

PROMOTING AFFECTIVE MATURITY AND PSYCHOSEXUAL INTEGRATION

Promoting **affective maturity** and **psychosexual integration** in Claretian formation is essential for fostering healthy, well-balanced missionaries capable of living their vocation with freedom and joy. Here are some **practical ways** to achieve this:

1. Self-Knowledge and Personal Growth

- **Encourage personal reflection:** Regular **journaling, spiritual direction, and personal retreats** help formees recognize their emotions, patterns, and areas of growth.
- **Psychological assessments:** Offer **professional evaluations** to help formees understand their temperament, attachment styles, and emotional responses.
- **Formation in emotional intelligence:** Teach formees skills to **recognize, express, and regulate emotions** constructively.

2. Healthy Relationships and Community Life

- **Foster authentic friendships:** Encourage **healthy bonds of brotherhood** where formees feel valued and supported.
- **Provide mentorship:** Assign **wise and emotionally mature formators** who can guide formees through personal struggles.
- **Promote intergenerational dialogue:** Interacting with older and younger members helps formees develop a **realistic understanding of community life**.

3. Sexuality, Chastity, and Integration

- **Comprehensive sexuality formation:** Provide **age-appropriate and context-sensitive** education on psychosexual development, sexual ethics, and affective maturity.
- **Address struggles openly:** Create a safe space where formees can **talk about their struggles with chastity, temptations, and boundaries** without fear of judgment.
- **Develop strategies for self-mastery:** Teach practices like **asceticism, accountability, healthy recreation, and digital discipline** (e.g., avoiding internet pornography, cultivating mindful media use).
- **Promote Marian devotion:** A genuine **Marian spirituality** helps formees integrate purity with tenderness and strength.

4. Prayer and Spiritual Integration

- **Teach affective prayer:** Encourage forms of prayer (e.g., **Ignatian examen, meditation, Lectio Divina**) that help formees process their emotions in God's presence.
- **Eucharistic devotion and reconciliation:** Frequent **adoration and confession** foster self-discipline and a spirit of renewal.
- **Develop a healthy theology of the body:** Help formees see their bodies and sexuality **as gifts from God, rather than sources of shame or repression**.

5. Formation in Celibacy as a Gift

- **Highlight the positive aspects:** Show that celibacy is not just "giving up marriage" but a radical way of **loving God and others**.
- **Teach about intimacy in consecrated life:** Help formees understand how they can experience **deep love and connection** in community, mission, and friendship.
- **Encourage spiritual fatherhood/brotherhood:** Show how a celibate life, properly lived, is **fruitful and fulfilling** in service to others.

6. Balanced Lifestyle and Human Formation

- **Encourage physical activity and hobbies:** Promote **sports, music, art, and creative pursuits** to channel energy constructively.
- **Develop stress management skills:** Teach **mindfulness, relaxation techniques, and healthy coping mechanisms**.
- **Foster vocational discernment:** Ensure formees freely embrace their vocation, integrating their **desires, struggles, and mission** in an authentic way.

7. Formation in Healthy Authority and Obedience

- **Teach mature obedience:** Help formees understand **obedience as a relationship of trust, not mere submission**.
- **Address power and boundaries:** Formation should include **handling authority responsibly**, avoiding clericalism, and **respecting personal space and freedom**.
- **Promote co-responsibility in community life:** Encourage formees to take **initiative in decision-making and fraternal correction**.

8. Accompaniment and Ongoing Formation

- **Regular personal accompaniment:** Spiritual directors and formators should regularly check in with formees **on emotional, relational, and sexual integration**.
- **Workshops on affectivity and sexuality:** Invite professionals to speak on **human development, emotional healing, and pastoral implications of celibacy**.
- **Encourage therapy when needed:** Formees struggling with deep wounds should be encouraged to **seek professional help** without stigma.

By integrating these approaches, Claretian formation can help formees **embrace their vocation with maturity, joy, and freedom**, ensuring that their consecration becomes a **life-giving and prophetic witness** to the world.

STRUCTURED PROGRAM FOR PROMOTING AFFECTIVE MATURITY AND PSYCHOSEXUAL INTEGRATION

Here's a **structured program** for promoting **affective maturity and psychosexual integration** in Claretian formation. This program is designed to be implemented over one or two years, integrating **spiritual, human, psychological, and pastoral dimensions** of formation.

PROGRAM: Affective Maturity and Psychosexual Integration in Claretian Formation

Theme: “Growing in Love: Integrating Affective Maturity and Psychosexual Wholeness in Missionary Life”

Duration: 1–2 years

Target Group: Formees in different stages of initial formation (Postulants, Novices, Theologians)

Format: Monthly sessions, personal accompaniment, workshops, group discussions, and retreats

Methodology: Input sessions, personal reflection, small group sharing, experiential exercises, case studies, spiritual integration

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Each phase builds on the previous one, guiding the formee toward deeper **self-knowledge, relational maturity, and vocational commitment.**

PHASE 1: Foundations of Affective Maturity (First 3–6 Months)

Objective: To help formees develop self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and a healthy understanding of human affectivity.

Sessions:

1. **Understanding Yourself: Personality, temperament, and emotional patterns**
 - Tools: **Personality assessments (MBTI, Enneagram, DISC)**
 - Reflection: “What are my strengths and challenges in relationships?”
2. **Emotional Intelligence and Self-Regulation**
 - Skills: Recognizing and managing emotions, handling stress
 - Practical: Mindfulness and Ignatian examen
3. **Wounds and Healing: Understanding Emotional Baggage**
 - Case Study: Emotional wounds and their impact on religious life
 - Activity: Writing a “healing letter” to oneself
4. **The Role of Friendship and Brotherhood in Formation**
 - Discussion: Authentic friendships vs. emotional dependency
 - Group Sharing: “What makes a healthy relationship?”
5. **Developing Healthy Boundaries in Community Life**
 - Case Study: Over-involvement, possessiveness, and detachment
 - Skills: Assertive communication and conflict resolution
6. **Spirituality of the Heart: Integrating Affective Maturity in Prayer**
 - Practice: Contemplative prayer as a way to bring emotions before God

PHASE 2: Sexuality, Celibacy, and Psychosexual Integration (Months 7–12)

Objective: To develop a mature understanding of sexuality, celibacy, and the integration of human desires within consecrated life.

Sessions:

1. **Theology of the Body: A Positive View of Sexuality**
 - Input: The meaning of sexuality, desire, and celibacy as a gift
 - Reflection: How do I view my body and sexuality?
2. **Celibacy as Loving with an Undivided Heart**
 - Discussion: Celibacy as a “yes” to love, not just a “no” to marriage
 - Group Sharing: “What are the joys and struggles of celibate love?”
3. **Affectivity and Sexual Integration in Religious Life**
 - Case Study: Challenges of loneliness, attraction, and relationships
 - Activity: Writing a personal “Rule of Life for Affective Maturity”
4. **Pornography, Masturbation, and Digital Purity**
 - Input: Understanding struggles, addiction, and healing
 - Practical: Internet accountability tools and strategies for self-mastery
5. **Healing and Accompaniment in Sexual Struggles**
 - Testimony: A priest/religious sharing about struggles and growth
 - Personal Reflection: “Where do I need healing?”
6. **The Role of Marian Devotion and Eucharistic Spirituality in Purity**
 - Practice: Developing a devotion to Mary as a model of purity

PHASE 3: Growth in Interpersonal Relationships and Missionary Commitment (Months 13–18)

Objective: To cultivate relational maturity and a balanced affectivity for mission.

Sessions:

1. **Spiritual Fatherhood and Brotherhood in Missionary Life**
 - Reflection: What does it mean to love as a missionary?
 - Group Sharing: “How do I express tenderness and care in a healthy way?”
2. **Falling in Love: Discerning Attachments and Attractions**
 - Input: Handling attractions, crushes, and emotional dependency
 - Case Study: “What happens when I develop feelings for someone?”
3. **Obedience, Authority, and Healthy Relationships with Superiors**
 - Role Play: Handling disagreements with formators respectfully
 - Skills: Obedience as a relationship of trust, not submission
4. **Balance in Community Life: Work, Prayer, and Recreation**
 - Group Sharing: “What habits help me maintain a healthy emotional life?”
 - Activity: Creating a balanced **personal rule of life**
5. **Affective Maturity in Leadership and Mission**
 - Practical: Case studies on leadership, collaboration, and handling emotions in ministry
 - Reflection: “How do I deal with conflict and rejection in mission?”
6. **Final Integration Retreat: “Loving Freely, Serving Joyfully”**
 - Silent retreat with guided meditations on affectivity, sexuality, and mission

ONGOING FORMATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- **Spiritual Direction & Confession:** Regular accompaniment to process struggles and growth
- **Psychological Counselling:** Available for those needing deeper healing
- **Monthly Peer Support Groups:** Safe spaces for ongoing sharing and encouragement
- **Annual Retreats on Affective Maturity and Celibacy**

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By the end of the program, formees should:

- ✓ Have **greater self-awareness** and **emotional regulation**
- ✓ Understand **celibacy as a positive choice** rather than mere renunciation
- ✓ Develop **healthy friendships and boundaries** in community life
- ✓ Integrate **prayer and affectivity** for a more profound **missionary identity**
- ✓ Be **equipped with practical skills** to deal with temptations, attractions, and loneliness
- ✓ Grow in **maturity, freedom, and joy** in their Claretian vocation

SESSION OUTLINES AND REFLECTION GUIDES

PHASE 1: FOUNDATIONS OF AFFECTIVE MATURITY (First 3-6 Months)

Session 1: Understanding Yourself - Personality, Temperament, and Emotional Patterns

Objective: To help formees develop self-awareness by understanding their personality and emotional tendencies.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:** Psalm 139:14 - “I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

2. **Introduction to Personality Types:** Overview of MBTI, Enneagram, DISC.
3. **Self-Assessment:** Personality tests and discussion on strengths and weaknesses.
4. **Reflection & Sharing:** “How do my personality traits influence my relationships?”
5. **Practical Exercises:** Writing a personal mission statement based on self-awareness.
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:** Inviting God to shape personal growth.

Reflection Guide:

- What are my dominant personality traits?
- How do I react to stress, criticism, or affection?
- What areas do I need to work on to improve relationships?

Session 2: Emotional Intelligence and Self-Regulation

Objective: To develop emotional awareness and regulation for healthy relationships and spiritual growth.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:** Proverbs 16:32 - “Better a patient person than a warrior.”
2. **Understanding Emotions:** Identifying core emotions (anger, joy, sadness, fear, surprise, etc.).
3. **Emotional Triggers & Responses:** Recognizing patterns and managing impulses.
4. **Techniques for Self-Regulation:** Mindfulness, deep breathing, and Ignatian Examen.
5. **Practical Exercises:** Journaling emotional responses to real-life situations.
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:** Surrendering emotions to God in prayer.

Reflection Guide:

- How do I typically respond to stress and frustration?
- Which emotions do I struggle to express or control?
- How can I better integrate my emotions into my spiritual life?

