

# The Catholic Church and Celibacy

Horrible stories are daily appearing in the public press about what Roman Catholic priests have been doing. We do not care to recount any of them here.

But it seems well to get to the underlying problem, which the media only gives slight mention to.

Why is the Roman Catholic priesthood so corrupt? Why are homosexuals attracted to it? Why are parents afraid to let their children be near a priest? Why are priests and nuns taught to stifle their normal affections? Why are so many priests leaving the priesthood? Why are so few young men interested in becoming priests?

A primary cause is the evil dogma of celibacy.

You may recall my recent study on homosexuality in the Catholic priesthood (*Catholic Priests and Homosexuality [WM-1032-1033]*). According to Catholic sources, which I quoted, about half of the priests are now homosexual.

The underlying problem is the papal requirement of celibacy. If the priests were permitted to marry and have normal homes, the present crisis in the Roman Catholic Church would not exist.

I have prepared this present study to provide you with the background of this problem,—and why the Vatican does not dare abolish it.

## WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

The Apostle Paul specifically condemned those who were “forbidding to marry” (*1 Timothy 4:3*). He also said that a bishop should be “the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded . . . one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity” (*1 Timothy 3:2, 4*). Likewise the elders (*Titus 1:5-6*) and the deacons (*1 Timothy 3:12*) should each be the husband of one wife, “ruling their children and their own houses well.” The Apostle Peter was married (*1 Corinthians 9:5*) during the time that Paul was an apostle, which, according to Vatican tradition, was the time when Peter was supposed to be the reigning pope in Rome (A.D. 42-67). We also know that he had a mother-in-law (*Matthew 8:14-15*) prior to the time that, according to Catholic doctrine, Jesus appointed him to the position of first pope (*Matthew 16:18*).

God gave marriage to mankind as a precious gift (*Genesis 2:18, 24*); and it is honorable (*Hebrews 13:4*). It is a type of the most sacred union of the church with Christ (*Ephesians 5:23-33*).

In view of the clear teachings of Scripture, how did celibacy get started in the Catholic Church?

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE CATHOLIC TEACHING

By a strange inconsistency, the Church of Rome declares that marriage is a sacrament; that is, something regarded as specially sacred or holy. Yet it denies mar-

riage to its priests, monks, and nuns—who supposedly are the most holy people in the church. Rome says that celibacy is a state superior to marriage.

Ascetism (living alone in the desert) was practiced in the pagan religions and early entered Catholicism. From the fourth century, ascetism became more widely practiced.

It was not until A.D. 1079, under the strong hand of Hildebrand, known as Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), that the priests were required to be celibate. But, for centuries thereafter, they continued having either secret wives or concubines.

Popes Urban II (1088-1099) and Calixtus II (1119-1124) tried, with partial success, to get the priests to separate from their concubines.

The decree of the First Lateran Council (1123) declared the marriage of all in sacred orders invalid. But it was the Council of Trent (1545) which finally settled the matter once and for all. It pronounced a curse on any priest or nun who married.

Among its decrees, it said any priest or nun who married was automatically excommunicated. A married man who wanted to become a priest must leave his wife, and his wife was also required to take the vow of chastity or he could not be ordained.

“Whoever shall affirm that the conjugal state is to be preferred to a life of virginity or celibacy, and that it is not better and more conducive to happiness to remain in virginity or celibacy, than to be married, let him be accursed.”—*Council of Trent, Canon 10*.

Thus during the first five centuries of the Christian era, Catholic clergy were permitted to marry and have families. For more than a thousand years after the time of Christ, Catholic priests, without too much opposition, had wives.

But faithful Catholics are presented with a rewritten history:

“[Celibacy] became established as the regular discipline in the Western Church toward the end of the 6th century when Pope Gregory the Great imposed it on all clerics in major orders.”—*Maryknoll Catholic Dictionary, article, “Celibacy,” p. 111*.

Here is an even more inaccurate statement!

“Although celibacy was practiced by the majority of clergy in the first three centuries of the Church’s history, it was after the Council of Elvira in 305 that the law became more definite. A council held at Rome in 386 and two later councils at Carthage imposed continence on all bishops, priests, and deacons.”—*The Catholic Encyclopedia, p. 100*.

Now let us look at the facts. The three councils, mentioned above, may have been fictitious or their celibacy decrees may have been forged centuries later.

