

Women Who Love Priests

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I fell in love with my parish priest and kept my feelings hidden for a long time (close to 2 years), prayed to God to please take them from me as I knew it was pointless and fruitless, but the heart won out over the head time and time again. I told myself my feelings could not be sinful, yet I still suffered great pain. My heart ached and longed for his presence. He was to me the perfect man, possessing all the qualities I had ever wanted, problem was he wore a Roman Collar. His kindness, friendliness, charm and wit overwhelmed my very soul. I knew I was in trouble. We had similar working class and ethic backgrounds, same sense of humor. We worked in several ministries together and he counseled me a few times, but nothing inappropriate ever happened. At times I caught him gazing at me, and I could not get over feeling that perhaps he had also felt attracted. I felt he truly appreciated my kindness and love of the Catholic faith. After one of our last meetings, I told him how much I admired him and how much I appreciated his kindness, help and compassion and also how sad I and several others would be should he be transferred. I gave him a small token that said "You are Loved" a very simple and general (not personal), acknowledgement of how ALL of us at the parish felt for him as a priest and shepherd of our church. But of course, I am sure he sensed I had very personal feelings. He acted very awkward almost like a school kid. I gave him a really big hug and held on for a long time---he did not push me away though.

Not two weeks later he made the announcement at mass that he was being transferred, and very, very far away too. Coincidence? I remember my knees buckling under me and I felt like I was going to faint. I was absolutely devastated, went home and wrote him a very long letter revealing my feelings, which I personally handed to him the next day. This later proved to be a big mistake for my emotional and spiritual well-being. At the time though I wanted the burden off my heart, but instead I just put it on him. I knew I should have run away from such intense feelings. He never once led me on or did anything inappropriate, but after having been extremely friendly to me prior to this, he suddenly backed off, which did indeed hurt me very much. That marvelous smile of his never came my way again.

He never acknowledged that letter, any future emails, birthday or holiday wishes. He simply dropped all communication. For almost 2 months I looked in the mail for a thank you note, as I gifted him with money and homemade prayer cards when he left. I was devastated. When other family and work problems came into my life later on, I asked for his prayers but he never answered me. This killed me.

I will never ever know if he ever felt any tender feelings for me...and yes I did want just a tiny piece of his heart. I suppose I will always hold feelings for him. It is the most painful thing I have ever gone through and I feel like he died.

I chose my words very carefully in that letter, as I did not want to offend in any way. Henry, I sent you a copy of it a previous email to you. I was wondering how, as a former priest, you thought my letter may have been received by him and what he might have thought of me.

Lucy,

I do not see anything inappropriate in your letter. You shared your honest feelings in a respectful way. But, I expect Fr. Jim could no longer play the game. For a priest, the game goes something like this: Flirting is ok and even welcomed but it must not be too overt. He welcomes a certain amount of affection being stirred in his heart. But, when he perceives that you are getting too close or he is falling in love, the game is up. Now he must make difficult choices and his was to leave. My guess is that he fled from his love for you if he moved unexpectedly. The game is really up for the priest when a woman expresses her love for him. Now, it is all on the table rather than in innuendo under the table.

You have to look deep within, be honest and ask yourself why you fell in love with him. Here are some hard questions. Were you attracted to him because: He was safe and you were in control because he could not be? Because he represented sensitive men that women can talk to and also has a spiritual side that's attractive. Because he is a public figure, are you are attracted to public figures, have you been attracted to other priests? Perhaps this is why. Does he represent forbidden love which is enticing? During this time, did he represent what you were not receiving from other men in your life?

When women love priests who are not willing to reciprocate, they are in for a lot of pain.
Henry

Henry,

You want me to ask myself why I fell for him. I have asked myself many times what the draw was. One question was "would you feel the same attraction if he were not a priest and a free man?" Yes I know all about the "safeness and unavailability" reasons. I honestly haven't a clue as to any subconscious reason for such an intense and prolonged attachment. What made you fall in love with your wife and she for you?

What I wanted was your initial gut reaction to the contents of that letter - had you received such a letter, what would you have thought? I thought it was absolutely beautiful, very sad and heartfelt and I wanted it to touch him in some small way. I put my heart and soul into it and spent a long time carefully choosing my words. If I couldn't touch the heart of a priest, how can I touch the heart of a lesser man?

When you wake up in the morning thinking of that person, go to bed at night thinking of them, want them to be happy, worry if they are safe, long to be near them, feel your heart flutter and such tremendous joy in their presence, that true kindred spirit - are you suggesting that this can't be real love unless the object of your affection feels the exact same thing?? That is how I felt when he was there. I wanted to be his sweetheart; I wanted him to think of me as his "beloved" and feel his heart beat next to mine. Instead I am a pathetic fool.

It has been a year and a half since he left--of course I no longer feel that way, but I still think of him almost daily. I've stopped "feeding" the feelings and dwelling on them. What point is there in doing that? Thoughts of him are fleeting ones----not so much pining and longing, only trying to understand all of it so I can heal and truly move on and put it all behind me. Time does heal, but this one is a slow healer. I pray unceasingly to be completely free. But the only way I can totally forget him is to have a lobotomy. This is one pain I will carry with me to my grave

I feel like the biggest fool in the world for opening up my heart to this man - I do not feel I will ever be able to do this with anyone, ever again. I am humiliated and embarrassed by my very humanness. My feelings did not matter and had no significance whatsoever. What a shame that I am afraid to ever open up to someone again - this because of a priest? Sometimes the pain was so bad, it hurt to even take another breath.

Is there a course in Seminary for how to react to women who profess their love? Is it aptly called, "Rejection by Silence 101?"

What I want to say to all priests: Your calling is a worthy one for the sake of God's Kingdom. If you are able to maintain this celibate lifestyle and push human love out of your hearts, I applaud you. But live out your priestly persona and always present yourself as truly an "Alter Christus". In other words, to be very frank and somewhat crass, if you are a priest and therefore dead from the neck down then please act like one! Please stop the winking, wearing after shave, putting your hand on a woman's shoulder, flashing a movie star smile, gazing at her, holding her hand longer than you should and being witty. I suppose God calls even handsome and charming men to the priesthood, but it is so very unfair to us lonely Catholic women who have yet to find that Godly man she so desires.

Lucy

Henry,

I wish to respond first in more detail to a previous question of yours, that of why I think I may have fallen in love with him. Now that I have given it more thought:

Ø No, I have never been attracted to other priests or to those who are public speakers. No, in no way am I enticed by "forbidden" love.

Ø Yes, of course I am attracted to someone who is kind and compassionate to me. He was. No other man in my life was, instead they turned out to be users who were cruel and ultimately insulting. He would not use women and instead respected them. He treated elderly women so sweetly as well; this impressed me. Yes, his faith and love for God was also a big draw, no other man in my life had the spiritual dimension I so sought in a mate.

Ø He had a magnetic personality and a wonderful sense of humor.

Ø He was sensitive. I saw him cry when someone sang "Ave Maria" - it truly touched me. He was able to show his broken side to us; he acknowledged he was also a sinner who struggled. He always put himself on the same playing field as the rest of us.

Ø He had a smile that also lit up a room; a smile that would melt hearts. He was also very

handsome. He made sure to make people feel valued and important; he often told me I was “gifted”.

