



Celibacy as Charism and Vocation in the Life of Capuchin Friars

Ricardo Putrawan Gowasa^{a,1}; Triman Sihura^{b,2}

^a Parahyangan Catholic University Bandung, Indonesia

^b Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma, Italia

¹ rivanrenimus1697@gmail.com

² threeman.sihura@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted: June 5, 2026

Revised: September 15, 2026

Accepted: September 25, 2026

Keywords:

Celibacy;
Capuchin Order;
Sexuality;
Self-Control;
Sacramental Life;
Kingdom of God.

Kata-kata Kunci:

Selibat;
Ordo Kapusin;
Seksualitas;
Penguasaan Diri;
Hidup Sakramental;
Kerajaan Allah.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.53396/media.v7i2.940>

ABSTRACT:

This study examines how perpetually professed Capuchin friars understand and live celibacy as a charism and vocation, identifying challenges and practices that sustain their commitment. It employs a qualitative approach combining a review of Church documents, Capuchin Constitutions, theological writings, and relevant literature with in-depth interviews with Capuchin friars in the Nias Islands. Interview responses were categorized and analyzed in relation to the theological and spiritual foundations of celibacy. The findings present celibacy as a freely embraced divine gift expressed through union with Christ, service to others, and prophetic witness to the Kingdom of God. Prayer, sacramental participation, healthy friendships, and constructive activities support fidelity and the responsible integration of sexuality. However, the study identifies limitations in understanding constitutional guidance on managing sexual urges, alongside personal initiatives such as gardening, exercise, music, reading, and writing. It concludes that sustaining celibacy requires ongoing spiritual and affective formation, deeper appropriation of the Capuchin Constitutions, and contextual, humane accompaniment that integrates personal responsibility with service and fraternity.

ABSTRAK:

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji pemahaman dan penghayatan selibat sebagai karisma dan panggilan pada saudara Kapusin berkaul kekal serta mengidentifikasi tantangan dan praktik yang menopang kesetiaan mereka. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang memadukan kajian dokumen Gereja, Konstitusi Kapusin, tulisan teologis, dan literatur relevan dengan wawancara mendalam terhadap saudara Kapusin di Kepulauan Nias. Jawaban wawancara dikategorikan dan dianalisis dalam kaitannya dengan landasan teologis dan spiritual selibat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa selibat dipahami sebagai karunia ilahi yang diterima secara bebas dan diwujudkan melalui persatuan dengan Kristus, pelayanan kepada sesama, serta kesaksian profetis tentang Kerajaan Allah. Doa, kehidupan

sakramental, persahabatan sehat, dan kegiatan konstruktif menopang kesetiaan serta pengintegrasian seksualitas secara bertanggung jawab. Namun, ditemukan keterbatasan pemahaman terhadap pedoman konstitusi mengenai pengelolaan dorongan seksual, disertai inisiatif pribadi seperti berkebun, berolahraga, bermusik, membaca, dan menulis. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa pemeliharaan selibat memerlukan pembinaan spiritual dan afektif berkelanjutan, pendalaman serta penghayatan Konstitusi Kapusin, dan pendampingan kontekstual yang manusiawi dengan memadukan tanggung jawab pribadi, pelayanan, dan persaudaraan.

Copyright © 2026, Authors



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

INTRODUCTION

The celibate life is a gift from God and a free choice of human beings. This means that the celibate life is a special gift from God, without extinguishing human free will. Celibacy is “living unmarried for the sake of the Kingdom of God.”¹ Some terms often used to express living unmarried for the sake of the Kingdom of God include celibacy, living in purity, living in virginity, and holy living as practiced by religious people and friars. Celibacy expresses the perfection of love for God and neighbor.² Celibates choose to remain unmarried so that they can live the Gospel of Jesus Christ more perfectly. They are chosen and consecrated by God Himself, sent by the Son and inspired by the Holy Spirit³ for the service of God’s people.

Celibacy is not without consequences. One consequence of celibacy is the “obligation to live celibacy perfectly.”⁴ “Living celibacy perfectly” means abstaining from all forms of sexual pleasure or enjoyment. In other words, celibates, because they freely and voluntarily choose to live a celibate life, have an obligation to “live out their celibate status and learn to appreciate it as a special gift from God.”⁵ Furthermore, celibacy certainly does not extinguish sexual desire. As sexually healthy men or women, those who choose and live a celibate life carry within themselves sexual urges. This means that celibates live a celibate life as men or women who have sexual urges. Therefore, it is not impossible for celibates to fall into actions that violate the celibate life.

In this modern era, celibacy is increasingly in the spotlight. This is due to the issue of sexual abuse committed by priests. The September 2014 edition of *Hidup* magazine, on page 5, entitled “*Selibat: Berat atau Berkat*,” discusses the issue of celibacy in the Catholic Church. The article states that approximately 2% of Roman Catholic priests are suspected of sexual abuse.⁶ John Mansford Prior concluded that one of the causes of the crisis of celibacy among priests is their dissatisfaction with their pastoral work. This formulation is based on the research findings of Andrew Greeley, an American priest and sociologist, who found that violations of celibacy take various forms. This has become a disturbing topic of discussion among the faithful. Sexual violence committed by priests is a reflection on the Church and those who adhere to celibacy. The crisis of celibacy is a challenge not only for celibates, but also for the Church.

