

# RELIGIOUS LIFE AND RATTRAPS

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The vocation of a religious, as understood by the majority of the Catholic people, is to be free, loving, being just to one another, and by this, building a just human society. But, in reality, this is a vocation for any human being.

The real vocation of a religious is to be a prophet in God's name, just like our Lord Jesus Christ. But, unfortunately, the majority of our people do not know about this special call to be a religious, (including a few religious themselves!). Therefore, the question arises in their minds, "What is the need of religious?"

The vocation to a religious, in today's context is 'the following of Christ the obedient, Christ the chaste, and Christ the poor, on mission.' Though this seems very old-fashioned, it does have its value and meaning and the Rattraps.

In simple terms 'FOLLOWING' is 'to act like someone.' Here it is to act like Jesus. But, when it comes to a religious, it is not merely 'acting' like Jesus, but even 'thinking' like Jesus.

'Acting' and 'thinking' like Jesus is not at all easy, and definitely not in this modern world, where money is counted as The God and where the suppression of the poor is a heritage for the rich.

So, the world sets rattraps for the one who wishes to 'follow' it. The baits can be

the encouragement to have power and prestige, or the encouragement to enjoy a 'tense free life', or it even can be one's attachments to one's parents and family. A person is tempted to touch these baits, and he is trapped.

Jesus' principle for these baits was 'let the dead bury their dead.' In simple terms, do not even look at the baits!

"He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death on a cross." A religious is called to this sort of obedient.

The ego for oneself, self interest, self love and self will, are the baits for one to get caught in disobedience. And the work done, by disobedience, is not the 'following of Christ'

The golden key to overcome this bait is the following sentence: 'What I want to do for God may not be necessarily what God wants me to do for him.' If I have this conviction it is easy to obey whole heartedly, like Jesus, even if it meant to die.

Jesus Christ was chaste for the kingdom of God. So, chastity for a religious is much more than celibacy, it is a total commitment to Jesus.

The rattraps against chastity lie like thorns on a rose plant. I would like to mention a couple of them which I came across in a book.

It is a story of a Sadhu (naked), who lived in a jungle. One day a shepherd saw him under a tree, he called other men from his village for the darshna. They gave him some food asked to wear something, so the women of the village could come and see him. Soon, the

ladies came and met him. He became so famous in the village that the people gathered a fund and built him a house and sent a lady also to stay with the sadhu and to take care of the house.

It is said that, the sadhu and the lady lived happily ever after!!!

In another incident, a couple is working in a priest's resident, consisting of twenty priests. They have a young daughter. On the feast day of the parish, the young daughter receives eighteen invitations and the couple receives only one! Can this not be called 'to be caught in a trap'?

So, Jesus says, "Love as I have loved you." A love that is selfless, without any lustful desires. St. Paul writes, "For me, life means Christ."

"For his sake I have suffered the loss all things. And I count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him." For St. Paul what he has gained is more important than what he had 'given up'. The religious call of following Christ the poor is because He lived a poor life and worked for others. So, poverty for the sake of poverty is useless.

Unfortunately, some religious seem to have taken not a vow of poverty but a 'vow of prosperity and property'.

One day, a priest came from a mission station of Gujarat to our novitiate. While talking, he told us, "We have now got an air conditioner in each room in our residence!" He added further, "We did not ask the permission from the provincial, because he may refuse."

The very next moment a novice asked him, "Father, A.C. in all rooms? And that too, in a mission station?!!" The Novice Master smiled at the question, because we had understood the context.

The following of Christ is always 'on mission'. The worldly standard of enjoying life eating, drinking, making merry, and nowadays, watching television has no place in our religious life.

Lastly, if a person who takes his life and vocation as a gift from God, and is aware of the rattraps, will surely live out his life very meaningfully and HAPPILY.