Ø His eyes were deep set and very special - once during reconciliation his whole face seemed to glow. I was blown away. He was intelligent without being intimidating. He would not talk “over your head” or be too philosophical.

Ø In short, I simply could not help but fall in love with the very person he was. He was an amazing and beautiful soul!

Would I have felt guilty for him leaving the priesthood for me? Or would I have been willing to have a secret affair on the side given my Catholic faith?

No and Yes! I would have given anything to be with him! Even if it were only one time I would not have passed up the chance to have experienced what I believe would have been a beautiful union. I too have some issues with Catholic teaching; I feel that celibacy is a very noble thing IF a man is truly called to it. However, I feel the church should give them a choice. Marriage is not a lesser or inferior type of love from celibate love; it is just a different way to express it. I believe that God reveals himself to us in many ways, and one of the ways is with human love and the marital bond!

I am well into middle age and have never felt this way about anyone, not even for my husband on my wedding day. No comparison, not even close. I am now divorced and people may think I just did this psychological “transference” thing they talk about. Perhaps there are elements of that, I do not doubt it. But no, he did not just counsel me (only 3 brief meetings over 2 years). No instead it was seeing him regularly as I was very active in my parish. I loved assisting him in various ministries; I truly cherished that and miss it very much. (For months I found it hard to walk into that church and I even dropped out of many ministries for a while.)

We would have been fornicating if sexually involved and he remained a priest. Then he would have had two sins on his soul: breaking his vows and fornicating. This is the guilt the Catholic Church puts on people who love each other. We would both have lost our souls for acting in such a selfish manner. This is what I have been taught and told to believe. But despite knowing this, I do not doubt I would have been with him either way. I took a very brave and very great risk by putting myself out there and telling him how I

felt. I lost though--as he rejected me and rejection and unrequited love is one of the most painful human experiences there is. You thanked your wife for her courage to share her feelings and view it as a gift from God; I got no such response (sad). I am now an emotional mess who needs healing. I'm definitely not an emotionally healthy woman! Oh how I wish HE could somehow read this!

According to the Church hierarchy, I am a heretic for not believing every single teaching and therefore deemed unworthy to receive our dear Lord in Eucharist with this mortal and sacrilegious sin on my soul. But God still sits on his mighty throne and ultimately He alone is the only one who truly knows my heart, my intentions and my struggles—He alone will be the judge of my love for this priest.

Lucy

94 Comments

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Conrad said...

Lucy,

I just want to comment on your letter to Father Jim, without having more than scanned the rest of your exchange with Henry.

I see two very beautiful people hurting and hurting bad. I think I can feel part of your pain because I, too, struggled for four years with a broken heart after I introduced my lover to another man and could never know her sexual embrace ever again. But I had it easy compared to you, because Beverly and I remained friends and kept on communicating with each other occasionally.

I'd be willing to bet that Fr. Jim is hurting just as bad. His priestly ministry must mean a lot to him, considering that felt that he had to take such drastic measures to preserve it. He might well be fighting two battles in the depth of his being – one, dealing with losing your company and the other, fighting the temptation to admit that celibacy is perhaps not worth the price he has to pay to preserve it. I

wouldn't be at all surprised if he couldn't make Tom T. Hall's words his own: "Nobody every knew it but I went into the woods and I cried" (from his song, "I remember the Year that Clayton Delaney Died"). Maybe, in time, he will be able to break his silence with you, but it would seem that now he is handling it in the only way he knows.

I know that's not much consolation for you right now. I do believe that he loved you very, very much.

I have noticed, time and time again, that it seems to take about seven years to heal from deep emotional traumas. In the history of man 7 has come to symbolize a perfect number of sorts, even leading to establishing the convention of the seven-day week (our only measure of time that has no exact counterpart in nature!) Recently I heard that every cell in our bodies is replaced every seven years! And I wonder. Is there a connection between that and coming to be a thoroughly renewed human being? Maybe so, maybe no, I don't know. But if it's true, a lot of healing can already have taken place in the several years since the trauma was suffered.

Lucy, I cannot but think that you and Father Jim are two of the holiest people I've ever known. I stand in deepest, awe-ful admiration of you both. And had I ever gotten a letter from a parishioner like the one you wrote to Fr. Jim, I'd have been busting my buttons and fighting the demon of pride! I think your letter was beautifully written, a tribute not only to Father Jim but also to yourself.

Hang in there!

Conrad

December 9, 2008 4:14 PM

Anonymous said...

I was involved with a priest and it all went very sour - he left, but did not leave the priestly habits behind. Celibacy allows priests to flirt with many women and to have a number of intense relationships going at the same time. I did not realize

this. I was very , very naive I know this now. He said that he loved me, he left the priesthood and said he wanted a future with me but I soon discovered that he was still seeing a number of women for lunch, talking to them for hours on the phone etc. and minimizing his relationship with me to them. All this was behind my back and I only stumbled on some of the stuff by accident. I still do not know the full story. I know now that four women, two of them married, were in close contact with him and were meeting him for dinner etc. all without my knowledge at the time. And likely, without any knowledge of each other's existence in his life either!

It all became very bizarre and when I confronted him with this behavior - I heard a few phone messages on his phone one day and discovered a "love" letter in a book, similar to the one posted above by Lucy - he turned on me and told me I was trying to control him in the same way that the church had done. My relationship with him ended.

Lucy, you may not have been the only woman he was flirting with or having an intense relationship with. This is the reality of celibacy I believe. And I think that many of them flirt as a way of surviving it. The fact that it is devastating for a woman who tries to put the cards on the table - as Henry expressed it - is meaningless to many of them.

I was married to a wonderful man who died young so I knew what my standard was. Frankly, I wonder how any Catholic priests can make good husbands.

December 10, 2008 4:04 PM

Anonymous said...

Anonymous

I am sorry that you had to go through such an experience; perhaps the priest in your life was more of a rascal than the one I loved. Maybe I got off easier in the long run and my priest friend did the "right thing" and preserved his priesthood, only at great cost to me. Either way, we both got hurt. I will pray for you that you will find healing and peace as well.

Lucy

December 11, 2008 4:44 PM

Anonymous said...

Lucy,

I would like to tell you that you did a brave thing by writing your letter to Fr. Jim. You get one chance in life and you took the risk. KUDOS! However, it is possible that Fr. Jim did not feel the same. This is a scenario as old as time. Men and women in all areas of life (at the office, in the gym, at the grocer) develop relationships. Sometimes they are flirtatious. However, for whatever reason, it can not or will not go any further.

I, too, fell in love or, maybe, in like, with my priest. He was 15 years older than me. Chubby. Intelligent. Somewhat, charming. More reserved than outgoing. Kind. Understanding. Physically, my husband is younger, taller, fit. But the pastor was kind. Kind at a time when I was overrun with problems. A husband has many distractions...bills, children, extended family, job. Sometimes, they forget to be kind, understanding. It is a priest's job to be those things to his parisheners.

Honestly, I don't think a priest could be married and serve his parish. I think there would be more incidents of infidelity than there are priests breaking their vows. Marriage or a relationship is not just sex. Its having someone to talk to, listen to, cry with, etc. Many priests and ministers do this better than a husband of 10 or 15 years. Its easy to fall in love with someone who is always happy to see you. Just like the young, attractive secretary at your husband's job. She's not angry at him because he left his socks around the house, or because he plays with the kids instead of encouraging them to do their homework.

