves being morally clean in mind, words, and actions. Sexual intimacy is ordained by God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife. God has commanded that sexual intimacy be reserved for marriage. When we are sexually pure, we qualify for the companionship of the Holy Spirit, and we are protected from the emotional and spiritual damage of sexual sin.

The vow of chastity supports my missionary freedom to have much time for prayer and focusing my vow on God and the life of Christ Jesus. It also helps me to devote all my time to the Church and serving others. By publicly professing vows of chastity, I point to an aspect of God that is meant to be known by all: the reality that God is enough for me.

Religious vows of chastity give witness to the sufficiency of God. Chastity goes beyond the merely practical and is properly situated in the realm of the spiritual. In the vow of chastity, Catholic religious give up the natural goods of marriage, physical/sexual intimacy, and children. In this way we strive to imitate Jesus who Himself was chaste and who calls those who are given the grace to live this way to follow His example (Mt. 19:12).

It is through this vow that we, in a spiritual sense, are espoused to God. consecrated religious give themselves entirely over to God and are thus a prophetic witness to how every Christian will be united totally to God in heaven, where there will be no human marriage (Mt. 22:30). Living in our culture means we are all bombarded with messages telling us that money, sex and power are the keys to our happiness and fulfillment. Christians know that our happiness lies only in God and in living the kind of life that God desires for us.



*At the Service of Others*



BR. LUDWIG SCHARENBERG (BRN)

As a religious I live alone and have no bond with a person. I always try to focus my love and my commitment on Christ. In this way, my power and my whole being is of service to other people.

IMAGE CREDIT: WWW.FIRSTCHRISTIANOLYMPIA.ORG



# My Affectivity



IMAGE CREDIT: BR. MARK PAGLICAWAN

FR. JUAN Ettl (ECP)

I believe that my vow of chastity expresses a concrete way of life, my life with Christ. Of course, it will always be a "try to ..."! Nothing that would be complete.

I feel free by this vow to try to give myself, to respond with my own (poor) love to other people, whether women or men, finally for the Kingdom of God that is within us and within our life in community, church, world ... I hope it is also a way of living in solidarity with so many people who do not have the freedom, the possibility to choose their lifestyle...! What I really had to learn in life is the healthy, necessary and beautiful challenge of what is my affectivity, my being in spiritual, soul AND body! A long time ago I read with heartfelt joy in the Gospel that Jesus himself had quite a few healthy, pretty and good women ... his "clients"!

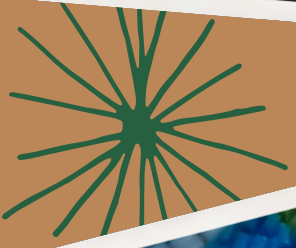


IMAGE CREDIT: BR. MARK PAGLICAWAN





BR. FRANSISKUS BALO (IDE)

Live by the Spirit so that you may belong to the Lord (Gal 5:13-26)! Abide in the Word of God, to be delivered from all the dominion of sin and find fulfillment in everything that God has provided (Matt. 19:16-26). Becoming an SVD in response to God's call is a blessing that I deserve and live with joy. Living a personal vocation in the togetherness of a religious community has made us a new multicultural family: one heart with many faces, in the womb of the Society of the Divine Word. From this spirituality, I was enabled by the power of the Word of God to bear witness to all people about the Gospel of Christ through my personal life, through our community life, and through building up Christian communities (Cons. 501)

