

**THE EMOTIONAL MATURITY
OF
JESUS OF NAZARETH**

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JESUS OF NAZARETH**



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Nowadays, it is common to hear many people be labeled as “emotionally immature,” without offering them a clear understanding or an archetype that reflects the aforementioned maturity. This is basically the same as giving these immature persons nothing, because in the education and formation of personality, the path of exemplarity and imitation is essential. Any work to be done in the realms of psychology, emotionality, and morality is, in great part, a process of imitations, like that carried out by children by observing their parents (for better or for worse). Emotional maturity is not achieved if *inspiration* is not received from some attractive, firm, and sure paradigm, in which what the disciple aspires to have materialize in themselves is valued.

These pages are a reply to those who want to find an unmistakable model of emotional and psychological maturity. I consider that Jesus, the Divine teacher, is also an incomparable model in this very delicate realm. In an old and well-known study of characterology, Alejandro Roldán speaks of “Christ’s masculine beauty,” and of the “masculine

and majestic aspect of the Savior . . . a dose of masculinity just right and precisely on point; . . . the perfect man, who possesses in its difficult measure and proportion the precious gift of masculinity.”¹ Without a doubt, Christ “fully reveals man to man himself”² and reveals the truth about man to him, and thus “anyone who contemplates Christ . . . cannot fail to perceive in him *the truth about man*.”³

For this task, the Gospels, which are so sparse in their description of Jesus’ physical features, nonetheless offer us numerous psychological traces of His rich personality. It is into these writings that we propose to penetrate in order to clarify, at least a little, according to the modest measure of our personal lights, the gigantic mystery of the Teacher’s affectivity.

Throughout the length of Jesus’ life, we can see that His emotional features always have an appropriate makeup. The maturity of a person is a dynamic reality: we could speak of a mature child, a mature teenager, or a mature young adult, understanding with such expressions that a person has achieved the physical development, the capacity for

¹ Roldán came up with these reflections by analyzing the figure of the Shroud of Turin, assuming that it was an imprint of the Savior’s crucified body (Roldán, Alejandro, SJ, *Introducción a la ascética diferencial*, Madrid (1960), 305-307). With no less admiration, the great psychiatrist and scholar of human typology, Gregorio Marañón, stated: “This disturbing image is not the simple effigy of an exceptional human being. . . . The shiver that contemplating it causes makes us think . . . that yes, that this must be God made man” (Marañón, Gregorio, Private letter to the delegation of *Cultores Sanctae Sindonis*; in: Roldán, *op. cit.*, 304).

² “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear” (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 22).

³ John Paul II, Apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (2002).

knowledge, the energy of will, and the emotional dynamism appropriate for their age. In contrast, the *immature* adolescent, young adult, or adult is one who *ordinarily* reasons, judges, desires, or reacts in a way that someone who is considerably younger than they are would. In this case, it is to be assumed that the psychic development of such a one ran aground at some point.

We know that the four Gospels tell of Christ's public life, that is, the three final years of His existence. Even though His enemies bear witness that He "was not yet fifty years old" (cf. Jn 8:57), it is thought that Jesus died between the ages of 30 and 40. Only Saint Luke has written of his infancy, while Saint Matthew limits himself to the episode of the kings from the East. All of these passages are, on the other hand, dense and suggestive.

The traits described in the pages of the Gospels correspond to a person of maturity beyond that of the norm. The episode of Jesus being lost in the Jerusalem and His subsequent finding in the Temple makes this clear (cf. Lk 2:42-50). On that occasion, His way of speaking, His sharpness, His questions and answers, astonished the doctors of the Law. The answer given to the question of Mary, His Mother ("Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"), shows an awareness of the Divine Fatherhood, of His relation of belonging totally to the Father, and of His full and absolute vocation to be about the things of the Father, which not only surpasses the mind of any child deeply educated

in religious questions, but also, and even, the minds of many adults. Jesus, who has just barely started to cross the threshold into adolescence, is already a person fused with His mission and with His supernatural—and filial—relation with God the Father.

His adult life, as we will now have the opportunity to consider at length, is the mature fruit of His character.

1.

Christ's manliness

“Love is the mainspring of his Being. Nobody whose eyes can see and whose heart is well-disposed will discover in the manifestations of his affection anything in the nature of constraint or compulsion. They are demonstrations of a clear, warm freedom. . . . From him, whose references to sex were so rare, there emanates a power of assurance, purification, and mastery of these forces, which is unparalleled.”⁴

1) Awareness and acceptance of His own masculinity

In order to be emotionally mature, a person must be aware that their masculinity or femininity is a *gift* from God, and that by means of this reality, the will and the mission that the Creator has assigned them in this world is expressed. Effectively, the vocation and mission of every

⁴ Bichlmair, *The Man Jesus*, Buenos Aires (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1953), 66.

person is tightly bound to their masculinity or femininity, since what must be made concrete in them is either fatherhood in a certain way, or motherhood in a determined mode, be it biological or spiritual, with its consequent emotional, psychological, and spiritual imprints, which differ between men and women.

However, maturity in this sense is not limited to awareness of what one has received, but also includes a conformity with the physiological aspect—genitality—that masculinity or femininity expresses; it demands a serene acceptance of one's biological and physical sex, the presence of appropriate intrapsychic experiences, and, finally, attitudes and external gestures that are in agreement with said sex.

Regarding this aspect of Jesus of Nazareth's personality, we find no explicit reports in the Gospels. However, even if we do not find direct testimonies, they do offer us indirect allusions.

One very important allusion is the absence in Jesus of *psychic conflicts*. A long list of writings and films of the last four or five decades have tried to impose the image of a Jesus crossed by interior struggles, of doubts regarding His own personality, of confusions surrounding His mission, and a profound misunderstanding of God the Father's will. Some have even come to affirm that it is Judas, and not Jesus, who sees things with sanity and depth: "But [Judas's] hard blue eyes had been pined on Jesus for a long time. He had divined what was happening inside of the master and how easily love could paralyze his strength.

The two glances joined and wrestled in the air for a split second, the one stern and merciless, the other [of Jesus] beseeching and afflicted.”⁵

History shows that anything and everything has been said of Christ, or, better said, that any number of “Jesuses” could be made according to what our febrile imagination suggests to us. But, to ask if these projections correspond to the historical truth of Jesus of Nazareth, is another matter entirely. Regarding all of these fanciful montages we can repeat what Benedict XVI said: “If you read a number of these reconstructions one after the other, you see at once that far from uncovering an icon that has become obscured over time, they are much more like photographs of their authors and the ideals [*or torments, we could add*] they hold.”⁶ Here holds a principle that the same author lays out later: “The fact is that scriptural exegesis can become a tool of the Antichrist.”⁷

The Gospels and apostolic writings of the earliest times say something else about Our Lord. They show Him to us with an emotionality that is normal, pacific, and serene. This is a sufficient indication of His clear emotional and sexual identity. Indeed, men who recognize themselves as men, and women who accept themselves as women, do not make allusions to this topic because they have no need to do so. No one comments that they have only one head, or two lungs, because no one speaks about what is taken as well-known or

⁵ Kazantzakis, Nikos, *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1995). This false and blasphemous novel was made into a movie with the same title by Martin Scorsese in 1988.

⁶ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, (New York: Doubleday, 2007), xii.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 35.

conventional, or, if you prefer, simply what is normal. On the other hand, those who have doubts about themselves and those who are unhappy with themselves do make such comments. It is when someone is suffering interior conflicts, anxieties, or confusions, that distressing topics are insinuated, be it with indirect questions, complaints, or expectant insinuations.

In contrast, Jesus' gestures and attitudes express a serene and mature experience of His own masculinity. He thinks like a man, acts like a man, has manly gestures, and reveals manly attitudes. Perhaps in many cases the actions shown are not actions exclusive to men, but they are actions that men do with a different tonality than women.

Let us point out, for example, His way of being provident in the episode of the multiplication of the loaves (Jn 6); His manliness, without fanfare or hysterics, during the very high strain of His arrest in the olive garden, where His serenity and self-control contrasts against the agitated background of Peter's reaction (who draws his sword and wounds one of the captors), of the escape of the other disciples, and of the nervousness of His enemies who face Him finding strength in numbers or who fall on their knees upon hearing His voice (Jn 18). We can also recall His decisive replies to the capricious questions of Ananias, Caiaphas, and Pilate. Never, not even during His passion, is Christ seen to lose His temper, to show hesitation, shaking, a tendency to hysterics, or any of the other disturbances that often characterize those who are not very manly, the pusillanimous, and the emotionally unstable.

