

FRIDAY, JANUARY 2, 2009- NOVEMBER 7, 2010 (ARCHIVE)

Why does the Church Ordain Married Anglican Priests?

Dear Father Henry,

I sympathize with you for loosing your place in the church even though you had spent half of your life serving them. But I wanted to tell you that the Vatican has recently been accepting married Anglicans [so far over 400 converts were ordained as Roman Catholic priests]. Now that you are married, perhaps you can try to convert to an Anglican, become a minister and then convert again to Catholicism and ask to become a priest again?

Henry's response:

Thank you for your email.

Yes, I am aware of the many Anglican and other married pastors who have been allowed to become ordained Catholic priests. But, do you see the absurdity of that? It is irrational to allow these married men to become ordained Catholic priests when thousands of Catholic priests who have married are not allowed to continue in ministry. I no longer have any desire to be part of a church that propagates such injustice.

Is there is anyone who can logically explain why the Church ordains married men from other denominations but refuses to ordain married Roman Catholic men to the priesthood?

12 Comments

Annie **said...**

Rational? No.

I've wondered the same thing myself. How can you say that there's no room in the Roman Catholic church for a married clergy when you, in fact, have a married clergy?

If I'm correct, Protestant ministers were/are allowed in under a pastoral provision. When women were being ordained in their denominations, they were allowed to convert to Catholicism, be ordained and were dispensed from celibacy.

Apparently, Rome can tolerate the lesser of two evils...wives, as opposed to women taking Holy Orders.

January 2, 2009 9:38 PM

Henry said...

It does appear that women are the problem in Catholicism with respect to ordination. The Vatican seems to think that a wife somehow defiles a priest (unless he is a protestant minister who has converted to Catholicism). And, whatever it is within women that makes Catholic priests unfit for the priesthood also prohibits women from being ordained. When it comes to women, the Church seems to be misogynistic in its views.

The Church teaches that Jesus never had any women apostles so women cannot be ordained, but what about Mary Magdalene - the first to proclaim the resurrection? That is a clear characteristic of an apostle, which means "one who is sent". Jesus clearly sent Mary Magdalene with the message of resurrection so there can be little doubt that she was an apostle.

Regarding the ordination of married men, the Church teaches that Jesus was celibate so priests must celibate. But, an argument can be made that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. For example, why was Mary, the mother of Jesus concerned about the lack of wine at the wedding feast at Cana? This is normally not the concern of a guest at a wedding, unless perhaps, she was the mother of the groom. Nathaniel called Jesus "Rabbi" (John 1:49) and in first century Jewish life a requirement of a rabbi was that they had to be married. And, most dramatically, Mary Magdalene is reported in John 20:15 to say: "Sir, if you have carried him away (the dead body of Jesus), tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away." Mary was claiming the right to the body, which in first

century Judaism was the right of the next of kin. (For more information, see "Born of a Woman" by Bishop John Shelby Spong, chapter 13.) Spong makes a pretty convincing argument that Jesus was married, but even if he wasn't he certainly had at least one woman who was an apostle.

Some believe that the ordination of married Protestant men is the first step toward the Church ordaining married Catholic men. Perhaps, but I doubt it. They will first have to abandon their misogynistic attitude about women.

January 3, 2009 7:04 AM

Ray said...

The National Catholic Reporter carried a news item, "Celibacy not for all" in its Nov. 28 issue, about an English bishop saying that priests should be allowed to marry. However, the bishop then states that he must be married before ordination. That's not allowing priests to marry. It's ordaining married men to the priesthood.

Presumably what underlies the difference between the two is the old erroneous idea that priesthood is a nobler state of life than is marriage. To ordain a married man is to raise him to a higher vocation, whereas to allow a priest to marry is to demote him to a lesser one."

Another inane reason for the church's hard line on mandatory celibacy for priests!
Right on, Henry!

January 3, 2009 8:59 AM

Anonymous said...

Trying to argue for a married clergy based on an absurd theory that perhaps Jesus was married is just silly. No one will take you seriously. If you want to argue for a married clergy argue from tradition and argue from the perspective of the Eastern rites and the Orthodox Church.

January 13, 2009 1:45 PM

Henry **said...**

I agree that few take seriously the possibility that Jesus was married even if some evidence points in that direction. It is interesting that early church officials turned Mary Magdalene into a prostitute, when there is no scriptural evidence for this. One can only ask why.

The Church does not have the freedom and objectivity to seek truth because it is preoccupied with empowering itself and reinforcing its assumptions. Even if they had clear evidence that Jesus was married, they would have to deny it because it would contradict their present belief system and agenda.

Allowing married Protestant clergy to function as ordained priests, while forbidding the same right for Catholic priests shows their twisted logic. It is difficult, if not impossible to have dialog with such an institution. Some Protestant Church bodies have all but abandoned ecumenical discussions with Catholicism for this very reason.