Pope Francis strongly condemned priests who commit sexual violence. On December 5, 2013, he formed the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors as a form of the Catholic Church’s commitment to combating sexual crimes among celibates and invited celibates

¹ Roy S. Djikarya, *100 Tanya-Jawab Mengenai Imam Diocese, Imam Praja, Imam Sekular, Imam Keuskupan* (Jakarta: Obor, 1992), 26.

² Al. Bagus Irawan, *Seks, Selibat, Dan Persahabatan Sebagai Karisma* (Jakarta: Obor, 2009), 1.

³ Edison R. L. Tinambunan, “Formasi Berkelanjutan: Membermakan Kekinian Imam,” *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 21, no. 1 (2020): 28, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v21i1.295>.

⁴ KWI, *Kitab Hukum Kanonik (Codex Iuris Canonici)*, 1983 (Jakarta: Obor, 2006), Kan. 599.

⁵ Kan. 247 §1.

⁶ Benny Sabdo, “Hidup Selibat Para Imam,” *Hidup*, September 2014, 8.

to reflect on the message and call of the Gospel to love one another as Jesus loved His people.⁷ Mgr. Julius Sunarko, Bishop of the Diocese of Purwokerto, believes that cases of sexual abuse committed by priests are caused by a distorted understanding of the sanctity of celibacy. He says that priests need to be aware of the erotic energy within themselves and the sanctity of their genitals, so that they are able to experience these erotic urges in a good and wise manner in accordance with God's will.⁸ In this regard, celibates must reexamine the essence of their vocation.

The author observes that celibacy is not an easy lifestyle choice because it constantly presents challenges that test the loyalty of celibates. Amidst the development of an era that offers ease and enjoyment in life, the temptations of social media and technology undermine everyone, including religious people and friars. Therefore, this study attempts to examine more deeply the celibate life and how it is lived and interpreted. By understanding celibacy and its purpose correctly, celibates are expected to appreciate the sacredness and value of the celibate life, which is total surrender and devotion to God and others. Thus, the call to celibacy can be understood as a grace bestowed by God upon certain individuals and a symbol of the expression of faith. In this case, the author focuses on the subject of the experience of celibacy by Capuchin friars who have taken perpetual vows.

Capuchin is the name given to members of the *Ordo Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum* (OFMCap). This order was founded in 1525 by Father Matthew of Bascio (1495-1552), who was committed to reviving the simplicity and spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. The Capuchins live a spirituality of brotherhood, humility, and service to the poor and marginalized. Those who have taken perpetual vows are Capuchin friars who have pledged lifelong poverty, obedience, and chastity as a form of total surrender of their lives to God and the Church. Research on the experience of celibacy in the context of the Indonesian Capuchin community is still very limited, especially regarding the dynamics of the spiritual and pastoral experience of celibacy in facing the challenges of the times and socio-cultural realities. Therefore, this research contributes to the development of the theology of consecrated life and the formulation of a more contextual and humanistic formation of celibacy.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach. Within this qualitative framework, the author conducts a literature review. According to John W. Creswell, a literature review is used to explore and analyze, in depth and comprehensively, theories, concepts, and previous research findings related to a specific topic.⁹ Similarly, Snyder states that a literature review is an approach that

⁷ Sabdo, 8.

⁸ Sabdo, 10.

⁹ John W Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, ed. Helen Salmon, 5th ed (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2018), 233.

examines various topics in depth through a range of relevant and scientifically validated literature sources.¹⁰

Data collection was conducted through literature review and the categorization of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of Church documents, theological writings, Franciscan spirituality, and Capuchin documents. Meanwhile, secondary sources include scholarly books, journal articles, and magazines to support this study. In addition, the author also conducted in-depth interviews with several members of the *Ordo Kapusin*¹¹ *General Kepulauan Nias* to explore their understanding and experiences in living a life of celibacy. The author classified and analyzed the various responses from these interviews to develop and present a new perspective on understanding and living out celibacy.

DISCUSSION

Definition of Celibacy

Celibacy comes from Latin, from the root word *caelebs* or *caelibatus*, which means unmarried (single or widowed).¹² This term refers to men who are not bound by family life. There are several terms that are often used to refer to the act of not marrying, namely: celibacy, continence, and abstinence. Celibacy as a form of not marrying is usually contrasted with the term marriage (married life). Continence refers to a person's conscious desire not to engage in sexual intercourse. Meanwhile, abstinence refers to a person who is married but, due to mutual choice and agreement, does not engage in sexual relations for certain reasons.¹³

In this sense, celibacy as referred to in this study is the choice to remain unmarried for life and to adhere to personal purity in thought and deed, in order to serve God and humanity more freely. The choice of celibacy is essentially based on awareness, careful consideration, willingness, and without coercion or influence from external circumstances.¹⁴ This life choice contains the intention to cultivate pure ideals. The formation of celibate life is always reflected upon in relation to an attitude of charitable service toward oneself, others, creation, and God.