Remember we're all human and make mistakes. Fr. Jim didn't make a clean break or ask to be transfered because the church is cruel and imposed celibacy. It was purely his decision. Or, it was God's will. Since you let your feelings known, if things change he'll be calling. However, I would try to meet another, available man. You have a lot to offer a someone who can return your feelings.

Anonymous,

I could understand why your priest friend had so many female friends. They kept him from being lonely. He wanted a break from the all male living conditions. I get tired of meeting my girlfriends for lunch, movies, etc. Its so refreshing to talk to someone new, intelligent, different. My priest was that person. What I really think I wanted from him was a friendship. A new friendship!
It never happened. A few months after I started having feelings for him he was transfered. Which was weird because he was with our parish for 10 years. God's plan I'm sure.

Henry, I sense you are very angry at the church. Don't be! You found the love of your life. Praise God and Rejoice!

I fear that married people with infidelity in their hearts will read your postings and think why do I have to keep my vows. Sometimes in a marriage people fall in love or become infatuated with some outside of the marriage. Please, as a married man and a former priest, stress that marriage vows are important. The church cannot be wrong about everything!??

Life is full of trials and tribulations for all. We shouldn't expect our priests to be infallible. Pray for them!

I just have one other question....Are there any nuns who resent their celibacy vows? It seems as if they've been silent. Or, men are less likely to pursue a nun.

I just want to encourage you all to keep praying for all who have touched your lives. What if you never experienced the friendship, love, or even hurt from a relationship?? Its all a part of your growth as a Christian and person.

God Bless you all.

December 12, 2008 5:50 AM

Henry **said...**

You mentioned I appear to be “very angry” at the church but I don’t think that is the case. I would say that I’m critical of Church teaching that I consider erroneous and harmful.

It is important to remember that religion casts a long and dark shadow and has the capacity to cause both good and evil. I think mandatory celibacy has caused a great amount of harm to many people including: Priests who are in love and required to force this love out of their lives and women whose hearts are broken; congregations forced by the bishop to close their doors because of the priest shortage; children who have been sexually abused by clergy who have found refuge in the Catholic celibate clerical system; women whom God has called to ordained ministry but were forbidden; and married people who God has called to ministry and were forbidden to share their gifts. Doesn’t any of this make you angry?

Lucy, Father Jim only did what the Church required of him. Why can’t you direct your anger toward the Church? I fail to understand how you can be angry at Father Jim and not angry at the institution that required him to act as he did.

December 12, 2008 2:35 PM

Anonymous said...

Henry,

First of all this is from "Lucy", not another anonymous (I can't seem to figure out again how to post with my name!)

Henry I am not angry with Fr. Jim, rather very hurt. It would not have killed him to at least write me a brief note or say a few words or to even hit the "reply" key in emails. Would not have ruined his precious priestly soul in the least bit. Like his bishop was really gonna know he did this, have they no privacy at all? Does the bishop have access to their personal belongings and emails? Are their phones bugged?

I feel he asked to be transferred long before this ever happened because he at one time was a pastor and was only in a transitory assignment as PV anyway at my parish. He wanted his own church again, and it was the time of the year for

transfers in our diocese. The timing of the transfer just happened to coincide with my confession. So I guess to him it was perfect and he could run away and not have the guts to at least address this with me.

As anonymous also pointed out, the feelings were probably not reciprocal either. Oh well. No man has ever loved me, so how could I be so stupid to tell a priest yet and invite more rejection. Again, I was a fool and have to live with this.

So it all worked out for him - I just feel because I wrote such a lengthy and emotionally charged letter he should have acknowledged it. I think he was an absolute COWARD for not doing so, the hell with the church rules. He would not in any way risk the security of his position as a priest. I suppose they have to think about maintaining the security of their priestly lifestyle, a roof over their heads, a bed to sleep in, utilities paid, monthly allowance, retirement and health insurance, etc. No way would he want to jeopardize any of that. Yet he had to know how very much this hurt me, how could he live with himself?

What I have issue with in the church is that I am viewed as a horrible succubus. Ridiculous. It's not like I enjoyed any of this. Oh yes, pray for the priests and their temptations from evil Eve, who ruined everything from Day 1 for all of mankind.

December 12, 2008 6:19 PM

Conrad said...

Lucy AND Henry:

Re Lucy's difficulties signing her comments. I find that I have to go through the process twice. The first time, after typing in the distorted letters designed to obviate spammers, I get a message saying that my posting could not be accomplished and "please try again." Then, when I go through the process again, the post is accepted and the message appears, "Your message will be visible upon approval."

December 13, 2008 6:31 AM

Henry said...

Lucy,

It seems to me that you are being rather hard on yourself. Maybe Father Jim transferred in response to your letter and maybe not. In any case, you expressed love which is admirable. Yes, he could have responded with a phone call or email, but he didn't. Feeling rejected is painful but it is also the price paid when stepping out in faith. Take heart in your courage.

December 13, 2008 3:25 PM

Anonymous said...

Conrad,

With regards to posting here, it asks you to "select a profile" - all of the selections require you to have an account log in with what is chosen from the drop down menu - the only thing left to pick from is "anonymous" If you don't you are asked to create one. Too much trouble for me. Guess I will always be anonymous and have to add my name in the actual post.

Henry/Conrad, have you not noticed that others have not used a personal name either? You will be getting a lot of anonymous posters. What "profile" do you use?

Lucy

December 13, 2008 4:05 PM

Lucy said...

wait I think I finally got it!! woo hoooo

You click on "name/url" but I thought you had to include an actual URL address as well, so that is why I did not use it before.

Just fill in the name....see it's the little things in life that make us happy huh, if only for a few moments...

December 13, 2008 4:08 PM

Lucy said...

Yes Henry, feeling rejected is indeed painful. Can you imagine how you would have felt if your now wife just "dismissed" you and acted like you never existed.?

December 13, 2008 4:10 PM

Henry said...

I would have cried like a baby for a long long time. My future would have been full of darkness and in time, hopefully, I would have found someone else or she would have found me.

December 13, 2008 5:54 PM

Henry said...

From the above comment, one could think I was miserable as a priest, but that would not have been evident from all outward appearances. I was pastor of a large church that was growing with an associate pastor and staff. I was also on Diocesan staff with other responsibilities.

Ministry was going well, but I was an owned person. The Church owned my testicles and it was dehumanizing.

This may sound harsh, but it's true.

A very deep part of who I am as a human being was controlled by an institution. External success can only go so far. I needed freedom and I thank God every day that my wife helped me find it.

My life is far more than sexuality. It's about companionship and having the freedom to live it how I feel God is calling me. I am no longer owned and it makes all the difference in the world.

December 13, 2008 7:06 PM

Lucy said...

Anonymous,

I am responding to your post from the "vocation" topic on the blog, as it is more appropriate in this topic.

I figured out how to post using a name. Select the profile "Name/URL" but do not fill out a URL address. It will still allow you to post that way. Hit "post" and it will ask you to enter the letters shown to avoid spammers.

Regarding your comments about me and Fr. Jim being holy, I thanked Conrad personally for his lovely comments and opinion, but I too disagree with him. I do not think I am holy nor is Fr. Jim's cowardly rejection and dismissal of my existence holy either.

Such lasting silence from Fr. Jim caused me to go into a very deep depression for many months and I dropped out of church altogether. I have since returned, but am not and never will be the same. I carry the pain inside me.