Session 3: Wounds and Healing - Understanding Emotional Baggage

Objective: To help formees identify and begin the healing process for past emotional wounds.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:** Isaiah 61:1 - “He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted.”
2. **Understanding Emotional Wounds:** Family wounds, past relationships, experiences of rejection.
3. **The Process of Healing:** Forgiveness, counselling, spiritual direction.
4. **Guided Exercise:** Writing a “healing letter” to oneself.
5. **Small Group Sharing:** Optional sharing of insights from the letter.
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:** Asking for inner healing and peace.

Reflection Guide:

- What past experiences have shaped my emotional life?
- Are there unresolved wounds affecting my formation?
- How can I open my heart to God’s healing?

Session 4: The Role of Friendship and Brotherhood in Formation

Objective: To foster a healthy understanding of friendships and fraternal relationships in religious life.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:** John 15:13 - "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."
2. **What is True Friendship?** Defining authentic friendships vs. unhealthy emotional dependencies.
3. **Friendship in Community Life:** Challenges and joys of fraternal relationships.
4. **Boundaries in Friendship:** Emotional maturity in celibate relationships.
5. **Case Studies:** Examples of healthy and unhealthy friendships.
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:** Commitment to building strong brotherhood.

Reflection Guide:

- What kind of friend am I in community?
- Have I experienced emotional dependency in friendships?
- How can I cultivate healthy, Christ-centred relationships?

Session 5: Developing Healthy Boundaries in Community Life

Objective: To teach the importance of personal boundaries for emotional and spiritual health.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:** Galatians 6:2,5 - "Carry each other's burdens, but each one should carry their own load."
2. **Understanding Boundaries:** What they are and why they are necessary.
3. **Signs of Unhealthy Boundaries:** Co-dependency, over-involvement, detachment.
4. **How to Set Healthy Boundaries:** Practical steps and communication skills.
5. **Role-Playing Exercises:** Practicing boundary-setting in real-life scenarios.
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:** Asking God for wisdom in relationships.

Reflection Guide:

- Do I struggle with setting boundaries in relationships?
- Have I experienced situations where I felt my boundaries were violated?
- What steps can I take to improve my personal boundaries?

Session 6: Spirituality of the Heart - Integrating Affective Maturity in Prayer

Objective: To help formees bring their emotions and relationships into their prayer life.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:** Ezekiel 36:26 - "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you."
2. **Affective Prayer:** Connecting emotions with spirituality.
3. **The Role of the Heart in Prayer:** Claretian spirituality and affective maturity.
4. **Practicing the Examen:** A method for processing emotions daily.
5. **Guided Meditation:** Bringing joys and wounds before God in prayer.
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:** A prayer of surrender to God's transforming love.

Reflection Guide:

- How do I express my emotions in prayer?
- Do I bring my struggles in relationships to God?
- How can I grow in affective maturity through prayer?

PHASE 2: SEXUALITY, CELIBACY, AND PSYCHOSEXUAL INTEGRATION (Months 6-12)**Session 1: Understanding Human Sexuality in the Light of Faith**

Objective: To develop a holistic and theological understanding of human sexuality.

Session 2: The Gift and Challenge of Celibacy

Objective: To understand celibacy as a vocation and a path to spiritual fruitfulness.

Session 3: Managing Sexuality and Affective Desires in Religious Life

Objective: To equip formees with strategies for integrating sexuality healthily.

Session 4: Overcoming Temptations and Addictions

Objective: To address struggles related to chastity and offer spiritual and psychological support.

Session 5: Spiritual and Psychological Maturity in Celibate Life

Objective: To explore pathways to maturity in living out the vow of chastity.

Session 6: Psychosexual Integration and Ongoing Formation

Objective: To reinforce the continuous journey of psychosexual development and integration.

Here are the detailed outlines for **Phase 2: Sexuality, Celibacy, and Psychosexual Integration** (Months 6-12). Each session includes objectives, scripture references, activities, and reflection guides.

SESSION 1: UNDERSTANDING HUMAN SEXUALITY IN THE LIGHT OF FAITH

Objective: To develop a holistic and theological understanding of human sexuality as a gift from God.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:**
 - **Genesis 1:27** – “God created mankind in His own image... male and female He created them.”
2. **Introduction to Human Sexuality:**
 - Understanding sexuality as an essential aspect of the human person.
 - The integration of body, mind, and spirit.
3. **Theology of the Body:**
 - St. John Paul II’s insights on human love, dignity, and vocation.
 - Sexuality as a sign of divine love and communion.
4. **Healthy Sexual Development:**
 - Biological, psychological, and emotional aspects of sexuality.
 - Distinguishing between sexual identity, attraction, and orientation.
5. **Group Discussion:**
 - How does my faith shape my understanding of sexuality?
 - What challenges do I face in integrating sexuality into my identity as a religious?
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:**
 - Gratitude for the gift of sexuality and commitment to growth in integration.

Reflection Guide:

- How do I see sexuality as part of my vocation?
- What are some misconceptions I have about sexuality?
- How can I cultivate a healthy, positive approach to my sexuality?

SESSION 2: THE GIFT AND CHALLENGE OF CELIBACY

Objective: To understand celibacy as a vocation, a call to love, and a path to spiritual fruitfulness.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:**
 - **Matthew 19:12** – “Some have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.”
2. **Understanding Celibacy:**
 - Celibacy as a call to undivided love and service.
 - The historical and theological foundations of celibacy.
3. **Challenges and Misconceptions:**
 - Common struggles (loneliness, misunderstanding, emotional dependency).
 - Addressing cultural and societal perceptions of celibacy.
4. **The Joy of Celibate Love:**
 - How celibacy fosters deeper relationships, intimacy with God, and mission.
 - Witness stories from joyful celibates.
5. **Personal Reflection & Sharing:**
 - How do I experience celibacy as a gift?
 - What are the difficulties I face in embracing celibacy?
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:**
 - Offering one’s celibacy to God in trust and joy.

Reflection Guide:

- What does celibacy mean to me personally?
- What joys and struggles have I encountered in my celibate journey?
- How can I grow in embracing celibacy more freely and joyfully?

SESSION 3: MANAGING SEXUALITY AND AFFECTIVE DESIRES IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

Objective: To equip formees with strategies for living out chastity and managing affective desires in a healthy way.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:**
 - **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** – “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit... honor God with your bodies.”
2. **Understanding Affective Desires:**
 - The natural human need for love, affection, and intimacy.
 - Differentiating between love, attraction, and attachment.
3. **Healthy and Unhealthy Expressions of Affection:**
 - Developing emotionally mature relationships.
 - Avoiding unhealthy attachments and emotional dependencies.
4. **Practical Strategies for Healthy Living:**
 - Discipline of thought, heart, and action.
 - Fostering spiritual friendships and accountability.
5. **Group Discussion:**
 - What are common challenges in managing affective desires?
 - How can we support one another in living out chastity?
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:**
 - Commitment to self-discipline and trust in God’s grace.

Reflection Guide:

- How do I handle moments of strong affective or sexual desire?
- Have I formed healthy, mature friendships in religious life?
- What steps can I take to grow in personal discipline?

SESSION 4: OVERCOMING TEMPTATIONS AND ADDICTIONS

Objective: To provide spiritual and psychological tools for overcoming struggles related to chastity.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:**
 - **James 4:7** – “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”
2. **Recognizing Common Struggles:**
 - Pornography, lustful thoughts, masturbation, emotional dependencies.
 - The impact of media and technology.
3. **Psychological Insights on Addiction:**
 - Understanding addictive behaviour and its triggers.
 - The role of shame, secrecy, and guilt in perpetuating struggles.
4. **Practical Strategies for Overcoming Temptation:**
 - Strengthening willpower and avoiding triggers.
 - Seeking support from spiritual direction, community, and accountability partners.
5. **Personal Commitment Exercise:**
 - Writing a “purity covenant” as a personal commitment to growth.
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:**
 - Invoking God’s grace for strength and perseverance.

Reflection Guide:

- What temptations or struggles do I need to surrender to God?
- Who can support me in my journey towards purity?
- What practical steps will I take to resist temptations?

SESSION 5: SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MATURITY IN CELIBATE LIFE

Objective: To explore the qualities of a mature and integrated celibate person.

Outline:

1. **Opening Prayer & Scripture:**
 - **Philippians 4:13** – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”
2. **Signs of Psychosexual Maturity:**
 - Self-awareness, emotional stability, balanced relationships.
3. **Common Pitfalls in Celibate Living:**
 - Isolation, repressed emotions, immaturity in affective relationships.
4. **Tools for Maturity:**
 - Psychological self-care, ongoing formation, spiritual direction.
5. **Personal Sharing & Peer Encouragement:**
 - How do I measure my growth in affective and psychosexual maturity?
6. **Conclusion & Prayer:**
 - Gratitude for the journey and commitment to growth.

Reflection Guide:

- What aspects of celibate maturity do I need to develop?
- How can I balance spiritual and psychological health?
- What support systems do I need for ongoing growth?

SESSION 6: PSYCHOSEXUAL INTEGRATION AND ONGOING FORMATION

Objective: To reinforce the continuous journey of psychosexual development and integration.

Outline:**1. Opening Prayer & Scripture:**

- **2 Corinthians 3:18** – “We are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory.”

2. The Journey of Integration:

- Understanding that maturity is a lifelong process.

3. Building Healthy Habits:

- The role of prayer, community, personal discipline, and support networks.

4. The Role of Ongoing Formation:

- Importance of retreats, workshops, and spiritual direction.

5. Commitment to Growth:

- Setting personal goals for continued psychosexual development.

6. Conclusion & Prayer:

- Surrendering one’s journey to God’s transforming grace.

Reflection Guide:

- How have I grown in affective and psychosexual integration?
- What areas still need attention?
- How can I ensure continued formation in this area?

PSYCHOSEXUAL MATURITY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CELIBATE LIFE

This questionnaire is designed to **help formees assess their psychosexual maturity** as they prepare for a celibate life. It covers **self-awareness, emotional regulation, relational maturity, integration of sexuality, and spiritual commitment**, ensuring that one’s celibacy is lived with freedom, joy, and authenticity.

Instructions:

- Answer each question honestly.
- Use the following scale:
 - **5** – Always
 - **4** – Often
 - **3** – Sometimes
 - **2** – Rarely
 - **1** – Never
- After completing the questionnaire, reflect on areas needing growth and discuss with a spiritual director or formator if necessary.

SECTION 1: SELF-AWARENESS AND PERSONAL INTEGRATION

01	I have a clear understanding of my sexual identity and accept it with gratitude.	
02	I recognize and appreciate my capacity for love, affection, and intimacy.	
03	I understand the psychological and emotional aspects of celibate chastity.	
04	I am at peace with my decision to live a celibate life.	
05	I can recognize and name my sexual feelings without shame or repression.	
06	I am aware of my emotional needs and do not seek to fulfil them in unhealthy ways.	
07	I can differentiate between healthy emotional connections and unhealthy dependencies in relationships.	
08	I reflect on my sexual and emotional experiences with honesty and maturity.	
09	I understand how past wounds or experiences influence my current attitudes toward celibacy.	
10	I believe that celibacy, when properly lived, leads to greater freedom and love.	

