

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2008 - NOVEMBER 7, 2010

(ARCHIVE)

## Vocation

"I am Priest. Vocation. Vows. Celibate. ...

But, God calls me to change. I seek freedom. Love. ... "

**NO!**

**Heretic!**

**Shame!**

**You can't leave!**

"But, God calls me to change, freedom, love ..."

**I am your God. I am the Church. I own you Priest. I am your wife and any other is a whore.**

**Fear me. Fear me damn you. I speak for God. I am your God. I hold your soul and will punish you.**

"Goodbye."

**You can't live without me. How dare you leave. I am your world. Fear me. Fear me damn you.**

**You're a failure. You should have never been ordained.**

**You damn**

**Sinner,**

**Sinner,**

**Sinner,**

**Sinner,**

**Sinner**

**Bad boy.**

**Bad,**

**bad**

**boy . . . .**

**"I'm free."**

**"Goodbye."**

*Our vocation is seldom a straight path, but a series of unfolding tackings and turnings. A newspaper recently reported that in any given year nearly forty percent of Americans change their careers; not jobs, careers. This mobility and transition is in part the result of shifting economic opportunities, for sure, but many are changing their lives. We live longer today; there is nothing to prevent a person from having several careers, each activating another facet of the polyhedral self. ...*

*When we recognize and withdraw the projections that money and power represent, then we are obliged to ask in radical form: "What am I called to do?" This question must be asked periodically, and we must listen humbly to the answer. We may, in our individuation process, be called to incarnate many kinds of energy. Just when we have achieved a measure of stability, we may be undermined from below and called to a new*

*direction. Whatever our social burden, whatever our economic constraint, we must keep asking anew, "What am I called to do?" Then, with planning, the paying of dues and sufficient courage, we must find a way to do it. The sacrifice of the ego, with its need for creature comforts and security, is painful, but not half so much as looking back on our lives and regretting that we failed to answer the call. The 'vocatus' is to become ourselves as fully as we are able; the task is to find out how. We are judged not only by the goodness of our heart, but also by the fullness of our courage. Relinquishing security we have struggled to obtain may be frightening, but not so much as denying that larger person we are called to be. The soul has its needs, which are not served well by paycheck and perks. (James Hollis, "The Middle Passage" pp. 73-74)*

### 31 Comments

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#### **Joseph said...**

"You can't leave . . ."

That is exactly what I have been told just recently. I am leaving at the end of the month and I feel as if some of my "friends", instead of supporting me, just taunt me as if their voice is the "Voice of God." It is a terrible feeling.

November 16, 2008 11:14 AM

#### **Henry said...**

Joseph, it takes great courage to leave amid shaming accusations of damnation. The Church has constructed a world-view that has put itself in the place of God. It is a dictatorship and its loyal subjects are its priests, who unlike most laity that dismiss their control, are imprisoned by vows of obedience and a celibate culture of fear. Congratulations in finding freedom. It is no small accomplishment. Would love to read your story in a post on [www.leavingthepriesthood.com](http://www.leavingthepriesthood.com).

November 17, 2008 8:10 AM

## Lucy said...

I wish to leave a comment for "Conrad" one of the transitioned priests.

He says he did not want to live in sin by being in a marriage not sanctioned by the church.

Conrad, what about all the previous sins, like fornicating with a married woman? You had 3-4 lovers! A fornicating priest commits two sins for the price of one act!

Am I being judgemental? I suppose I am, but one of the spiritual works of mercy is to admonish the sinner. You were a priest and held to a much higher level of expectation to live out the Christian life. I am alone myself for 15 years and yes it is awful at times, but I am called to be celibate unless in a loving marriage. No one ever said it was gonna be easy.

Why do men entertain thoughts of entering the priesthood in the first place if they know upfront they are not to marry or engage in sexual congress of any sort? There is the Permanent Diaconate if you wish to marry.

To receive our Lord in Eucharist while fornicating - what a sacrilege. And Conrad, you feel such a relationship was "sacramental"??? Love isn't always about jumping into bed with someone, it is wanting what's best for that person, for the sake of both your eternal souls.

God help us all - for the devil surely preys on His priests.

November 22, 2008 8:42 AM

## **Conrad said...**

Lucy,

According to all that the Church has consistently told me, you are absolutely right. It's exactly what I kept telling myself all those years as I was repeatedly going through the sin-guilt-repent cycle. But, as that same Church also told me, "all those previous sins," were forgiven by a merciful God through the sacrament of

Penance, so that, when I was at the crossroads trying to decide which direction to take, they were no longer on the table.