In Jesus Christ's psychology, as it appears in the Gospels, there exists neither feelings of inferiority nor unhealthy shyness. Hence, there is no foundation for attributing to Him any sort of affective-sexual disorder that is closely linked with these types of problems, for instance, embarrassment due to physical deformities, fear of being strange, sexual embarrassment, or a fear of people of the opposite sex. Jesus do not show any of the marks of a man obsessed (or even worried) by His sexual inferiority, as happens in those who run away from women or those who feel attracted to or disturbed by people of their same sex.⁸ Nor do we find in Him a characteristic that Marañón attributes to some people with inferiority complexes (especially those who have them in the realm of sexuality): exhibitionism.⁹ According to the famous doctor, the human spirit is prone to make others believe that they possess those qualities that they fear that they are missing. It is for this reason that many men who are unsure of their masculinity need to proclaim their manliness to others, and above all to themselves, by means of bravado and by boasting of their conquests and successes.¹⁰ From here it follows that often we can uncover the true personality of these people by tossing out that which is ostentation and gala in them: if they need to proclaim their bravado with a display of brutality or shouting, it is because they are *afraid to be a coward and that others might notice it*; if they need to make others aware of their masculinity, it is

⁸ Cf. Marañón, *Ensayo biológico sobre Enrique IV y su tiempo*, in: *Obras Completas*, Madrid (1970), vol. V, 110.

⁹ Cf. *Ibidem*, 135.

¹⁰ Regarding this, see, for instance, the same Marañón, *Don Juan*, Madrid (1946).

because they are not sure of it themselves and *they are afraid that others might judge them to be effeminate.*

The total lack of exhibitionism on the part of Jesus (a man, on one hand, of an intensely public life) makes clear His profound humility, His disdain for public exaltation (He flees when they try to make Him king: Jn 6:15), and His rejection of easy and colorful triumph (like that which Satan offered to Him by inviting Him to show His status as Messiah by means of useless miracles: Mt 4:5-6). Jesus would only accept a triumphal acclamation when this was a prelude to His suffering and death (cf. Mt 21:1-11).

2) Jesus' fatherly awareness

Christ's fully masculine affectivity is expressed in a particular way in His fatherly attitude.

Jesus is aware of being personally distinct from the Father: "The Father who sent me" (Jn 5:37). He is the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, distinct from the first, the Father, and the third, the Holy Spirit. Expressions such as "The Father and I,"¹¹ and "Me and My Father"¹² leave no room for doubt regarding this certainty.

However, at the same time, He knows Himself to be "one with the Father," by communication in the same divine nature: "The Father and

¹¹ "The Father knows me and I know the Father" (Jn 10:15); "Whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father" (Mt 10:33); "My Father is at work until now, so I am at work" (Jn 5:17); "I came in the name of my Father" (Jn 5:43).

¹² "You know neither me nor my Father" (Jn 8, 19).

I are one” (Jn 10:30); “I am in My Father” (Jn 14:20). In the Creed we say, “consubstantial with the Father.”

For this reason, without ceasing to be a person distinct from the Father, Christ is also the Father’s face: “Philip . . . Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). Since He is a reflection of the Father, Jesus acts like a father with a paternal attitude and virtues towards men and women: He is provident, a defender, a benefactor, a support, a surety, and a help. It is He who solutions the hunger of His followers (Jn 6), who arranges for His followers to rest (Mk 6:31), and who defends those who are His own even at the cost of His own life: “If you are looking for me, let these men go” (Jn 18:8). In short, His clear understanding of responsibility shines forth: “This was to fulfill what he had said, ‘I have not lost any of those you gave me’” (Jn 18:9).

3) Jesus’ manly way of living

Jesus has a markedly masculine resistance and endurance. The fatigue that must have been imposed by the tenor of life during His few years of public activity shows forth a magnificent physical complexion. Since ordinarily (although there are exceptions) development in the different spheres of personality is harmonious, we can suppose a correlative development in the other orders. In the expression with which Luke describes the adolescent Jesus, “And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man,” (Lk 2:52) Roldán sees a perfect correspondence between His bodily development (age), His psychic development (wisdom), and His spiritual development (grace).

He explains, “It is as though [the Gospel] wanted to tell us that the dynamic expansion of the corporeal, immaterial, and spiritual ‘components’ in Jesus Christ was completely harmonious and balanced, without any deviation or displacement.”¹³

Some facts from the Gospels confirm Jesus’ most perfect biophysical structure, His strong and robust nature.

He is able to endure prolonged fasts, like the one that lasted forty days and forty nights that preceded the beginning of His apostolic life (Mt 4).

He arises very early in the morning (Lk 6:14); He spends days on His frequent apostolic journeys (Mt 15:21), seemingly with scarce provisions, since that is the way He recommended to His disciples when He sent them out for apostolate (Lk 9:3), and it is witnessed to by the hunger and thirst that would often oppress Him: “Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well” (Jn 4:6). The evangelists note that sometimes He did not have the time needed in order to eat (Mk 3:20; 6:31). And as a finale, often He would spend entire nights, or a great part of them, in prayer (Lk 6:12), even when the day’s work had been exhausting (Mk 6:46).

We can also suppose, and rightfully so, that speaking much would also tire Him greatly, since normally He preached in the open air, to great crowds, under the burning sun of Palestine.

¹³ Roldán, A., *op. cit.*, 298-299.

It should not surprise us, then, that many could not keep up with His pace, as He seems to warn the scribe who, drawing near to Him, says: "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go," to which Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head" (Mt 8:19-20). It seems that this alone was enough to dissuade this superficial admirer, whom we never find again in the Gospel accounts.

It is very likely that during His trips Christ spent the night in uncomfortable and inhospitable public accommodations (*the inns* like those in which His Mother was unable to find a place at the time of His birth) or would even spend nights under the open skies. From here would come that ease with which we see Him fall into a serene and profound sleep, like that of children, able to rest without disturbance in the middle of a storm like that on Lake Gennesaret during which, while the waves threatened to capsize the boat, "Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion" (Mk 4:38).

It seems He greatly enjoyed life outdoors, as is shown by the innumerable allusions to the fields and to agricultural and herding customs that we find in His parables. It was the places of solitude—the desert, the summits of mountains, or the darkness of an olive grove—that He chose to be with His disciples and to which He preferred to withdraw in order to pray.

All of this implies a great tolerance of heat, cold, the wind, the rain, hunger, and fatigue, and we are not talking about a rough man, one raised in the wilderness, or adorned with rough and savage qualities. On

the contrary, Jesus never shows Himself unable to deal with people of noble lineage, or uncomfortable in navigating a banquet, as we see in the evangelical texts. Jesus' hosts never reproach him for the awkwardness or ordinariness of His ways, but only for not binding Himself to the customs of the Pharisees, for His excessive condescension with sinners, and for the trust He shows with people leading a bad life.

Likewise, Jesus also bears that unmistakable trait of an authentic man, which is the ability to assert Himself against His enemies when a just cause demands it. For Jesus, the "cause" *par excellence* was His Father's glory. It should not surprise us, then, that we only see Him raise a hand when He sees that fatherly glory trampled. The episode of the expulsion of the merchants from the Temple, who had converted the temple into a market, is recounted by the four evangelists (Jn 2:13-22; Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-19; Lk 19:45-46). The texts allow us to glimpse the stupor and the deranged panic of His adversaries, which is explained, in part, because for the unscrupulous merchant (and these were of that sort), there is nothing more painful than the ruin of their business. However, and above all else, their fear is because there are few things as fearsome as the *anger of the meek*. The calm man does not get angry without reason; however, when he has a reason, his anger makes him imposing, since the infuriated meek person knows the reason for his anger and that he has no right to calm himself down until justice is restored. The wrathful man can be bribed; however, it is difficult to corrupt a meek person who is angered *with and in accord with reason*. A man who has the time and makes the delay so as to put

together a whip of cords and the character of giving a speech explaining his behavior can not be out of his mind with anger. Jesus did both things. The shoves and kicks He needed to scatter the moneychangers and scare away the cows and pigeons that infected the Father's Temple were all thought, measured and decided. Jesus labels the merchants with the less than flattering title of "thieves," and yet, as far as we can see, none of them dared to reply to Him, since, as Mark notes (11:18), "they feared Him." His mere presence demanded respect, and even put a brake on murderous desires, as had happened earlier in Nazareth, when His countrymen wanted to knock Him off, "But he passed through the midst of them and went away" (Lk 4:30). It could not have been easy to get up the courage to place hands on Jesus.

His manliness must have frightened His enemies, first and foremost because it was "manliness" and not mere "bravado." The bully is a braggart and rowdy, and his gestures tend to be the occasion for a brawl because, since his apparent audacity arises from a contrived passion, it gives rise to the passions of others, just as a fire ignites another fire. However, authentic anger, which is imposed by moral superiority and flows from reason and justice, makes those whom it is against languish. True courage is that anger placed at the service of justice. This is what frightens the evil, and such was Jesus' spirit. In order to unleash their fury, His enemies would have to wait until He wished to surrender His life of His own accord (cf. Jn 10:18).