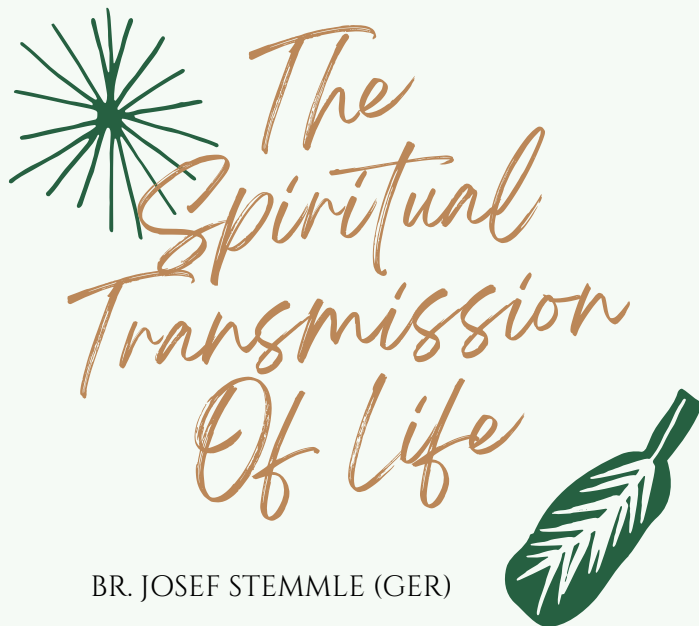
Since the first time when I gave myself and my life to God's guidance through the SVD, I confirmed it with the seal of religious vows. Chastity, poverty, and obedience serve to open ourselves for the inspirations of the Holy Spirit to unite us with Christ and to become his co-workers (Cons. 407). While living out my vows as an SVD religious missionary, the experience of failure remains possible and even unavoidable. However, the effort to renew myself and my life is an absolutely necessary requirement of Christ because the power of His calling is more powerful than me. Cons. 410, says, "We want to continually return to Him and renew ourselves in His Word so that by the power of His Spirit we may overcome our weaknesses and that we may become more and more like Him."

As a formandus, I lived in the formation house of the St. Paul Ledalero, together with many confreres under the same seminary roof. I did my best to build up communicative relationships with senior confreres, in order to experience the testimony of their spiritually rich lives; to gain academic knowledge, to embrace missionary life, to be guided by spiritual inspiration, and to share stories of living together in one house as Fathers, Sisters, and Brothers.

Apart from being in a large community, I was also trained to live in a small family in units. In my unit, I was guided and shaped in honing my responsibilities as an SVD who lives and contributes to life together as a family unit, the seminary, as well as the whole SVD. I gladly accept and carry out the small tasks entrusted to me, as the simplest form of passion for missionary service (Cons. 412.1).



Happiness and satisfaction are being able to take part in meaningful collaboration as self-service to the community. Living in the SVD religious family that takes part in God's mission, I am trained toward the struggle to form myself in a complete identity realizing all aspects of religious life in a balanced way. Spiritual life, academic life, emotional aspect, health aspect, missionary aspect, community life aspect, and work aspect—all these I have slowly experienced in their fullness in the journey of this vocation. May the Spirit of God always be with me in this whole process of internalizing my religious life.



BR. JOSEF STEMMLE (GER)

The vow of chastity is my lifestyle, along with the other vows: poverty and obedience. However, I see chastity as the inner part of the three vows, the focus for giving myself to Him who has called me and who calls me again and again. Thus this vow of chastity is for me an invitation that motivates me again and again to give myself completely to Him who has called me and calls me again and again. Will I succeed? Or is there something else that can influence me and has influenced me?

I haven't forgotten what I realized as a young man. It is the fact that man is an emotional creature with understanding to which it essentially belongs to pass this creation on, also in procreation. Of course, this is an essential foundation of being human. Is there only this transmission of life? Is there no another transmission of life also meant and essentially included here—namely a spiritual one, which is expressed in the life of the religious vows but cannot be based on itself as such but must necessarily meet broader goals? It is part of the essence of man to live towards God and to answer His call, which is always special. I think it is essential to say that this call for people exists, as it has been exemplified for me by countless brothers and sisters in faith. To this call, I also feel called.

How far I succeed in this total surrender is essentially dependent on how far I identify with the one who has called me and who also repeatedly calls me to follow him. Unfortunately, I have not always succeeded in doing this, but that does not prevent me from starting again and again to serve Him. I stand by what I've written. It took a long time.



IMAGE CREDIT: BR. MARK PAGLICAWAN



IMAGE CREDIT: [HTTPS://FRANCISCANVOICE.ORG/THE-VOW-OF-CHASTITY/](https://franciscanvoice.org/the-vow-of-chastity/)

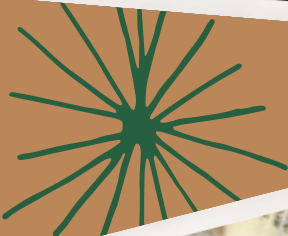


# Vow of Chastity

BR. KIM BONG JONG JOHN (KOR)



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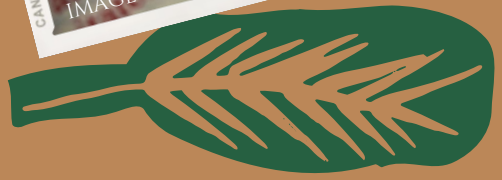


I am trying to live a life of regular prayer, actively participate in community activities, like meals, cleaning the house, serving the migrant workers during the day time. I take care of my diet and food. I don't go out often for dining/drinking/shopping and other worldly things.