The guilt feelings disappeared for the most part when I finally came to the realization that 1) the only factor that made my relationship “immoral” was the ecclesiastical decree that mandated celibacy for priests and thus prevented me from exercising my inalienable right to marry Beverly and/or Marie, 2) that no positive law of the church could ever constitute grounds for eternal damnation and 3) that it’s OK to follow one’s convictions. As the Church also teaches, the proximate norm of morality is the individual’s conscientiously formed conscience, and mine does not upbraid me in the least for my relationship with Marie. That’s why nobody—no priest, no bishop, not even the Pope himself—is justified in passing judgment on anyone else.

And yes, our relationship is sacramental. As I bask in the warmth of my beloved’s love, it speaks to me constantly of God’s endless love for me, and empowers me to be, likewise, a similar sign of God’s love for her. If that isn’t sacramental—a visible sign of God’s love and grace—then I don’t know what is or what might be. The lustful bed-hopping that you mention in passing constitutes a completely different scenario.

I empathize with you in your difficulties with living a celibate life (been there, done that!) and I deeply admire you for being faithful to your celibate commitment. However, there is a huge difference between your situation and that of the priest, because you are free to marry if you wish to do so. If the Church would restore to its priests that same freedom, which they enjoyed throughout the first fifteen centuries of the Church’s existence, it would certainly help to level the playing field.

November 23, 2008 8:31 AM

Henry **said...**

Lucy,

From my reading of Conrad's post (see "Posts from Transitioned Priests" at [www.leavingthepriesthood.com](http://www.leavingthepriesthood.com)), he did not "jump into bed" with anyone. He sought to love someone, which is honorable and holy. Present Church teaching implies that sex defiles a priest, but there is nothing dirty or defiling about sex, especially when celebrated in the midst of a relationship of love. I doubt Christ is offended when a priest whose heart is full of love, and who celebrated that love in sexual union, receives the Eucharist. The "sacrilege" you refer to lies in the Church forcing lonely priests to live out their lives in mandated celibacy.

The real question here is "Why does love disqualify a priest from the priesthood when the scriptures state that God is love?" By requiring priests to force love out of their hearts, mandated celibacy opposes the will of God. Also, controlling a priest's sexuality is to control him at his deepest level. In this sense, priests are owned men and breaking free from this ownership is an act of physical and spiritual liberation, even if they have yet to leave the priesthood.

Allowing the Church to define for you the parameters of acceptable behavior limits your world-view. The Church's major concern is self-preservation and not your spiritual enlightenment and maturity. In fact, she would find that a great threat because it would diminish her power.

November 23, 2008 7:20 PM

### Lucy said...

Sex outside of marriage is clearly fornication.

Since when does "being in love" make everything okay? what happens if the person tells themselves they are in love over and over again and over the course of their lives have 5, 6, 7 "true loves" YOU see what I am getting at?

Sex within marriage isn't a church law it is God's law.

If I continue to fornicate and go confession so I can receive the Eucharist, does it really count if I know in my heart that I am just going to go out and do it again

anyway? (oh its okay because I can just go to confession...I think God knows the bottom of our hearts and our truest intentions) that would be making a mockery of the sacrament of reconciliation...in order to be forgiven, you have to be TRULY sorry and not want to do it again! You say "allowing the Church do define for you the parameter of acceptable behavior limits your world view". Henry, Conrad you guys are speaking MORAL RELATIVSIM. This type of thinking leaves what is moral up to each and every own individual

There has to be a moral compass.

November 23, 2008 8:26 PM

### Lucy **said...**

Let's take the priestly celibacy out of the picture all together and just focus on what else transpired---you had sex outside of marriage and sex outside of marriage for ANYONE, priest or layperson is called fornication and is a sin. This is God's law--certainly not invented by the Catholic Church.

Being in love doesn't make every action "okay" nor does going to confession after each act make you forgiven because you have to fully repent and have no intention of doing it again. God knows the bottom of our hearts and our truest intentions so why waste time making a mockery out of the sacrament of reconciliation.

I could just imagine how you two guys listened to other confessing their sins of fornication and adultery and you sat there absolving them?

We need a moral compass and cannot decide for ourselves what is right and wrong. This is relativism - and will bring us all down.

November 23, 2008 8:30 PM

### Henry **said...**

Lucy,  
You forget one important thing. Most priests would welcome marriage and

celebrating their union with their beloved within its confines. But, tell that to the celibate male Bishops and Pope who claim to wield their dictatorial power in the name of Christ. Until you have walked in the foot steps of a priest, you will never really understand.

We became priests because we were called by God. Many of us found out later we were not called to celibacy and left under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The important issue is holding the priesthood hostage to mandated celibacy. You may want to read the information on the website [www.leavingthepriesthood.com](http://www.leavingthepriesthood.com) again.