As we have said, Jesus was not a rough person; He was not one of those who can tolerate or confront great labors because they have the

nature of a mountain man. On the contrary, His body possessed a particular finesse and an especially sensitive nervous system. The Letter to the Hebrews applies to Christ the words of Psalm 39 directing them to His Father upon His entrance into the world: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me” (Heb 10:5), which should be understood to mean “apt for suffering.” In witness of this truth, we can consider His sweat of blood in Gethsemane (Lk 22:44), and His eloquent words: “My soul is sorrowful even to death” (Mt 26:38).

This Jesus, whom we can imagine, on account of the few traits that we have just mentioned, worn-out, tanned, overwhelmed by the crowds who constantly surround Him to ask for bread and miracles or to demand teachings from heaven, tired of running around, lacking any material comfort, instead of complaining or asking for a moment of rest, instead offers others assistance to help them cope with their sufferings: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28).

Beyond all doubt, this is not the psychology of a man with personality conflicts, who is always complaining, moody, has conflicting emotions, a tangled mentality, or half-hearted desires.

4) Jesus’ masculine spirituality

If Jesus’ affectivity is manly and balanced, this is because His spirituality is the same way. It is well-known that those who are emotionally complicated do not usually guide themselves by reason, but

rather by their feelings and their emotional states, which makes them unpredictable. In contrast, Our Lord's affective or emotional life has always been thoroughly permeated with rationality. The human passions differ from those of animals in that, on account of the union of the soul with the body, those in the human are elevated by reason in an "eminent assumption,"¹⁴ and for this reason, "everything in man is human": "we men are *totally men* (and not animality *plus* spirituality), and moreover more perfectly animals than other animals. . . . Without the thesis of the *eminent assumption of forms* anthropology cannot capture the mystery of man."¹⁵ If this is true for every man, it is much more so for Christ. For this reason, the theological tradition coined a particular expression in order to refer to Christ's passions, calling them "propassions," a word that indicates their transcendental and pure nature.¹⁶

For this reason, if we consider, for example, Jesus' preaching and actions, it is not hard to see that for Him what matters is always what is objectively greater and more important, and not, as is often said, "emotional reasons" (which is often the same as saying the heart's whims). He assumes this same tone with the people and hence, as Bichlmair notes, Jesus appeals much more to the spirit than to the mere sentimentality of His listeners.

¹⁴ The expression is from Pithod, A., *El alma y su cuerpo*, Buenos Aires (1994), 55.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 54-56.

¹⁶ The word is from Saint Jerome, *Commentarium in Evangelium Mattheum*, I, 5. Cf. Saint Thomas, *S. Th.*, III, 46, 5, obj. 3 and ad 3. cf. Pietro Parente *Proposiones*, in: "Diccionario de Teología Dogmática," Barcelona (1963), 320.

We find another witness of His spiritual equilibrium by observing the focus of Jesus' attention: although He proclaims Himself "the way, the truth, and the life," "the bread of life," "the source of living waters," etc., He does not hold on to His listeners' affections in Himself, but rather directs them towards God the Father. This is a notable characteristic for a person who is gifted with a singular ability to attract others, as Christ had ("Everyone is coming to him," say John's disciples: Jn 3:26), for someone with His formidable ability to perform miracles, and the admiration that this gave rise to (to the point where they wanted to make Christ their king and proclaim Him messiah and "a great prophet": Lk 7:16). He does not allow those emotions to stop with Him and His person, but rather always directs them to the Heavenly Father. In some cases, even, He does not permit some to follow Him but rather demands that they become proclaimers of God's glory, as He did in the case of the Gerasene demonic after exorcizing him (Lk 8:38-39), or with the lepers who were cured, whom He sent to present themselves to the priests (Lk 17:14).

Jesus' masculine spirituality is also shown in His parables. All of them are the creation of a thought that is once manly and balanced. As Bichlmair says, if we did not know that these sermons and parables came from Jesus, with all that they say and present, we could conclude that they must produced by a man of spirit, a man. In fact, the tone of these little pearls of literature has concepts like work, friendship, fidelity and infidelity, fatherhood, the betrayal of a bad son, repentance, fatherly mercy, virginity, evil judges and dishonest administrators, the faithful woman and the foolish youth, servants without mercy and

fearful men, all of which pertain to the imagination of a man, to masculine ingenuity, and to manly ways of thinking. A woman of great talent and refined spirituality, even if she were able to create magnificent works like the Gospel parables, would have given them a different tone.

Jesus also had an ease to love, as is shown by His attitude towards John, Peter, Lazarus and his sisters, and others. However, His love has qualities that are distinguished by a spiritual elevation. Saint Mark refers to the encounter with the rich young man by saying: “Jesus, looking at him, loved him” (Mk 10:21; cf. 10:17-22). The evangelist mentions this gesture *after* the youth has told the Lord that he has fulfilled all of the commandments since his youth; it is precisely for this reason, seeing in him the “dough” for a saint, He looked at him, (that is, He penetrated his heart), He loved him, and He proposed a direct and sure way to holiness that the youth seemed to be seeking: “Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” Jesus’ love that shines forth in this episode reveals His motional balance. Let us consider:

First and foremost, we see a *spiritual love*, because He loves the spiritual goods of the youth, his desire for holiness and for purity, and not his physical qualities or goods; Jesus falls in love with the heart of the virtuous, or, at the very least, a heart that is able to be very virtuous.

Moreover, it is a *patient love*, neither untimely or inopportune; He only invites him to follow him when the youth shows signs of not being

satisfied with the common paths of every mortal; that is, when he seems to be one of those who *wants something more*.

However, it is also a *demanding love*, which calls to leave everything without ambiguities or watery proposals; He offers the path of the cross and thorns.

It is a *selfless love* that asks nothing for itself: “Give to the poor.”

The most outstanding characteristic is that it is *a love that respects freedom absolutely*. Jesus does not become bitter, nor does He look with disdain on the youth’s unexpected pusillanimity. Christ looks at him distance himself without reproaching him, without despising him and without disdain; in any case, Christ looks at him with a sadness hidden in the deepest depths of His heart.

From here it follows that the inconsistency of those who had attempted to present a sinister exegesis of Jesus’s love as a homosexual sort is clearly revealed. In its day, a great deal of attention was paid to the unfortunate work of the Freudian François Dolto *The Jesus of Psychoanalysis: A Freudian interpretation of the Gospel*.¹⁷ She interpreted Jesus’ love for John (“the beloved disciple”) as a narcissistic affection (“John is what remains of Christ’s narcissism, that is to say, the affective fixation on himself”) and the relationship of Lazarus with the Lord as a homosexual, “passionate, narcissistic friendship.” Even Lazarus’ death is explained in this way (“Lazarus despairs of being separated from Jesus, like a baby who is separated from its mother’s

¹⁷ Cf. Dolto, François, *The Jesus of Psychoanalysis: A Freudian interpretation of the Gospel*, Madrid (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979); the texts that I cite are found between pages 126-127.

breast and allows itself to die. Lazarus in fact needs Jesus. His love for Jesus is one of carnal dependence”)! Ideas in the same vein were given a boost by Morton Smith’s passing study when he claimed to have re-discovered, in 1958, fragments of a supposed “Secret Gospel of Mark,” used by the Carpocratian Gnostics of the second century, wherein it seems to insinuate that Jesus “initiated” some of His disciples into God’s kingdom with homosexual practices.¹⁸ In our days, this absurdity has found followers among the stars of the gay movement and also among some Protestant theologians who are defenders of the homosexual cause.¹⁹

The points that we have been making, and all the other marks of Jesus’ masculine and balance affectivity that we will recall in the points that follow, clearly show not only the sacrilegious nature of these theories, but also their essential incompatibility with the texts that place us in contact with the *flesh and bone Jesus* of the Gospels. For this reason, Romano Guardini, analyzing the Lord’s psychological structure, has affirmed: “Jesus was emphatically a man. The fact must not be allowed

¹⁸ According to Smith, in 1958 he discovered, in the Orthodoxy monastery of Mar Saba, near Jerusalem, in a letter from Clement of Alexandria, some fragments that allude to a “Secret Gospel of Mark.” Supposedly Clement affirmed that the Carpocratians had inserted certain texts into the authentic “Secret Gospel,” which Clement had known earlier. From the two texts that Clement cites as insertions, one seems to be understood in a carnal and homosexual meaning. Smith maintains that, in reality, the “Secret Gospel of Mark” was Mark’s original Gospel, while the one that we have in our canonical Bibles would be a version with the uncomfortable passages removed. Morton Smith’s theories were laid out in his book, *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel According to Mark* (1981). The author could never show the fragment that he found in Mar Saba since, according to him, after returning it to the monastery’s library “it disappeared.”