¹⁰ Hannah Snyder, "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines," *Journal of Business Research* 104, no. 333-339 (2019): 333-39, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.

¹¹ Adolf Heuken, *Ensiklopedi Gereja*, Jilid IV (Jakarta: Cipta Loka Caraka, 2004), 30.

¹² K. Prent et Al, *Kamus Latin-Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1969), 103.

¹³ Deshi Rahmadhani, *Libatlah Tubuhku: Membebaskan Seks Bersama Yohanes Paulus II* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2009), 135.

¹⁴ Maman Suharman, "Menggali Makna Imamat, Doa, Dan Selibat Kristiani," *Melintas* 28, no. 03 (2012): 331–44, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26593/mel.v28i3.275>.

Biblical Basis for Celibacy

In the Old Testament, the reality of celibacy is evident in the calling of the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah lived a celibate life as a form of preparation for God's judgment on the land and His people (Jer. 16:1-13). The prophet Jeremiah prophesied a situation that required everyone to live in purity. Purity signifies an open heart to hear God's word and act according to His will. God wants humans to surrender themselves completely into His hands. This implies physical and spiritual asceticism.

Meanwhile, in the New Testament during the early Church, celibacy was not an obligation. The New Testament Scriptures also do not provide an explicit explanation of celibacy. The New Testament provides an indication of celibacy as shown in the Gospel of Matthew 19:11-12:

But He said to them, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."

In reflecting on celibacy, the life and ministry of Christ serve as a model. Jesus first accepted people as valuable individuals just as they were, and only then called certain people to live for the kingdom of God and serve others. Jesus did not explicitly encourage celibacy for His followers. Jesus said, "*He who can accept this should accept it*" (Matthew 19:12). With these words, Jesus emphasized the free will to choose celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God. Celibacy is a charism and a gift that must be responded to with effort and struggle. The call to celibacy is not a gift that makes someone do it without the will of the person who chooses it.¹⁵

In addition, celibacy is a hope for the *parousia* (1 Corinthians 7:25-26). Paul lived a celibate life because he knew Christ. By living a celibate life, Paul devoted his entire life to God. He became a perfect servant of God in proclaiming His word.¹⁶ Paul realized that not everyone could live a celibate life. Paul understood celibacy as a form of self-orientation toward God, namely the freedom to keep one's thoughts constantly focused on God and a close and intimate relationship with God. Living a celibate life made Paul free to serve God. This was the reality that Paul constantly fought for.

Celibacy according to Vatican Council II

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) revisited the issue of priestly celibacy. The Council reaffirmed that celibacy is obligatory for priests of the Latin Church. The Council also

¹⁵ H. Van Der Looy, *Selibat Para Imam*, ed. N. J. Boumans and Konrad Kebung Beong (NTT: Nusa Indah, 1991), 26.

¹⁶ Roderick Strange, *The Risk of Discipleship: Imamat Bukan Sekedar Selibat*, ed. Esti (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2007), 170.

issued three decrees concerning celibacy. These decrees are *Perfectae Caritatis*, *Optatam Totius*, and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*.

Perfectae Caritatis affirms that purity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven must be valued as a very noble gift of grace. For celibacy in a special way inflames human love for God and neighbor. For this reason, everyone who wishes to live a life of celibacy must be given a thorough understanding of the celibate life and its consequences.¹⁷ The same sentiment is found in *Optatam Totius*, where celibacy as a gift from God must be appreciated, not merely because it is required by Church law.¹⁸ *Presbyterorum Ordinis* itself states that by living in virginity or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, priests are consecrated to Christ. Through celibacy, priests find it easier to attach themselves to God with an undivided heart.¹⁹

Celibacy in the Code of Canon Law

In the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the canons that speak of celibacy are found in Can. 247 §1; 277; 599 and 604. Can. 277 §1 affirms that clerics (deacons, priests, bishops) are obliged to maintain perfect chastity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Celibacy is one of the requirements for someone to enter the clerical state by receiving holy orders. Through celibacy, clerics are united with Christ and devote themselves to serving God and humanity. In addition to clerics, there are also institutes of consecrated life that give themselves completely to God by professing a life of celibacy. Through this profession, members of institutes of consecrated life are obliged to preserve their chastity.²⁰

The witness of celibacy in the Church is a tangible expression of Jesus' missionary work. Celibacy is a sign of the Church's love for Christ and a symbol of the heavenly bride at the end of time and in the life to come. Celibacy is a sign of complete surrender and devotion to God and neighbor.²¹

The Celibate Life according to the Capuchin Constitution

The Capuchin Constitution uses several terms to express the same reality, namely, living unmarried for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.²² Terms such as purity, virginity, perfect chastity, and celibacy are understood as a form of total surrender to God for the sake of

¹⁷ DOKPEN KWI, *Dekrit Tentang Pembaharuan Dan Penyesuaian Hidup Religius (Perfectae Caritatis)* (Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI, 1993), no. 12.