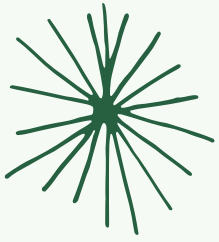


IMAGE CREDIT: BR. MARK PAGLICAWAN

Chastity fit into my relationship with Christ through my regular daily meditation, prayers and masses. My fraternal relationship with the community members and my commitment to the migrant workers. I see that I am walking with Christ.



Chastity supports my missionary freedom I am not bound to my family. I am totally free to serve the migrants workers and I am at the disposal of the community.



# Lifestyle and Chastity



BR. RENATO PARMAGNANI (COL)

My lifestyle mainly manifests the vow of chastity through community life. The relationships forged in the community and all the gestures that unfold from it: service, forgiveness, welcome, care, dedication ... emanate from a feeling and living typical of hearts without pretensions, or arrogance, not superficial either. My lifestyle and way of living must authentically express these gestures to truly be a commitment, a vow or a promise. If I am not consistent with living these gestures in the daily life of the community as a maxim of brotherly love, it is futile to keep a vote simply as legislation or a rule. The vow of chastity should help me to be more authentically human, friend, partner, brother. Otherwise my lifestyle and way of living would become an empty expression of chastity for no reason. It is like the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies in order to bear fruit, if it does not die, it remains only a grain of wheat, nothing more.

Chastity fits into my relationship with Christ since I am especially influenced by his way of being and of becoming a person and brother of all. Christ wanted to live authentically human relationships with the women and men of his time, free from social legalisms, moral, religious and cultural prejudices that divided people between good and bad, pure and impure. His condition as Messiah and Son of God did not prevent him from living experiences of friendship or fellowship with those who crossed his path and with those who came to listen to him. On the contrary, his mission, his words, his gestures, his gaze, his entire person was a relationship and invited a relationship: with God, with himself, with humanity and with the Kingdom. The Kingdom itself is forged in the relationship of love for neighbor and the Father. The vow of chastity should not prevent me from approaching and interacting with people, nor from feeling them and showing them affection and care of them, as Jesus lived. Having the same feelings as Jesus Christ (Phil 2, 5) is an invitation to love as he has loved, to serve as he has served, to relate to people as he has related. My vow of chastity strengthens my relationship with Christ and with the community of brothers and sisters and gains meaning only in this fraternal communion. Nobody lights a lamp and then covers it with a drawer. If it does, it ceases to be a sign, to be a testimony, to illuminate.



# Chastity is Life

BR. DARWIN P. JAIME (PHS)



Every member of a religious congregation, whether a religious brother or sister, or a priest, professes the three evangelical counsels. They are Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. This sharing poses the three guide questions of this Forum on chastity which is, for me, to refrain from engaging into sexual or lustful desires. In Tagalog, it is kalinisan.

Being an SVD Junior Brother, this is one of the vows I professed. To manifest this in my lifestyle, I wear decent clothes, and not revealing ones. Not only that, another manifestation is my acceptance of my personhood and that of others.

To fit chastity into my relationship with Christ, I see to it that every person I meet is a living image and likeness of God. With this, what comes into my mind is that every person has his / her dignity coming from God. Hence, I am invited to treat every person I meet as subjects, and not objects. Objectifying people is one way of not living out the vow of chastity.

Lastly, the vow of chastity supports my missionary freedom by accepting each other's sexuality and uniqueness, and by respecting the culture of the people where I am sent. We may be diverse, but what makes us united is our humanity.

With this, I say that indeed, chastity is life. As I respect each other's sexuality, uniqueness, and diversity, I also accept our commonality as human persons. Yes, as a human person, I am compelled to treat every person I meet as subjects, and not objects of desire. This is my way of living out the vow of chastity. Truly, chastity is life.

IMAGE CREDIT: BR. MARK PAGLICAWAN





# Religious Vows and The Lord's Day

FR. SAJU GEORGE ARUVELIL (ARS)

Tell me how you celebrate the Lord's Day and I will tell you how you live the evangelical vows.