January 16, 2009 6:33 AM

Anonymous said...

I believe it to be highly irrational. I am a young man, discerning the priesthood. Deep deep down, I know that I also would like to marry one day. I am torn. It is not fair.

Why does receiving one sacrament bar another? Is not baptism the gateway to the other 6? Not the other 5.

Pray for our church.

June 1, 2009 4:43 PM

Henry **said...**

You can find the article "The Celibate Addiction" on www.leavingthepriesthood.com under the "Theology" link that points out the irrationality of mandated celibacy. I think the real problem is not mandated celibacy but Papal Infallibility. Locating that sort of power in one person is primitive and dangerous. Mandated celibacy shows the oppression Papal Infallibility can cause.

I wish you well in your discernment whether or not to enter the seminary and prepare for the priesthood. Beware, there is a cloud hanging over Catholicism and it is not a cloud of sanctity. Your decision to enter the priesthood is a decision to embrace and defend the whole system, some of which is badly misguided. There are many other ways to serve the Lord without having to sacrifice your intellectual honesty.

June 2, 2009 6:38 AM

Amanda **said...**

Dear Henry

It must have been a hard decision for you to leave the priesthood and having fallen in love- to fall in love is the greatest experience- but faithfulness to God is the greatest proof of love.

The simple answer is that the catholic church never considered ordained men from other demoninations as having valid ordination- they lost apostolic succession. In effect they were lay married men becoming catholic priests in the Roman Rite- For many years the catholic church in the Eastern Rite would ordain married men to the priesthood eg Maronite Rite in Lebanon- and other rites in Croatia and eastern europe- once the wife dies you can not remarry ie once having received the clerical state none can remarry - after VAT II in the Roman Rite married men can now be ordanined deacons- . the Roman rite of the 21 rite in the catholic church requires celibacy.It is a precept not Gods law- and there are amny married men in the catholic church -just not in the Roman Rite

Life is hard and calls for committment- as a married person I may be married to my husband and after 10 years meet another man who loves and appreciates me

far more than my husband and with whom I fall in love- does that mean to hell with my marriage vows taken 10 years ago?? and now I leave my husband to be with my "lover, to marry him who appreciates and loves me more than my husband???

Its all about fidelity to committment- and its a martyrdom sometimes to be faithful to the call and committment of so long ago.

God bless you

Amanda

July 19, 2009 1:58 PM

Henry **said...**

Amanda,

There is a thin line between "martyrdom" in marriage and being a doormat for someone to use as they see fit. Many divorces occur for very good reasons. I believe the Church's insistance on mandated celibacy is abusive to priests and those who realize this are free to leave. Also, the idea that priests are married to the Church doesn't make much sense. Married to an institution? See this link for more comments on this: www.leavingthepriesthood.com/Postsactivepriests.html

July 19, 2009 2:51 PM

George **said...**

The problem is that the Catholic priests who left to be married abandoned their posts and violated their ordination vows. Anglican priests who convert have not abandoned the Catholic Church and have not betrayed their ministry. They have come home while the others have deserted. Former Catholic priests can still be faithful Catholic communicants, but lay communicants, or non-practicing priests.

November 7, 2009 8:43 PM

Henry said...

George,

Rather than priests abandoning their posts, perhaps it would be more descriptive of your mentality if you were to say that priests who left are runaway slaves, owned by the institution to which you seem so devoted.

I am continually amazed by people who cannot see beyond the institution and who have equated the institution with God. Because you perceive Anglican priests converting to Catholicism as "coming home", I presume you also believe that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church.

Absolutist religion such as yours has been (and is) responsible for a great deal of violence and death in our world. It's time to put aside the tribal god and move into the twenty-first century. The future of the world may very well depend upon it. The God Jesus came to reveal is compassion and love and this is the God humanity must embrace if we are to ever find our way to peace on this planet.

November 8, 2009 1:44 PM

Anonymous said...

So much of the Catholic Churches doings are easily intepreted on the basis of power politics. Ex: forgeries of documents to legitimize the idea of the supremacy of the bishop of Rome (see Donatio Constantini), despite easy references to the contrary in Ecumenical councils.

.....Thus, why shouldn't we intepret it's actions in this way. Is it not clear that the Catholic Church (Joseph Ratzinger) allowed Anglicans to be ordained Catholic priests... in order to undermine the Anglican Church. When I hurt my competitor, I advance my position (figure skater Tanya Harding understood this).

In regards to the second-class citizenship of women and marriage, look up the controversy on the "apostle Junia" mentioned by Paul in Romans 16:7, meditate on the importance of other women mentioned in the New Testament. These women had important roles to play in the early church. And consider current Catholicism, where note-worthy women are basically limited to nuns like Mother Teresa.

May 17, 2010 11:10 PM