¹⁸ DOKPEN KWI, *Dekrit Tentang Pembinaan Imam (Optatam Totius)* (Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI, 1993), no. 10.

¹⁹ DOKPEN KWI, *Dekrit Tentang Pelayanan Dan Kehidupan Para Imam (Presbyterorum Ordinis)* (Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI, 2022), no. 16.

²⁰ Kan. 277; 603.

²¹ KWI, *Katekismus Gereja Katolik* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2010), no. 923; 931; 1579.

²² *Konstitusi Saudara Dina Kapusin 2013 Dan Ketetapan Kapitel General Bersama Anggaran Dasar Dan Wasiat Santo Fransiskus* (Roma: Kuria General Kapusin, 2012), no. 22, 4; 169, 6; 171, 3; 173, 7.

proclaiming the Gospel and serving the people. Celibacy is discussed specifically in Chapter XI, entitled *Our Life in Holy Chastity*, with an emphasis on the source of the celibate life, the free will to choose celibacy, and the importance of preserving the gift of celibacy. In accordance with Canon 247, celibacy is seen as a special gift from God.²³ That is received in human freedom, which must be valued, preserved, and developed with full awareness. Celibacy is not merely an ascetic practice, but participation in Christ's love for the Church, as well as a prophetic witness to the reality of the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world. Thus, celibate life demands a personal attitude of responsibility and a deep spiritual commitment.

The Constitution also addresses human limitations in living a celibate life, how to maintain, strengthen, and develop it. Celibacy cannot avoid various challenges rooted in human limitations. Affective impulses, lust, loneliness, emotional compensation, and misuse of mass media can threaten the integrity of the celibate life. Therefore, concrete efforts are needed to maintain fidelity through sacramental life, especially the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as well as through perseverance in prayer and interior union with Christ and the Virgin Mary. In addition, the Constitution emphasizes the importance of self-control as the basis for organizing affections in a healthy way, respecting the body, and accepting sexual identity peacefully. The ability to exercise self-control in the midst of a hedonistic culture that reduces sexuality to an object of consumption is key to maintaining integrity and affective maturity.

In particular, the Constitution also highlights the importance of friendship as an element that supports human and spiritual development in celibacy. Healthy friendship is seen as a gift that strengthens and fosters emotional balance, as long as it is lived with modesty, respect, fairness, and does not cause excessive emotional dependence. The example of friendship between Francis and Clare shows that pure brotherly relationships can enrich spiritual life without undermining the commitment to celibacy. The charism of celibacy is an eschatological testimony to heavenly life that has already begun to be realized, and it requires constant maintenance through asceticism, healthy relationships, and creative fidelity to God's grace.²⁴

The Nature and Purpose of the Celibate Life

Perfectae Caritatis affirms that celibacy is an effort to direct oneself totally to God in apostolic work that is evident in daily life.²⁵ This act of love is not based on human consent, but rather on the initiative to give oneself in service. The celibate life is a concrete expression of the self-giving and sacrifice of a priest, rooted in Jesus' self-surrender to the Church, so that he may

²³ Kan. 247.

²⁴ C. Manangar Marpaung, *Kaul Fransiskan* (Medan: Bina Media, 2008), 73.

²⁵ PC no. 12.

serve God and His Mystical Body more freely.²⁶ Love is grace, and grace is God Himself as the source and sustainer of all human existence.²⁷

St. Augustine revealed that God had chosen to love him first, so God made him lovable. The expression of love has two meanings, namely being able to love God (God's grace influences human beings) and being worthy of God's love (God's love enables celibates to love). This is the essence of celibate life.²⁸ The love of a celibate is to love wholeheartedly as Jesus loves, while also loving Christ who is present in others.²⁹

Dimensions of the Celibate Life

First, the mystical dimension.³⁰ Celibates must be in mystical union with God. The spirit of prayer and communal life nurtures celibates' awareness that God loves them. This leads celibates to move toward a real experience of love in human beings. God is present in love that can be felt and experienced, so that everyone can feel that they are called by God to love.³¹ This confirms that being celibate means being a mystic, who wants to grow and develop in faith and acts of love in an intimate relationship with God through prayer. Drawing closer to God and establishing a mystical relationship with Him is an act of removing the uncertainty of love. This understanding enables a celibate person to eliminate their egotism and open themselves to community. This is where the mystical solidarity of celibates lies, enriching the effort to proclaim the kingdom of God.

Second, the Christological dimension.³² The commitment to celibacy as the light and salt of the world is the purpose and mission of every celibate (Matthew 5:13-14). Celibates devote their entire lives and ministries, just as Jesus Christ devoted Himself to the will of God, namely to proclaim the good news of salvation. He called on those who wanted to follow Him to be willing to leave everything behind, including children and wives. Jesus Christ is the model of giving oneself totally in love for the sake of the kingdom of God through the celibate life He embraced.³³ Celibacy is a grace, a distinctive way of following and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Celibates, united with and in Christ, are called to serve as shepherds for those entrusted to their ministry.

