

## 7. Eight Types of Intimacy

From Ch. 3 in "Sex, Priestly Ministry and the Church" by Len Sperry

### *Sexual Intimacy*

communicating, sharing, and expressing feelings, thoughts, fantasies, and desires of a sexual nature with a significant other. It includes physical closeness, contact and interactions intended to be sexually arousing, stimulating, and satisfying; but it may or may not lead to sexual intercourse and/or orgasm for one or both parties.

### *Physical (Nonsexual) Intimacy*

engaging in physical closeness and body contact with a significant other, hugging, giving a back rub or other nonsexual touching, that is not a prelude to genital sexual activity.

### *Psychological Intimacy*

communicating, sharing and disclosing personal information and feelings about oneself with a significant other. It may include disclosing one's hopes and dreams as well as one's fears, concerns, and insecurities. True psychological intimacy presumes a secure base of trust in the relationship.

### *Intellectual intimacy*

communicating and sharing important ideas, thoughts, beliefs, etc., with a significant other. It presumes the capacity for role-taking, i.e., to understand the world from the other's frame of reference.

### *Emotional Intimacy*

communicating and sharing all of one's feelings, both positive and negative, with a significant other. It presumes empathy, i.e., the capacity for putting one's self in another's place *and* feeling what the other is feeling without identifying with or feeling sorry for the other, i.e., sympathy.

### *Social Intimacy*

engaging in enjoyable or playful activities and experiences with a significant other. Can include sharing one's daily experiences, discussing current events, sharing meals, etc.

### *Spiritual Intimacy*

sharing one's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and experiences about spiritual matters or concerns with a significant other, as well as God. May include religious practices, rituals, experiences of nature or deep personal spiritual experiences.

### *Celibate Intimacy*

sharing a deep friendship without being married and without violating chastity physically or psychologically. For a priest, this form of intimacy is considered by some to be a gift and a grace.

**Three prerequisites for intimacy are equality, commitment, and reciprocity or mutuality in the relationship.** From these flow six processes that produce what L'Abate (1997) calls the "spiral of intimacy": communication of personal values, respect for personal feelings, acceptance of personal limitations, affirmation, sharing of hurts and fears of being hurt, and forgiveness of errors.