November 24, 2008 2:01 PM

### **Conrad said...**

Yes, Lucy, by all means, let's take the law of priestly celibacy out of the picture altogether. It dates back to 1123 AD. However, to be consistent and for the sake of discussion, let's also take another church law out of the picture—the one requiring that a couple wanting to marry must go through a formal marriage ceremony in the church (enacted in 1565 AD). Where does that leave us? In exactly the same situation that prevailed in the church for more than half of its history!

So, if we take church laws out of the picture, what is left? Persons desiring to enter conjugal life together, honorably do so simply by committing themselves to each other and living together. That used to suffice to bring into existence a marriage fully recognized as valid by the Church. The point here is that all that prevented me from entering into a church-sanctioned marriage was the law of the Church itself. Take away the mandatory celibacy and the problem disappears, doesn't it?

Rescinding mandatory celibacy and the requirement of form would not, of course, put a stamp of approval on casual sex or on bed-hopping, which I acknowledge to be immoral, but it would indeed validate, in the Church's eyes—and, I believe, in God's eyes as well—a loving, committed sexual relationship between a man and a woman. It would, in fact, be truly a marriage, without the trappings of civil and ecclesiastical law.



That's not moral relativism. It's simply recognizing that the positive law of the Church does not determine the moral character of an action. A moral compass does indeed still exist. However, it is not found in ecclesiastical regulations per se, but in the natural law that is binding on all of humanity.

November 25, 2008 3:22 PM

Lucy **said...**

I apologize for the two similar postings as I am having difficult making sure the comments are submitted correctly. Hope it doesn't happen again.

That is very well put Conrad and I am open to your views and opinions (and yours as well Henry)

Forgive me if I am not as well-versed or knowledgeable of Church history (I have had no college education) I only speak from my heart and from reading many books throughout my life.

But as for what is moral law - well WHO defines what moral law is then? Is it Almighty God, or is it the the individual who tries to interpret scripture on his own.

You are saying that if a man and a woman commit themselves to each other, without any sort of ceremony at all, that at one point in time that ws okay with the church. I suppose then, that even gay couples can do this and feel it is also a moral act because in their own eyes they "love each other"

I am interested in hearing your views on gay couples as well. I am not trying to broaden the topic too much away from priestly celibacy; rather I am trying to point to what constitutes "right and wrong" in the eyes of the individual vs. God and the Church. You feel what you did was fine and loving and acceptable in God's eyes. On the other hand, some pretty wacky people out there might also feel THEIR behavior and lifestyle choices are "ok" and perfectly acceptable as long as it doesn't hurt anyone and it is between two consenting adults.

Who decides what is right and wrong? That to me is what moral relativism is - specific to each individuals life and circumstances Where is the line drawn and WHO draws the line?

Conrad and Henry - please just both of you give me YOUR definition of "FORNICATION"

God bless and Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours

November 26, 2008 5:28 PM

### Henry said...

Lucy,

The Bishop has to give his priests permission to fornicate. When saying masses, a priest can binate and trinate, but needs permission to fornicate (say four masses in one day). Because the shortage of priests, I expect more bishops are giving their priests permission to fornicate.

Seriously, fornication is what most of us did in the back seats of our cars during high school and college. After I got my drivers license, I remember the lecture my mother gave me prior to my first date. It was the first time I heard her talk about hell. She feared that her authority was not enough to curtain my sexual curiosity, so she felt it necessary to bring God into the picture. It didn't work very well in 1970 and is even less effective today. Using God and the fear of hell to control children may work for awhile, but normally during adolescence the God of fear is discarded when they realized it was all about attempting to control their behavior. They spend the next few decades of their lives trying to salvage a God they can believe in.

I think it is safe to say that the vast majority of unmarried people fornicate prior to marriage, especially when the average age of first marriages today is around 25, rather than 18 or younger as it was 75 years ago. Today, most couples cohabit prior to marriage and the church will need to make peace with this. When first

ordained, I tried to enforce diocesan policy which required cohabiting couples to move apart or have a small wedding. All it accomplished was the alienation of families from the Church.

Lucy, you seem rather preoccupied with “sins of the flesh”. Why? Do you perceive sex as “dirty”?

Jesus’ major concern was about compassion and the scriptures record little from him about today’s hot topic sexual issues. Just last Sunday on the feast of Christ the King we heard this proclaimed:

The King will say to those on his left, “Depart from me you evil doers. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not invited me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothed me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me... Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.” Matthew 25:41-45

I see nothing here about sexual behavior, which seems to be your and the Church’s major concern. “Sins of the flesh” are most often about two people attempting to express their love for one another. There are far worse things.