²⁶ Yohanes Hario Kristo Wibowo, "Penghayatan Selibat Imam Sebagai Kesaksian Hidup di Zaman Sekarang," *Jurnal Teologi* 6, no. 2 (2017): 125-142, <https://doi.org/doi:https://doi.org/10.24071/jt.v6i2.997>.

²⁷ Joyce Ridick, *Kaul: Harta Melimpah Dalam Bejana Tanah Liat, Pendekatan Psikologis-Spiritual*, ed. Mardi Prasetyo et al. (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1987), 84.

²⁸ Ridick, 85.

²⁹ Agustinus Supriyadi, "Dipanggil Kepada Kekudusan," *JPAK: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik* 20, no. 1 (2020): 26-47, <https://doi.org/doi:https://doi.org/10.34150/jpak.v20i1.251>.

³⁰ Gerald O'Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, *Kamus Teologi*, ed. Ignatius Suharyo (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1996), 202.

³¹ Felix Podimattman, *Persahabatan Orang Selibat: Makna Dan Tantangannya*, ed. Frans Sumantoro Siswoyo (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1985), 34.

³² O'Collins and Farrugia, *Kamus Teologi*, 170.

³³ Ridick, *Kaul: Harta Melimpah Dalam Bejana Tanah Liat, Pendekatan Psikologis-Spiritual*, 95.

The heart of a person living a celibate life resembles the heart of the Savior, consumed by love for the Father and the Church.³⁴

Third, the pneumatological dimension.³⁵ The Holy Spirit is the source of strength for the souls of the celibate. This must be understood within a theological framework. The Holy Spirit becomes a “compass” that guides the celibate. In the Holy Spirit, God calls and inspires the celibate. The celibate responds to His call by giving themselves completely, persevering in prayer and service.³⁶ The life of celibates will be meaningful if unity with God in the Holy Spirit becomes the axis of their life.³⁷ The celibate unites himself with God in the work of Jesus Christ, namely proclaiming the good news of salvation to all mankind. The unity built in prayer and self-surrender will produce a new awareness in his life. Thus, the power of God through the Holy Spirit is the axis of the celibate's love, both immanently and transcendently.

Fourth, the ecclesiological dimension.³⁸ The Church gives meaning and significance to the celibate life. The Church is a sacrament, that is, a sign of Christ, built by Him and directed toward Him. God's presence becomes more evident when celibates unite with the Church to bring Christ into the world through their special way of life.³⁹ Based on God's universal love, celibates are not separated from the communion of other members of God's people, because all of God's people receive the same grace. However, celibates continue to live in a specific way, namely, a life of particularity based on the choice of one value among many values. This value is manifested in acts of love for the work of the apostolate, which is proof of the surrender of one's entire self. The ministry of celibates, which is related to all apostolic tasks, in whatever form, is always based on unity with Christ and the Church. Celibates, especially priests, act in Christ and on behalf of the Church⁴⁰. Thus, priests become *in persona Christi et in persona Ecclesiae*. The unity of celibates with Christ and the Church shows the unity of celibates with the mission of Jesus himself.

Fifth, the apostolic dimension.⁴¹ The apostolic dimension of celibate life reveals the ministry it embodies. This is confirmed by Jesus, who said that He came not to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:26-28). The spirit of Jesus must encourage celibates to be more faithful, persevering, and wholly devoted to serving others. The task of service received as mandated by Jesus is to proclaim the concrete message of salvation, such as proclaiming the word of God,

³⁴ Looy, *Selibat Para Imam*, 55.

³⁵ Nico Syukur Dister, *Teologi Sistematis: Allah Penyelamat*, Jilid 1 (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2004), 243.

³⁶ Irawan, *Seks, Selibat, Dan Persahabatan Sebagai Karisma*, 44.

³⁷ Podimattman, *Persahabatan Orang Selibat: Makna Dan Tantangannya*, 33.

³⁸ O'Collins and Farrugia, *Kamus Teologi*, 64-65.

³⁹ Ridick, *Kaul: Harta Melimpah Dalam Bejana Tanah Liat, Pendekatan Psikologis-Spiritual*, 96.

⁴⁰ Donal J. Goergen, *Being A Priest Today*, (Collegeville-Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992), 98-100.

⁴¹ O'Collins and Farrugia, *Kamus Teologi*, 33.

teaching, comforting, and visiting the people to provide physical and spiritual assistance.⁴² Celibates emulate Paul in carrying out his duties as an apostle by accepting all the consequences, including suffering. Paul made suffering a strength to proclaim the Gospel. This is the totality of Paul's perfect self-giving. He acknowledged that he was weak, but in his weakness, God's grace strengthened him (2 Cor 12:9). Paul gave himself completely to serve the congregation not only through material actions, but also through prayer and advice so that the congregation would remain steadfast in their faith.