SECTION 2: EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND AFFECTIVE MATURITY

11	I manage my emotional needs in a mature and healthy manner.	
12	I do not repress my emotions but express them appropriately.	
13	I do not seek affection, affirmation, or validation in manipulative or inappropriate ways.	
14	I can experience loneliness without becoming discouraged or falling into unhealthy behaviours.	
15	I do not develop obsessive emotional attachments to individuals.	
16	I can appreciate beauty and attraction without inappropriate desire.	
17	I practice self-discipline in managing emotional and sexual desires.	
18	I use prayer and reflection to process my emotions.	
19	I understand the difference between genuine love and emotional dependency.	
20	I seek to grow in emotional freedom and independence.	

SECTION 3: RELATIONAL MATURITY AND INTERPERSONAL BOUNDARIES

21	I maintain healthy and appropriate relationships with people of all genders.	
22	I respect personal boundaries in my relationships.	
23	I do not engage in flirtatious, possessive, or emotionally exclusive relationships.	
24	I am comfortable with intimacy in non-sexual, appropriate ways (e.g., deep friendships).	
25	I relate to others with purity of heart and sincere brotherly/sisterly love.	
26	I am not afraid of vulnerability but express it in a mature way.	
27	I handle attraction toward others in a healthy, prayerful, and mature manner.	
28	I do not engage in secretive or emotionally manipulative relationships.	
29	I can interact freely with others without fear of emotional entanglement.	
30	I do not idealize or romanticize others in ways that lead to attachment or confusion.	

SECTION 4: SEXUAL INTEGRATION AND DISCIPLINE

31	I recognize sexual energy as a gift to be integrated, not suppressed or ignored.	
32	I understand that chastity is about freedom for love, not just avoidance of sexual activity.	
33	I am committed to living celibacy with joy, not as a mere obligation.	
34	I practice self-discipline in my thoughts and behaviours related to sexuality.	
35	I take responsibility for my sexual desires and do not blame external circumstances.	
36	I do not engage in pornography, masturbation, or other behaviours inconsistent with celibacy.	
37	I seek healthy outlets for my energy, such as prayer, work, exercise, and friendships.	
38	I am able to recognize and resist sexual temptations in a mature way.	
39	I seek spiritual guidance when struggling with sexual temptations.	
40	I integrate my sexuality into my identity as a whole person, rather than seeing it as separate or problematic.	

SECTION 5: SPIRITUAL INTEGRATION AND VOCATIONAL COMMITMENT

41	I see celibacy as a gift that allows me to love more freely and universally.	
42	I unite my struggles and desires with Christ, who lived a celibate life with love.	
43	I entrust my psychosexual development to God's grace and ongoing growth.	
44	I use prayer, meditation, and the sacraments to sustain my commitment to celibacy.	
45	I do not see celibacy as repression but as a joyful offering to God.	
46	I find meaning in my vocation and do not feel that I am "missing out" on something.	

47	I am willing to make ongoing efforts to grow in maturity, self-control, and purity of heart.	
48	I recognize celibacy as a call to love, not just a renunciation of marriage.	
49	I seek supportive relationships (mentors, formators, spiritual directors) to help me grow.	
50	I am committed to lifelong celibacy, not just temporary abstinence.	

SCORING AND REFLECTION

- **200-250 points:** You have a high level of **psychosexual maturity** and integration. Continue deepening your commitment to celibacy with joy and freedom.
- **150-199 points:** You are developing well but may have areas for growth. Identify specific struggles and seek guidance to mature further.
- **100-149 points:** You may have **some difficulties in integrating celibacy**. Consider engaging in self-reflection, spiritual direction, and possibly counselling.
- **Below 100 points:** You may need significant **formation and support** in psychosexual maturity. It is important to engage in dialogue with your formators and spiritual guides to ensure healthy growth.

Reflection Questions for Further Growth:

1. Which areas of psychosexual maturity do I struggle with most?
2. How do I handle **attraction and emotional attachments**?
3. How do I **channel my sexual energy** into a life-giving, positive way?
4. How does my **prayer life and relationship with Christ** strengthen my commitment to celibacy?
5. What practical steps can I take to **grow in discipline, freedom, and integration**?

TOOLS FOR MATURITY IN CELIBATE LIFE

To live celibacy with joy, freedom, and spiritual fruitfulness, it is essential to cultivate **psychological self-care, ongoing formation, and spiritual direction**. These tools help in fostering affective maturity, inner peace, and a deeper relationship with God.

1. Psychological Self-Care

Psychological self-care refers to the intentional efforts to maintain emotional and mental well-being, ensuring that one's affectivity and sexuality are integrated healthily into their vocation.

A. Self-Awareness and Emotional Intelligence

- Understanding one's emotional needs, desires, and vulnerabilities.
- Recognizing personal triggers and patterns of unhealthy attachment.
- Developing empathy, patience, and the ability to regulate emotions.

B. Healthy Relationships and Boundaries

- Maintaining balanced friendships that foster personal growth.
- Avoiding emotional dependencies or exclusive relationships that can threaten celibacy.
- Learning to express affection and love in appropriate and mature ways.

C. Managing Stress and Loneliness

- Engaging in hobbies, exercise, and relaxation techniques.
- Creating a support system within the religious community.
- Practicing mindfulness and self-reflection to process emotions constructively.

D. Seeking Professional Help When Needed

- Consulting a psychologist or counsellor when facing deeper emotional struggles.
- Recognizing that therapy is not a sign of weakness but a tool for personal growth.

2. Ongoing Formation

Ongoing formation is essential for the continued growth of a religious in their vocation. Celibacy is not just a one-time decision but a lifelong commitment that requires constant renewal and deepening.

A. The Need for Lifelong Learning

- Sexuality and affectivity evolve over time; ongoing formation provides guidance at different stages of religious life.
- Growth in knowledge about human development, theology of the body, and emotional intelligence.

B. Means of Ongoing Formation

- **Spiritual Retreats & Workshops:** Opportunities to reflect and renew commitment to celibate chastity.
- **Reading & Study:** Engaging with literature on human psychology, spirituality, and religious life.
- **Community Sharing & Peer Support:** Learning from the experiences of fellow religious and mentors.

C. Formation in Affective and Psychosexual Integration

- Understanding one's sexual development and affective needs at different life stages.
- Developing strategies for managing temptations and cultivating inner freedom.

3. Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction provides guidance for discernment, growth in holiness, and the integration of celibacy into one's spiritual life.

A. Purpose of Spiritual Direction

- A safe space to reflect on personal struggles and joys in living celibacy.
- Helps to discern God's will and recognize His presence in affective experiences.
- Strengthens the missionary and apostolic dimension of celibacy.

B. Choosing a Spiritual Director

- The director should be someone experienced, spiritually mature, and trustworthy.
- The relationship should be based on honesty, confidentiality, and a shared desire for growth.

C. Key Areas Addressed in Spiritual Direction

- Challenges in celibate life and ways to overcome them.
- Maintaining a deep prayer life and relationship with Christ.
- The integration of sexuality into one's vocation as a gift rather than a burden.

Final Thoughts

Psychological self-care, ongoing formation, and spiritual direction work together to ensure a **mature, joyful, and fruitful** celibate life. These tools help religious embrace their vocation with **freedom, love, and deep fulfilment**, allowing them to be **credible witnesses of the Gospel**.

SIGNS OF PSYCHOSEXUAL MATURITY IN CELIBATE LIFE

Psychosexual maturity is essential for living celibacy with joy, freedom, and authenticity. It involves integrating one's sexuality and affectivity into one's identity in a way that fosters healthy relationships and personal wholeness. A psychosexually mature person is able to love deeply, relate well to others, and live their vocation with integrity.

1. A Positive and Realistic Understanding of Sexuality

- Recognizes sexuality as a gift from God, integral to human identity.
- Views celibacy as a meaningful way to channel love and affection rather than repressing or denying sexuality.
- Avoids an unhealthy dualism that sees the body and sexuality as something to be ashamed of.

2. Capacity for Healthy and Meaningful Relationships

- Forms friendships that are mature, non-possessive, and supportive.
- Can express affection appropriately (e.g., through words, service, presence) without excessive emotional dependency.
- Develops relationships based on respect and mutual growth rather than hidden emotional needs.
- Avoids inappropriate attachments or exclusive relationships that could undermine celibate commitment.

3. Emotional Balance and Affective Stability

- Manages emotions (joy, loneliness, frustration) with maturity and inner peace.
- Accepts moments of solitude without resorting to compulsive behaviours or distractions.
- Demonstrates resilience in the face of difficulties, maintaining emotional stability even in times of stress.
- Does not rely on external validation for self-worth but is secure in personal identity and vocation.

4. Inner Freedom and Self-Discipline

- Lives celibacy as a free and loving choice, not as a burden or obligation.
- Maintains boundaries in relationships to avoid emotional entanglements or inappropriate intimacy.
- Has self-mastery in thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, avoiding impulsive actions.
- Controls sexual desires in a way that fosters inner peace rather than repression or guilt.

5. A Healthy Integration of Sexual Energy

- Redirects energy into creative, apostolic, and relational endeavours.
- Channels love into service, prayer, community life, and mission.
- Engages in healthy physical activities, hobbies, and intellectual pursuits to maintain balance.
- Practices self-care to avoid burnout or emotional fatigue.

6. The Ability to Deal with Attraction and Temptation Maturely

- Acknowledges that attraction to others is normal but responds with responsibility and discernment.
- Knows how to handle moments of temptation without self-condemnation or despair.
- Uses prayer, self-reflection, and accountability to navigate challenges in celibate life.

7. A Deep Spiritual Foundation and Sense of Mission

- Finds fulfilment in deepening one's relationship with God.
- Recognizes that celibacy is not just about renouncing something but about giving oneself fully in love.
- Draws strength from prayer, community, and spiritual direction.
- Experiences celibacy as a source of joy, freedom, and apostolic fruitfulness.

Conclusion: Psychosexual maturity is a lifelong journey of integrating one's sexuality and affectivity in a way that fosters **wholeness, authentic relationships, and joyful celibacy**. It requires self-

awareness, discipline, emotional intelligence, and a deep spiritual foundation. When lived well, celibacy becomes not a burden but a profound way of loving and serving God and others.

FORMATIVE GUIDELINES FOR PSYCHOSEXUAL MATURITY IN CELIBATE LIFE

Psychosexual maturity is not automatic with age or religious profession; it must be cultivated through deliberate formation processes. Each area below includes **objectives, formation practices, and accompaniment tips**.

1. A Positive and Realistic Understanding of Sexuality

Formation Objective: To help formees view sexuality as a positive, God-given dimension of their identity and integrate it into their vocation.

Formation Practices:

- Offer **courses and workshops** on theological anthropology, human sexuality, and Theology of the Body.
- Encourage **open, shame-free conversations** around sexuality and celibacy in group and one-on-one settings.
- Include personal storytelling or testimonies from mature celibates.

Accompaniment Tips:

- Listen to the formee's **early messages** about sexuality (family, culture, religion).
- Gently challenge **dualistic thinking** (spirit good/body bad).
- Help them frame celibacy not as "cutting off" sexuality but **transfiguring it** for mission.

2. Capacity for Healthy and Meaningful Relationships

Formation Objective: To form the ability to relate with maturity, openness, and non-possessiveness in friendships and community life.