Are you going to also defend the Church’s ban on artificial birth control? When it comes to teachings about sexuality, the Church has lost its credibility.

Regarding homosexuality, I would welcome input from our gay brothers and sisters. I’m in favor of inclusion and feel that among many conservative Christians, gay people are today’s “lepers”. I doubt anyone chooses to be gay. Why would they choose to be an outcast and possibly beaten and killed? I remember a young man coming to confession shortly before I left the priesthood. After he confessed he was gay, he then asked if God would condemn him if he committed suicide. His purpose in going to confession was to get permission to kill himself. He certainly did not choose to be homosexual. It’s time to stop persecuting gay people.

During the abolition movement of the 17th century, those in favor of slave

ownership quoted scripture in defense of their position. While acknowledging there are scriptures in favor of slave ownership, the abolitionists argued that the thrust of scripture as a whole points to freeing slaves. I believe the same argument is valid for the issue of homosexuality.

November 27, 2008 8:50 AM

### Henry said...

Lucy,

You asked, "Who decides what is right and wrong?" I think the answer to that question is "you". Decisions are made by others for children and not adults. Adults make their own decisions which is a sign of spiritual maturity. I don't think this is relativism. On [www.leavingthepriesthood.com](http://www.leavingthepriesthood.com) website, I stated more of my views about this under the sections: "Defining Truth" and "Relativism vs Pluralism".

November 27, 2008 10:08 AM

### **Conrad said...**

Who defines the moral law? I say that It is God, who has written it into the very nature of the world he created, and who gave us humans the power of reasoning (common sense, if you will) so that we could figure out, by observing the nature of things, which actions are right and which are wrong. The Church can help a person do this and provide much needed guidance in the process of growing to maturity and in the formation of conscience.

However, the Church does not create the natural law. It only interprets it, and not always correctly, I might add. For example, what person gifted with only a modicum of common sense would subscribe to the teaching that, for the unmarried, sexual sins admit no parvity of matter—that ANY transgression of the sexual moral code, however slight it may seem to be (for example, enjoying the sensation of spontaneous sexual arousal), is mortal sin when fully consented to, and can thus invoke the ultimate sanction of eternal damnation`

I understand and appreciate your alarm at “subjective morality,” and, along with

you, I condemn it outright. But coming to a conclusion about what is right and wrong by considering the nature of things is not subjective morality. Subjective morality is looking at a poisonous mushroom, declaring that it is non-poisonous, and eating it; objective morality is recognizing it as poisonous and avoiding it. (That's only an example, which you could probably shoot full of holes, but I think it illustrates the point.)

So, who decides what is right and what is wrong? The individual, basing his (substitute "her" if appropriate) decision on objective truth learned from whatever resources are available to him and not simply on emotions and whims. He may not always be objectively right, but he is morally blameless if he does what he conscientiously believes to be all right.

About fornication. Webster defines it as: consensual sexual intercourse between unmarried persons. (Please muffle the ah-HA!) So who's to blame for my fornication? I say it's both of us—both the Church and I. For my part, I could have refrained from the activity, so I'll have to take responsibility for that. However, equally responsible is the Church, by making it impossible for me to exercise my inalienable right to marry. I'm saying that I would have married Beverly were it not for that bit of positive legislation. I don't blame the Church for my relationships and my actions, but I do blame her for calling them immoral and maintaining an artificial barrier to prevent me from rendering them OK. That's also why I could truthfully say in my post in Leaving the Priesthood.com: "It was only after fourteen years into this relationship that I quit feeling guilty about it, reasoning that the ONLY thing that stood in the way of its being recognized as honorable was the church's law of mandatory celibacy for priests."

You ask for my views about gay couples. I think what I've said above will also help illustrate my views on that subject. First of all, I do not believe that anyone chooses to be gay—be it due to nature or to nurture, a homosexual person has had no choice in the matter, any more than I could have chosen to be heterosexual. I respect a gay person's freedom of conscience just I expect everyone to respect mine. I believe that most of Scripture that is cited to condemn homosexual relationships is misinterpreted through emotional arguments and the biblical

emphasis on the primacy of childbearing. True, conception is impossible in gay relationships, but other fruits of marriage such as mutual support and love can be attained, just as they can in the equally sterile marriages of the elderly. I don't believe that the Church has listened to enough honest input from the gay community to be able to state definitively that committed sexual relationships between gay persons are immoral. Gays are called upon to look at their situation honestly, taking into account all the factors that might affect the morality of their sexual activity, and make their decisions accordingly.

November 27, 2008 9:30 PM

### Lucy **said...**

Well I guess the bishop won't allow fornication at all since doing it three times is the max and you might get worn out and unable to perform yet another time huh Henry (you're a regular riot Alice!)