God himself has a strange sense of humor. I prayed for years for him to send me a holy, godly man. Although very much alone I was still okay with my life, then this priest came along. What a horrible cross was put on me from that moment on.

This cannot be what God wants!

I am bitter and envious of those in long-lasting marriages and those who have found their true love (particularly of those women who won the heart of a priest) and yes even Henry and Conrad and the woman they love. I have much work to do on myself.

The Church's answer is to get to confession, receive Eucharist, go before Blessed Sacrament, say the Rosary, pray unceasingly, join a faith sharing group, read Scripture regularly, light a candle, forget myself in the service of others...etc. However, I have done all of this and more for almost two years and the pain persists. It may be tucked away, but it doesn't take much to come forth. No I am

not healed yet.

I know many reading my story might say "Just accept it and get over it already!" Of course this is the logical thing to do and I am really trying, really. I hope by putting my story out there and writing about it I can finally move on.

TO ALL WOMEN: If you are reading this and harbor any feelings or attraction for a priest, no matter how small the seed, do not permit it to grow any further. **RUN LIKE HELL.** Leave your parish if you must and distance yourself from him. A priest is just a man, no better than you. Such relationships will cause great emotional and spiritual pain, cause you to question yourself, your faith and your entire belief system, and possibly separate you from a loving God.

December 14, 2008 9:53 AM

Anonymous said...

The word Love can be so misconstrued. One must know the difference of love and being in love. And of course there is lust. I am a devout Catholic and I admit that I love my pastor. The love I feel for him is not in the same manner in which I feel for my husband whom I am still in love since I met him 26 years ago and married for almost 20 years. Right now, I am going through a family crises and he counsel me. I apprieciated the fact that he allowed me to work out what was vexing me, in which my I could not do with my husband. Afterwards, my pastor hugged me and when he did, I felt it was more of a spiritual healing embrace because I felt nothing sexual about it. I admit that I do think about him often, but I cannot see nor image myself having sex with him. My pastor is a handsome, gentle kind man who has a no nonsense attitude when it comes to the teachings of the church and how we should act towards each other-with mutual respect. And yes, he sincerely cares for the community and for the one true church. I love my pastor as a friend-nothing more and nothing less. Lucy, I'm sorry that you had to go through the pain that you did, but please do not give up hope. When you stop looking, true unconditional love will find you and believe it or not-that same love that you seek is within yourself. Just hang on Lucy and I'll pray for you, my sister in Christ.

Sign me FaithfulGemi

December 17, 2008 8:38 AM

Henry said...

FaithfulGemi,

It sounds like you have a wonderful pastor who has been very helpful to you.

You mention he "cares for community and the one true church". I hope you are not saying other churches are inferior or that only Catholics are saved.

December 18, 2008 6:56 AM

Anonymous said...

Hi Henry,

The one true church I speak of is Heaven. We are all brother and sisters in Christ, and it doesn't matter whether your a Baptist, Protestant, Luthern, Methodist, Pentacostal, Catholic, etc. In the eyes of the Heavenly Father, we are his children of the light and not of darkness. And we All can be saved if we choose to turn to Him unconditionally and with Faith. We are all in this together so we should pray for one another. This world is full of cold hearted and cruel people; I've seen first hand the evil that men do. However, it has not shattered, but strenghtened my relationship with God.

I hope that my response has help you understand what I meant.

By the way, I had thought long and hard to tell my pastor how I feel about him and it would not be a good idea. I wouldn't want him to get the wrong idea. So I keep it between me and the Heavenly Father.

Peace of Christ be with you!

FaithfulGemi

December 18, 2008 10:20 AM

Anonymous said...

Lucy, I wanted to add another thing regarding Father Jim being a "coward." He's human which means he's not perfect. The only one perfect man that walked this Earth died for our sins. He's only a coward if he would have persued a relationship with you and drop it without warning.

Lucy, have you ever considered that Father Jim may have felt the same way for you and his vows he made to God caused some conflict from within himself? Maybe he felt guilty because he couldn't return what you felt for him and this was the best way he could deal with it.

Has it occured to you may that you have not have been the first woman who expressed her feelings towards him and this is the only way he knows how to handle it.

Do not be troubled by it any more. Let go and let God take that burden from you. There is a rhyme and reason to His will which we must all follow because God knows what's best for His children, whether we like it or not.

Be happy Lucy, enjoy life to the fullest and know that you are loved by God, my sister in Christ. May you never be separated from the love of God.

Peace . . .

FaithfulGemi

December 18, 2008 10:38 AM

Lucy said...

FaithfulGemi,

Thank you for your kindness and compassion to me. I truly appreciate it

I am sure I am not the first woman to tell him such feelings and because of his charisma and wonderful personality I probably won't be the the last either. But priests must learn how to deal with such awkward situations with grace and

sensitivity. I know they need to protect their priesthood, but they should at least acknowledge the woman even if only with a few words: "I am flattered, but I am a priest first and foremost and wish to stay faithful to my calling. You are a lovely person, but for obvious reasons I cannot return your affection-I wish you all the best."

Now that would have sufficed!

He gave subtle signs that he had feelings, but was quick to cover them up and when he got to "chummy" he suddenly backed off.

Oh well..it is all ancient history now. I am trying my best with God's help and his grace to be at peace with this.

Do not tell your pastor; please learn from my mistake and keep it to yourself and God alone.

God bless

Lucy

December 18, 2008 6:09 PM

Anonymous said...

Lucy,

Amen to that . . .

FaithfulGemi

December 19, 2008 8:29 AM

Anonymous said...

Lucy,

Amen to that . . .

FaithfulGemi

December 19, 2008 8:29 AM

Sara said...

Lucy I am going through exactly your pain. I too have always prayed God to send me a holy man. Result: God sent me a priest who manipulated with me then dumped me. I too question my beliefs.

I got tearful reading your story. You sure haven't healed yet. I also envy those women who were able to win their priests and I also envy Henry for becoming honest with himself when he freed himself from the Vatican's orders.

Lucy, I will pray for you everyday to bring that priest back to you.

December 20, 2008 9:42 AM

Lucy said...

Sara,

I appreciate your thoughts, but I really feel it is God's will that I am not with this priest. I could have gotten hurt even more so, like you.

Only God knows the "big picture" and what is ultimately best for our souls. We can only join our suffering to His.

How very tragic and sad to hear your experience. I will keep you in my prayers as well. I am sure you have much healing of your own to do. How long ago did this occur?

I try to remember the one man who loves us all perfectly, our Lord Jesus. In His time our hearts will feel joy and peace again.

Please feel free to share more as I believe this blog can be a healing process for all women hurt by the Church and priests.

December 20, 2008 10:31 AM

Annie said...

Thank you for this comment string! It's good to witness your honesty and your concern for each other, and nice to see you affirm each other while giving differing points of view.

Lucy, I also prayed for a godly man, and he literally showed up on my doorstep! I fell in love with a man who happens to be a priest, and he fell in love with me. In the end, though, he could not bring himself to leave a life he had known for 30 years.

I felt all the things you're feeling, Lucy. It's been almost 8 years since, and Conrad, you are right on the mark about the 7 year cycle. Time heals. There were times when I thought I'd never be able to go on; times when I couldn't imagine my life without him. But I have gone on, and I'm a stronger (and sometimes sadder, I'll admit) person for it. The thought of him doesn't sting anymore; he's not my first thought in the morning and my last thought at night. I'm even at the point where, if he suddenly had a change of heart and came to me; I'm not sure I'd take someone back who could be so cavalier about my feelings.