¹⁹ For example, see Jennings, Theodore W., *The Man Jesus Loved: Homoerotic Narratives From the New Testament* (2003). This author is a Protestant professor at the Chicago Theological Seminary.

to become obscured either by certain conventional ways of portraying him in art or by the types of piety or devotion which give rise to this portraiture. Jesus is made to appear as a tender, passive, half feminine individual, but this is due to a fatal misinterpretation which empties the notions of Jesus' 'gentleness,' 'humility,' or 'self-sacrifice' of all meaning. It would be equally erroneous, it must be admitted, to conceive of his masculinity exclusively in terms of the man of action, the aggressive type, or the man who is concerned with superficial notions about honor. Jesus' manhood was strong, deep-seated, and inspiring; but, typically, it was not governed by any passion or impulse: it was ruled entirely by the spirit. . . . An unbiased examination of the [*Gospel*] evidence shows clearly that his manhood was without trace of any of the baser passions [*that is, the instinctive attraction towards what is feminine*]. This is not because the evangelists were at pains to cover up such failings; nor is it because he had no feelings at all like other individuals, or because he was an ascetic and overcame them. A primordial warmth and fullness of life pervaded his whole personality. But his masculinity was completely integrated in his whole religious personality, more precisely, in a center which lay deeper and was mightier than the spiritual or religious center to be found in man. His manhood had been taken over by the divine power of love, understood in the purest sense of the word, and permeated by it. The manhood of Jesus was transformed into perfect, selfless, divine love."²⁰

²⁰ Guardini, Romano, *The Humanity of Christ: Contributions to a Psychology of Jesus*, (New York: Random House, 1964. What is in italics and what is found in parentheses are my clarifications.

2.

Jesus and women

1) Women and Christ's contemporaries

It must be recognized that, with respect to women, Jesus was not bound to the customs of His time and place. Among His strictest countrymen, women were discriminated against from birth, which later extended to the nation's political and religious life. "Woe to the one whose descendants are women!" says the Talmud. For some, the birth of a girl caused sadness and annoyance, and, once they grew up, girls would not have access to learning the Law. In the Mishnah it is said, "May the words of the Torah [the Law] be destroyed by fire before they are taught to women. . . . Whosoever teaches the Torah to his daughter is as if he were to teach her [to cause] disasters."

It is certain that expressions like these are sharply contrasted by others, like this one, regarding divorce, which was repeated by the rabbis: "The very altar sheds tears when a man divorces the wife of his youth." However, the great Presbyterian exegete Barclay, speaking

precisely of the institution of the Mosaic divorce, points out: “The tragedy was that practice fell so far short of the ideal. One thing vitiated the whole marriage relationship. The woman in the eyes of the law was a thing. She was at the absolute disposal of her father or of her husband. She had virtually no legal rights at all. To all intents and purposes a woman could not divorce her husband for any reason, and a man could divorce his wife for any cause at all. ‘A woman,’ said the Rabbinic law, ‘may be divorced with or without her will; but a man only with his will.’ The process of divorce was extremely simple. The bill of divorcement simply ran: ‘Let this be from me thy writ of divorce and letter of dismissal and deed of liberation, that thou mayest marry whatsoever man thou wilt.’ All that had to be done was to hand that document to the woman in the presence of two witnesses and she stood divorced.”²¹

For this reason, commenting on the apostles’ surprise at finding Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:27), the same author adds: “There is little wonder that the disciples were in a state of bewildered amazement when they . . . found Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman. We have already seen the Jewish idea of women. The Rabbinic precept ran: ‘Let no one talk with a woman in the street, no, not with his own wife.’ The Rabbis so despised women and so thought them incapable of receiving any real teaching that they said: ‘Better that the words of the law should be burned than delivered to women.’ They had a saying: ‘Each time that a man prolongs converse

²¹ Barclay, W., *Matthew*, in *Commentary on the New Testament*.

with a woman he causes evil to himself, and desists from the law, and in the end inherits Gehinnom.’ By Rabbinic standards Jesus could hardly have done a more shattering unconventional thing than to talk to this woman. Here is Jesus taking the barriers down.”²²

Elsewhere, explaining the Jewish background of the first letter to Timothy, the Scottish scholar adds: “No nation ever gave a bigger place to women in home and in family things than the Jews did; but officially the position of a woman was very low. In Jewish law she was not a person but a thing; she was entirely at the disposal of her father or of her husband. She was forbidden to learn the law; to instruct a woman in the law was to cast pearls before swine. Women had no part in the synagogue service; they were shut apart in a section of the synagogue, or in a gallery, where they could not be seen. A man came to the synagogue to learn; but, at the most, a woman came to hear. In the synagogue the lesson from Scripture was read by members of the congregation; but not by women, for that would have been to lessen ‘the honour of the congregation.’ It was absolutely forbidden for a woman to teach in a school; she might not even teach the youngest children. A woman was exempt from the stated demands of the Law. It was not obligatory on her to attend the sacred feasts and festivals. Women, slaves and children were classed together. In the Jewish morning prayer a man thanked God that God had not made him ‘a Gentile, a slave or a woman.’ In the *Sayings of the Fathers* Rabbi Jose ben Johanan is quoted as saying: ‘Let thy house be opened wide, and let the

²² Barclay, W., *John*, in: *Commentary on the New Testament*.

poor be thy household, and talk not much with a woman.’ A strict Rabbi would never greet a woman on the street, not even his own wife or daughter or mother or sister. It was said of woman: ‘Her work is to send her children to the synagogue; to attend to domestic concerns; to leave her husband free to study in the schools; to keep house for him until he returns.’”²³

Undoubtedly not all of the Jews thought this way, as we can see in the gentleness with which some men treated certain women, for instance, Joseph with Mary, Zachariah with Anna, etc. However, it must be agreed that Jewish thought in general at the time of Christ had not advanced very far in the treatment of women. It is for this reason that Jesus’ attitude with respect to women strongly contrasts with these expressions.

2) The changes introduced by Jesus

A man’s emotional maturity in his dealings with the feminine sex are measured by the ability to form healthy relationships of friendship and respect with women without these entailing disturbances, attachments, dangerous friendships, or a lack of control of his own sensibility.

Our Lord has no qualms about conversing publicly with the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:27), nor does He bear in mind the legal impurity of the woman with the hemorrhage (cf. Mt 9:20-22); He allows a sinful woman to draw near to Him in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and He even lets her touch Him in order to wash His feet and

²³ Barclay, W., *The First Epistle to Timothy*, in: *Commentary on the New Testament*.

cry over Him (cf. Lk 7:37); He forgives an adulterer, showing that it is unjust to have more severity with the woman's sin than with that of her male accomplice (cf. Jn 8:11). He distances Himself from the Mosaic law into order to affirm the equality of the rights and duties of both man and woman with respect to the marriage bond (cf. Mt 19:3-9; Mk 10:2-11); He was accompanied and maintained in His travelling ministry by several woman (cf. Lk 8:2-3).²⁴ To women He entrusts the first Pascal message, and even chooses them to announce His resurrection to the rest of the disciples (cf. Mt 28:7-10 and parallels).

Many of the women that Jesus encounters in His journey did not have an exemplar past, and perhaps in some cases they were not even living an exemplar present: the Samaritan woman had already lived with many different men, and Jesus shows that He knows that she is not married to the man with whom she is currently living; the woman who enters into the house of Simon the Pharisee was probably a prostitute, since the host says within himself that she "was a sinner," and he feels a certain repugnance towards her (Lk 7:39); the woman who was caught in adultery, whom Christ's enemies throw at His feet with the hope that He will be caught in a bind because she had been surprised in her crime; our Lord had expelled seven demons from Mary Magdalene (cf. Mk 16:9). Even then, Jesus' enemies, who accuse Him falsely, but fiercely, of being a glutton and a drunk (cf. Lk 7:34), an impostor (Mt

²⁴ Saint Luke recounts that in His proclamation of the Kingdom of God, Christ was accompanied by: "the Twelve and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources" (Lk 8:1-3).

27:63), possessed (cf. Mk 3:22), and a blasphemer (cf. Mt 26:65) . . . *never ever* allude even to the most minimal failing against chastity, nor do they even insinuate that Jesus was imprudent in that realm. The very fact that, in order to try the balance between His justice and His mercy, they choose a woman surprised in adultery (cf. Jn 8:1-11), demanding that He apply the Mosaic law to her, in all its harshness, is explained because they were certain that, if Jesus' behavior were in accord with the purity that He preached, He would have to *condemn her*. We know how it ends.