No I am not obsessed with sins of the flesh guys, really. I have a very healthy attitude towards sex and as you can see a sense of humor about it too.

I do not condemn homosexuals, I personally feel that many if not most of them did not CHOOSE to be outcast either or keep the secret hidden. I am sure people with a deep orientation to their own sex are very troubled and carry a very heavy cross.

However, I AM finding that many young people today simply choose to EXPERIMENT with this lifestyle and like to be thought of as bisexual. They feel it is ok - that I am against big time, as a daughter of two young adults.

As for my own past sins you are talking to a divorced woman who has had an abortion, several lovers and fell in love with a priest - the latter part being after a conversion of heart and repentance back to the Catholic Church I was raised in - so you can see I have a personal interest in your stories. The priest did not love me back though, I told him my feelings, but he simply ran away and ended all communication with me. IT was very very painful - the hardest cross I ever had to bear.

So I listen to what the Church tells me as well, that I a sinner for having wanted to steal intimacy from a man who was not free to begin with. I don't want to go to hell for loving him or desiring him either. I still think of him every day and believe in my heart he had feelings as well, but could not handle it when I revealed it to him in a letter.

November 28, 2008 3:54 PM

### **Conrad said...**

Thank you, Lucy, for sharing those intimately personal details. It brought our ongoing discussion down from the theoretical to a deeply personal level and gave rise to warm feelings toward you, and if you were here I'd just like to give you a great big hug.

It would be nice if you wrote up the story about you and the priest you loved, and submitted it for posting on the website. There are probably hundreds of women who have walked in your shoes, and some of them might well respond with sharings of their own, forming a support group in cyberspace! We might even hear from some priests who are or were in HIS shoes.

November 29, 2008 11:41 AM

### **Henry said...**

Lucy,

Thank you for sharing some of the challenging events of your personal life. I too would enjoy reading the story of your relationship with the priest you loved. You can email it to me at [henry@leavingthepriesthood.com](mailto:henry@leavingthepriesthood.com). We can start a post on [www.leavingthepriesthood.com](http://www.leavingthepriesthood.com) entitled "Women Who Love Priests" or something like that. There are other women considering writing a similar post on the website.

November 29, 2008 6:48 PM

### **Anonymous said...**

Lucy,

I am with you on this issue...completely. As a woman I think that priests are far too willing to have sex with a woman "in the name of love" and leave the marriage and commitment part out of the picture.

I think, if I will pardon me Henry, that you are rationalizing behavior which is not Christian teaching for anyone. Sex outside of marriage is a sin for Christians but one which no one seems willing to address.

The priest I was involved with saw no harm whatsoever to a woman in having sex with her and then moving on when the feelings "passed" or the situation became difficult for him. It takes a lot more than "love" to make a decent and honorable relationship with a woman and I think that priests do not get this at all.

December 11, 2008 4:31 AM

### Henry said...

Anonymous,

I know there are priests out there who have casual sex with multiple partners but I believe they are in a small minority and their behavior must be condemned. Like any other organization, the priesthood has its share of assholes and it sounds like you had the unfortunate experience of finding one. Or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say he found you and maybe even preyed upon you. If you would like to share your story, please email it to me at [henry@leavingthepriesthood.com](mailto:henry@leavingthepriesthood.com) and I will post it on the website under "Women Who Love Priests". It would be good for priests to read about the experience of women who get hurt in relationships that become sexual when they refuse to leave the priesthood.

Unlike my early years in the priesthood, I do not think sex outside of marriage is necessarily a sin. In the USA, perhaps the majority of people live together prior to marriage and in Canada and parts of Europe, the vast majority do. I refer you to Conrad's post above about the history of marriage and who determines moral law. Today, the Church says, "You're not married until I say you're married", but the Church is not God. It is a human organization controlled by male celibates whose



attitude about sexuality is archaic. Why should people listen to a Church who considers its priests sexual appetite to be an alien force within him which must be opposed with a vengeance? Even masturbation is considered a sin! The Church's ban on artificial methods of birth control indicates it should not be taken seriously. The majority of Catholics have rightfully lifted themselves out from under this oppression by disregarding much of the Church's teaching about human sexuality.

December 11, 2008 7:02 AM

### **Anonymous said...**

Henry,

Have you know a fair number of priests who have this casual sex on the side and then pretend to play holy priest at the altar? I have read stories where bishops have found out some of their priests had girlfriends and, although while certainly not condoning such behavior and discouraging it--the bishops preferred the priest carry on in secret with the woman rather than leave the priesthood to marry her! This to them was a lesser sin and scandal! "What they don't know won't hurt them" sort of thinking. But leave the priesthood and marry? Abomination! This is probably more prevalent in the last 10 years or so; as Conrad's and your stories do no reflect such attitudes from your bishops. Either way I think it stinks big time.