I'm still active in my church (he was not my pastor) and consider myself as having a deep faith. So, why did God bring this man into my life if he wasn't to be for me? Who knows? Some days, I do blame the institutional church for its rules on celibacy...but I also allow that maybe...just maybe...they are right, as FaithfulGemi says. I honestly can't say for sure.

As for my broken heart, I have put the whole thing in my 'unresolved' file...it's a mental/emotional file of questions or situations which I keep for resolution/explanation when I get to Heaven. Of course, it won't matter then, will it? :)

I have just one last note for FaithfulGemi. It's a small thing, but as a single person I feel I want to point this out. A romantic partner will not necessarily come to someone just because they're not looking. It's a sweet piece of advice, but for someone that, for whatever reason, God does not allow to marry, it's just one

more reason to feel inferior. Something along the lines of, "If I'm not expecting it, and it's still not coming, then I must be a total loser!" I may not have expressed myself exactly right, but I hope you'll get the idea of what I'm trying to say. My point is, not everyone gets to marry, and that's ok, too.

Thanks for letting me write about this; it's not something I've had the opportunity to talk about much at all. Another sad byproduct of the whole ordeal; you can't even grieve properly because you can't publicly acknowledge what you're grieving! Again, thanks for listening.

December 27, 2008 4:05 PM

Anonymous said...

I used to wonder if I'd go to hell for loving my priest the way we loved each other.

I now realize that loving him is punishment enough.

December 31, 2008 8:18 PM

Lucy said...

I am amazed at how many priests succumb to the love of a woman.

I don't know whether I am indeed one of the lucky ones that Fr. Jim dismissed and ignored my love. Perhaps I just wasn't attractive enough or loving enough to win his heart; or he just wanted to be truthful to his calling. Either way it seems whether or not a priest reciprocates or rejects, the woman is the one who ultimately gets hurt.

As Henry states, it is only due to the church's refusal to bend on married priests and celibacy that this whole mess even exists. So many broken hearts and wasted love.

January 1, 2009 11:23 AM

Annie said...

To Anonymous on 12/31...Amen and Amen.

January 1, 2009 6:59 PM

Lisa said...

I was searching on the internet for help on falling in love with a priest and came across this web site. THANK GOD!!

I have developed a very close friendship with a priest and am not sure what to do about it. He was a friend while I was married and helped me with my divorce and annulment. After the marriage ended, our friendship continued and we would go to dinner and other outings such as movies and excursions. I professed feelings for him a couple years and he replied that he was "flattered but committed to being a priest" Part of me wanted to hear him tell me he had feelings back while the "catholic" in me was trying to do the right thing and give him the knowledge so he could remove himself from the situation if that was the best thing.

We went a few months without doing anything one on one and then fell back in the habit of going out together a few times a month.

I guess I am at a loss over what to do. He knows how I feel. He asked a couple weeks ago if I still had feelings for him. We continue in the friendship. Nothing physical has happened but there is definitely a "secrecy" involved over the amount of time we spend alone together. I want to ask him how he feels but fear of what the other posters have said about the priest running away. More than anything I don't want to lose him in my life now. It would devastate me.

January 17, 2009 6:16 PM

Lisa said...

I was asked to share my experience also in hopes that maybe it might help someone else. I too fell in love in love with a priest. Like Lucy I prayed for the feelings to go away but they have only gotten stronger.

I met him when I was going thru a divorce. He helped me thru it from beginning to end. My ex husband and I had done things socially with him prior to the divorce. Post divorce, he and I continued to socialize, just the two of us... Movies, dinner, outdoor activities, dancing etc...

Like I stated before after a few months, I realized that I had major feelings for him

and came clean. He told me he was flattered but was committed to being a priest. After a few awkward months of only seeing each other at church, we resumed our outings a few times a month.

This has been going on for a couple years now. He has asked me if i continue to have feelings for him and I have told him I do. At first he got upset and said that he was worried that he may be holding me back from seeing other men because we spend too much time together. I told him that it wasn't the case, and that I was willing to date men but it hadn't happened yet. However, he will always hold a special place in my heart and I don't know if I will ever not have feelings for him. Now that I have dated other men, when I try to tell him about it, he just smiles and quickly changes the subject.

There are times when i feel like he also reciprocates feelings and others have mentioned that they see it as well, his actions are quite confusing.

I wish he would just come clean and tell me how he feels. I worry that he is comfortable in this relationship and that i am fulfilling the role of a girlfriend without really being one.

January 18, 2009 9:08 PM

Annie **said...**

Lisa, I think you've already got your answer in your last line. You are fulfilling the role of a girlfriend without really being one. Lucy wrote a few entries back that she was surprised at how many priests succumb to the love of a woman. None of us should be surprised. God Himself said it is not good for the man to be alone. You and he are responding just the way God created us to respond to one another. The problem is that the Church leaves no room for that. Maybe that makes it convenient for him to act immaturely...or maybe he really does love his priesthood and cannot imagine life without it...and that's legitimate. The question you've got to ask yourself is...is this relationship--as it is--worth it to you? In my own experience...the relationship was all well and good, until it was going to cost him something. I finally reached my pain threshold, and said, "No." Was it awful? Oh heeeeeeeeeell yes! Do I regret leaving it? No. After a long period of healing, I'm

back to myself. I hope that you'll make the best decision for you-- and no one else. Don't expect him to do the work on this one.

January 19, 2009 11:59 AM

Lisa said...

Annie,

Thank you for the advice. you are right and i am in the role of "girlfriend" which is what i want only in a greater capacity lol. But it is not healthy in the context that it is now and I fear it is going to come to a breaking point soon because our friendship is starting to cause some tongues a wagging. If it comes to the point where he has to choose between his calling and our friendship, I believe he would choose the church and that saddens me. It makes me feel disposable and that is a pretty crappy thing to do to someone.

January 19, 2009 5:12 PM

Lucy said...

Lisa

Henry was so right when he wrote that a woman who is in love with a priest who is not wiling reciprocate is in for a lot of pain.

It is wrong for this priest to "date" you to his liking, he wants it both ways. With the church's current stand on celibacy and married priesthood, your situation will remain the same as long as you permit it to go on. He wants to remain a priest and you know where that leaves you...out in the cold, begging for a few crumbs. This is very selfish of him and very unfair to you. Now your relationship is soon to be found out and you will have that mess on your hands as well.

The more I read these stories, the more I realize I am better off not having gotten involved with my priest friend. I can now see that he did the right thing nipping it in the bud (even if it caused me great pain and confusion as to his silence)

I don't know what to tell you other than you have to love yourself enough to make the break on your own if he is not willing to fully reciprocate. Good luck and God bless you.

January 19, 2009 6:36 PM

Anonymous said...

I read Lucy and Penny's stories and these ladies seem somewhat bitter. Do they consider themselves to be victims of these Priests, and if so, victims of what? Unrequited love? How many men and women are victims of this everyday?