I see a close relationship between the celebration of Saturday (Sunday for Christians) and living the vows. Saturday was a day off from other work, obligations and commitments to dedicate: more time for prayers, worship, community and especially family gathering and complete rest. To achieve these, there were laws, guidelines, and regulations.

We can also reflect on the evangelical vows from the Sabbath's point of view. As the Sabbath is to dedicate itself fully to the mentioned purposes, Consecrated Life also wants to follow Jesus Christ fully and live His teaching. It is achieved through the classic vows: unconditional donation, detachment of materials and resignation of one's own will. Thus, the vows are the means to achieve these experiences. They are in this sense, evangelical counsels, orientations, guidelines, etc.

But unfortunately, sometimes, these became absolute laws and put above the person. Thus, both got distorted reducing them in external observations, and in a certain way a literal fulfillment, without going deep to the spirit of the same to enjoy them. Really both: the Lord's Day and the evangelical vows are and should be joyful experiences. They are ways to live, enjoy and celebrate the life.

IMAGE CREDIT:  
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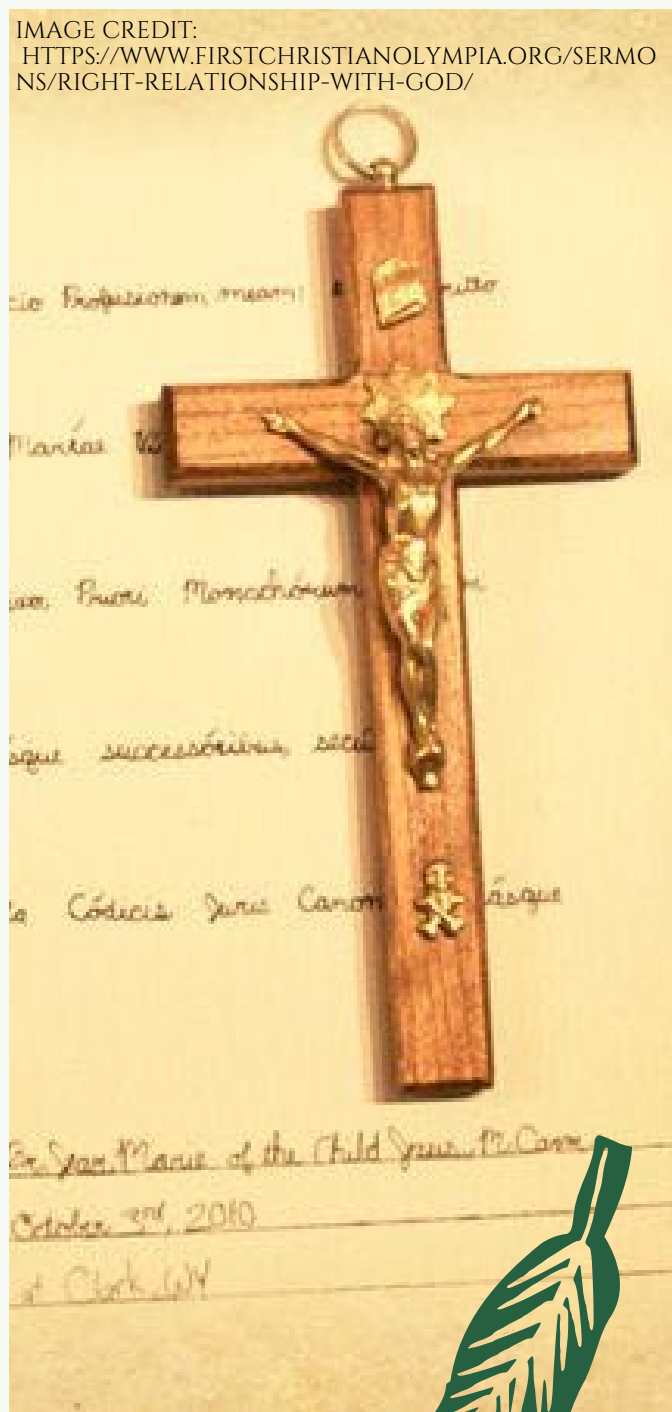


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# We Create Right Relationships

BR. BERNIE SPITZLEY, USC

As a celibate Religious I believe the vow of Celibacy is one that calls me to be in “Right Relationship”. Right relationship with every one I meet and invite into the mission of our Brother Jesus. We as consecrated persons, our presence to God through our life of prayer and our contemplative stance in the world enables me to see, hear, and discern God’s will and ways which as a prophetic minister shapes, form my ministry by treating everyone I meet as a brother or sister. This is done via contemplative prayer where God’s view of the world becomes my own.





