

Priests and Sex

Authorities in the Roman Catholic Church expect the priest to repress his sexual appetite by sublimating it through ascetical means. They perceive his sexual appetite as an alien force which must be denied.

Why?

Why treat it as an alien force needing to be curtailed when it is part and parcel of a priest's nature as created by God and in His image?

Is there something wrong with sex? Is there something about sexual intimacy that defiles a priest or renders him ineffective as a priest? If so, what is it?

Or is it women? Why do celibate male Church officials believe that sexual intimacy with a woman renders a priest unclean and unfit for the priesthood?

The Church maintains that mandatory celibacy is somehow supposed to help priests love all people more effectively. However, untold numbers of us who have left the priesthood have found this to be untrue. We who have married and who continue in ministry have found that the love and intimacy we have with our wives has not diminished, in the least, the love we can give to others. Quite the contrary, the intimacy we share with our wives helps empower us to extend love and understanding to others even more effectively.

So, why should a priest have to sacrifice his God-given appetite for sexual union and love?

It appears there is no convincing answer to this question and the Church should, without delay, repent of its sexual oppression of priests by making celibacy optional for them once again.

What are your thoughts? Is there a rational reason why celibate male Church officials forbid priests to marry and celebrate God's gift of sexual intimacy?

Do they have a problem with women?

10 Comments

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Henry said...

Pope's new edict on the priesthood
by Gay News

The Roman Catholic Church requires its priests to refrain from any sexual relationship, whether heterosexual or homosexual. So one might think that the sexual orientation of an aspirant for the priesthood would be a nonissue – especially in light of the distinction the church has drawn between homosexual conduct, which is considered sinful, and homosexual orientation, which is not.

One would be wrong.

The Vatican recently issued a statement re-emphasizing that even chaste gay men are to be barred from the priesthood. Never mind that large numbers of gay priests – estimates range from 25% to 50% – already serve the faithful, with most adhering to their vow of celibacy.

“Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood,” released Oct. 30 by the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education, not only reiterates the teaching that men with “deep-seated” homosexual tendencies are unworthy of ordination, it also urges seminaries to enlist the aid of psychologists in screening candidates for homosexuality and other “psychic disturbances.”

The Vatican’s hard line against chaste gay priests seems to be inspired by the

condemnation the church justly received for its passive response to the sexual abuse of minors – most of them male – by some priests. But, as Pope Benedict XVI conceded during his visit to the United States this year, homosexuality isn't the same as pedophilia. That statement was a rebuke to conservative Catholics, and others, who have attempted to equate the two. (Despite the pope's enlightened comments, he approved last month's statement.)

Obviously, the church must be free to define the qualifications for its clergy based on theological arguments that many outside (and within) the fold find unpersuasive. In this country, the 1st Amendment allows the church to bar homosexuals from the priesthood, just as it does women. But even many Catholics will be horrified by the idea of the church employing psychologists to "out" prospective priests. Nor is it much comfort that the psychological scrutiny will be voluntary. What young man who feels called to the priesthood will feel free to object?

To be fair, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States – including the Archdiocese of Los Angeles – operates under its own guidelines for the screening of prospective priests, which can include consultations with psychologists. Although the U.S. policy professes to adhere to Vatican pronouncements (and was approved by the pope), it seems to adopt a narrower definition of "deep-seated" homosexual inclination, one that allows gays to be ordained as long as their sexual orientation doesn't interfere with their ministry.

Yet even if the U.S. church is following a more compassionate policy than Vatican pronouncements would seem to authorize, the role of psychologists in screening applicants raises troubling ethical questions, as even psychologists who approve of such cooperation admit. Aiding the church in weeding out homosexuals is hard to reconcile with these guidelines of the American Psychological Assn.:

"Psychologists are aware of and respect cultural, individual and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language and socioeconomic status, and consider these factors when working with members of such groups. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those

factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices.”

If the church – or a diocese within the church – takes the Vatican decree literally, it’s hard to see how a psychologist could lend his or her expertise to the thwarting of a young man’s aspiration to serve God simply because he happens to be gay. In our view, that’s not just cruel; it’s unprofessional.

From: <http://www.gayguidemiami.com/inthenews/religion/popes-edict-priesthood/>

December 1, 2008 6:53 AM

Conrad said...

The church’s insistence on mandatory celibacy for priests does have a rational explanation, and it is this: the church is being irrational! Maybe that sounds corny, but it’s true!

It is irrational to impose a restriction that was once in order, but whose reason for existence (a cleric’s prerogative of passing a benefice on to his heirs) has ceased to exist.

It is irrational to uphold the biblical concept of women being “unclean” after menstruation and after miraculous life-bestowing childbirth, or declaring a man unclean following “an issue of seed,” and therefore unfit for presiding at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

It is irrational to allow fear to displace reason in determining policy. The church recognizes sex as a potential evil to be feared and tightly controlled to forestall dire imagined consequences.

It is irrational, and arrogant as well, to maintain the patriarchal assumption that Man is superior to Woman and that the priest must be male in imitation of Christ, when they essentially hold that the priest par excellence was Mary, the Mother of

God, who made Christ present to the world, as the priest does at Mass.

All too often, people are helpless in the face of irrational governance acting out of fear. Unfortunately, that is where we sexual beings find ourselves in relation to the church, which feels the need to maintain control by demonizing sexual activity, demeaning women and gays, and safeguarding its clergy from the corruption that (they implicitly maintain) infects those who exercise and receive their God-given gift of sexual love.

December 13, 2008 1:56 PM

Conrad said...

PS

What the Church needs today is someone who can harmonize its creed with what today's philosophers of good will have figured out about our nature and our world, as Thomas Aquinas did back in the 13th century. There is such a man, Charles Curran, who used to be tenured at Catholic University. But they canned him for his views about sexual morality.