Formation Practices:

- Use **interpersonal skills training**: assertiveness, active listening, empathy, conflict resolution.
- Organize **peer-sharing groups** to encourage mutual support and honest friendship.
- Encourage interaction with both sexes in apostolate and lay settings.

Accompaniment Tips:

- Watch for signs of **exclusive friendships**, jealousy, or emotional dependency.
- Explore emotional needs behind relationships: Are they using others to fill a void?
- Affirm appropriate affection and teach how to **express it constructively**.

3. Emotional Balance and Affective Stability

Formation Objective: To build emotional literacy and inner resilience that supports celibate living.

Formation Practices:

- Include **emotional intelligence modules** in formation (recognizing, naming, managing emotions).
- Integrate **regular affective journaling** and group processing.
- Provide access to psychological support when needed.

Accompaniment Tips:

- Observe how formees handle **loneliness, disappointment, and stress**.
- Help them notice patterns: Do they suppress, dramatize, or project emotions?

- Encourage silence, mindfulness, or **healthy solitude** as forms of emotional grounding.

4. Inner Freedom and Self-Discipline

Formation Objective: To help formees grow in self-mastery, responsible freedom, and healthy boundaries.

Formation Practices:

- Include training on **personal boundaries, time management, and digital discipline**.
- Offer regular **self-reflection tools** to track habits and reactions.
- Encourage commitment to small disciplines (fasting, exercise, digital detoxes) to build willpower.

Accompaniment Tips:

- Ask about areas where they feel “**enslaved**” or **out of control** (food, phone, fantasy).
- Support them in finding **non-shaming accountability structures**.
- Promote the link between self-mastery and joyful mission, rather than guilt-based control.

5. A Healthy Integration of Sexual Energy

Formation Objective: To guide formees in transforming sexual energy into creative, relational, and spiritual energy.

Formation Practices:

- Promote **creative activities** (art, music, manual work) as a healthy outlet.
- Include **service opportunities** that engage compassion and physical presence.
- Teach about the **sublimation of desire** (channelling eros toward love and mission).

Accompaniment Tips:

- Ask: Where is your energy going? What gives you life?
- Explore how **disordered expression** may be a cry for connection or purpose.
- Reinforce the positive message: sexual energy can be a **source of vitality** for celibate life.

6. The Ability to Deal with Attraction and Temptation Maturely

Formation Objective: To develop realistic expectations and mature spiritual-emotional strategies for dealing with attraction.

Formation Practices:

- Normalize conversations on **attraction, temptation, and desire**.
- Teach **discernment tools** (e.g., awareness-examination-reflection-response).
- Include regular **spiritual direction** to reflect on interior movements and struggles.

Accompaniment Tips:

- Help formees distinguish between **impulse and action**, attraction and decision.
- Encourage nonjudgmental reflection: “What was happening in you?”
- Avoid moralizing; instead, focus on **freedom and responsibility**.

7. A Deep Spiritual Foundation and Sense of Mission

Formation Objective: To root celibate living in a personal relationship with Christ and a sense of purpose in mission.

Formation Practices:

- Offer a **solid rhythm of prayer**, Eucharist, and scripture-based meditation.

- Integrate **vocational discernment** into all stages of formation, not just the beginning.
- Highlight celibacy as a **mission-driven love** rather than a static status.

Accompaniment Tips:

- Ask: What gives you the deepest joy in your vocation? What drains you?
- Link struggles with celibacy to possible **spiritual aridity or mission fatigue**.
- Encourage formees to revisit their **foundational call** during times of dryness.

GENERAL ACCOMPANIMENT STRATEGIES

Tools and Methods:

- **Individual accompaniment** (monthly or biweekly)
- **Peer support groups**
- **Journaling and written reflections**
- **Psychological screening** (at key stages)
- **Annual retreats** with celibacy themes
- **Case-study or life narrative sessions**

Attitudes of the Formator:

- Compassionate and **nonjudgmental presence**
- **Clarity and firmness** with boundaries
- Deep belief in the **formee's capacity for growth**
- Willingness to **model** integrated celibate life

COMMON PITFALLS IN CELIBATE LIVING

Celibate life, when lived with maturity and integration, is a path to deep joy and freedom. However, it also comes with challenges that, if not addressed, can lead to struggles, dissatisfaction, and even crises in vocation. Below are some common pitfalls that those living celibate lives may encounter, along with ways to overcome them.

1. A Dualistic or Negative View of Sexuality

Description:

- Viewing sexuality as something shameful, impure, or entirely negative.
- Treating celibacy as a suppression or denial of sexual desires rather than an integration of them.
- Feeling guilt or fear around natural sexual thoughts and attractions.

Dangers:

- Can lead to repression, which often results in unhealthy expressions of sexuality (e.g., secret struggles, compulsive behaviours).
- Might cause an emotionally disconnected and rigid personality.

Healthy Approach:

- Recognize sexuality as a God-given gift that must be integrated, not denied.
- Develop a positive, realistic, and spiritually grounded understanding of celibacy.
- Seek healthy ways to express love and affection through meaningful friendships and service.

Signs to Observe:

- Excessive guilt over sexual thoughts.
- Rigid or anxious behaviour around discussions of sexuality.
- A tendency to demonize the body or deny physical needs.

Guidelines for Accompaniment:

- Create safe spaces to talk about sexuality openly, without shame.

- Normalize sexual feelings as part of human experience—not sinful in themselves.
- Educate on a holistic theology of the body and integrated celibacy (e.g., through Theology of the Body, writings of John Paul II, or Claretian sources).
- Encourage the use of journaling, art, or nature to explore and affirm one's embodiment.
- Explore personal history (especially early sexual education or trauma) with compassion.

Questions for Dialogue:

- How do you understand your sexuality in light of your vocation?
- Do you feel freedom or fear when thinking about your sexual identity?
- What helps you integrate your body and spirit?

2. Emotional Isolation and Loneliness

Description:

- Avoiding deep emotional connections for fear of attachment or dependence.
- Feeling disconnected from others and withdrawing into solitude.
- Struggling to find a sense of belonging within the community or mission.

Dangers:

- Can lead to feelings of sadness, depression, or loss of purpose.
- May result in unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as addiction or secretive behavior.
- Increases vulnerability to inappropriate relationships.

Healthy Approach:

- Cultivate deep, healthy friendships with fellow missionaries and laypeople.
- Engage in meaningful activities that foster community and emotional well-being.
- Seek spiritual direction or mentorship to process emotions constructively.

Signs to Observe:

- Withdrawal from community or lack of participation.
- Emotional flatness or absence of meaningful friendships.
- Recurrent sadness, listlessness, or passivity.

Guidelines for Accompaniment:

- Foster **intentional community-building** practices (e.g., regular fraternal sharing).
- Encourage emotional literacy: name and share feelings.
- Invite participation in **apostolic works** that connect them with people.
- Promote regular recreation and time with peers to nurture joy.
- Refer to therapy if signs of depression or prolonged disconnection persist.

Questions for Dialogue:

- Who are the people you feel closest to right now?
- What makes you feel seen, known, or cared for?
- How do you experience community life?

3. Emotional Dependency and Inappropriate Attachments

Description:

- Becoming overly dependent on one person for emotional support.
- Forming exclusive or possessive friendships that interfere with communal relationships.
- Developing romantic feelings or attachments that threaten celibate commitment.

Dangers:

- Can lead to emotional turmoil, secrecy, or even the loss of vocational identity.
- Creates distractions from mission and weakens fraternal relationships.
- May result in inappropriate behaviour, boundary violations, or scandal.

Healthy Approach:

- Maintain healthy emotional boundaries in friendships.
- Ensure relationships are open, balanced, and not exclusive.
- When feelings of attraction arise, address them with self-awareness, prayer, and guidance.

Signs to Observe:

- Exclusive friendships or secretive behaviour.
- Emotional highs/lows tied to one specific relationship.
- Resistance to correction or detachment from the community.

Guidelines for Accompaniment:

- Help the formee **name and explore emotional needs** without judgment.
- Clarify **boundaries** in friendships and community interactions.
- Support development of a **network of relationships**, not one central figure.
- When romantic feelings arise, approach them with **honesty and discernment**, not fear or repression.

Questions for Dialogue:

- Are there relationships that you feel overly dependent on?
- What emotions arise when you think about letting go or setting limits?
- What are your needs for affirmation, and how are they being met?

4. Lack of Self-Care and Burnout**Description:**

- Overcommitting to work and neglecting physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.
- Seeing rest and recreation as unnecessary or selfish.
- Ignoring signs of fatigue, stress, or emotional exhaustion.

Dangers:

- Leads to burnout, resentment, and loss of motivation.
- Can weaken one's ability to maintain healthy relationships.
- Increases vulnerability to temptation and crisis.

Healthy Approach:

- Prioritize regular self-care: sleep, exercise, recreation, and spiritual renewal.
- Maintain a balanced schedule that allows time for prayer, rest, and fraternity.
- Seek support when feeling overwhelmed—spiritual directors, friends, or counselors.

Signs to Observe:

- Constant fatigue, irritability, or restlessness.
- Overidentification with work or ministry.
- Neglect of prayer, recreation, or physical health.

Guidelines for Accompaniment:

- Assess the **balance of their schedule**—include time for rest, silence, fun, and socializing.
- Encourage **Sabbath moments**: weekly times of renewal.
- Address any underlying **perfectionism or savior complex**.
- Model and share personal self-care habits as a formator or spiritual guide.

Questions for Dialogue:

- How do you rest and renew yourself?
- What part of your life is feeling most drained?
- What are you doing just for joy—not for duty?

5. Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms**Description:**

- Using distractions such as excessive work, entertainment, social media, or food to avoid dealing with inner struggles.
- Resorting to compulsive behaviours like pornography, alcohol, or other addictions.
- Escaping reality rather than confronting emotional needs in a mature way.

Dangers:

- Creates cycles of guilt, secrecy, and frustration.

- Does not address the root causes of dissatisfaction or struggle.
- Can lead to more serious spiritual or psychological crises.

Healthy Approach:

- Cultivate healthy outlets for stress, such as exercise, prayer, art, or hobbies.
- Be honest about struggles and seek help early.
- Develop greater self-awareness through reflection, therapy, or spiritual direction.

Signs to Observe:

- Overuse of screens, food, or noise to avoid reflection.
- Secretive behaviours or compulsive habits.
- Sudden withdrawal or mood changes.

Guidelines for Accompaniment:

- Address behaviours without shame—**focus on the underlying need**.
- Encourage the use of **healthy alternatives**: exercise, journaling, silence, confession.
- Teach techniques for **emotional regulation** and **stress management**.
- Refer to addiction counselling or therapy when patterns are entrenched.

Questions for Dialogue:

- What do you do when you feel stressed, sad, or lonely?
- Are there patterns in your life that feel out of control?
- What gives you real peace and satisfaction?

6. Routine and Spiritual Dryness

Description:

- Losing passion for mission and prayer life.
- Going through the motions in religious duties without personal engagement.
- Experiencing a lack of enthusiasm for the celibate vocation.