Lucy

There is something really really wrong here and very much a sin in my eyes.

December 11, 2008 4:33 PM

### **Henry said...**

Lucy,

No, I do not personally know any priests who have casual sex with multiple women but I am sure they are out there and the damage they do is enormous. Anonymous seems to have been involved with one. But, again, I think they are in the minority. Normally, priests who get sexually involved with women do so within a relationship

of mutual love and sex is one aspect of their relationship. Most of these priests are men who feel starved for companionship of depth and begin these relationships in friendship.

Mandatory celibacy is a little like telling a starving man he can have no food, and when he finds some food he is publicly shamed for desiring it and consuming it. Yet, God created the desire for food and food is essential to a healthy body. Likewise, we all have similar needs for intimate loving companionship and it was put in us by God. Yes, it can be sacrificed but what does that do to one's soul especially if love has been awakened from a long celibate slumber? I think denying this awakened love has negative spiritual consequences for the celibate. The love of God knocked at the door and he refused to open.

Regarding Bishops turning a blind eye to priests involved in sexual relationships with women, I think this did happen in the past but those days are now over because of law suits. Now, bishops are quick to drop the axe on a priest in love and sometimes do so even in violation of canon law. Often, the canonical rights of priests are not respected when a bishop comes in like gang busters when a priest is attempting to work through a relationship. They are booted and normally not reinstated because they are perceived as a financial risk to the diocese. The effect of this has been to drive priestly relationships of love deeper underground.

December 12, 2008 6:41 AM

### **Anonymous said...**

I have heard these same arguments from the priest I was involved with - the rationale being that the church has failed as regards sexual teaching therefore "I can do what I want" or even "we can all do what we want" as regards sex. The church got it wrong on birth control so ergo it has it wrong on everything else about sex. Personally I think this is nonsense and I think that you and Conrad have missed the illogical argument being put forward.

If as you state confession, a man made institution, brings forgiveness from God [working through the church] - then why does the same church in its teaching not bring condemnation from God? God only works through the church to forgive but

not condemn?

I understand very well the history of moral thought and ethics. The fact that there is an evolutionary process in moral development does not necessarily render contemporary teaching invalid or abrogate it. I think that some sexual codes actually benefit women well.

Sex outside of marriage serves men far more than it does women. Male and female sexuality are not equivalent - in spite of such pronouncements in the early to mid twentieth century by progressive women. Women bring a far great emotional dimension to sexual relationships and need to have their emotions catered to in order to feel fulfilled. Rarely is a woman looking for a purely sexual relationship - but men sometimes are. How many porn magazines are aimed at women - how many women seek male prostitutes?

Men having sex with women - the way so many Catholic priests do - for no other reason other than a covert "love" are being abusive - and selfish. A man's relationship with a woman ought to have other components to it - like loyalty, faithfulness and be openly proclaimed so that the woman is in a primary position in the man's life and that those around him respect this. Anything short of this is abuse in my opinion and a priest having sex with a woman under these conditions is abusive to her.

December 12, 2008 10:35 PM

### Henry said...

Anonymous,

The Church has no power except that which we give it. I do not perceive the Church having power to either forgive or condemn. The Church can pronounce forgiveness in the confessional or during the penitential rite, but it is doing nothing but proclaim the forgiveness that is already yours. It is a nice part of the liturgy and comforting to hear words of forgiveness, but no one, including the priest, stands between you and God. In this we have both freedom and responsibility.

It appears to me that the priest you were in relationship with was irresponsible and would be irresponsible in any other walk of life. He may even be in the priesthood to prey on women, which is an unspeakable evil. If this is the case, his conscience is malformed and he ought to receive the boot. I want to believe that most priests get sexually involved with people they love and do not have casual sex, but mandated celibacy can attract some very confused people and nothing surprises me anymore. Why the hierarchy insists on maintaining this Church discipline is beyond my understanding. Perhaps there have not been enough law suits. They will not be convinced by reason.

I agree that women have much more at stake when engaging in sex and sex should be surrounded in a relationship of committed love. I think it would be best if priests who find themselves in love would leave the priesthood and get on with their lives in the light and outside of the shaming shadows mandated celibacy. When he refuses to leave, not only is he being abused by celibacy, but now his beloved is too. I fail to understand why a priest would expect the person he loves to do so in shaming shadows. If he really loves her, he should leave and once out and established he will be very thankful he did. If the priest you were in relationship refused to leave, he probably would have failed to look out for your best interests later. Perhaps you should kiss the ground you are walking on and thank God you never married him.