Yes, it is because of daily nurturing and developing my relationship with the Father, I can move from a single personal relationship to one that is available and freely given to others. As a religious I know it is so important, so vital to change the world view of relationships. One that promotes exclusive or even violent relationships such as sex for sale, human trafficking, 'ownership' of the other, my possession. As I said earlier because of my relationship with the Father I can be (am) a counter expression of the world's view of so called 'love', one that exploits one as an object and not seeing, embracing the other as a whole person.

We live in a world where sex sells, where human trafficking is a reality, where people use and abuse others. As a Brother I know I must "Wake Up THE World" as called forth from our Pope, Francis. I and all Brothers, religious need to show the joy we find in the vow of celibacy. Where because of our relationship with the Father, we see others as brothers and sisters not as objects, but others with whom we can create right relationships. Celibacy is a gift, a way to be counter to the world which uses persons as objects. I for one celebrate the relationship I have with the Father and thus live life to the fullest by treating all I meet as a sister, brother through right relationships.





# The Virtue of Chastity and My Missionary Freedom



BR. EUGENIO A. OROG (PHC)

By definition chastity is a virtue—an acquired disposition which does not come to us all at once. It is done by repeated action and renewed everyday through daily choices. This requires a growing sense of Christian identity. Our “creation identity”, to know that God created us, is very important for consecration since God created human being in his image and likeness.

Based on this, three questions come to me: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? My immediate answers to these questions are: We came from God — We are for God — We are going back to God. So chastity therefore is a gift, not an endless burden because its origin and destination is from and to God. This is clearly exemplified in our SVD Constitutions #205-206. With this perspective I am now ready to disclose the following.

First and foremost of all I need to be honest of my sexuality with a fellow human being. It can be a confessor, spiritual director, counselor or just a good friend. Verbalizing and mirroring my sexual struggles is helpful. It helps me to remain objective. I also avoid watching pornography or reading pornographic magazine. So I need to be responsible of my choices.

Second, I need to cultivate my community life, and have one or two intimate friends. Intimacy is a deep basic human need. However this can vary from individual to individual, especial in our weakening family tradition nowadays. Of course I must be on guard on exclusivity for this can polarize the community. A wise saying goes: “Shoulder to shoulder to a common direction.” It is a life apart from self-absorption but to the gospel values.



Third, I have to observe boundaries. This helps keeping the correct way of listening to music, doing physical exercise and observing diet.

Fourth, I will learn from people who successfully navigate their sexual. Reading and reflecting on books along this line will have a lasting effect on me.

Finally, prayer and discernment. When sexual temptations are overwhelming which can make me helpless and hopeless, I surrender everything to God. Thus I am freed from guilt and lustful responsiveness. On the other hand, I maintain a healthy focus of not "what I gave up" but of what I am being freed from. For example, throughout my religious life was assigned in all over the country—which would be impossible if I had a family and kids of my own. (See also 1 Cor 7:32-35.)

Now in my senior years, I am realizing that the vow of consecrated chastity is a Call for Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Just like the chosen people of God were lead out from the slavery through a prolonged desert experience and not immediately to the Promised Land. That resulted in a new life. So also our vow of consecrated chastity, it is a long and perilous journey towards a greater inner freedom. May bless us always in cooperating God graces that continually at work in our life.