Dangers:

- Can lead to a crisis of meaning and questioning of vocation.
- May foster resentment or cynicism toward religious life.
- Increases vulnerability to external temptations.

Healthy Approach:

- Regularly renew spiritual commitment through retreats, spiritual direction, and deeper prayer.
- Find new ways to engage with mission and community.
- Cultivate gratitude for the vocation and reflect on its deeper meaning.

Signs to Observe:

- Monotony or mechanical performance of duties.
- Loss of joy in prayer or mission.
- Frequent complaints or disengagement.

Guidelines for Accompaniment:

- Reignite a sense of **spiritual purpose** through reflection on their call.
- Suggest **creative forms of prayer** (e.g., nature, art, Ignatian contemplation).
- Offer **personalized spiritual reading** or a new mission challenge.
- Encourage participation in **renewal experiences** (e.g., retreats, pilgrimages).

Questions for Dialogue:

- When do you feel most connected to God or the mission?
- What is prayer like for you these days?
- How do you refresh your spiritual life?

7. Resistance to Ongoing Growth and Formation

Description:

- Feeling “settled” and no longer seeking personal development.

- Avoiding challenges that could lead to deeper maturity.
- Becoming rigid or overly comfortable in one's way of life.

Dangers:

- Stagnation in personal and spiritual growth.
- Greater risk of frustration, boredom, or disengagement.
- Lack of adaptability to new challenges in mission and community life.

Healthy Approach:

- Engage in ongoing formation—intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and pastoral.
- Be open to self-examination and feedback from mentors or peers.
- Continually seek ways to grow in love, joy, and self-giving.

Signs to Observe:

- Dismissal of feedback or unwillingness to self-reflect.
- Rigid attitudes or resistance to change.
- Disengagement from formation activities.

Guidelines for Accompaniment:

- Frame ongoing formation as part of a **joyful, lifelong journey**, not correction.
- Use regular **evaluation tools** and shared reflections for feedback.
- Highlight moments of **personal growth and fruitfulness**.
- Introduce new challenges and roles that stretch but do not overwhelm.

Questions for Dialogue:

- What area of your life do you feel invited to grow in?
- How do you respond when others offer feedback?
- What inspires you to keep maturing?

General Guidelines for Formators and Spiritual Companions

1. **Be a Mirror and a Safe Space:** Listen with empathy and without judgment. Reflect what you see with compassion and clarity.
2. **Form the Whole Person:** Attend to the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, physical, and relational dimensions of celibate life.
3. **Work in Teams:** Collaborate with psychologists, spiritual directors, and community members as needed.
4. **Discern Patterns, Not Incidents:** Avoid overreacting to isolated events. Look for emerging patterns that signal deeper needs.
5. **Model Healthy Celibate Living:** Be a witness through your own lifestyle of joy, balance, affection, and authenticity.

Conclusion

Celibate life is a journey that requires continuous growth, self-awareness, and support. Avoiding these pitfalls does not mean achieving perfection but rather developing the tools and attitudes to live celibacy with **freedom, authenticity, and joy**. With a deep spiritual foundation, healthy relationships, and self-care, celibate living becomes a path to **deep love, fulfilment, and mission**.

SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST FOR HEALTHY CELIBATE LIVING

Instructions: Read each statement carefully. Reflect honestly on how true it is for you. Mark each with:

-  **Always / Often**
-  **Sometimes**
-  **Rarely / Never**

1. Integration of Sexuality

Item	✓	⚠	✗
I see sexuality as a good and natural part of being human.			
I do not feel shame or guilt for having sexual feelings.			
I understand celibacy as a way of channelling love, not suppressing desire.			
I have healthy outlets for affection and intimacy (friendship, service, prayer).			

2. Emotional Connection vs. Isolation

Item	✓	⚠	✗
I feel emotionally connected to others in my community or ministry.			
I can name people I trust and talk to when I feel lonely.			
I make time for friendship and meaningful conversations.			
I do not isolate myself when I'm struggling emotionally.			

3. Emotional Boundaries and Attachments

Item	✓	⚠	✗
My relationships are balanced and not overly dependent on one person.			
I am aware of emotional or romantic attachments and manage them wisely.			
I have not formed exclusive or secretive friendships.			
I am able to love deeply without compromising my celibate commitment.			

4. Self-Care and Balance

Item	✓	⚠	✗
I take care of my body through adequate sleep, exercise, and healthy food.			
I take time to rest and enjoy leisure without guilt.			
I have a rhythm of life that balances work, prayer, and recreation.			
I notice and respond to signs of fatigue or burnout.			

5. Coping and Inner Life

Item	✓	⚠	✗
When I feel stressed or down, I deal with it in healthy ways (e.g., prayer, talking, physical activity).			
I avoid escaping through compulsive behaviours (e.g., screens, food, pornography).			
I am aware of my emotional triggers and try to respond consciously.			
I seek help when I notice unhealthy patterns emerging.			

6. Spiritual Vitality

Item	✓	⚠	✗
My prayer life nourishes me and gives me joy.			
I find meaning and purpose in my celibate vocation.			
I regularly reflect on my spiritual journey and relationship with God.			
I renew my spiritual passion through retreats, reading, or spiritual guidance.			

7. Openness to Growth

Item	✓	⚠	✗
I welcome feedback from formators, peers, or spiritual companions.			
I participate actively in formation programs.			

I seek opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.			
I am not afraid to look at areas of weakness or limitation in myself.			

Scoring & Reflection

This checklist is **not a test** but a **tool for awareness**. You can reflect on it in the following ways:

- **Count** how many , ,  you marked.
- Identify the areas with the most  — these are growth points.
- Choose **1–2 areas** to focus on in prayer, spiritual direction, or accompaniment.
- Share the results with a trusted formator or mentor.

Reflection Prompts

1. Which section of the checklist was most affirming for you?
2. Which area was most challenging? Why?
3. What support do you need to grow in that area?
4. What are you grateful for in your celibate journey right now?

APPENDIX

Our Psychosexual Story

Our lives hold many stories. We have a family story an educational story, a faith story, and a health story. We have a work story, a crisis story, and a creativity story.

We also have a *psychosexual* story. This dimension of our personal history involves the mysterious convergence of circumstances, events, experiences, and choices that have brought us to our present stage of integration or woundedness. Our psychosexual story contains all the moments of growth, excitement, discovery, pain, struggle, and questioning in our relational lives. This is the story of our growing up — our journey toward friendship and human communion. It is the story of our physical and emotional awakenings, our yearnings and our fantasies, our soaring feelings and our broken hearts, our desires and our dependencies, our struggles with shame and our breakthroughs to mutuality.

Each of us grows up with a desire to connect: to find safety, nourishment, and protection when we are infants; to discover playmates and friends when we are in school; to choose a way of life, which includes the significant person or persons who will be our companions. These people become a vital part of the way we walk through time. Some, like our families, may be part of our entire journey in one way or another. Others enter our story at certain significant times as classmates, friends, fellow workers, colleagues, or lovers, and then they disappear. Still others — usually only a few — are in some way bonded to us through the most important times of our growing and changing. They are the real-life companions, the “significant others” who know our hearts and love us in our weaknesses as well as our gifts.

The Importance of Our Psychosexual Story

What does our psychosexual story have to do with healthy development? Why should we spend time exploring these memories and messages? How will this help us to become more integrated in our relational lives?

The answer to these questions has to do with the importance of *self-knowledge* and *self-acceptance* in our journey toward integration. Whether or not we are aware of it, our sexual and relational history exerts a powerful influence on our self-esteem. And our self-worth, in turn, affects our capacity for friendship, our style of interacting with others, and our way of relating to God.

Our psychosexual story is like an emotional “**memory bank**” that stores all the events and experiences related to our relational development from our earliest moments of life. Its data is stored both in our conscious memory and in our unconscious mind. This vital flow of experience is also traced out in our physical self as “*body memories*.”

Becoming more comfortable with our psychosexual story marks the difference between responsible awareness and psychic denial, between living in the light or hiding in the dark. When we know our story, we can begin to heal our past, embrace our present, and shape our future.

Approaching Our Psychosexual Story with Reverence

Our sexuality is close to the core of our being. In some mysterious way, it shapes our identity as human persons and conveys something about the way in which each of us is an *imago Dei* — an image of a loving and creative God. Perhaps this is why we experience our sexual feelings and memories as being so deeply personal and private. Perhaps this is why we carry them in our hearts with such care and protectiveness.

The willingness to spend time reflecting on our psychosexual story is itself an act of courage and openness. Entering into this process of reflection has its risks. Some of our memories will be warm and comforting, exciting and reassuring, perhaps even wrapped in reverie and nostalgia. But there are other memories that will bring back the searing pain of rejection, failure, or betrayal. ***We will likely have to confront our unfinished growth, our unresolved pain, our unnamed fears, and our lingering feelings of guilt.***

Even more important than courage and honesty, therefore, is a ***stance of reverence***, a willingness to be gentle with our past experience and our present selves. When we reflect on our psychosexual story we are journeying into a ***paradoxical land*** of hope and hurt, strength and need, generosity and selfishness, love and brokenness. We are walking not only on the intense ground of ecstasy, but also on the fragile soil of unfulfilled dreams and aching memories. Most importantly, we are standing on the “holy ground” where God has laid plans for love. We want to suggest a simple guideline for approaching our psychosexual stories: Listen to your story with openness and honesty. But do not judge your story. Do not put unwarranted negative labels on your past, or you will “bruise” it. If it is subjected to harsh judgments, it will not be able to reveal itself as a journey with God.

Listening to Our Psychosexual Story with Trust

Each of our stories is a graced venture into the unknown, a sometimes painful, sometimes joyful encounter with the energies of love and hatred, acceptance and rejection, trust and betrayal. Our psychosexual story is one of the ways we discover “some of the best stuff God did.”

What does it mean to listen to our psychosexual story? What does this look like in practice? How can we retrieve our memories and begin to see them as part of a journey toward integration?

Listening comes in a variety of intensities. But before it is a focused awareness, it is first an attitude of the heart — a willingness to be ***receptive to the truth***. Listening is a stance of ***openness*** toward our lives and our experience. In this case, it is openness to our sexual memories and the events and relationships that have shaped our search for love.

It is no accident that the *Shemah Israel* — the great commandment of love, which every Jewish person was to “keep in their hearts” (Dt 6:4-6) — begins with a single, dramatic command: Listen! ***Love begins and ends with listening.*** So too does the understanding and healing of our relational memories. Our growth and integration involve our willingness to circle back to that attentive stance.

In addition to the attitude of non-judgemental reverence, which we mentioned above, we also recommend that people begin listening to their psychosexual stories in a stance of ***prayerfulness***. Our lives are mysteries that ultimately evade our attempts to categorize them. We discover that our origin and our destiny is a love beyond our comprehension. In some way, each of us can claim the words of Jesus as our own: “I came from God and have come into the world. Now I am leaving the world and am going to God” (Jn 16:28). Living and loving is what we do between coming from God and

returning to God. The most fruitful way to gain access to our story is in the presence of the God who is our beginning and our end.