December 13, 2008 4:21 PM

### **Conrad said...**

I agree. It's just as abusive as if a layman had casual sex without the loyalty and faithfulness that the sexual relationship morally calls for. A priest who is living "the third way" can be faithful and loyal to a woman, but is prevented by canon law from making the relationship public. Whose fault is that?

December 13, 2008 4:26 PM

### **Lucy said...**

I agree. That priest she was involved with was a real ass and "user" -shameful. Yet the ones who truly love and want to be committed to a woman are looked down

upon as "fallen priests" and failures in the eyes of the church. I just dont get it either guys.

December 13, 2008 8:41 PM

### **Anonymous said...**

Sorry all, but I won't be fobbed off by the comfortable proposition that the one priest I was involved with was no good and a "bad apple" and the majority are fine and psychologically healthy but hampered by the nasty church teaching on celibacy. Now, where have we heard that argument made before? Oh yes, the Church makes that case all the time. "The few bad apples" syndrome that we heard about the child molesters. Celibacy and the priesthood does far greater damage to the men in the priesthood that many seem willing to accept.

The man I was involved with left the priesthood and still could not get himself emotionally together. I have spent too long talking with other women who have been involved with priests, too long reading testimonies from women, and far too long observing the behavior of men in the priesthood to accept that there is not a psychological profile that fits probably a majority of men in the Catholic priesthood.

Lucy, the guy you were involved with was an emotionally damaged individual who acted like he was a frightened teenage boy. He was not a mature grown up man - that is why he fled. He had a "crush" on you and then ran away - what would be, about 14 year old behavior? Sounds about right to me. This is only one aspect of what their lives do to them. Fleeing situations is typical of many of them. For someone on here to refer to you and him as "holy" because of this result would be hilarious if it were not more accurately a tragic denial of this retarded way of behaving.

By the way, I am having problems posting under an ID. I do not want to open a Google account - I avoid Google if at all possible.

December 14, 2008 5:22 AM

## Henry said...

Anonymous,

Perhaps you are correct in saying the majority of priests are dysfunctional when it comes to relationships of love. But, I don't blame it totally on priests.

Imagine for a moment that you are married to a man who regularly abuses you and you fall in love with another person with whom you want to begin a new life. But, if your husband knows you are in love with this other person he will release his wrath upon you. You know he has the ability to publicly shame you and pronounced you a failure to the community. To make matters worse, your husband and many others who know him claim he has divine powers to damn your soul to hell and you're not so sure he can't.

Within this environment, how easy would it be for you to love this other man?

This is the scenario priests in love find themselves. Over their shoulder is an institution eager to publicly shame them, shun them from the community and pronounce them a failure and hell bound. It is a little like attempting to love someone in a war zone. It is difficult to be mentally sound in such an environment.

After leaving the priesthood and experiencing the Church's wrath both explicitly and implicitly, I came to the conclusion I had been partially brainwashed. Years before I left, I counseled a woman who extracted herself (with the help of her family) from the Moonie cult; and I saw parallels in my leaving the priesthood. Even now, I occasionally get an email from some smart-ass young Vocation Director stating I am a failure for leaving and should have never been ordained.

So, in a sense, all priests come from a dysfunctional family and will need to do some inner work before they can properly get on with their lives. I hope the website, [www.leavingthepriesthood.com](http://www.leavingthepriesthood.com) will help them in this regard.

December 15, 2008 7:41 AM

## **Penny [formerly anonymous] said...**

Henry,

I am trying to be munificent here but I find your analogy a little patronizing. I can get what the church dogma on celibacy does to priests - wasn't that my point? - without you trying to simplify it to what you feel would be my otherwise limited world view. My post indicated what I saw as the result of celibacy on men who cannot grow emotionally. It was not my intention to blame anyone - I was just pointing out the result of this bizarre way of life. My experience has led me to see that emotionally they are not fully grown up men.

The problem for women however, is that they have to deal with these emotionally retarded guys who flee at the first sign of having to admit any involvement in a relationship. Lucy is not by any means alone in her experience - pity the women whose relationships have advanced to sex and pregnancy and then get abandoned by these emotionally immature scaredy-cats. This abandonment is often done with the support of the church in the person of the bishop.

You asked for women who have had experience with involvement with priests to come on here and express opinions and I am trying to give you that. Priests ought to know and learn that there is enormous responsibility that goes along with an emotional relationship with a woman - especially one that goes on for some time. You shouldn't just flirt and flee.

Penny

I am trying to post under "Penny" ID and not anonymous. Here goes...

