The image of the Church that speaks most deeply to me is the image of the bride of the new Adam being brought into the world from his womb/wound by the Father/midwife in the warmth of the Holy Spirit. I believe that at the heart of the universe is a nuptial mystery. I am also drawn to Fritz Eichenberg’s Labor Cross because I know in my bones that what each of us does for a living is connected to the work of Christ on the cross.

The general life-areas in which being a married, seminary, theology professor belongs are “marriage” and “government”; however, my “business” is learning and teaching the Word; so I am involved in all three “worlds.”

The essential goodness of being such is especially found in two aspects of my life: I get to “carry life and love forward with affection” for my wife and in all my interpersonal relationships and I get to increase freedom and meaning in the life of future celibate presbyters (and lay leaders) whose whole life will be devoted to increasing freedom and meaningfulness in their people.

The “limitations” of my way of life are quite obvious: In heaven there will be perfect nuptial affection and complete freedom and meaningfulness, so I will be ‘out of a job.’ However, I expect to grow in love for God and everyone and to still be able to lead all the blessed into a deeper Theology (knowledge by acquaintance with God) which is uniquely mine.

The ambiguities of my way of life are many: The limits of time and energy, the barrage of distractions from our consumerist culture, the sheer hard work of overcoming the inertia/resistance to the every day work of teaching (correcting student work and grading), the overwhelming variety and quality of things to be read and ‘up on,’ the need to focus—all of these are but a few of the signs by which my way of life shows you it cannot, on its own power, place me or my world in the Kingdom.

The temptations and sins of my way of life are taking all goods for granted (especially my wife, my friends, and my comfortable way of life), behaving as if I had the command of the subjects I teach and the perfect way of teaching them, and abusing the power I have as teacher and member of a formation faculty.

Jesus is the very Word that God breathes/speaks to me in the Church by his Holy Breath. I need to embrace his poverty and live more precariously. I need to live more chastely in a world which sells everything with sex; I especially need to
use my eyes to see the beautiful in context: created by God for God and for
cherishing by a spouse and children and friends. I need to surrender to God with a
passion similar to the best in Islam.

Prayer and fasting are the pillar(s) of piety and other virtues which arm my
way of life against these temptations because prayer of all kinds (but especially
contemplative prayer) keeps me connected with the Trinity whose outpouring Life
and empowering Love I am trying to explain and make attractive and because
fasting makes me keen about the right things and available for the hard work and
present to the delights of relationship with my wife, my friends, my colleagues,
and my students. But I also need to continue to engage in generous almsgiving
(especially in the form of 100% luxury “tax”) so as to travel more and more
lightly on the earth.

I am most involved in the teaching/learning and worshipping dimensions
of the Church. I experience the Trinity in the Church especially at Sunday
Mass when the Father calls his people together to speak his Word to them and
when the the eucharistic body of Christ turns us into the mystical Bride of Christ.
The latter becomes vivid to me as I process to receive communion and when, after
communion, I sit in silence and Jesus, the bridegroom at the banquet leads me to
those whom I love and to those whom I don’t love, perfecting my communion
with them in him. It should be pretty obvious that the image of the wedding feast
is the one that gives me most hope.