In practice, listening to our psychosexual story means taking the time to be with our memories. Initially, this will probably mean *time alone*, time to be quiet and to let the silence speak to us, time to let memories begin to surface and play around the edges of our consciousness, time to go for walks or light a candle and just sit, time to spend jotting down memories, journaling our feelings, or, if we are so inclined, sketching images from our past.

We meet many people who report that they have few, if any, recollections of sexual feelings or experiences as children. They are often surprised to discover that once they become receptive and welcoming, the images and memories begin to return to their awareness.

Listening to our psychosexual story also involves taking the risk of asking questions. It means talking to our parents about their relationship and their memories surrounding our birth and infancy. It involves the *willingness to explore* our family's attitudes and messages around sexuality. It could mean conversations with our brothers and sisters or our other relatives about our shared past and early life experience.

At some point, we might also find it helpful to write out our psychosexual story for ourselves and share it with a close friend, a spiritual director, or a counsellor. When we facilitate retreats on the topic of human sexuality, we often invite participants to begin sharing their stories, at the level at which they are comfortable, in a small group setting. **Listening to our personal story and sharing it with people whom we can trust can be a powerful experience of growth and healing.**

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

Prenatal Stage

1. What do you know about the circumstances of your mother's pregnancy while she carried you? How was her physical and emotional health? Did she smoke, drink alcohol, or use any drugs while pregnant? How long had it been since she delivered a previous child before she became pregnant with you? What kind of support system did she have?
2. How did your mother spend her days while she was pregnant with you? What was the level of emotional stability in her environment at the time? Who else lived in the house? What would it have been like to be a baby in her womb?
3. What do you know about your mother's labour and delivery with you? Where were you born? Who attended your birth? Were there any complications? Did you ever hear your birth story?
4. What questions do you have about your own prenatal experience?
5. How do you think you have been affected by your prenatal experiences? Do you recognize any connection between: Your mother's pregnancy experiences and your current level of self-esteem? Sense of belonging? Degree of interior calmness or anxiety? Right to be here?

Childhood Stage

1. What "body memories," stories, or imaginings do you have about how you were held as a baby? Nursed? Tended? What relationship do you recognize between these early experiences and your current level of comfort with body touch? Giving and receiving affection? Feeling physically needy or physically comfortable?
2. What baby pictures have you seen of yourself? What do you think/feel your experience was like as a baby? Or what was it like to be a baby in your family when you were born?
3. What do you recall about your play experiences? Playmates? Favourite toys? Games? How do these relate to your interests in people today? Enjoyments?

4. What memories do you have around self-pleasuring (masturbation)? Childhood sex play? Body exploration?
5. Were there any traumas during your childhood? Sexual abuse? Being “caught” during sex play or body exploration? Any punishments related to sexual behaviour?
6. What do you remember, or what have you been told, about coming to understand your gender identity (maleness or femaleness)? How were boys and girls valued in your family? Treated differently? What were the family rules for “boy behaviour” and “girl behaviour”?
7. What messages did you receive about sex and sexuality as a child from parents? Siblings? Friends? Church? School? What effect did these messages have then? Now? Which ones were helpful? Not helpful?
8. How do you think your childhood experiences of sexuality express themselves today in your:
 - level of body comfort and self-esteem?
 - feelings of sexual arousal?
 - interior “self-talk” about your sexuality?
 - ways of attempting to connect with others as a man or a woman?
 - degree and type of sexual guilt? Discomfort? Comfort?

Adolescence Stage

1. What are your spontaneous memories of your adolescent years? Take some time to go back to your high school annuals or other memorabilia. What feelings and memories are evoked?
2. How did you obtain your first sexual information as an older child or a young adolescent? What were your parents’ attitudes about sexuality? What messages did you get from them directly? Indirectly?
3. What are your memories around self-pleasuring during this period? What was your level of sexual exploration and experience? What kinds of feelings surrounded these experiences?
4. Were there any experiences of sexual trauma or sexual abuse during your adolescent years? If so, how have these events affected you? What kind of healing or help have you had as part of your recovery?
5. How did you feel about yourself as a young man or a young woman? What were your “self-messages” or “self-talk”? What was happening in your friendships and your relationships? Your dating history?
6. What awareness did you have about the direction of your sexual orientation? If you felt you were same-sex oriented, or wondered about this, how did you respond to this awareness?
7. Who were you able to talk to about sexuality as an adolescent? Who could you confide in? Get information from?
8. What do you recall about the content of your sexual fantasies during this time of your life?
9. What were your experiences of guilt during adolescence? What did you do with those feelings?

Adulthood Stage

1. What have been your sexual experiences and behaviours as an adult? What do you feel best about? Worst about?
2. What are your most urgent questions? With whom have you shared them? How are you attempting to answer them?
3. What is the content of your sexual fantasy life at this time in your life? Are there any patterns that you recognize and tend to elicit of violence toward others? Manipulation? Self-depreciation?
4. How sensitive are you to the needs, moods, and desires of those closest to you? How do you express this sensitivity in words and actions?
5. How do you feel about your body today? How well do you know it? Care for it? What do you like best about it? What do you wish you could change?

6. How would people who know you best describe you? What adjectives would they use?
7. How faithful are you to your commitments? Can you trust others? Be trusted?
8. What needs to happen to promote greater growth toward wholeness in your relational/psychosexual life? What do you hope for the future?

FERDER, F. - HEAGLE, J., *Your Sexual Self*, (Indiana 1992).

Some Practical Suggestions with Regard to Heterosexual Friendships Among Celibates

1. First, in actual practice many people involved in deep friendship have found that there is great strength in the deliberate effort of both to regard *the other's primary commitment to priesthood, religious life or marriage, as primary to both*. To talk together about one's own commitment and the friend's commitment is mutually confirming and helps to keep active and productive in the friendship the real identity of both people.

2. Second, the erotic dimension of any relationship is intensified by *secrecy* and *exclusiveness*. It is important to have another person, either a spiritual director or a friend who is not a close friend of the other party, with whom one can freely discuss the relationship. *Being able to talk about the relationship openly in a context of confidentiality relieves the erotic pressure* that can build up.

3. Third, it is very helpful if the two friends can share their relationship with other friends, in other words, if the friendship can be inserted into the social context of each other's lives. [C.S.Lewis (1960): "When two real friends are together, a third friend is always welcome, but when two lovers are together, a third person is not wanted."]

4. Fourth, the *willing acceptance* of the very real *renunciations* that such a friendship involves constitutes an authentic and strengthening asceticism. The discretion called for in public and in ministerial situations can often be painful. Celibate friends are not a couple and they must avoid setting in motion in regard to themselves the social dynamics appropriate to couples. Every occasion which brings this home is bound to be a painful reminder of the real renunciations that celibate commitment involves; but a *conscious generous acceptance* of these renunciations strengthens them in and for a friendship that is filled with challenge.

5. Fifth, both friends can *be vigilant* regarding signs of exclusiveness or possessiveness in the relationship. Jealousy, suspiciousness, prying, checking on one another, losing interest in projects that do not involve the other, are feelings and behaviours that are clear danger signals. Celibate friends are not life-partners or lovers. Exclusiveness and possessiveness should not be characteristic of celibate friendships. A great maturity is needed to exercise such vigilance and to surrender freely those very natural and spontaneous feelings which can gradually transform a celibate friendship into an erotic involvement.

6. Sixth, the friends must *consciously develop and deliberately give preference to non-physical ways of being intimate*. Conversation, writing, sharing of aesthetic and intellectual interests about which one or both are truly passionate, the sharing of important ministerial involvements, can be ways of being together, of sharing intimately, that reach the depths of one another. Learning how to communicate is the essence of the development of an intimate friendship and the deliberate foregoing of much of the physical expression of that intimacy can, paradoxically, foster the communication in which the friends relate to the whole of each other rather than taking easy flight into sexual expression.

7. Finally, if one makes mistakes, one needs to admit it to oneself and to the other and take appropriate measures to avoid repeating them. Perhaps one of the most important factors

in the development of authentic humility is the experience with one's own very real bodily humanity which cannot be intellectualized or spiritualized in a genuine relationship but which must be transformed, slowly and painfully, in the image of Jesus who was fully human.

(Sandra Schneiders in *New Wineskins*, p. 230)

SELF-REFLECTION GUIDE: Telling God the Truth About Our Sexuality

Purpose: To foster honest, healing, and prayerful dialogue with God about our sexuality—an essential aspect of our identity, vocation, and spiritual growth.

PART 1: ENTERING INTO GOD'S LOVING GAZE

1. Awareness of God's Presence

- Take a moment to become aware of God's presence.

"Lord, I come before You just as I am. Help me to trust that You love me fully—including my sexuality."

Reflect:

- Do I believe that God delights in me as a sexual being?
- What feelings come up when I think of talking to God about my sexuality—shame, fear, curiosity, gratitude?

Prayer Prompt: "God, I want to become more open with You in this area of my life. Help me."

PART 2: YOUR SEXUAL STORY BEFORE GOD

2. My Experience of Sexuality

- How did I first learn about sexuality? From whom? In what context?
- Was it presented as a **gift**, a **danger**, or something to **fear or ignore**?
- What messages did I receive from family, school, Church, and society?

3. My Body and Self-Image

- How do I feel about my body and physical appearance?
- Do I accept my body as part of God's creation?
- Do I ever compare myself with others? How does this affect me?

Prayer Prompt: "Lord, this is how I feel about my body and sexuality... [name the feelings]. Show me how You see me."

PART 3: SEXUAL ATTRACTIONS, DESIRES & FANTASIES

4. Naming Attractions

- Am I aware of people I am (or have been) sexually or emotionally attracted to?
- What draws me to them—appearance, kindness, attention, touch, conversation?
- How do I react emotionally and physically?

5. Desires and Fantasies

- What kinds of sexual thoughts or fantasies arise in me?
- Have I ever felt ashamed or fearful because of these thoughts?
- Have I brought these desires to God in prayer?

Prayer Prompt: “Jesus, this is what I find attractive... This is what I desire... What do You see in this, Lord?”

PART 4: LIVING CELIBACY

6. If I Am Celibate (or in Formation for Celibacy):

- Do I accept that I still have sexual desires and needs?
- How do I deal with loneliness or the longing for intimacy?
- How do I channel my sexual energy into love and service?

Prayer Prompt: “Lord, in my celibate life, I bring to You the reality of my desires, struggles, and joys... Walk with me in truth.”

PART 5: WHEN SEXUALITY FEELS DIFFICULT OR PAINFUL

7. Struggles and Failures

- Have I experienced shame, guilt, or confusion about sexual experiences?
- Are there areas where I need healing, forgiveness, or understanding?
- How do I respond to temptations or failures (e.g., pornography, masturbation, infatuations, inappropriate relationships)?

8. What If I Talked to God First?

- Like King David before his fall, what would change if I shared my attraction or fantasy with God honestly first?

Prayer Prompt: “Lord, You know my weakness and confusion... Help me to walk in truth and receive Your mercy.”

PART 6: GRATITUDE, GROWTH, AND GOD’S PATIENT PEDAGOGY

9. Gratitude and Growth

- In what ways have I grown in freedom, integrity, or healthy self-expression?
- Do I experience more peace and maturity in how I relate to others?
- How has God guided me through my struggles?

