

In his second article^{)} in the domain of the human formation, Fr. Andrzej (Andrew) Szablewski reflects on the theme of fraternity in the formation of future priests. A Sulpician and the Director of Human Formation at [St. Joseph Seminary](#) in Edmonton, Alberta, he links this theme with affective maturity and celibacy as essential elements of a wholesome personality of today's priest.*

HUMAN FORMATION AND FRATERNITY.



by Fr. Andrzej (Andrew) Szablewski, p.s.s.

Human formation from the very start pays close attention to such issues as affective maturity, celibacy and friendship. As we know the initial formation serves to confirm or disconfirm one's vocation and establish some healthy paths for mature and healthy life and ministry. John Paul II points very clearly to an education of mature and true friendship:

*"In view of the commitment to celibacy, affective maturity should bring to human relationships of serene friendship and deep brotherliness a strong, lively and personal love for Jesus Christ. (...) A precious help can be given by a suitable education to true friendship, following the image of the bonds of fraternal affection which Christ himself lived on earth." (John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, # 44).*

Furthermore, John Paul II underlines the fact that a life of celibacy that is freely chosen for the sake of the Kingdom of God is to imitate our Saviors' bonds of fraternal affection. Such a life should not exclude affectivity and intimacy but open up the possibility of entering into fraternal relationships. These relationships in fact are signs of affective maturity.

As the "filial" relationship with God leads to our "filial" relationship with our bishop, so from our "fraternal" relationship with Jesus Christ, stems our "fraternity" with other members of *presbyterium*. All the priests are called to fraternize with other priests, especially those from one's diocesan community. And it is not only an operative or affective aspect of the *presbyterium*. As such, fraternity constitutes an essential dimension and not just an accessory of priestly celibate identity.

A celibate life could serve as an escape from one or another type of intimacy. Celibacy could be chosen to avoid close relationships, out of fear of sexuality. It might be denied or repressed together with one's affective dimension, but in the end, neither emotions nor sexuality can be controlled in such a way. As a consequence one looks for yet another

^{*)} The first article, "Human Maturity and Relationships in Priestly Formation Today", was published on May 19, 2010. It can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

escape in alcohol (alcoholism), work (workaholism), food (overeating), spending (compulsive shopping), sex (cybersex) or relations (pseudo-relationships).

The celibate life is a free and conscious choice of giving up the right to a spouse and children but it does not give up being kind, tender and compassionate in one's relationships with others, both men and women, without being romantically and erotically involved. If one is truly human, one needs to relate to others.

If our celibate or chaste life prevents us from having friends, then we do not live our vocation in a healthy and mature way. We need to trust others and to be trusted by others. We need to be loved and to love. We need to overcome our fear of intimacy and be able to be vulnerable to someone, to talk about our emotions, about our frustrations with the past and hopes for the future. It is very liberating to enter intersubjectivity with love and respect for the dignity of the other.

This demands that the bishop (or any celibate) not be arrogant, or quarrelsome, but affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to stable and brotherly relationships and encouraging the same in others, quick to understand, to forgive and to console. (cf. 1 Tm. 3: 1-5; Ti. 1: 7-9).

September 26, 2010.