Sixth, the eschatological dimension.⁴³ The expectation of the Lord's coming at the end of time is one of the pillars of the experience of celibacy. This end-time situation is clearly expressed in the Gospel of Matthew, namely that all this will come to pass when there is no more emptiness, all desires are fulfilled, and all desires are fulfilled, and there is no more marriage or giving in marriage. However, the Gospel of Matthew does not intend to devalue marriage, but rather to emphasize that celibacy has spiritual meaning and is a model for the life to come. Celibacy is a sign of God's grace that encourages celibates to be more focused on God. Through their way of life, celibates proclaim to the world that the kingdom of God has been and is being fulfilled in Christ.⁴⁴

The Practice of Celibacy by Members of the Capuchin Order

After exploring the biblical and theological foundations of celibacy, the following section discusses the understanding and experience of celibacy in the religious tradition and practice of the Capuchin Order. It should be emphasized that in this study, the terms celibacy, holy purity, virginity, and chastity refer to the same meaning and essence. Thus, all these terms can be used to express a life of unmarriedness for the sake of the kingdom of God, total surrender to God in order to follow His Word and serve His people. The Capuchins live a life of unmarriedness for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven as a special grace and charism from God. This means that this gift is a gift from God intended specifically for those who receive it. The Church recognizes that everyone who receives a charism is invited to be grateful for it, to preserve it, and to develop it. The Church also respects that charisms that have become the wealth of the Church should be proclaimed properly and wisely. In this way, this gift brings inner joy to the individual.⁴⁵ Celibacy is a special charism that is not understood and not possessed by everyone. This gift is only bestowed upon those who are able to live it. In Matthew 19:11-12, it is emphasized that not marrying for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven is a very special gift from God that is not intended for everyone.

⁴² PO no. 4.

⁴³ O'Collins and Farrugia, *Kamus Teologi*, 73.

⁴⁴ Ridick, *Kaul: Harta Melimpah Dalam Bejana Tanah Liat, Pendekatan Psikologis-Spiritual*, 96.

⁴⁵ KGK 799-801.

Understanding the Dimensions of Celibacy

Appreciation of the dimensions of celibacy is one indicator of the quality of celibate life. There are five dimensions of celibate life, as explained earlier. These dimensions are the Christological, Pneumatological, Ecclesiological, Apostolic, and Eschatological dimensions. In addition to these five dimensions, there is one dimension of celibacy that is unique to the Capuchins, namely the Mariological dimension.⁴⁶ The Mariological dimension is intended so that every Capuchin celibate person may make the Blessed Virgin Mary a perfect example of surrender to God. This is clearly expressed in Constitution no. 170; 2:

“Let us cultivate a warm relationship with the Most Holy Virgin, Saint Mary, Tota Pulchra, who was beautiful from the moment she was conceived without sin, an exemplary model of perfect purification before God and love for divine beauty, the only one who can fully satisfy the human heart.”

Thus, a Capuchin lives out the six dimensions of celibacy so that his celibate life may be of higher quality. The five dimensions of celibacy, except for the Mariological dimension, are lived as commitments within the vocation to celibacy, even though this is not explicitly stated. In this case, the relationship with Christ is the strength of celibacy. This is a manifestation of the informant’s understanding of the Christological dimension of celibacy.

First, celibacy for the sake of God’s kingdom. Celibacy is understood as faith and joyful readiness in God. The Capuchins live it out through an intimate relationship with God, which is manifested in service to others. A celibate person accepts the mandate as a mediator of God’s grace and brings God’s love into concrete action. The celibate life is proof of a total commitment to building a relationship with God and is a symbol of the coming kingdom of God. Through their mission, celibates participate in building the Kingdom of God in the world. Celibacy demands totality and fidelity, just as married life does. Celibates direct their affections and their whole selves toward service for the common good. The celibate life is a gift of the Spirit of Christ, a pure offering to God and neighbor, and a tangible expression of the Creator’s will.

Second, celibacy as union with Christ. The celibate life is an expression of deep love for Christ and a desire to follow in His footsteps in a spirit of love and service. Just as Jesus was focused on proclaiming the kingdom of God, celibates are called to be light and salt for the world for the same purpose. Jesus became a sign for humanity that the offering of life to God is achieved through love. He showed the way through complete self-sacrifice for the will of the Father. With this example, Jesus showed humanity a way in which humans should give themselves completely for the kingdom of God through celibacy.

Third, celibacy as divine service. Celibacy is a grace for the Church in unity with other believers. The grace of celibacy is not only a personal matter, but a form of relationship with other

⁴⁶ Nico Syukur Dister, *Teologi Sistematika: Allah Penyelamat*, 419.

human beings in hope and faith. Celibates are not a separate class within the Church, but belong to a noble vocation to live in holiness. The celibate life is a sign of faith because it is lived in a consciousness of faith that animates the entire life of the celibate. The special vocation and ministry of celibates refresh the spirit of the Church and renew the faith life of the faithful. The witness of the celibate life shows that the way of salvation is realized through complete devotion to God and the proclamation of the Gospel.