I do not feel these ladies are taking equal responsibility for the situations they placed themselves in. They both clearly should have known the circumstances for which they were getting involved. Was the fact these men were Priests withheld from them? It is evident in their stories it was not. Penny says, "Priests should not be flirty" one could argue to Penny, to take it from where it is coming and question the depth. One could also conclude these women equally did not show any respect for these men by ignoring the vow of celibacy. These women decided to take a chance and it did not work out the way they expected. As in a parallel with adulterous affairs. Therefore, it was not meant to be. Please take any lessons you have been learned and get on with your life in a positive fashion. While doing so leave a special place in your heart for these men you once loved and pray for them..they may be lost themselves.

Henry, I am sure your wife knew she was taking a chance when she approached you. The two of you must have had this conversation. I am sure she would have handled rejection more gracefully. It is certainly a very delicate area.

Lucy, to carry this to your grave seems like a lot of wasted energy to me. Healing is a choice. Also, to look at this in a different light... the way Lucy described her attempt to reach this man seemed rather weak. I did not see any attempt to rebut the rejection...is it possible he wanted you to be stronger in your approach? Is it possible this Priest did not feel the inner strength and support from Lucy that would be necessary to bring this relationship to fruition?

I believe if they feel true love for these Men, (Priests or not) they would not be bitter. They would show understanding of the present situation and what is to lie ahead in order for these men to break the vows and begin a whole new life. They would provide all the patience, love and understanding necessary in order to make

this a reality. Is it possible these ladies let their own fears and insecurities stand in the way? It's no different from any other relationship where one is previously committed. When you play with fire you may get burned.

Love expects one for who they are and does not wish them any harm or expect them to change for their own personal benefit. Love is kind and love is good, love is not jealous and love is patient.

Catherine

January 28, 2009 11:57 AM

Henry said...

My wife may have received the rejection (if I would have rejected her) but it would have been very painful to both of us. The love I felt, I could not deny unless I was willing to deny something I knew was holy and part of the very heart of God. It would have been a contradiction for me to deny the experience of authentic love and try and function as a priest. I would have let something of God slip through my hands. When I was discerning about what to do, I saw sadness and darkness in my life if I would have continued on in the celibate priesthood where I would have to deny something I found to be very holy - romantic love.

January 28, 2009 2:28 PM

Catherine said...

Henry you sound like a very healthy man who is in touch with his inner self. Bravo to you for being true to yourself. Do you think some men become Priests to be "taken care of"? Being a Husband and Father and a Family Man can be a great and seemingly daunting tasks in today's society.

January 28, 2009 4:06 PM

Henry said...

I would like to think I'm healthy, but I would have argued I was healthy as a priest too. To know if I am really emotionally healthy, you would have to ask my wife. Which raises the question, who do you ask to find if a celibate priest is emotionally healthy? Who looks behind the curtain of their personal life?

Yes, some become priests to be taken care of and because they would not be successful in another occupation. Frankly, I think marriage and family life demand far more altruism than the priesthood, which can be a very self-absorbed lifestyle where one's ego is massaged with all the accolades. I see this particularly with many of the younger priests who can't see beyond their collars . Having said this, there are many healthy priests trying to make a go of it in today's Church.

January 28, 2009 6:41 PM

Comment deleted

This post has been removed by the author.

January 28, 2009 6:41 PM

Henry said...

My last comment was posted twice so I delete one.

January 28, 2009 6:45 PM

Henry said...

Kathleen Norris writes, "When I think of the demons I need to exorcise, I have to look inward, to my heart and soul. Anger is my best demon, useful whenever I have to go into a Woman Warrior mode, harmful when I use it to gratify myself, either in self-justification, or to deny my fears. My husband, who has a much sweeter nature than I, once told me that my mean streak grieved him, not just because of

the pain it cause him but because it was doing me harm. His remark, as wise as that of any desert Abba, felt like an exorcism. Not that my temptation to anger was magically gone, but I was called to pay closer attention to something that badly needed attention, and that was hurting our marriage. It confirmed my understanding of marriage as a holy act: one can no more hide one's true faults from a spouse than from God, and in exorcising the demon of anger, that which could kill is converted, transformed into that which can heal."

Who speaks words of truth to the celibate to help him with his demons?

January 28, 2009 7:39 PM

Catherine said...

Henry I like your point on speaking the truth to help with demons. For one to partake in this on their own would require real soul searching courage and energy. It could prove to be a painful experience for most, but a growing and healing process. "That which does not kill us only makes us stronger."

As you stated with all of the accolades one experiences in the celibate life, as a Priest(I can also think of other Professions where this occurs) what would provoke one to do such a thing? A person who truly loves the individual and has the courage to be forthright with the shortcomings they see such as a spouse or your children. What a humbling experience being a spouse and Parent is, eh?

January 29, 2009 8:17 AM

Catherine said...

Henry I want to thank you for creating this blog and this site in particular. I have learned much from it. The most recent lesson I learned was based on a question you asked Lucy relating to a possible reason why she thought she may be attracted to an unavailable man. This prompted me to look at myself and to identify any possible patterns. I did some research on self help books and I found a book by Alice Miller; The Drama of The Gifted Child. It is a book about The search for the True Self. I recommend everyone read this book.

January 29, 2009 8:26 AM

Lucy said...

Catherine

I was asked to share my story and that is exactly what I did.

But people like you-- who read and see only what they want-- really upset me more!

Who are YOU to tell me what love is? You go so far as to quote scripture-is that supposed to make me hide my face in shame because I dared to love the wrong person and worst yet, wanted to feel his love in return? How very "Catholic" of you to lay more guilt at my feet than I have already done to myself.

Did I know he was a priest?? What a silly thing to even write! Just because someone wears the collar on his neck doesn't automatically decimate romantic attraction!! I can't turn off my feelings like a water faucet. I hope you never have to live through such a painful and confusing experience.

Yes I am bitter, and yes unrequited love hurts deeply - I have previously wrote that myself so you aren't gracing me with any new found wisdom Catherine.

Despite what you may think, I have come a long way. But I think only time, self-inspection and just basically resigning myself to the reality has brought me to where I am now.

Please do not make light of my comments that I will take this to my grave, that angers and upsets me. That is how I feel, how dare you - you weren't in my shoes dear. I don't wake up every day with him the first thing on my mind or go to bed with him the last thing on my mind either. Life goes on whether we want it to or not.

And don't tell me it's a "choice" I know that - but healing comes about in different ways for different people and at a different pace for everyone.

May I ask what brought YOU to this website? There must be something in your life or someone you know that is struggling as well. Hmmm

It just hits a very big nerve with me when someone who does not know my entire situation tries to invalidate or negate the genuineness of my feelings for this man

I do NOT wish him harm and pray for him daily that he be happy and content.

January 29, 2009 6:33 PM

Catherine said...

Hi Lucy,

I am not at all suggesting you hide your face in shame. Please forgive me for sending this message. I believe you are very courageous for doing what you did and your story has prompted others to come forward. Positive things will come from your story. You have helped women just from what you wrote in this short period of time. Is it possible this is where the relationship was to lead for you? This is the path you were meant to be on for some reason or another? Helping others and being a pioneer on the subject?

My message was intended to support what Henry stated and take a closer look at your responsibility in this situation with an unavailable person. Not for him but to help yourself. You allowed yourself to continue to be in a vulnerable situation consciously or unconsciously. I think you should feel good about Lucy and to protect her.