Rome did not begin demanding celibacy for several centuries after the time of Constantine I (A.D. 312-337). Gregory's edict was not given till 1079.

Both before and after the Council of Trent decision in 1545, concubinage, secret marriages, and adultery continued.

In an attempt to suppress vice among the clergy, Emperor Charlemagne (800-814), a strong Catholic supporter, issued this edict:

"We have been informed to our great horror that many monks are addicted to debauchery and all sorts of vile abominations, even to unnatural sins. We forbid all such practices and command the monks to cease wandering over the country."—*Charlemagne, quoted in T. Demetrius, Catholicism and Protestantism, p. 26.*

Unperturbed that its priests were enjoying themselves, the Vatican figured out a way to make some money on what was happening. The Irish historian, William Lecky wrote:

"An Italian bishop of the tenth century described the morals of his time, saying that if he were to enforce the canons against unchaste persons administering ecclesiastical rites, no one would be left in the Church except the boys. A tax was systematically levied on princes and clergymen for license to keep concubines."—*William Lecky, History of European Morals.*

Bernard of Clairvaux protested against enforcing celibacy on the clergy as contrary to human nature and divine law, saying:

"Deprive the Church of honorable marriage, and you fill her with concubinage, incest, and all manner of nameless vices and uncleanness."—*Writings of Bernard of Clairvaux.*

In 1536, Henry VIII of England appointed commissioners to inspect all monasteries and nunneries in the land. So terrible were the cruelties and corruptions uncovered that a cry went up from the nation, that all such houses without exception should be destroyed! The fall of the monasteries was caused by "the monstrous lives of the monks, the friars, and the nuns," said Parkes who added:

"Clerical concubinage was the rule rather than the exception, and friars openly roamed the streets with women on their arms. Many of the priests were ignorant and tyrannical, whose chief interest in their parishioners was the exaction of marriage, baptism, and funeral fees, and who were apt to abuse the confessional."—*Henry Bamford Parkes, A History of Mexico.*

Though more hidden, the problem has continued on down to the present time. Now it is breaking open!

## THE PROBLEM TODAY

Now you can better understand the cause of the problem confronting the Catholic Church in America today. Here are some current statistics gleaned from the media:

There are now 63.7 million Catholics in America. Of these, 65% are white, 25% are Latino (and growing fast!), 4% are black, and 3% are Asian.

The number of priests and nuns keeps shrinking each year. The high point came in the mid-1960s, when there were 180,000 priests and 60,000 nuns. Every year, since then, their ranks have lessened; today there are only 79,462 priests and 46,041 nuns. It is an open secret that the requirement of celibacy is the cause.

Each year, the majority of priests and nuns are getting older. The average age is now 62 for priests and 69 for nuns. At the same time, the number of students studying to be priests keeps falling. The high point was in the mid-1960s, when there were 20,000 seminarians. Today, there are only 3,541.

In 1965, about 500 parishes in America had no resident priest. Today 5,300 have none! That is 27% of the total. The church has been using more deacons to fill the vacancies—about 500 in 1975, and 13,348 today.

Vatican II mandated that celibacy must remain in force; and Rome would be embarrassed if it relented on a long-held tradition—even though it is ridiculous and destroying the church.

As if that is not enough, Catholics all over America and elsewhere in the world have awakened to the problem. Lawsuits are now in progress in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Missouri, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

Announced verdicts and settlements in U.S. sexual-abuse cases over the past two decades total about \$400 million. Experts believe an equal amount has been spent in secret payoffs. More and more victims are telling their story. The number of lawsuits is rapidly becoming a flood. Insurance and cash reserves are nearly exhausted. "Churches and schools will be closed and shuttered to pay verdicts," predicts Patrick Schiltz, dean of a Catholic law school in Minneapolis. "Without doubt, some dioceses will go into bankruptcy," he adds.

Each of the 195 Catholic dioceses in the U.S. is an independent financial entity, with its own insurance and property. In 1997, the Dallas diocese had to take out loans, mortgage its chancery building, and sell land to come up with \$11 million of the \$31 million settlement not covered by insurance. Much of the liability insurance held by the various dioceses is now exhausted.

But more lawsuits start every day. The situation keeps getting worse. And Rome dares not get rid of celibacy; for to do so would be to admit that centuries ago it made a terrible mistake. And, as you know, "Rome never errs."

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