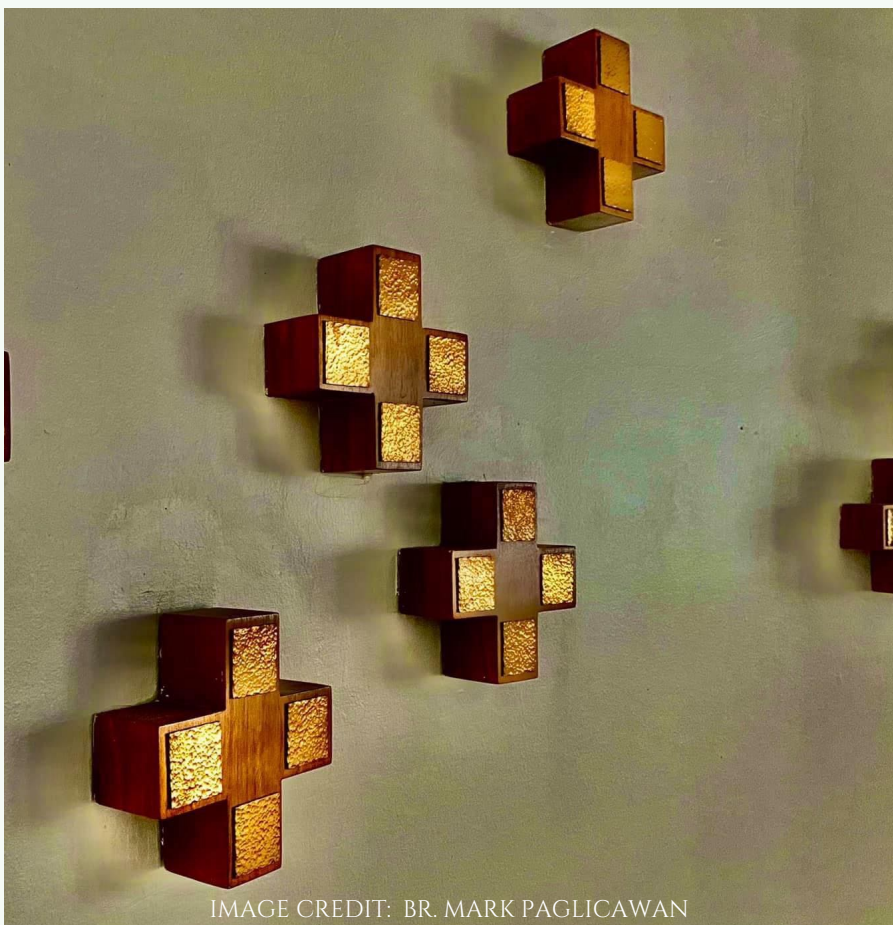


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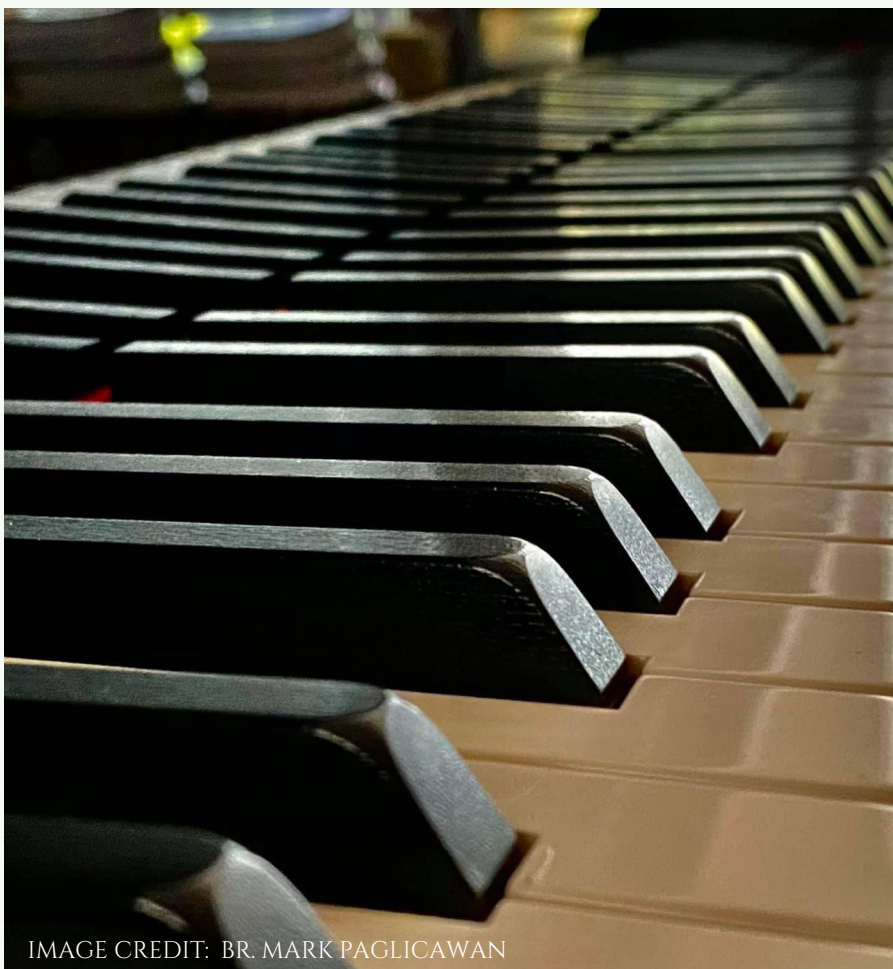