10. Listening for God’s Response

- What do I sense God is saying to me about my sexuality today?
- Is God inviting me to deeper honesty, healing, or trust?

Final Prayer Prompt: “Thank You, God, for staying close to me in my sexual journey. Help me to grow in love—selfless, respectful, joyful love. Amen.”

Optional Practices:

- **Journaling:** Write your conversations with God about sexuality over time.
- **Spiritual Accompaniment:** Bring your reflections to a trusted spiritual director or formator.
- **Scripture for Prayer:** Song of Songs, Psalm 139, Isaiah 49:15–16, Hosea 2:14–16, 2 Samuel 11.

PRACTICAL FORMATION GUIDE ON SEXUAL ISSUES FOR FORMEES AND FORMATORS

1. MASTURBATION

Brief Description: Masturbation is the self-stimulation of the genitals, often leading to orgasm. It is commonly practiced, especially among males, and can become habitual or compulsive. It often functions as a way to relieve stress, loneliness, boredom, or inner emotional conflict, usually accompanied by guilt, shame, and secrecy.

Implications for Growth

- Reveals unmet emotional needs (e.g. intimacy, affection, self-worth).
- Requires growth in affective maturity, bodily integration, and spiritual self-understanding.
- Calls for development of healthy coping strategies: physical activity, creativity, spiritual depth, community connection.
- Guilt cycles must be addressed through compassion, education, and guidance, not repression or moralistic fear.
- Honest conversations in spiritual direction help reduce shame and foster spiritual integration.

Discernment Criteria

- **Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2352):** Masturbation is objectively a “gravely disordered action” but moral responsibility may be diminished due to psychological or emotional immaturity, habit, or anxiety.
- Compulsive or addictive masturbation may impair celibate commitment and needs intervention.
- Assess motivation: Is the candidate showing increasing freedom, responsibility, and willingness to grow?
- Persistent, unaddressed behaviour or refusal to seek help may indicate lack of readiness for celibate life.

2. HOMOSEXUALITY

Brief Description: Homosexuality is a sustained and predominant emotional and sexual attraction to persons of the same sex. It may manifest in behaviour, identity, or orientation. Some formees may experience same-sex attraction without fully identifying as homosexual. Causes are varied and may include relational, emotional, or developmental factors.

Implications for Growth

- Requires clarity between transient experiences and persistent orientation.
- Offers opportunity for affective growth and deeper understanding of self and vocation.
- A safe and non-judgmental environment allows the person to face attractions maturely.
- Orientation is not sinful; what matters is the capacity to live celibate chastity in fidelity and integrity.
- Same-sex communities may pose additional challenges to those with a homosexual orientation, requiring prudent accompaniment.

Discernment Criteria

- **CCC 2357–2359** affirms respect and dignity for persons with homosexual tendencies, while clearly teaching that homosexual acts are not morally acceptable.
- A candidate with a deep-seated homosexual orientation must demonstrate affective maturity and the ability to live celibate chastity with inner peace.
- Repeated or unrepented homosexual behaviours, emotional entanglements, or harassment of peers signal unsuitability.

- Past experimentation (esp. in adolescence) should be processed with guidance and clarity.

3. “THIRD WAY” RELATIONSHIPS (Emotionally Exclusive Friendships)

Brief Description: These are emotionally intense, often exclusive, relationships between celibate individuals (e.g., a man and woman religious) that mimic romantic partnerships without overt sexual acts. They may involve verbal and physical expressions of affection, emotional dependency, and secrecy.

Implications for Growth

- Highlights the need for mature boundaries and inclusive, fraternal love.
- Requires growth in freedom from emotional dependence or unconscious need for exclusivity.
- Authentic celibate love should be generous, joyful, and universal—not closed or possessive.
- Affective maturity helps recognize and handle attraction without acting on it or becoming emotionally entangled.

Discernment Criteria

- **Consecrated chastity**, as per *Perfectae Caritatis* (n.12), implies freedom for God and others, not substitute romantic bonds.
- Exclusive friendships that absorb excessive emotional energy, secrecy, or “perpetual engagement” are not compatible with the celibate vocation.
- Discern whether the person maintains healthy friendships across the spectrum, or is locked into one emotionally consuming relationship.
- Support through direction, community correction, and if needed, reorientation of the relationship is essential.

4. PORNOGRAPHY & CYBERSEX ADDICTION

Brief Description: Pornography involves viewing or consuming explicit sexual content, often online, which may escalate into addictive behaviour. Cybersex or compulsive consumption of porn can damage affective, spiritual, and relational life, and is increasingly common among religious and seminarians.

Implications for Growth

- Addiction often masks emotional wounds: trauma, abuse, loneliness, anxiety.
- Calls for self-discipline, digital responsibility, and healthy emotional regulation.
- Formation must address media use habits, internet boundaries, and emotional processing.
- Restoration of self-worth, dignity, and intimacy with God are crucial.

Discernment Criteria

- **CCC 2354** states pornography “perverts the conjugal act, grave offense against chastity.”
- Ongoing use indicates affective immaturity and lack of integrated celibate commitment.
- Openness to accompaniment, willingness to receive therapy or spiritual help is a positive sign.
- Secrecy, minimization, or denial of the problem indicates concern for vocational suitability.

5. WOUNDED SEXUALITY & ABUSE HISTORY

Brief Description: Sexual abuse, neglect, trauma, shame, or toxic upbringing can deeply wound a person’s sexual and spiritual development. Effects include fear of intimacy, distorted body image, compulsions, depression, perfectionism, and spiritual confusion or anger at God.

Implications for Growth

- Healing takes time, compassion, professional support, and deep spiritual accompaniment.

- Requires safe space to process shame, reclaim self-worth, and restore trust in others and God.
- Unhealed wounds can lead to boundary violations, dysfunction, or abuse repetition in pastoral settings.
- Integrated healing leads to deeper compassion, maturity, and authenticity in ministry.

Discernment Criteria

- **Church's formation documents (Ratio Fundamentalis §202–203)** call for special attention to emotional and psychosexual wounds.
- Wounded persons are not excluded but must show significant progress toward healing and affective balance.
- Requires professional counselling where appropriate, and mature cooperation with formation
- ✓ An experienced professional will not ask every question but will use

processes.

- Unprocessed trauma may render the person vulnerable to re-traumatization or inappropriate behaviours in ministry.

GENERAL FORMATION STRATEGIES

- **Spiritual Accompaniment:** Ongoing, honest direction is essential for integration.
- **Human Formation Sessions:** Address body image, emotions, relationships, digital ethics, and celibacy.
- **Community Support:** Cultivate healthy, non-exclusive friendships and emotional expression.
- **Psychological Assessment:** When needed, engage professional therapists to support growth.
- **Freedom and Integration:** The goal is not perfection, but inner freedom and joyful commitment to celibate chastity.

St. Luke Institute Psychosexual Interview by Rev. Stephen J. Rossetti, D.Min., Ph.D. & Ms. Carmen Meyer, L.C.S.W.

- ✓ This interview is designed to be used by an experienced mental health professional.
- ✓ This interview should be used in the context of a complete clinical assessment.
- ✓ An experienced professional will not ask every question but will use the questions in this interview as guidelines for conducting the assessment.
- ✓ This interview should be conducted in a therapeutic environment with an appropriate respect for the confidentiality of the information elicited.
- ✓ Before doing this psychosexual interview, the clinician might want to introduce the subject of sexuality with these or similar words: "As part of this assessment, the church needs to know the psychosexual strengths and the areas of needed growth of the men and women that are applying for the priesthood and religious life. I'll be asking you a number of personal questions about your sexuality. I hope you will answer as truthfully as you can."
- ✓ There are many questions to this interview; some overlap, others will not be necessary to use based on the way the interview is progressing. The interview questions are meant to be used as a guideline for a clinician to use as appropriate during the course of a psychosexual history taking. Unless there are a number of unusual features to the person's sexuality, the interview should last between 40 minutes and an hour.

FAMILY OF ORIGIN SEXUAL ATTITUDES

GOAL: *To obtain an understanding of the broad family attitudes about sexuality. The responses may also yield insights into the dynamics of the family system*

COMMENT: Looking for signs of discomfort around sexuality in the family of origin. Such discomfort would likely be passed on to the client. As a result of this discomfort, the client may experience considerable shame around his/her own sexuality. This discomfort and shame may add to the difficulty the client would have in seeking help with sexual matters.

1. Was sexuality discussed openly by your parents, extended family, or older siblings? Specifically, what was said about sexuality?
2. How comfortable were family members discussing sex and sexuality?
3. What messages, direct or tacit, were conveyed about sexuality in your family?
4. How did you learn the facts of life?
5. Was there any other person(s) in your family or early life whose attitudes about sexuality affected you? Who was this person? What were their attitudes? How did their attitudes influence you?

AREAS OF CONCERN:

6. Discomfort with sexuality in family of origin
7. Strong negative or shameful attitudes of sexuality in family of origin

PRE-PUBESCENT SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: *To obtain an understanding of the client's earliest (pre-pubescent) sexual feelings and experiences.*

COMMENT:

- Early sexual stimulation is a risk factor for later sexual problems. Precocious sexual activity is a possible indicator of sexual abuse.
 - An absence of curiosity and awareness of sexual interests can be a risk factor for later sexual problems such as unintegrated sexuality.
1. At what age were you first aware of sexual feelings or your own sexuality? Describe the event.
 2. When did you first have crushes, interests or curiosity in others? (Comment: It is important to include curiosity into his question because some sexually repressed people will only identify their sexual interests as curiosity and are not able to admit there is blatant sexual interest.)
 3. Were you involved in any early childhood sexual play or exploration? Describe each experience in detail including the age and gender of the other participants, the age of the client at the time, the feelings of the client about the behavior, who initiated it, where did it occur, were they ever caught, did s/he ever feel guilty.
 4. Did you ever feel pressured to behave in stereotypically masculine or feminine ways? For example, as a male being forced to play sports when there was no interest or talent? If so, who pressured you? How did you feel? Did you feel like you were a disappointment to the adult person? Explain the experience in detail. (Comment: Forced gender-typed early experiences can lead to feelings of low self-esteem shame and possibly contributing to ego-dystonic feelings around his/her sexuality, especially ego dystonic homosexuality.)

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- Pressure to conform to stereotyped gender roles
- Excessive pre-pubescent sexual stimulation
- Precocious sexual behavior.

SEXUAL ABUSE HISTORY

GOAL: *To determine if the candidate has experienced any sexual abuse, and/or exploitation in his or her development.*

COMMENT:

- It is important to elicit more than just a factual history of any abuse or exploitation. Equally important is to obtain an understanding of the impact of the abuse on the candidate both physically and emotionally. How the abuse was dealt with by the person and the family can give insights into the family and the candidate's role in that system.
 - It should be noted that while a personal history of sexual abuse is a significant factor in a person's sexual development, it does not necessarily mean that the person's subsequent life must be dysfunctional. Much will depend upon how the person dealt with the situation and the other resources that s/he could call upon.
1. When you were growing up, did anyone older than you ever touch you or look at you in a way that was blatantly or overtly sexual? Or that you experienced as unwanted or intrusive?
 2. If so, please give the details of this experience, including the specific incident, the frequency, the duration, your age and the age of other person at the time, and your relationship with the other person.
 3. How did you feel about this sexual experience? What did you think about it?
 4. Did you ever tell this to anyone or discuss it with anyone? Who was this? How did they respond? What happened? If you did not speak to anyone, why not?
 5. As a child or adolescent, were you ever involved in any sexual play, exploration, fondling, masturbation or sexual exposure with someone younger than you? What was the age and gender of the other person(s)? Who initiated it? Were you ever caught? How did you feel about this experience? How do you think the other person felt about the experience?