Even John, noting Jesus' special affection towards the three siblings of Bethany, two of whom were women, "Now Jesus *loved* Martha and her sister and Lazarus" (Jn 11:5), never insinuates that that feeling implied some disorder. The words of the same evangelist describing the episode of the Samaritan woman should be understood in the same way: "his disciples . . . were amazed that he was talking with a woman" (Jn 4:27); this amazement would not be understandable if Jesus had the custom of speaking to women, or if, as if they say, He were *overfamiliar* with them.

3) The surprising balance

Jesus' equilibrium is really extraordinary, since, at the same time it arouses the aforementioned amazement of His apostles, on at least two opportunities He let Himself be touched, kissed, and anointed by some women. The first was in the home of the Pharisee who invited him to dinner: "A Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he entered the

Pharisee's house and reclined at table. Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment" (Lk 7:36-38). The second scene is the one that we alluded to a short while ago, and the protagonist is Lazarus' sister: "Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil" (Jn 12:3). The two episodes are certainly different, and different as well are the motives for the anointings: in one case a poor sinful woman asked for mercy for her sins, while in the second, a young woman shows her gratitude for the one who had just restored her deceased brother to life.²⁵ In both cases, the women who acted were criticized; one for being bold, for touching the Master although she was a sinner; the other, for being wasteful. However, in both cases Jesus defended them, the one because she had shown great love (cf. Lk 7:47), and the other because she showed mercy to Him by anointing Him in advance of the anointing that would be incomplete at His burial (cf. Mt 26:10-12). However, it is worth mentioning that none of those around Jesus thought ill of Him, which speaks of the high regard they had for His affectivity. Judas himself, who it seems looked at Mary with

²⁵ There is a third event recounted that might perhaps be a variant of Luke's event, although nothing impedes it from being a distinct one. Both Matthew and Mark relate it: "When he was in Bethany reclining at table in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of perfumed oil, costly genuine spikenard. She broke the alabaster jar and poured it on his head" (Mk 14:3).

bitter eyes, did not think ill of her affection, but rather of her extravagance in wasting a jar of purest nard on the Lord's feet (cf. Jn 12:1-7).

4) The Master's teaching

In a certain sense, too, we can *deduce Christ's way of life* from His doctrine. What I mean to say is that there should be an extraordinary coherence between Jesus' preaching and His way of life. First and foremost, this is shown in the symmetry between the sermon of the Beatitudes and His death on the cross, which is the foreseeable outcome of the doctrine contained in His first public preachings. However, we also see this coherence in the fact that, inspired by having so many enemies conspiring in order to be able to accuse Him (Lk 6:7: "The scribes and the Pharisees watched him closely to see if he would cure on the Sabbath so that they might discover a reason to accuse him") and wanting to set up some false charge that would be believable (Mt 26:59: "The chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death"), He was never accused of not having fulfilled what He Himself preached or demanded from others. If Jesus had been inconsistent, the Sermon on the Mount would be sufficient to have a banquet of reproaches!

From here it follows that it is legitimate to think that Jesus' attitude towards women would have been exactly the attitude He taught. Regarding this point, His doctrine can be summarized in what He proclaimed at the beginning of His public ministry: "Everyone who

looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5:28). With these words, the Lord overcomes the exteriority of the Jewish teachers—who only pointed out the sin of acts that were external and consummated—condemning in this way the inclination of heart that makes a woman into an object of potential sexual satisfaction, an inclination that is expressed through a look of desire. The interior desire to achieve sensual or sexual satisfaction with a woman who does not belong to him produces a transformation in the man that is so profound that Jesus expresses it with the strong word of “adultery.” This desire, which is translated into a lustful look, reduces a woman to the level of “a thing,” and the man who desires her, to the level of a “manipulator.” Jesus Christ judges that this attitude is unworthy of a man (which is also true for woman who does the same).

Christ’s thought is completed with another expression from the same Sermon: “The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness” (Mt 6:22-23). “Adultery of soul,” the fruit of that sinful look, darkens the heart. The look that is wrongly desirous of a woman who becomes a sexual object, profoundly hurts the will that looks through the eyes. The man’s evil eyes spoils the image and the idea that he has of woman, and that vicious and harmful concept enters through the eye’s lamp perverting the heart of the lustful man.

It must be highlighted that these expressions of Jesus are part of the *novelty* of His doctrine; they reveal Jesus Christ’s heart, and they are,

precisely, *new teachings* that Jesus sets against the teaching of the old teachers who did not demand purity of intention but rather only of external acts. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5:27-28). Adultery, like carnal intercourse with someone else’s spouse, was condemned in the Old Testament. Our Lord adds (and with that powerful ‘But I say to you’) that physical contact is not essential to break chastity; the intention is enough. Jesus preaches interior purity because He lives it.

Our look is pure when it is directed to what we judge to be clean and pure; it is reverent in the face of what we consider sacred, and it is caring and understanding with those whom we love tenderly. However, it is greedy of what we value with utilitarian criteria, and voracious of what we calculate sensually. In this sense, it is not the woman’s feminine nature that gives rise to lubricious looks, but rather the *meaning* and the *value* that a woman represents for a man. From here it follows that the voluptuous man does not look impurely at his mom, nor his daughter, nor his sister (the pervert is the exception), because they *are appreciated* with holy and spiritual measures. However, in contrast, the lustful man does not do the same with other women. In contrast, the pure man casts a clean eye on his own wife and the women in his life as well as those of others, because he considers them all with the same measure. Thus is Jesus’ look: it is pure, because His heart is pure and His intentions are pure. His look is in accord with the *value* that every woman has for Him. In the Samaritan woman, He sees a soul tired and

thirsting for transcendental values, and He offers her the pure water that springs up to eternal life; in the woman caught in adultery, He sees fear and shame, and He offers her understanding and forgiveness (“Nor do I condemn you”); in the sinful woman, prostrate at His feet, He sees shame and humiliation, and He praises her love as shown in a repentance capable of wiping away past sins.

5) Jesus, celibate

In the latest days, some minds, contaminated by an anachronistic Gnosticism, have proclaimed a supposed intimate loving relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene (identified, on the other hand, with Lazarus’ sister). Some have even spoken of marriage and others of concubinage. There are even some who have made Jesus into an incestuous polygamist, united at the same time to both Mary and Martha, blood sisters and rival lovers.²⁶ Anyways, if it is a question of making things up, anyone can rig it so as to turn the Gospels into a soap opera, because the imagination does not require much brain development. On the other hand, it is very different to speak with a Biblical foundation and scientific seriousness. In this last sense, the Gospels neither affirm, nor give grounds to say, to think, or even to look for such odd thoughts.

From Magdalene’s gratitude at having seven demons cast out from her (cf. Mk 16:9), and from her fidelity during the Passion (cf. Mt

²⁶ For example, Margaret Starbird’s books, *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalen and the Holy Grail*; *The Goddess in the Gospels*; Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*; Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, etc.

27:53), it does not follow that there was any particular relationship between her and Jesus, nor are those things motivation for a healthy mind to fantasize along such lines. At the supreme moment of His death, Jesus did not think about the ex-demoniac of Magdalene, although artists of all times have painted her embracing the foot of the cross, but rather another Mary, with whom He was bound by blood. It is the solitude of His Mother that concerned the agonizing Lord, and not the mistaken widowhood of a desperate girlfriend. It is to the Virgin of Nazareth that He directs Himself in His last moments, proclaiming with His words a new pact between her and the beloved disciple: "Woman, behold, your son." "Behold, your mother." He does not do so between Magdalene and His Mother (whom He would have had to said: "Behold, your daughter-in-law; behold, your mother-in-law.>"). In any case, it is understandable that those who do not understand chastity or celibacy suppose that everyone else also has that same part of their conscience darkened.

Jesus was celibate. "No woman could say his life," exclaims Bichlmair. "The mere thought that a woman should share the life of this man is repugnant to our religious sensibility."²⁷ It's true. More over, not only our religious feeling, but also our theological reasoning is opposed to it, because even though marriage is something sacred, any woman whatsoever would be a limitation to the universal love of the Incarnate God. Even just restricting ourselves to the facts of the Gospels, the idea of a married Jesus is not only repugnant to the health

²⁷ Bichlmair, *The Man Jesus*, Buenos Aires (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1953), 69.

of our imaginations and of our emotions, but even to intellectual honesty and scientific investigation. We cannot invent things in Jesus that the sacred authors do not have, unless we want to confuse exegesis with sensational novels.

Jesus could not belong to any woman; the awareness of His absolute surrender to the mission entrusted to Him by His Father would make it impossible. His vocation is complete and total (cf. Lk. 2:49).