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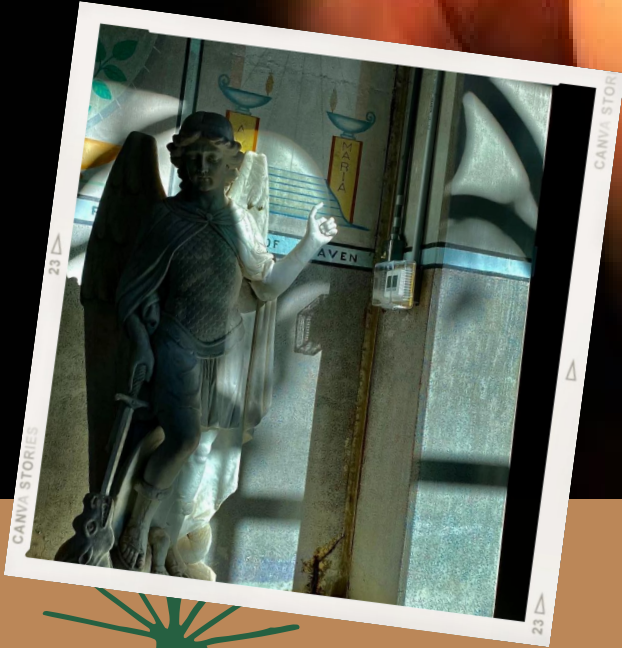


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# Be Chaste - And Appear as Chaste

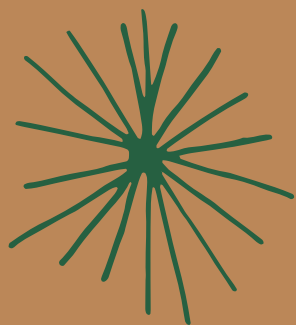
BR. BELA LANYI (PHS)

“Just don’t tell me that SVDs conduct no sexual life”, confronted me the laundrywoman decades ago when we were in temporary vows, “then why are those wet condoms in the pant pockets of so many young seminarians?” What she did not know that, a few days ago during a community meeting, we had a game where condoms had to be filled with water for an entertaining task. Honestly, I did not explain this to the lady because it would have sounded as a cheap excuse only.



In fact, many SVDs, young and even aged, entertain camps of admirers. Girls (and sometimes boys...) already feel in the seventh heaven when the admired Reverend Father /Brother just touches their shoulder. What they don't want to know is that the confrere loves his missionary vocation and does not intend to date them, sleep with them, or marry them. But the heart of these blind admirers are full with the admired SVD and so—how can they find a real lifetime partner in this situation?

As the editor of this Forum, I have just noticed that all writers are totally spiritual on “chastity” although our internal conversations sound much more colorful. That's why I felt the need to contribute with some real stories—since appearing chaste contributes to being truly chaste. Or not always?



# Appendix



BRO. JIM ZABRANSKY (USC)

Thank you for your latest issue of the Brothers forum. No, I do not have any contribution for you now on the topic, the Vow of Chastity. However, I would like to suggest a topic for any upcoming issue. Here it is:

SVD Brothers have decreased in number from 603 in 2011 to 502 in 2021 (Catalogus 2021). What should the 2024 General Chapter do to increase and strengthen the Brother vocation?



# Last Words From The Editors

Dear Confreres,

Peace!

Thank you for reading and contributing to this issue. The next issue will be published in March 2022. The guide questions will reach you on February 28, 2022.

For the meantime, you can write comments on the present issue and/or suggest topics for the coming issues. We will be very happy to publish your insights. Moreover, we would deeply appreciate it if you could also attach some photos of you as you send us your articles.

Please, do send your comments and suggestions to this email addresses: [blanyi@usc.edu.ph](mailto:blanyi@usc.edu.ph)

You can write in any of the following languages: English, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia, German, and Polish.

May we all have a blessed Christmas celebration.

In the Divine Word,

Your SVD Brothers Forum Publisher and Editors