December 16, 2008 8:08 AM

## **Henry said...**

Penny,

Thank you for your insightful observations. As I mentioned earlier, I would like to

post your story of loving a priest and what you learned from it on [www.leavingthepriesthood.com](http://www.leavingthepriesthood.com). I hope you don't mind that I posted a few of your observations on the website off the blog. You can view them at: [http://www.leavingthepriesthood.com/Womenwholovepriests.html#anchor\\_9](http://www.leavingthepriesthood.com/Womenwholovepriests.html#anchor_9)

If you would like to write a more complete story, I would be happy to post it. Your experience and observations about loving a priest are very insightful and helpful.

In your post above, you state:

"The problem for women however, is that they have to deal with these emotionally retarded guys who flee at the first sign of having to admit any involvement in a relationship. Lucy is not by any means alone in her experience - pity the women whose relationships have advanced to sex and pregnancy and then get abandoned by these emotionally immature scaredy-cats. This abandonment is often done with the support of the church in the person of the bishop."

Why do you think priests are "emotionally retarded"? Do you think the celibate priesthood attracts them this way or does it form them to be emotionally retarded, or both?

I must admit that I found myself rather "emotionally retarded" when I first attempted to express by love while in the priesthood. I think "emotionally arrested" would better explain my situation. I believe I became "emotionally arrested" with respect to my ability to give and receive romantic love when I entered the seminary. The reason for this is that I had to cast a thick wet blanket over my sexual appetite to deny and suppress it. I think that in some respects priests can become alienated from a part of themselves (their need for intimacy, romance, etc.) because of forced celibacy. Perhaps this is what you experienced in your relationship. In my experience, I knew something was amiss with respect to my ability to give and receive female nurture and romance and it took about a year after leaving to integrate this area of my life again.

In this sense, from my experience, the celibate priesthood contributes to sexual disintegration and immaturity. Sadly, for many this sexual disintegration manifests



itself in sexual abuse. As much as the Bishops and Pope want to deny it, mandated celibacy is a contributing factor in the inordinate number of priest pedophile cases.

December 16, 2008 3:15 PM

### **Conrad said...**

Penny,

You write: "I have spent too long talking with other women who have been involved with priests, too long reading testimonies from women, and far too long observing the behavior of men in the priesthood to accept that there is not a psychological profile that fits probably a majority of men in the Catholic priesthood."

I think you are making a keen observation here with which I agree, and I think I can help explain at least one factor that may have contributed to the problem, especially regarding us guys who were ordained before Vatican II.

Many of us went into the seminary right out of grade school, though I myself entered at age 16. Contact with girls other than family members, was forbidden. That rule held also when we were home for Christmas or the summer.

This, in effect, forced us to keep our distance from females even before we knew what celibacy was all about and deprived us of the psychological benefits of interacting with them during our formative years. Add to that the complete lack of discussion and/or guidance in sexual matters, and you can see why some of our personalities may have gotten somewhat warped, as I'm sure mine was. Hopefully post-Vatican trainees fared better.

Conrad

December 27, 2008 5:51 PM

### **Henry said...**

I agree with the above comment from Conrad. However, I was post-Vatican II trained and entered the seminary during early college. Even so, I found a sort of dualism between flesh and spirit to exist and necessary to live a life of mandated celibacy. I think most priests fear their appetite for intimacy when it is aroused because it may put them at crisis with their vocation. This results in many becoming alienated from their sexuality and ability to give and receive intimate nurturing even if it is not sexual. For the priest, when entering this emotional arena, he sees "DANGER" written all over it. This hinders healthy emotional development for many priests.

December 28, 2008 7:02 AM

### **Anonymous said...**

I have not read these comments before and I am rather shocked at the comment about sex outside of marriage being "God's law". If anyone thinks that "law" is specified in the Ten Commandments, he can think again. The commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery" only pertains to persons who are already in a union. It does not refer to single persons at all. Although, historically, the Jews [Christianity borrowed the Commandments] were concerned about the chastity of their young girls as they had to be virgins at the time of marriage, one was usually married at puberty. Then the couple lived with one set of the parents. This was the case until the 18th Century AD. There was not much of a time to be single and no dating whatsoever. Married women were not to have sex outside of marriage and married men could have sex with as many partners as they could find--but not with the wives of other men. This had to do with the laws of inheritance more than morality because the Jews believed a man had the right to be certain his children belonged to him and not another man. Once again, there was little concern about single people having sex because people were married so young--and the matches were made for them by their parents. Anyone who believes that two single persons who love one another are sinning because they are engaged in sexual activity have been confused by some religious who are confused, themselves. Promiscuity, for obvious reasons, is not healthy for anyone.

January 21, 2010 8:16 AM