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Whole Diamonds, not Half Oranges: Seeing Apostolic Celibacy Through New Eyes

When Bertilia attended the Service Commission for Greendale's St. Raphael girls, she didn't expect the evening to touch her so deeply. The topic — Apostolic Celibacy — was familiar, yet what she heard and felt that day opened her heart in new ways. Through honest reflection, laughter, and heartfelt discussion, she discovered that Apostolic

Celibacy is not about giving up love, but about loving more freely and fully. What began as mild reluctance became a moment of grace and clarity.

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The Service Commission for Greendale's St. Raphael girls had been on my mind for weeks. I knew a special guest was coming from Rome to guide us through the topic of Apostolic Celibacy, but I'll be honest — I wasn't exactly thrilled.

Having already encountered the concept of apostolic celibacy during my formation in Opus Dei, I felt there wasn't much left for me to learn. Or perhaps, deep down, I just wasn't ready to face what the topic stirred within me. A few days before the event, I had to admit to myself that

my lack of enthusiasm revealed more than boredom — it exposed an inner tension. Was apostolic celibacy something God might be calling me to? The thought made me uneasy. Still, I decided to show up with an open heart, even if it felt like bracing for a storm.

October 9th, 2024, arrived. As I walked through the familiar doors of Greendale, my nerves quietly buzzed — but were quickly eased when I was greeted by the gentle smile and warm hug of our guest speaker. Her presence alone brought a sense of calm, and for the first time that day, I felt at peace.

The evening unfolded beautifully. Surrounded by my friends in the inviting warmth of the living room, we listened to the speaker share her thoughts on apostolic celibacy. The discussion began with a powerful exercise: we were asked to write

down our personal definitions of apostolic celibacy. In my jotter, I wrote:

"Apostolic celibacy means sacrificing and offering yourself up for love of God, for the purpose of being visible representations of Heaven here on earth."

As the session progressed, I realized I had some misconceptions. With humor and clarity, she used animated slides to challenge popular ideas — including Plato's theory of soulmates. One image I'll never forget showed two halves of an orange, paired with the statement: "Plato thinks you're like half an orange, but you're a whole diamond. God's precious diamond!" That line made all of us smile.

Her words were both tender and profound. She described apostolic celibacy as a diamond willingly undergoing cuts and polish — so it

can help shape other diamonds. That image stayed with me. It perfectly captured the self-giving nature of people who embrace apostolic celibacy and the deep bonds they form with others, including with us St. Raphael girls.

That evening, I came to understand the paradox of apostolic celibacy: loving God exclusively so as to love others more fully. It's not a life of lacking love, but of loving differently — deeply, generously, and without exclusivity. These individuals aren't “single” because they love too little, but because they love so much. Their lives are poured out in prayer, service, and sacrifice.

After the main presentation, we split into small groups for more intimate conversations. Our group explored three main questions:

1. What is the impact of apostolic celibacy on the Church?

2. What challenges in today's world make it difficult to appreciate this vocation?
3. How can I discover its value for myself?

These discussions were eye-opening. Many shared that the secular world, with its glorification of comfort and “soft life,” often fails to understand the beauty of this calling. The loud, fast-paced distractions of modern life drown out the quiet power of self-offering.

One story that struck me was from a girl whose mother once told her, “Stop praying about your vocation to apostolic celibacy before God hears you and answers.” While the comment was made jokingly, it revealed a deeper discomfort many Catholic families feel toward this vocation. The fear of not seeing their children marry or have grandchildren leads some parents to

unknowingly discourage a beautiful path to holiness.

After the breakout sessions, representatives from each group shared their insights. A common thread emerged: for many of us, the greatest obstacle to discerning this vocation is not societal pressure — but family resistance. It's a painful truth.

Our guest reminded us that Jesus Himself chose apostolic celibacy, breaking cultural expectations of His time. Following His example takes courage — the courage to seek God's will, even when it goes against what the world expects. We were encouraged to pray sincerely about our vocations, and not to fall into “selective hearing” when listening for God's voice.

To close the evening, we returned to the same question from the beginning — what does apostolic

celibacy mean to me now? My answer had changed. No longer did I see it only as a sacrifice. I now understood it as a beautiful gift — a freeing love that allows one to serve God and humanity in a deeper way.

That day at Greendale left a lasting impression on me. It helped me see apostolic celibacy not as a giving up, but as a receiving — of grace, of purpose, of love. It's an experience I'll always be grateful for.

Bertilia

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