I do not believe we can help who we fall in love with. So I do not blame you for this and I applaud your courage for sharing this with him. I do not think loving a person because they do not love us back in the way we expect is loving the wrong person. You need not feel shameful of your feelings at all. I think you should feel proud you have love for him. Sing it from the rooftop if you need to.

You ask me what brought me to this site. I too am in love with a Priest. I am not involved with him in any inappropriate manner...do I think about wanting more? Yes, I do. Is it possible? I don't know. It is out of my hands at the moment and I have to be okay with this. He is married to the church and I am a married woman. Do I believe the feeling is mutual, yes I do. The signs are there just like with your

situation. I have shared my feelings but we drew the line. Who knows maybe some time in the future. I was wondering have you tried to contact your friend since he moved? Send him a card? I know this may sound contradictory to what I said above, but have you thought about contacting him and being direct with him? I think what may help you here is some closure. It seems as if things were left open and this may help you to heal. What do you think?

I am sorry I upset you and yes I learned tough Catholic love from my Dad. Sorry for that. I have to work on a more gentle approach. Being introspective as you said is a good thing. We can learn many lessons from all of this, wouldn't you say?
Peace in Christ.

January 30, 2009 8:13 AM

Lucy said...

Catherine

I apologize for getting so angry; I truly thought you were someone trying to put me in my place and scold me. I will not stand for anyone implying I am a sinner for loving a priest.

Yes I admit to being bitter for not having won his love and angry because others have managed to touch the heart of a priest and had their love reciprocated. But it was never meant to be for me.

But true love does mean wanting what is best for that person and not always thinking of ourselves. Sometimes that means letting them go, hard as that is.

Your situation is even more volatile than mine because you are a married woman. You are playing with fire, as you said yourself. I am sorry you are going through this.

I assume you spoke directly to your priest rather than take the route of sending a letter...how did he respond? What do you mean by "we drew the line." Is he careful in his dealings with you? What signals did he give off that led you to believe the

feeling was mutual?

If he wishes to stay a priest, and truthful to his vows then you have to respect that as I had to respect Fr. Jim's as well, although he never had the courage to tell me that. It was in my case his obvious "unspoken response". It would be in your best interest and emotional health to learn from my pain and either put this relationship in its proper place, that of priest to flock (as I had to) or take a much braver and sacrificial step-- leave your parish in order to distance yourself. Seeing him regularly only reinforces this attachment. I know that sounds like an unfathomable impossibility to you right now, never seeing him again. But, you have hit a wall.

I know that you more than likely harbor feelings that you can someday seduce him and he will profess his undying love. I know this because it is the way God made us--loving someone calls out for unity with that person. I have been there Catherine. For now, you are in a real conundrum and riding a very painful emotional rollercoaster, wishing for something that may never be. I feel for you-- it's a really tough spot to be in. To make matters even more complicated, you have your husband to think about.

You asked if I tried to contact my priest friend. I have. The passage of time has allowed me to heal and think of him as a priest and friend, nothing more. He has finally responded to emails when I had some real problems and needed guidance and I have visited him in his new parish. He probably no longer views me as a threat. He was very kind and gracious to me. I was with other friends as well, so it was not awkward. We went to mass and dinner afterwards as a group (the safety net was there!) I know I can never NOT have him in my life somehow; it is good to know he is there as a true priest when I need him. But he knows I will always hold a special place in my heart for him (yes even to my grave)

I hope you can eventually come to this level of understanding with your priest friend as well.

Lucy

January 31, 2009 7:24 AM

Catherine said...

Hi Lucy,

I am glad we came to an understanding. So much is lost in e-mail communications. I am so very happy to hear you are able to have a friendship with Fr Jim I think this is wonderful. You are able to see him and it sounds as if you are working on coming to a place of peace for yourself in this friendship.

You asked about my situation and it is complicated and I am in a conundrum as you say. But only if I choose to allow it to be.

I was not looking to fall for this Man or anyone else for that matter. I am in a marriage with a Man who has problems and is volatile at times. When I met this Priest I was separated from my Husband. This was the last thing I wanted..as a matter of fact I was wishing to never be involved with another man in my life. This was just fine with me. Part of me still is,I guess that is why I am just fine with everything as it is for now.

I know realistically I am not in any situation to begin a new relationship with anyone, let alone a Priest. I have to figure out what I am going to do ultimately with the Marriage. We are getting therapy at the moment. If it works out great if not then I will deal with that when it comes. The cards are on the table. I am putting my whole heart into it. Just as you have to work to get into a relationship there is work and healing to be done to either stay in it or get out. You have to be sure you did everything possible to resolve your issues, if not they will follow you into a new relationship.

Like you I think about this Man often and pray he is doing well. (He also left the Parish so I don't see him anymore)I do have a lot of love in my heart for him and I am so happy to know he exists. It may sound strange but this makes me very happy and puts a smile on my face.

I do not feel any pain at all...just happy he is alive and I got to know him. The conversation we had was not a direct one it was insinuated. We both agreed we liked seeing each other and he called me personally when he was transferred and told me and I cried. I feel the love and that is good enough for me right now. I do not believe one has to have a sexual relationship to be in love. It certainly may

enhance the relationship, but it is not necessary. But who am I to say I never felt this love for a Man ever before in my life. There is such a peace with it.

January 31, 2009 11:28 AM

Lucy said...

Catherine

I know exactly what you mean by saying you are happy to know he is alive and that puts a smile on your face. As I believe I wrote before, I am thankful to God for allowing me to walk through this world at the same time as Fr. Jim and ultimately blessed to have crossed paths with him. (despite all the suffering, confusion and guilt).

It does sound like you have a lot on your plate and it is wise of you to just let things play out without pushing the issue too much, especially regarding your marriage issues.

Do you think you will ever visit this priest? Do you still have any email or phone contact?

God be with you and may you find peace and contentment. If you would like to email me personally, please ask Henry to provide my email address.

January 31, 2009 1:44 PM

Lisa said...

I can't help thinking while reading all of these stories is why are they so afraid to at least admit to having SOME sort of feelings?? It would eliminate the wonderings and doubts. If the woman knows they have feelings but do not want to succumb to then at least we could conduct ourselves better and not put them in situations where something might happen.

Catherine, I have you in my prayers that you find a resolution in your marriage. I have been there, done that and it is very difficult.

January 31, 2009 8:01 PM

Catherine said...

Lisa and Lucy I want to thank you very much for sharing and your prayers. I will keep you in my prayers as well.

Lisa I am wondering what became of your relationship with your Husband, did it work out? Were you also in love with a Priest?

February 2, 2009 8:06 AM

Lisa said...

Catherine,

My husband and I ended up divorced. I am also in love with a priest. My story is in the above comments if you want to read the entire thing but long story short, we are good friends and spend a lot of time together. He knows how I feel about him but isn't open about his feelings. I just feel we would be better equipped if we knew both sides of the story not just what is in our own hearts.

My email is also open if you need someone to listen to. same goes for anyone here.

February 2, 2009 1:15 PM

Anonymous said...

Hi Lucy,

His priesthood is his marriage to God. God is his spouse, whom he has devoted his life to. Falling in love with a priest is the same a falling in love with a married man.

As he is human, he could've developed feelings for you. The fact that he left was a very good thing, in that it was a sacrifice he had made for the sake of God. God is his true love. If anything, he is suffering very much. I hope you understand that. There was no point in acknowledging your letter, or even keeping in contact with you, as it would only prolong your hopes and desires. What he did was not unmanly of him, and had chosen it for your own good.