On the other hand, His celibacy is demanded in coherence with the renunciation that He asked from those who wanted to follow Him completely: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt 10:37). “If any one comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:26).²⁸ “Peter began to say to him, ‘We have given up everything and followed you.’ Jesus said, ‘Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come’” (Mk 10:28-30). Jesus, who considered unworthy of

²⁸ The Greek verb “*miséo*” means “to hate,” “to detest,” and, by extension “to love less,” which is its meaning here. Barclay explains this expression: “We must not take his words with cold and unimaginative literalness. Eastern language is always as vivid as the human mind can make it. When Jesus tells us to hate our nearest and dearest, he does not mean that literally. He means that no love in life can compare with the love we must bear to him” (*Luke*, in: *Commentary on the New Testament*).

His school anyone who put discipleship on one side of the balance, and any family member or relative on the other, could not, honestly, have been bound to anyone on this earth. Whoever praises those who say that they have given up everything to follow Him, cannot Himself be bound to anything or to anyone.

From this it follows that Jesus' chastity is a necessity that His heart imposes, not as a limitation (because He is unable to love), but rather from *an excess of love* for God and for souls. In His case, it is, truly, a virtuous chastity, because not every chastity is such. As Bruckberger writes, "everything that is materially chaste, is not necessarily virtuous because of it: there is a chastity of stones, and that of dry hearts, that of misers of themselves and that of the impotent, that of blessed cowards who are afraid of hell. All of those sorts of chastity are rotten."²⁹

Jesus was celibate on account of a free act of His will. He did not accept chastity, as some think, because *if He had not, He could not have been free to move about*. In other words, they claim it was as a *condition* bound to the sort of life that He had to lead (without a home, without a fixed residence, without money). On the contrary, Jesus chooses it *for itself*, on account of the intrinsic beauty it has as *a way to love God with His whole being, body and soul*. He does it in the same sense that later Saint Paul will call the state of virginity: "euschimon" (1 Cor 7:35), which means what is noble, decent, decorous, distinguished. The Vulgate translates into

²⁹ Bruckberger, R., *Historia de Jesucristo*, Barcelona (1966).

Latin as “quod honestum est,” that which is worthy (worthy to be loved for itself, regardless of any utility that it might have in addition).³⁰

It is true that the New Testament gives Christ the title of “Bridegroom” (John, the forerunner, calls himself “the friend of the bridegroom”: Jn 3:29). However, this is always to be understood as the mystical espousal of Christ with the souls of His faithful: “I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (1 Cor 11:2). In other words, He is the spouse of the Church: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her” (Eph 5:25). Christ is spouse in a spiritual sense, as united with the Church through a surrender without reserve. On the other hand, He is not a spouse in the sense of human marriage, between a man and a woman. In this sense, Jesus is both virgin and model of virginity.

It is precisely in Christ that the Apostle seems to be thinking when he praises virginity to the Corinthians: “An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and *he is divided*. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but

³⁰ In Latin, the word “honestum” is used of that which is good in itself and of itself, independently of the advantages that it could offer us (since, in such case it would be a “*useful good*”) or of the pleasure it might afford us (in which case we would be speaking of a “*delightful good*”).

for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord *without distraction*” (1 Cor 7:32-35). Even if Saint Paul has a high perception of marriage (1 Cor 7:38: “The one who marries his virgin does well”), he acknowledges, nonetheless, that marital love imposes *a division in the heart of the married person*: between dedication to God and dedication to the spouse. Virgins avoid that division by completely surrendering themselves, without shortcuts, to God. Jesus Christ is not a man of a divided heart, as His life from His infancy bears witness, since at that point He declared Himself totally dedicated to the things of His Father, as we saw earlier, mentioning His being lost and found among the doctors of the law (cf. Lk 2:49); and, as He would repeat on another occasion: “But he said in reply to the one who told him, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? . . . Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Mt 12:48, 50).

Jesus was celibate, a virgin, and a virginizer, meaning, He inspires people to virginity, in spite of the fact that no one ever held marriage in higher esteem than He, as we will say in the next chapter.

3.

Knowledge of the Divine plan regarding sexuality

The emotional and sexual maturity of a person is also measured by the level of their knowledge and acceptance of the Divine law in this delicate realm. From here arises the parallels between the current debasement of sexuality (an undoubtable sign of immaturity) and the ignorance of the Divine law, both natural and revealed or, even, rebellion against what it imposes.

Since He is God incarnate, Jesus was the author of the Divine law. However, He also had a human intelligence, and in it, a marvelous and unique understanding of the divine plans regarding human sexuality was given. This He passed on to men.

First and foremost, the Gospels show us the very high notion of what Jesus called “the beginning”: “From the beginning it was not so.” The expression recurs twice in the discussion with the Pharisees regarding divorce. The passage reads: “Some Pharisees approached

him, and tested him, saying, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?’ He said in reply, “‘Have you not read that from *the beginning* [in Greek: *ap arjés*; in Latin: *ab initio*], the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.’ They said to him, ‘Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss [her]?’ He said to them, ‘Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but *from the beginning* [*ap arjés – ab initio*] it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery” (Mt 19:3-9).

“The beginning” is not only the “historical beginning” of the world but rather, and above all, the moment of foundation in which God, creating everything, put His law in the nature of things and in the heart of man. For Our Lord, the Creator’s primordial plan is paradigmatic and normative. He, with all of His authority as the divine legislator, by means of His incarnation, returns the Divine law’s original strength, its vigor, without the dispensations that the divine tolerance had given, having in mind the hardness—and weakness—of the human heart.

In Jesus’ eyes, the relationship between a man and a woman is the highest and most profound that can be established between two humans: *they are no longer two, but one flesh*. Jesus uses the Biblical expression “flesh” in the Biblical meaning of “the whole person” (and

not only the body). “Only one flesh” means “only one thing”: one physical unity, only one heart, one harmony of emotions, a concert of spirits. It is a “communion of persons.” This union is so strong that it takes priority over the filial bonds of blood (the tightest bonds there are among humans): *for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife.*

Nevertheless, this is not the case for just any union between man and woman, but only for that which is sealed with the divine blessing (marriage); that is why the Lord clarifies: *unless the marriage is unlawful*, meaning, a union that is not marriage (be it fornication, free union, or adultery), which does not establish a true bond.³¹

The same idea lies in the Sermon on the Mount, in the expression that we already commented on regarding the adulterous look, which the Lord completes saying: “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.’ But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Mt 5:27-32). In this text, the legislative force (or restoring force of the natural divine law, as is the case here), that Christ is aware He possesses, shines forth more clearly: “You have heard,” “It was said . . . But I say to you.”

³¹ Regarding this point see my article: *Jesucristo, ¿admitió el divorcio?*, Rev. Diálogo 15 (1996), 181-188.

4.

The virtuous equilibrium of Jesus' affectivity

Jesus' balance is notable in all aspects of His affectivity and His emotionality, which therefore posits, as a logical consequence, also a perfect normality in the realm of sexuality.

Earlier we alluded to the fact that Jesus could be energetic and wield His strength, as occurred in the expulsion of the merchants from the Temple (cf. Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-17; Jn 2:14-17). However, the description of that episode made by the evangelists is infinitely removed from the turbulent anger of the bewildered, or the one who channels his nervous energy in a convulsive tantrum. His indignation does not leave its proper margins.

In the same way, we note that Christ never becomes impatient in the face of offenses made against His own person (as tends to occur to people who are unsure of themselves or those who have psychological complexes), but rather only when the insult affects God's glory or His

mission of redemption (that is, against those who wanted to distance Him from the cross, as occurred with Peter in the episode at Caesarea Philippi: cf. Mt 16:23).

Jesus never punishes in excess; cruelty, revenge, jealousy, intrigue, and spite, which usually identify persons with emotional difficulties or sexual deviations, are unknown to Jesus. The attitude that Jesus shows to Judas in the Last Supper and in the Garden of Olives (a generous heart, offering forgiveness, a reproach without hatred) seems more like an invitation to repentance, and it is sufficient to infinitely separate Christ from humiliated and resentful men.

We should also mention His attitude with His disciples after the Resurrection: neither a reproach for their betrayal, nor a reminder of their abandonment of which He was the object, nor a mention of the cowardice that all hearts fall prey to in tragic hours.

On the other hand, Jesus is never depressed, moody, or resentful, habitual defects that accompany personalities with conflicts of sexual identity or emotional irregularities.

Nor does He present any doubts regarding His personality, His mission, or His relation with God the Father. On the contrary, He is perfectly aware of His mission: to establish the Kingdom of God and to attract souls to reconciliation with the Father by means of His own sacrifice on the cross. He begins by preaching the coming of the kingdom, announcing repeatedly the cross, and heads with determination to Jerusalem, where He knows that He must be delivered up to His passion and death. He has a perfect awareness of His

messianic character, of His power over the divine law (see in the Sermon on the Mount the repeated “You have heard it was said . . . but I say to you”), of His identity with the Father (His enemies will accuse Him of it, and He will not deny it—Jn 5:18—: “For this reason the Jews tried all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath but he also called God his own father, making himself equal to God”).