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- Personal history of being sexually abused;
- Unresolved feelings & conflicts surrounding one's sexual abuse
- Lack of awareness of personal psychological effects of being abused
- Sexual abuse history when arising from dysfunctional family system "Carrying the Secret" of sexual abuse history.
- Highly negative response by others to one's revelation of sexual abuse as a child/adolescent.
- Sexually abusing/involvement with someone younger

PUBERTY AND ADOLESCENCE

GOAL: *To obtain an understanding of the client's sexual development during adolescence, particularly with regard to puberty and masturbatory history.*

COMMENT: Puberty and adolescence are critical periods in the development of one's sexuality. Sexual deviancy often shows its first signs in adolescence. Many sexually under developed people are stuck in an emotional and sexual adolescence. While a certain amount of sexual curiosity, exploration, and confusion is normal, people with excessive sexual involvement in adolescence may have sexual problems. Likewise, people who report no sexual curiosity or sexual challenges during adolescence might also raise concerns.

1. Were you prepared for the bodily changes you experienced during the onset of puberty? Did anyone talk to you about what would happen to your body or what to expect?
2. How old were you when you entered puberty? What was the experience like?
3. What were your parents' reactions to your entering puberty?

4. How did you feel about the changes in your body? Did you feel self-conscious around your peers? Did you feel like you were developing or maturing at the same rate as your peers?
5. Were you ever teased or singled out by peers for being different? Please explain.
6. (For Males) How old were you when you had your first nocturnal emission?
7. Did you know what it was? What were your feelings about it? Do you remember what your sexual fantasies were at the time of the emission?
8. Did anyone talk to you about masturbation? What was told to you about masturbation? How old were you when you first masturbated? How did you feel about this? Did you feel guilty about it? Did you know that other people did it?
9. What are the fantasies you had when you first masturbated? What fantasies did you usually have during subsequent masturbations? (Include age, gender and any particular scenes that were attractive.)
10. Did you discuss masturbation with peers at any stage? How frequent was masturbation in adolescence, or whenever it first began?
11. During adolescence, did you ever masturbate with others? Were you ever involved in group masturbation? If so, please describe the incident(s) including the gender and age of participants, who initiated it, the frequency and the duration.
12. As an adolescent, did you ever feel pressured to be typically masculine or feminine? Who pressured you? What were the circumstances? How did you feel about it?

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- Lack of awareness of onset of puberty;
- Negative response of parents to onset of puberty;
- Excessive shame around bodily changes in puberty
- Excessive masturbation in adolescence;
- Group Masturbation;
- Feeling pressured to conform to gender roles

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

GOAL: *To obtain an understanding of the client's awareness of his/her sexual orientation and acceptance of that orientation.*

COMMENT:

- By the end of the exploration period of adolescence, many people emerge with a clearer sense of themselves as sexual people who are becoming increasingly comfortable, and able to manage, that sexuality. People who deny any sexual interest or are sexual confused should raise concerns.
 - Because of negative societal pressures, some homosexually oriented persons may not have the same opportunity to resolve sexual orientation issues in adolescence. This may occur in early adulthood instead.
1. Can you remember any sexual dreams that you have had? Describe the dream in detail. What gender and approximate ages were the figures in the dream?
 2. What is your sexual orientation? How do you know what your sexual orientation is, i.e., what are the concrete signs you use to tell you what your orientation is?
 3. Have you ever felt curious, been sexually aroused, or could have been sexually aroused by members of the same sex? Describe the situation. Did you ever tell anyone? Did you try to hide it?
 4. What was the attitude in your family about homosexuality? How did you feel about that attitude?

5. What was, and currently is, your attitude about homosexuality?
6. What is the Catholic Church's perspective on homosexuality? How do you feel about it?
7. If you were going to enter into a genital, sexual encounter, what type of person would you prefer for a partner?
8. How old were you when you discovered your sexual orientation? Describe the situation.
9. How did you feel at the time about your sexual orientation? If you had same sex feelings, what did you think those feelings meant to you, i.e., what did you think those feelings said about you?
10. Some adults prefer to have sexual relationships with younger people, under the age of 18. Have you ever felt that way? What do you think of people who do?
11. Have you ever had sexual fantasies about people under the age of 18?
12. Have you ever found yourself attracted to or aroused by young people? If so, please describe the situation and age of the young person.

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- Inability to name sexual orientation;
- Confusion around sexual orientation;
- Guilt And /Or shame regarding sexual orientation;
- Inability to admit sexual Desires;
- Sexual interest in minors

DATING AND ADULT SEXUAL HISTORY

GOAL: *To obtain an understanding of the client's experience of dating in school and later adult sexual activity.*

COMMENT:

- If a person's sexuality is unintegrated or unbalanced in any way, this will frequently be indicated in his/her sexual behavior.
 - Extremes such as repression of any sexual feelings or compulsive sexual activity should cause concern.
 - If a history of compulsive behavior is reported, even if it is episodic, obtain the following: a description of the specific behaviors, assess risk for STDs plus personal safety and reputation, and frequency.
 - For each sexual encounter, inquire about the partner's age, gender and age of the person at the time plus how the person knows the partner and who initiated the contact.
1. Did you date in school? Who were your partners. Was there any sexual contact? How old were you? Please describe what took place.
 2. Did you have any romantic or sexual experiences after schooling? Please describe including your age, the age and gender of the partner, and what took place.
 3. Have you ever been in love? How old were you and the other person? What was gender of the other person? Describe the relationship between you and this person. What happened to the relationship?
 4. Has marriage ever been an option for you? Would you like it to be? (Comment: Some people choose celibacy by default: because they do not think that anyone would marry them or because they are not attracted to the opposite sex).
 5. When was your last sexual contact? Describe the event including ages, gender, and relationship.
 6. How frequently do you currently masturbate? Describe your masturbatory fantasies. How do you feel about it?

7. What is your understand of the teaching of the Catholic Church on masturbation? What do you think about that teaching?
8. Have you ever had a sexual encounter with someone you did not know before that day? How often have such encounters occur? Where did you meet this person(s)? Describe the frequency, location, and the events leading up to the encounter and the sexual behavior that occurred.
9. Have you ever had and/or been treated for a sexually transmitted disease? If so, please explain.

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- No sexual desires or interest expressed;
- History of dating or romantic interest;
- Compulsive sexual behavior;
- Anonymous sexual contact;
- Compulsive or excessive masturbation;
- Choosing to be celibate because marriage is not an option;
- History of sexually transmitted disease(s).

PARAPHILIAS & OTHER PROBLEMATIC SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

GOAL: *To determine if the person has engaged in sexually deviant or problematic behavior.*

COMMENT: It is important not to use the word “pedophile” or “ephebophile” since many people who do have sexual contact with minors will deny that these terms might apply to them. The presence of previous deviant sexual behavior or a deviant sexual arousal pattern is cause for considerable concern and should be investigated as thoroughly as possible.

1. Did you ever engage in any sexual behavior that others might have considered to be unusual? If yes, please describe.
2. Have you ever paid someone to have sex? If so, explain.
3. Have you ever read adult” magazines, magazines with pictures of children, or magazines that others might consider to be pornographic?
4. What were the magazines? How often do you use them? What age and gender of people are shown? When was the last time you looked at one?
5. Have you ever visited an “adult bookstore?” When was the last time you visited one? How often do you go? What do you do inside?
6. Did you ever engage in any other sexual behavior such as exposing yourself to other people? If yes, please describe. (Comment: Clinicians might probe other areas of sexually deviant behavior as indicated. Some of these other paraphilias include fetishism, frotteurism, sadism-masochism, transvestic fetishism and voyeurism.)
7. Have you ever taken any minors on vacations, on overnight trips, or taken them to dinner? If so, please describe. Were there any other adults present?
8. As an adult, have you ever slept in the same bed or shared overnight accommodations with any minors? If yes, please describe.
9. Have you ever found yourself, when masturbating, thinking about people you have known who are under the age of 18? If so, please describe.
10. Has anyone ever suggested or alleged that you had a sexual encounter with someone under the age of 18 years old? If so, please explain.
11. Have you ever been in a situation where you could have, or did, become sexually aroused or acted inappropriately with someone under the age of 18? If so, what was your relationship to the minor? How old were you both? What happened?
12. Have you ever had a sexual encounter with someone that you were in a supervisory role with, such as: teacher-student, pastoral minister-parishioner, counselor-counselee, or employer-

employee? Please explain.

13. Do you find some things or activities sexually arousing that other people might consider to be different or unusual? If so, please describe.

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- Deviant Sexual Activity;
- Significant history of paid sexual encounters;
- Consistent use of pornography;
- Patronizing adult bookstores;
- Exhibitionism or other paraphilias;
- Sexual contact with a minor as an adult;
- Inordinate socializing with minors;
- Masturbation fantasies of minors;
- Substantial allegations of sexual contact(s) with minor(s);
- History of exploitive sexual activity, perpetrator or victim;
- Deviant pattern of sexual arousal.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR & FEELINGS

GOAL: *To understand how the candidate experiences, manages and integrates his/her sexual feelings, especially in light of his/her aspirations to enter into a celibate, chaste lifestyle.*

COMMENT: Extremes in this area could indicate potential problems. For example, an absence of sexual awareness, a spiritualization of sexuality, scruples and/or excessive moralizing around sexuality, compulsive sexual behavior, or a denial of sexual feelings.

1. How do you currently experience your sexual desires or innate sexuality?
2. When are you aware that you are a sexual person? Describe.
3. How do you understand and respond to your sexual desires?
4. What are the challenges regarding your sexuality that you currently face? How are you attempting to deal with these challenges?
5. Are you able to fulfill a desire for nurturance and love in your life? Please explain.
6. Who is your closest friend? How often do you see each other? What do you do and talk about together?
7. Do you have any physical contact with other people? If so, describe. If not, why not.
8. How do you understand the commitment to celibacy? How should celibates deal with their sexuality?
9. Do you think you will be able to live a life of celibate chastity and be at peace with such a lifestyle?
10. What do you think the difficulties and struggles will be for you in trying to live celibate chastity? What will be the joys and rewards of such a life?
11. Is it your intention to live a chaste and celibate life? What would happen if you were committed to a celibate life and had a slip?
12. What do you think would happen if you fell in love?

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- Denial of sexual feelings;
- Obsession with sexuality;
- Dealing with sexual feelings in a dysfunctional way;
- Excessive spiritualizing of sexuality;
- Lack of physical contact with other people;

- Having acquaintances but no real friends;
- Inability to find nurturance and love;
- Entering celibate lifestyle without personally accepting It;
- Rigid moralizing about sexuality