December 13, 2008 4:09 PM

Anonymous said...

i think that the problem of celibacy is it rests on the assumption or tradition of spirit and matter being torn apart from the blessed whole in which they are interwoven. woman is considered material, corporeal and fallen... an earthly non paradise element which would be a mistake to believe such a tainted material . In truth esoterically all is deeply saturated with gods love and with the love and mercy of god. an embrace between man and woman may be secularized or blessed union according to the pupil of the beholder . such beholding something as beautiful and valuable or valueless and a problem ...this shows you the esoteric maturity of the speaker .

which if we are willing to embrace within love the entire human development we might have a place in our heart for many stations of belief .

i have loved a catholic priest for many years often feeling concealed even from my self and am seeking prayers and guidance .

i think the chalice of love benefits from the kind gaze of the entourage and can scarcely survive

unkind words and thoughts .

my priest when he is sent far away by the archbishop for three years at a time is gracious about me loving perhaps another person in the interim as he cannot care for me at times ,this is a complex blessing and i try to accept Gods lattices and embellishments .

my priest is african and would be a traditional priest of his community and tribal elder had the catholics not colonized his west african nation

he has been a kind person to me and we have formed a hidden bond which is both precarious and strengthening

i send my love and support to the women to love priests and the priests who have opened their heart to women

blessings

mary

May 23, 2009 6:39 PM

pat said...

A man is a man, no matter how you dress him up

June 18, 2009 6:34 PM

Anonymous said...

I think a lot has to do with Manichaeism (I'm sure I've spelled that incorrectly). Material is bad and spirit is good - to simplify it. Flesh vs. spirit, body vs. soul, etc..... Look at St. Augustine - his teaching on sex and sexuality STILL influences the Church today - a necessary SIN for reproduction? Please..... So, he goes from one extreme to the other and the Church "suffers" for the rest of their existence? Since when was sex bad in God's eyes? Sacred, I thought..... So, then we have Holy Orders ABOVE marriage - celibacy and continence ABOVE sexual relations within marriage! Since when was sex an impediment to being holy? "Be fruitful and

multiply.....and fill the earth..." Out of the mouth of God! And it is my understanding that Jewish priests were married? To be single as a Jew was looked down upon, was it not? Sure, love has many expressions, but it seems to me that Godly Love is creative, and I mean that literally. When love enters the co-creative begetting of children, are we not as human beings entering into the realm of the sacred and of God? Could there be anything more "Godly" than that? Isn't the PHYSICAL sign of sexual relations EXTREMELY SACRED precisely because it incarnates? God PHYSICALLY begot His Son - WE beget children - connection here? The ministering that married couples do seems far "higher" than anything else that WE could possibly do..... Could there truly BE anything more profound in following God's example in co-creating?

Optional celibacy (and maybe the Church will actually get more vocations to the priesthood and religious life because there will be more families and children born from having a married clergy)!

August 24, 2009 4:43 PM

Henry said...

Anonymous,

To control a priest's sexuality is to control them at their deepest level. It is dehumanizing to the priest but keeps him in total submission. It is all about control that has been given a spiritual facade.

August 24, 2009 5:37 PM

Gerard said...

The comments given betray a severe lack of understanding or a willingness to understand about sex as well as celibacy and the priesthood itself.

Not one mention of grace, not one mention of giving something up for love of God and no other reason. Not one mention of sin, or misplaced "appetites" vs. sacrificial love.

From reading it seems many of you are simply sex-obsessed addicts who think sex will fill up the missing intimacy that God alone can fill.

Blaming the Church and attributing a series of false accusations will not raise the lower view of sex that many of you display. The Church protects and cherishes sex by making it sacred and for it to be sacred it must be put in boundaries where it's not abused or perverted.

I see no understanding here of the intimacy of the Priesthood with the Divine. Which by the way, the lay faithful can get a glimmer of if they too develop the virtue of "Chastity" (ever heard of it?)

Of course some are so sure that "God is calling me to change.." (ie God wants me to have sex when I want, as much as I want and with whomever I want.) Sorry Charlie, that ain't God talking. That's just the reaction of an addict unable to break the addiction. The alcoholic would use the same rationalization if it enabled them to drink.

It comes down to this, is sex your god or is God your God? Celibacy is mandatory in the Latin rite, priesthood is not mandatory. Perhaps those priests were misled and never had the call or they like many cheating husbands didn't do the work to stay faithful to their spouse. Marriage is about more than sex and some couples can't for whatever reasons. That doesn't mean they don't love nor are they lacking intimacy. One avenue is cut off from them and that allows deeper intimacy and greater bonds to be formed.

The question that needs to be asked is are the needs of the relationship not worth the sacrifice of an orgasm to them?

April 29, 2010 3:57 PM

Henry said...

Gerard,
I plugged my nose as I published your comment.

Why are you so obsessed with sex? Marriage is about a relationship of mutual love and understanding, which demands the ability to give one's self to the other in many more ways than sex. Priests who have transition from the priesthood and married, did so because love. What you describe is a prostitution of marriage and reflects the thinking of one who looks upon women as sex objects. My guess is that you are in the seminary or thinking about going in. I don't think you are a priest because most priests would know better. You seem to be sitting on a sexual volcano and view celibacy as a way to keep it from exploding. Your thinking reflects the mentality of so many entering the seminary today and is why mandated celibacy must become optional in order for the priesthood to attract more mature and integrated people.

April 29, 2010 4:42 PM

Henry said...

Gerard,
You have my email. Let's carry on our discussion there. You have equated God with the agenda of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, which is to say, you are a Catholic fundamentalist. I know this is difficult for you to believe, but God does speak directly to the hearts of his people. The Catholic Church is not the intermediary.

April 29, 2010 10:42 PM