

Sunday Message from Fr William for Solemnity of SS Peter and Paul 2024

*The 'Other World' continued from 23.06.24*

I shared with you in the preceding reflection my own experience of consecrated celibacy. I shared with you that my calling to this way of life, giving my life to something that I believed to be of value to the world, has always for me been rooted in my maleness. Maleness can be lived in the sexual intimacy of marriage and procreation. But it can also be lived in the giving of one's life to a need or to a cause. The reason I've shared with you my own experience of maleness is not to suggest that mine is the only other way that a man can live his maleness in this world, but to help break from the narrow understanding of maleness, that sees the sexual intimacy of marriage and procreation as the only understanding of maleness, and to open up the vast scope of what maleness can mean in its totality. Our maleness/femaleness as human beings is the way we have been created in the image and likeness of the Creator (*Genesis 1*). Our maleness/femaleness is not just the orientation to self-giving love, in all its limitless forms, but the way in which we are *called* to self-giving love, in all its limitless forms. Self-giving love is written into our bodies. This is why self-giving love is the fundamental vocation, the fundamental calling for all human beings. It is for us to read 'self-giving love' in our bodies, and to then live it in the way that is proper to our individual and personal vocation, eg marriage eg consecrated celibacy.

I've shared with you my personal example of maleness and what it has meant for me in my vocation to consecrated celibacy. I would love for us to hear from our womenfolk called to consecrated celibacy and how their femaleness has been foundational to their calling. Meantime, I did promise you 'examples' plural of maleness/femaleness lived in a way proper to celibacy, and lived to the full.

The ultimate example is, of course, Jesus Christ. If the self-giving nature of the Creator is written into the human body in the form of maleness and femaleness (*Genesis 1*), then the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ is the supreme and perfect instantiation of this. His self-giving love is rooted in his divinity and in his humanity together, and in the maleness of his humanity in particular. This is lived out not in the sexual intimacy of marriage but in his self-giving love for his people. Indeed the manner in which he gives his life *to* his people, and then gives his life *for* his people, takes the self-same form of a lover, in his maleness, giving his life for his bride. Christ: "It is a joy, a delight, and an endless happiness to me that I ever endured suffering for you, and if I could suffer more, I would suffer more." – Julian of Norwich (*Revelations of Divine Love* 22). Julian goes on to explain the meaning Christ revealed to her: 'In these words I truly saw that he was willing to die as often as he was able to die, and love would never let him rest until he had done it. For although the dear humanity of Christ could only suffer once, he would do it every day if it were possible. To offer to die for love of me so often that the number of times passes human comprehension, that is the most glorious present that our Lord could make to man's soul, it seems to me.'

This supreme and perfect instantiation of maleness, lived to the full in self-giving love, is unique to Christ. It is for him alone to accomplish the Passion. But it illustrates once again the vast scope of what maleness can mean in its totality. *to be continued...*

*William* 23 June 2024