Fourth, celibacy affirms sexuality. Celibacy as a lifelong commitment elevates the value of sexuality and directs it toward a higher purpose. Celibates transform their sexual energy through service to God, others, and the universe. This view does not demean human sexuality, but rather shows that celibacy opens up space for free and generous service. The celibate life is a dynamic of love that continues to develop. Within it, God's energy of love creatively expresses itself and renews the world. Celibacy becomes a way of loving and giving oneself to the Gospel mission and for the welfare of humanity.

Challenges and Dangers Threatening Celibacy

Humans, as sexual beings, must present themselves as either male or female. Celibates are sexually healthy individuals. Thus, celibates must have confidence in their identity as either male or female.⁴⁷ Talking about sexuality means talking about sex. However, many people narrow the meaning of sexuality down to just sexual activity. In fact, sexuality is much broader than just sex. Sexuality is the way humans exist and live as men and women, which is naturally and intrinsically inherent in every individual. Sexuality reveals a person's characteristics, self-expression, interests, and abilities in experiencing their identity, both internally and externally, in relation to the world and others. In this regard, Jesus wants humans to respect the dignity of the body, so that it is not merely an object for the fulfillment of biological desires.

Sexual urges or erotic impulses exist within every individual who chooses to live a celibate life. Celibates continue to experience sexual dynamics as part of human nature. Awareness of these limitations is important, because these urges can threaten fidelity to the vow of celibacy. Therefore, the Capuchin Constitution emphasizes the need for formation from the seminary period onwards so that brothers are not enslaved by physical desires and are able to manage their sexuality in a mature way.⁴⁸ The Constitution emphasizes that sexual urges are a human longing which, through purity and spiritual maturity, can be transformed into a positive force for maintaining bodily integrity and personal dignity. Celibates are also encouraged to use means that support mental and physical health in order to preserve the grace of celibacy they have received.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Paul Suparno, *Seksualitas Kaum Berjubah* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2007), 18.

⁴⁸ Konst. Kap., no. 172, 4.

⁴⁹ Konst. Kap., no. 173, 4.

It must be acknowledged that there are still limitations in the deep understanding of the Capuchin Constitution's provisions regarding the management of sexual urges. Nevertheless, personally, there have been various initiatives to implement forms of sublimation in order to maintain fidelity to celibacy. These efforts are manifested through constructive activities, such as gardening, exercising, playing music, reading, writing, and developing other talents and interests.

Practices for Sustaining Commitment to Celibacy

In accordance with the Capuchin Constitution, the charism of celibacy must be preserved and maintained as best as possible. The dangers or threats to celibacy come from both within and outside oneself. Therefore, celibates are required to strive for the fruitfulness and development of their vocation. The Capuchin Order recognizes this dynamic and proposes various concrete efforts to maintain fidelity to celibacy. These guidelines are specifically outlined in the Capuchin Constitution, Chapter XI, numbers 171, 172, and 173. The Capuchin Constitutions emphasize that the preservation of the charism of celibacy is carried out through intense involvement in sacramental life, especially through the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as well as closeness to the Blessed Virgin Mary as an example of purity and surrender to God. These three elements are the foundation that nurtures and strengthens fidelity to the charism of celibacy. In this context, it becomes increasingly important for Capuchins to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the values set forth in the Constitution, so that these guidelines are not only known but truly lived as an integral part of their formation and journey of celibacy.

In addition to participating in the Eucharistic celebration, communal prayer, and personal prayer, fostering friendships is seen as an important aspect that helps maintain and enrich the celibate life, especially among fellow celibates. The friendships referred to are primarily heterosexual friendships that are healthy and mutually supportive, without neglecting the value of brotherhood among fellow celibates. The Capuchin Constitution emphasizes that friendship is a great gift that can foster human and spiritual development. However, it also reminds us that friendship should not lead to excessive attachment, but rather liberate and purify fraternal relationships.⁵⁰ Friendship must be carried out with a polite, respectful, and fair attitude and should not cause suspicion, as exemplified in the noble friendship between St. Francis and St. Clare.⁵¹ The noble affection of these two saints is an example for Capuchin celibates in fostering friendship. This understanding is in line with the view that friendship among celibates is a means of helping to process affection in a healthy and responsible manner. In this context, religious attire is seen as a form of social control that helps to maintain the purity of friendship, because its

⁵⁰ Konst. Kap., no. 173, 5.

⁵¹ Konst. Kap., no. 173, 4.

presence raises public awareness of the identity and commitment of the celibate vocation, especially when interacting in a wider social space.

CONCLUSION

Celibacy is a free choice made by a person in response to God's call to devote their entire life intimately and totally to Him. Celibacy is not merely a personal decision but a special grace from God. In the Catholic Church, celibacy is lived as a devotion to the Kingdom of God. This choice is not due to an inability to have a partner or sexual relations, but is driven by an awareness and commitment to serve God completely. Celibacy places the profound relationship between God and humanity at the center of one's calling in life, actualizing noble Gospel values and producing true happiness through service and the witness of one's life.