His filial relationship with God the Father is absolutely perfect: He feels loved by the Father, He has a limitless trust in Him (Jn 11:41-42: “Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me”); He feels tenderness and an unconditional love (Mk 14:36: “Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will”). All of this distinguishes Him from troubled people and from those who suffer from emotional dramas (especially those afflicted in their sexuality), who, quite often, have suffered in their childhood a difficult relationship with their earthly father. This experience often ends in an ill-conditioned and bitter relationship with God the Father. However, in spite of this difference, Jesus does not lack empathy towards these neighbors. On the contrary, in His passion He was also burdened their sufferings, in such a way that every man and woman, no matter what their sufferings or conflicts are, will always find understanding and consolation in Him.³²

³² Regarding the problem of fatherhood and its repercussion in the experience of Divine Fatherhood, see our work: *Fatherhood in Crisis: The Absent Father*. Virtus Series 7; and regarding God the Father and Jesus Christ: *The Father Revealed by Jesus Christ*, Virtus Series 9, both published by IVEPress.

On the other hand, Jesus shows that He has very balanced ideas of evil, of suffering, of pain, and of the cross, which is a sign of a serene, mature, and completely integrated affectivity. In Him, we see, in an extraordinary path, the *patri aude*, dare to suffer!, which has been pointed out as the mark of the man capable of maintaining his sanity in the most critical vicissitudes of life.³³ Jesus does not shrink away from the cross; on the contrary, He reaches the point of calling a friend who wanted to dissuade Him from His path a “demon” (cf. Mt 16:23). It has been said that suffering that seems to have no point leads to despair.³⁴ However, for Jesus, suffering—His passion—has a transcendent and unique meaning, a value that He is not willing to abandon for any shortcut or promise (which is why He rejects, with such extraordinary force, the temptations the devil sets before Him in the desert, temptations that are nothing other than slights of hand from the cross: cf. Mt 4:1-11). This shows that Jesus is a man full of hope, of conviction, of security, and, for the same reason, of profound emotional and even sexual equilibrium, since the overwhelming majority of sexual disorders are born as (false) escape routes when someone does not know how to confront or deal with some suffering.

At the same time, Jesus has a very clear, intense, and convinced understanding of the meaning of life and of His mission, as He vehemently affirms to Pilate—Jn 18:37—: “For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.” Nowadays it would be said that He is a supremely *assertive* person. This immunizes Him

³³ Cf. Frankl, Viktor, *Logotherapy and existential analysis*.

³⁴ Cf. Frankl, Viktor, *The Will to Meaning*.

against all forms of neurosis (and, consequently, from any emotional or sexual conflict, since these are passing or permanent neurotic manifestations).

Nor are any childish or infantile (immature) psychological traits seen in Christ. His images and parables are extraordinarily simple, but they are in no way childish. Jesus is a person who uses numerous symbols, but these do not reveal unresolved conflicts, obsessive ideas, unconquered fears, or unprocessed failures. In His personality, there are no traits of the young, but immature and inexperienced, idealist. Jesus has a clear idea of His ideal, which is the establishment of His kingdom, but He does not show callow enthusiasm or utopic visions, and when those around Him are all shouting and exclaiming, thinking that He is about to establish His earthly reign, He alone weeps over the fall of Jerusalem, because He knows that His reign will be raised from His rejection and death at the hand of His own people: "The whole multitude of his disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen. . . . As he drew near, he saw the city and wept over it" (Lk 19:37, 41).

Jesus is completely realistic. He always knows and preaches that triumph passes through the cross, suffering, and death, after which the resurrection will follow (cf. Jn 12:24: "unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat"). He acts like a man of vast and great experience, in spite of His youth. He is not fooled regarding human hearts (Jn 2:25: "He did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well"). He is

prudent; He knows the times of each man (Jn 13:7: “Jesus answered and said to [Peter], “What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later”).

Nor do we find in His personality an aged, decrepit nature: He is not a pessimistic man, nor hopeless, nor repetitive or fixed on certain issues (as we see in many men of aged mentality); He is bothered neither by the crowds nor by children (cf. Mt 19:14), nor does He become impatient when faced with the inexperience of His disciples. All of these things reveal his psychic and emotional balance, and are also the source of the harmony that reigned in all His other faculties, even the instinctive ones.

One trait that distinguishes those men who are emotionally balanced from those who are not is humor. Some, among who the devil is included, can be ironic or sardonic, but they do not know what true humor is. In his essay on *Tiberius*, Marañón recalls that for many, humor becomes the letter of marque to crucify things, people, or symbols that we imagine have done us wrong, all with a smile; in other words, it can be the disguised spearhead of a resentment.

Jesus manifests several traits of healthy humor, which in Him is born from the profound happiness that often overflowed in His soul. He was a happy man (Lk 10:21: “He rejoiced”) who knew how to participate in the happiness of others (turning up at weddings and banquets, like the ones held by Matthew, Simon the Pharisees, Martha and her siblings, etc.), and He desired that others might be participants in His own joy (Jn 15:11: I want that “my joy may be in you and your

joy may be complete”). His humor is delicate as is seen in the dialogue that He has with Philip before the multiplication of the loaves, inviting His extremely poor disciples to give a huge crowd something to eat (cf. Jn 6:5-6), or, when walking upon the waters of the lake, in the midst of a storm that almost overthrows the boat of his apostles, feigns to pass them by, leaving them perplexed and more frightened than before (cf. Mk 6:48). It is true that we do not know many of the traits of Jesus’ humor; however, from His other qualities it is easy to conclude that it would not be worldly, nor sensual, nor vulgar, nor clownish, nor rogue, nor shameless, like those who, lacking true grace and wit, resort to frivolous acuity or the complicity of shameless passions. Neither would it be a hurtful, resentful, offensive, or humiliating humor. The Lord’s humor must have been respectful and measured. He did use irony, to be sure, as when He asked His enemies: “I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of these are you trying to stone me?” (Jn 10:32); and exaggeration too, talking about camels that try to enter through tiny holes, beams stuck in eyes, or caretakers of pigs who feed their animals with pearls.

I completely agree with the reflections with which Chesterton closes his book *Orthodoxy*: “Joy, which was the small publicity of the pagan, is the gigantic secret of the Christian. And as I close this chaotic volume I open again the strange small book from which all Christianity came; and I am again haunted by a kind of confirmation. The tremendous figure which fills the Gospels towers in this respect, as in every other, above all the thinkers who ever thought themselves tall. His pathos was natural, almost casual. The Stoics, ancient and modern, were proud of

concealing their tears. He never concealed His tears; He showed them plainly on His open face at any daily sight, such as the far sight of His native city. Yet He concealed something. Solemn supermen and imperial diplomatists are proud of restraining their anger. He never restrained His anger. He flung furniture down the front steps of the Temple, and asked men how they expected to escape the damnation of Hell. Yet He restrained something. I say it with reverence; there was in that shattering personality a thread that must be called shyness. There was something that He hid from all men when He went up a mountain to pray. There was something that He covered constantly by abrupt silence or impetuous isolation. There was some one thing that was too great for God to show us when He walked upon our earth; and I have sometimes fancied that it was His mirth.”

5.

Jesus and the oblation of friendship

The difference between an unripe pear and a ripe one is that the first is indigestible and the second can be eaten. Analogously, the immature person is one who cannot go beyond even the borders that mark his or her ego, meaning, they are not in condition to *give themselves*. In contrast, the mature person can give themselves without reserve, because they really possess themselves. The mature person can die to themselves—and they do so—in order to give themselves to a cause, an ideal, or a person. From here it follows that the culmination of emotional development becomes clear in the capacity for friendship and the oblation of self. The love of friendship is the most complete form of love; it is the love that establishes reciprocal emotional and spiritual bonds, as a sort of “circulation” of love. A friend is capable of giving love and of receiving it and, above all, of loving their friend in themselves and not because of the pleasure or benefits that they can

obtain from their company or their presence. However, even among friends there are degrees: the lowest degree is held by those who can only respond with love to the love that they receive. The highest, on the other hand, pertains to those who are able to love without needing to be loved first, or even taking the risk that perhaps they will never be paid back with love for the love that they have given.

Jesus was a great friend, meaning, a person with a great capacity for friendship. However, His friendship was the very highest; He gives it even though He does not receive it.

Friendship also has other nuances. There is a love of friendship that unites equals who are not blood relatives; there is a love of friendship among siblings; there is a love of conjugal friendship (Saint Thomas defines marriage as a most special form of friendship³⁵); there is also a friendship that is proper between the teacher and the disciple; finally, there is a special love between a father—or a mother—and a child.