For Capuchin candidates for the celibate life, an understanding of the nobility and sacredness of celibacy must be developed from the early stages of formation, grounded in the teachings of the Church and the Capuchin Constitutions, in accordance with the Decree *Optatam Totius* on priestly formation. Celibates are required to develop personal strategies to preserve and safeguard the charism of celibacy that has been bestowed upon them, in addition to adhering to the norms of the Church and the Order. Gratitude for this gift must be expressed through continuous efforts to maintain the sacredness of the vocation, avoiding boredom and dissatisfaction. The experience of celibacy as a charism and a vocation of total dedication to God and service to others becomes a profound spiritual experience and an important contribution to the Capuchin brotherhood and the Church.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Creswell, John W. *Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Desain Riset: Memilih Di Antara Lima Pendekatan*, 3rd ed. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015.
- Creswell, John W, and J. David Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Edited by Helen Salmon, 5th ed. London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2018.
- Djikarya, Roy S. *100 Tanya-Jawab Mengenai Imam Diocese, Imam Praja, Imam Sekular, Imam Keskupan*. Jakarta: Obor, 1992.
- DOKPEN KWI. *Dekrit Tentang Pelayanan Dan Kehidupan Para Imam (Presbyterorum Ordinis)*. Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI, 2022.
- . *Dekrit Tentang Pembabaruan Dan Penyesuaian Hidup Religius (Perfectae Caritatis)*. Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI, 1993.

- . *Dekrit Tentang Pembinaan Imam (Optatam Totius)*. Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI, 1993.
- Goergen, Donal J. *Being A Priest Today*. Collegeville–Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992.
- Heuken, Adolf. *Ensiklopedi Gereja*. Jilid IV. Jakarta: Cipta Loka Caraka, 2004.
- Irawan, Al. Bagus. *Seks, Selibat, Dan Persahabatan Sebagai Karisma*. Jakarta: Obor, 2009.
- Konstitusi Saudara Dina Kapusin 2013 Dan Ketetapan Kapitel General Bersama Anggaran Dasar Dan Wasiat Santo Fransiskus*. Roma: Kuria General Kapusin, 2012.
- KWI. *Katekismus Gereja Katolik*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2010.
- Looy, H. Van Der. *Selibat Para Imam*. Edited by N. J. Boumans and Konrad Kebung Beong. NTT: Nusa Indah, 1991.
- Marpaung, C. Manangar. *Kaul Fransiskan*. Medan: Bina Media, 2008.
- Dister, Nico Syukur. *Teologi Sistematika: Allah Penyelamat*, Jilid 1. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2004a.
- . *Teologi Sistematika: Sejarah Keselamatan*, Jilid 2. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2004b.
- O'Collins, Gerald, and Edward G. Farrugia. *Kamus Teologi*. Edited by Ignatius Suharyo. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1996.
- Podimattman, Felix. *Persahabatan Orang Selibat: Makna Dan Tantangannya*. Edited by Frans Sumantoro Siswoyo. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1985.
- Prent, K. *Kamus Latin-Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1969.
- Prior, John Mansford. "Krisis Selibat." *Hidup*, September 2014.
- Rahmadhani, Deshi. *Libatlah Tubuhku: Membebaskan Seks Bersama Yohanes Paulus II*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2009.
- Ridick, Joyce. *Kaul: Harta Melimpah Dalam Bejana Tanah Liat, Pendekatan Psikologis-Spiritual*. Edited by Mardi Prasetyo et al. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1987.
- Sabdo, Benny. "Hidup Selibat Para Imam." *Hidup*, September 2014.
- Snyder, Hannah. "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines." *Journal of Business Research* 104 (333-339), 2019. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.
- Strange, Roderick. *The Risk of Discipleship: Imamatan Bukan Sekedar Selibat*. Edited by Esti. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2007.
- Suharman, Maman. "Menggali Makna Imamatan, Doa, Dan Selibat Kristiani." *Melintas* 28 (03): 331-344, 2012. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26593/mel.v28i3.275>.
- Suparno, Paul. *Seksualitas Kaum Berjubah*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2007.

Supriyadi, Agustinus. “Dipanggil Kepada Kekudusan.” *JPAK: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik* 20 (1): 26-47, 2020. <https://doi.org/doi:https://doi.org/10.34150/jpak.v20i1.251>.

Tinambunan, Edison R. L. “Formasi Berkelanjutan: Membermaknakan Kekinian Imamat.” *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 21 (1): 24-44, 2020. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v21i1.295>.

Wibowo, Yohanes Hario Kristo. “Penghayatan Selibat Imam Sebagai Kesaksian Hidup di Zaman Sekarang.” *Jurnal Teologi* 6 (2): 125-42, 2017. <https://doi.org/doi:https://doi.org/10.24071/jt.v6i2.997>.