The sort of friendship that we observe between Christ and His disciples is similar to this last one. Indeed, Peter, John, and James are friends among themselves and also friends of Jesus. However, these bonds are not equal. The first is a friendship *inter pares*, whereas as the second is of filiation. This is in spite of the fact that Jesus was probably be younger than several of the disciples. There are characteristics of the relation between Jesus and them that support this classification. Jesus treats His disciples, and especially those whom He chose as Apostles, like a father: He educates, instructs, defends, encourages, corrects,

³⁵ Cf. Saint Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 123.

challenges, and lifts them up; He leads them to the Heavenly Father; He gives them wings so that they can fly by themselves. With them He exercises a most delicate providence. In turn, the disciples give Our Lord admiration, respect, reverence (Lk 5:8: “When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, ‘Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man’”), trust, and their needs (Jn 6:68: “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”). They are friends, but like a father is with his dearly beloved children.

This love of paternal friendship leads to a *certain solitude* of soul, something personal to Jesus. In reality, every human being has an incommunicable dimension of their soul that only God can penetrate. However, in no one is this seen like it is in a father; this is especially true in moments of suffering in which the father, in order not to grieve his children, does not share with them everything he is suffering. The children want the father to unload his burdens on them, but the father, on account of fatherly love itself, feels himself obligated to spare them from that burden.

In no one is that “solitude of heart” perceived like it is in Jesus, even when He is surrounded by men. Even in the moments of greatest feeling, Jesus in a certain sense continues to be alone with God the Father. This is seen at the Last Supper, when Christ’s gestures and words, filled to the brim with emotion, find no adequate echo among those who were His own. Even John, who eats while resting on His chest, remains far removed from the depths in which the Lord lives.

The gap becomes even deeper in Gethsemane: “Peter, could you not keep watch with Me for an hour?”

Nonetheless, this does not impede the establishment of an intense bond between these hearts. Jesus was not only fully but also completely human; and that perfection makes His capacity for friendship overflow for His friends: He gives them more than they can receive. In contrast, their friendship for Him could never fill His heart. It is a friendship that gives infinitely more than it receives, even though it wants and accepts that unequal circulation.

This shines out in His dealings with the Apostles. In spite of the disproportion between Jesus and His friends, He always lowers Himself to them. He recognizes the qualities and personal merits of each one; for this reason He chose Peter as head of the rest on account of the sincerity and generosity of the love of that hardened fisherman, but He privileges John (*the disciple whom Jesus loved*) with a special intimacy owed, perhaps, to the innocence of his age, and He appoints Judas as administrator of the community money because he was skilled for earthly business. He also knows the state of each heart: “You are clean, but not all” (Jn 13:10). However, He is aware of the limits and defects of each one, their weak points, weaknesses, and lacks. “Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him” (Jn 6:64). Sometimes, He even predicts it for them: “This night all of you will have your faith in me shaken” (Mt 26:31). Yet, even then, He does not reject them after they have fallen; rather, He touches their hearts in order to invite them to return, as He does to

Peter with a simple yet heartfelt look in Caiaphas's patio: "The Lord turned and looked at Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, 'Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.' He went out and began to weep bitterly" (Lk 22:61-62). The same reproach, directed at Judas in the Garden of Olives, exudes more sorrow for his straying than for the betrayal of which He was the object: "Jesus said to him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?'" (Lk 22:48).

Jesus establishes an order in His friendship, because authentic love is also ordered.³⁶ Although He loves all of His friends, He does not love them all equally. To choose always implies making a hierarchy, and the love of charity is a love of *predilection*. By choosing the Twelve, He shows a preference for them with respect to the other disciples. Even among the Apostles, Peter, James, and John were privileged, as Christ made them witnesses of special spiritual experiences (some miracles, His transfiguration, His agony in Gethsemane). However, His love neither absorbs them nor does it become favoritism; if He allows John to rest on His chest, and answers questions that no one else heard (revealing to him who the traitor is: cf. Jn 13:24), He nonetheless did not leave John as His vicar on earth, but rather Peter, *who had denied Him three times*.

Jesus does not show Himself to be jealous with His disciples; He is not overprotective, meddling, or controlling. In the face of

³⁶ "There must needs be some order in things loved out of charity, which order is in reference to the first principle of that love, which is God" (Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 26, a. 1).

misunderstandings He reacts with hurt but also with magnanimity (“But they understood nothing of this; the word remained hidden from them and they failed to comprehend what he said” Lk 18:34). He is forgiving: He does not become resentful in the face of abandonment and denial, and during the apparitions after the Resurrection, He never alludes to the ingratitude or infidelity shown during the Passion by His weak friends.

Jesus’ emotional maturity stands out like an intense star in the night sky in the clearest attitude that an extraordinary mature person can offer: *the ability to love without being loved in return*, and even more, *to love while being hated*. The Old Testament considered the one who loved those who were his own and hated his enemies as someone worthy of praise. Taking revenge on an enemy was not seen as a failing; rather, it seemed “normal,” the *norm*: “Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” (Ex 21:24). The Book of Leviticus orders: “Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your own people” (Lv 19:18). This would seem to indicate that it was not necessary to apply the same measure with foreigners, and even less to enemies. Jesus knows this way of thinking, but He deliberately overcomes this limitation of the Law by citing an idea that was commonly accepted among His countrymen: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust” (Mt 5:43-45). Indeed, He even goes beyond that: “But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those

who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Lk 6:27-28). Love, do good, bless, and pray. He did not simply leave it at words: “When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, they know not what they do’” (Lk 23:33-34). Saint Paul expresses this fullness and maturity of Christ’s love by reminding us: “But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. . . . While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son” (Rm 5:8-10).

No one loved as He did.

6.

Conclusions

In the preceding pages, we have pointed out many of the elements that show the “health” of Jesus’ affectivity and that, as a consequence, show His emotional, passionate, and, if we can be permitted to say so, His sexual balance; in other words, they reveal *His perfect chastity*. Those elements can be broken down into direct and indirect signs of His balance.

Direct signs of His balanced personality are:

- His temperance and mortification: He fasted 40 days and 40 nights in the desert; He spent entire, or, at the very least, large portions of nights in prayer; He had no place to rest His head, He was an extraordinary wayfarer, and put up, without any complain, with thirst, the sun, fatigue, the backtalk of those around Him, etc.
- An organic balance and healthy life can be derived from His great physical endurance.

- The incredible prudence, perfect justice, and enormous courage that characterize Him; these virtues suppose an excellent parallel in all the other moral virtues (since they all grow together in perfection), and notably in chastity.
- The great realism with which He judges sin, the weaknesses of others, the situation of men and of the world, the qualities and limits of each person, etc.
- His great understanding of life, and the clear awareness He has with respect to the ultimate end of all things.
- The supernatural criteria by which He is guided (as we can see, summarized, in the Sermon on the Mount).
- The conviction of His personality.
- The ability to capture the beauty of nature, the innocence of children, the honor of marriage, the dignity of women, etc.

Indirect signs of His balance include the absence of the disturbances and vices that usually accompany people with affective and/or sexual disorders. Concretely, in Jesus we see:

- There are no fears that disturb Him. On the contrary, He has an enormous trust (Mt 10:28: “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul”; Mt 17:7: “Do not be afraid.”)
- He does not have depressive ideas.
- He does not show any emotional defects and, even less, any lack of fatherly affection or support.

CONCLUSIONS

- He shows no misunderstandings regarding evil or sufferings.
- He does not have inferiority complexes.
- He shows no obsessions.
- He does not have a temperamental base that is nervous, tense, anxious, or moody.
- He does not express an understanding of life that is hedonistic, sensual, or materialist.
- He does not encourage weaknesses, comfort, laziness, or sensuality.
- He does not suffer from gluttony or lack of sobriety (vices that often trigger affective and sexual disorders).
- He does not suffer from hatred, resentment, antipathy, harshness, dislikes, anger, etc.
- He does not nourish any pride whatsoever (a vice that usually brings a fall into impurity as a punishment).
- He does not hold erroneous doctrines about sexuality.

In short: in Jesus of Nazareth, such as we discover Him in the Gospels, we see a person with the conditions that make for a perfect psychosexual balance and emotional maturity. So perfect is that balance that He is able to challenge His adversaries who surround Him: “Can any of you charge me with sin?” (Jn 8:46). For this reason, Saint Paul makes Him equivalent to the *state of the perfect man*, with the *maturity of the fullness of Christ* (cf. Eph 4:13).

Only a man like this can be our model and guide us without hesitations through the difficult path of human maturity. This is because in the mystery of Christ His complete perfection and close humanity are joined together. This is why He Himself insists on being followed: “I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (Jn 13:15). His Apostles have also insisted on this point, as Peter does in proclaiming that Jesus has preceded us so that “[we] should follow in his footsteps” (1 Pt 2:21).

In this sense, we should take as our itinerary those words of the author of the letter to the Hebrews: “keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus . . . consider” Him attentively (Heb 12:2-3).