Anyways, the last thing I want you to know that, no one in this world loves you

more than God. We can never love ourselves or anyone else completely, until we love God.

If you love him, you should let him go as he was never yours to have. If you care for him, you should try not to burden his soul anymore than it already is burdened.

I wish you the best.

In Christ,

Anon

PS: I have also fallen in love men who aren't mine to fallen in love with, esp those who belong to God.

February 21, 2009 9:11 PM

Henry said...

Anon,

The idea that priests are married to God has been propagated by the hierarchy to empower themselves, keep the laity submissive, and put priests on a pedestal making confrontation of problematic behavior difficult, which has been the sad situation with clergy sexual abuse and one reason why dioceses have been held responsible for it and required to pay astronomical sums of money.

Your thinking is similar to a classmate of mine who sent me a letter when he heard of my transition. It stated:

"You have been deceived by the persuasions of others who have likewise failed, or by your passions or both but ultimately by the father of lies and prince of darkness. I pray that he will not have ultimate victory over you. In the name of

Jesus our high priest, I exhort you to repent. Know that because of God's gift of celibacy to you no woman was made for you and you for no woman. You will have no true honest joy until you are received fully back into the arms of Holy Mother Church."

My happy marriage and those of thousands of other transitioned priests proves my classmate wrong. This is the sort of nonsense that must be excreted from any priest who wishes to leave the priesthood. It depicts a cultic like control over the priest and attempts to keep them living in fear. Priests who believe they are married to God are living in a world of illusion with questionable mental stability.

The love in mandated celibacy is supposedly between the priest and Christ or the priest and the Church, but this love does not require celibacy. A person may wish to be celibate as a symbol of their commitment, but it is not "marriage".

In marriage, the spouse is in a position to look behind the curtain of their loved one's life, speak truth to them and challenge hurtful and insensitive behavior. Who looks behind the curtain of the celibate's life and speaks truth to them? Who challenges them to charity and sensitivity, when their behavior is hurtful? Without this accountability, what kind of "marriage" is that? From my experience in the priesthood, few if anyone challenge "Father", unless it's serious enough for the Bishop to get involved.

Here we see why celibacy was born and nurtured within a monastic community where the celibate was in an intense relationship with others. The analogy of marriage in this setting may be more credible.

For several years, I lived my celibate priesthood in a rural congregation and alone in a rectory where I had to drive thirty miles to visit another priest. I found living as a young celibate in that situation to be lonely and painful. Having a marital companion would have been far more rational and humane and, I would have had someone to look behind the curtain of my personal life and speak truth to me and challenge non-loving behavior.

If marriage is an analogy, then so is divorce. A spouse in an abusive relationship finds divorce to bring freedom and peace. Similarly, priests required to live in an abusive relationship with an irrational and authoritative Church also find freedom and peace when they leave. Both "divorces" are understandable and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

February 23, 2009 8:02 AM

Anonymous said...

Mandatory celibacy is unhealthy. Celibacy is a gift, as Richard Sipe and others have pointed out. To say to a man "you must be celibate if you want to be a priest in the Church" is just cruel.

My parish priest is a gorgeous man. And I think that many women probably have fallen in love with him. Even I have entertained strong feelings for him. But I have determined to keep them in the realm of my own heart to protect myself, and him. After reading these stories of women having relationships with priests, I realize that this is the only prudent course of action.

Thank you all for these stories. I have learned alot. Esp. about the need these lonely men have for female companionship. I just think it is wrong to deny them this basic comfort of love and life. And yes, it puts their female "companions" in emotional danger as well. So it is just a lose/lose situation.

March 6, 2009 4:41 PM

Lucy said...

To Anon from Feb 21

Yes I knew he wasn't mine to have, but I too tire of this "married to the church" analogy that Henry speaks of. An institution cannot hold a priest in it's arms or comfort him, whisper sweet nothings into his ear, listen to his hopes, dreams and desires as well as his fears. Nor can it offer him the warmth, comfort and love meant for him alone at the end of a long hard day. It doesn't go through the ups and downs of everyday life with him. True, a special devotion and relationship with our Lord is already there for all of us who desire it, married or single, but

having a special mate to grow old with, the beauty of human love and union, is a gift from God himself.

March 14, 2009 8:03 PM

Comment deleted

This post has been removed by a blog administrator.

March 23, 2009 9:42 PM

Henry said...

The person with the theology from the Council of Trent can stop attempting to post their archconservative garbage because its not going to happen.

April 5, 2009 8:58 PM

Anonymous said...

This is a very interesting site and your stories touch the heart. I have never been involved with a priest but was engaged in research for a book I wrote about a priest who did leave and it forced me to think hard about certain issues. For me, the more difficult question was not why a priest would want to "get out"--but why he entered the seminary in the first place. Sorry to say, many of the reasons that came to mind may not have been the best motivations for making such a decision with all its implications--and complications.

If you think this fails to address the difficulties women have encountered in their relationships with priests, platonic or otherwise, perhaps I can enlighten:

First of all, a young man who elects to join the priesthood will most likely be the product of a very orthodox Catholic family, whose standards and [rigid] ideas he has probably adopted. Moreover, he knows that his vocation will be very pleasing in their eyes and, initially, he will find his status there very gratifying--so much so, perhaps, that he doesn't even ponder sufficiently if he can even manage all the mandatory "rules" in the long run.

Also, even if he has a heterosexual orientation, many a priest has been known to be very close to his mother. There was a motion picture in which one elderly cleric admitted to a younger, struggling colleague that he had wanted to leave the priesthood years before but the thought of severely disappointing his very religious mum was too much for him. Then he said that, by the time she died, it seemed to him too late to start over again. This then becomes the factor which goes "the more time invested, the more reason to remain"--and this encompasses several sub-facets such as "how will I earn a living and who will hire an ex-priest?"

Most human beings have the capacity to love but successful relationships require maturity. Unfortunately, the priesthood is not the best setting to mature an individual. A priest may counsel lay persons, even though he probably has far less life experience than they do. He has his own problems--but they are not the same as those of the laity. The life of a parish priest is far from easy but it is still a sheltered environment. Some of the priest's needs are obviously not met, but there are other things he need not worry about.

Ladies, getting involved with a priest is tantamount to getting involved with a married man. Neither is free and often freedom is a state of mind. Never underestimate the power of guilt. Plus, there are limits to which even a basically honest man can be honest with himself. A lonely priest may think he can solve his problem of lack of female companionship, even affection, by engaging in a platonic relationship, but deep down he ought to know he is playing with fire. There is the very real potential of someone getting hurt.

I wonder how many priests realize that nothing appears sweeter than "forbidden fruit", especially if it is in an attractive package, is intelligent and nice. I am not saying it is impossible for a priest to conduct a platonic relationship with a woman--but the tales of woe here serve amply to illustrate what can come of the best intentions. The priest is very lonely and to the woman he seems pretty "ideal" for several reasons beyond "forbidden fruit". Because he behaves like a gentleman, the lady can feel safe enough with the priest to contemplate his admirable qualities at her leisure. Suddenly, though, one or the other find they can't do without the "friend", that the feelings have gone beyond mere friendship. It may not even be reciprocal and that can make the non-reciprocating party feel very uncomfortable,

want to create a distance. Unhappily, when we fall in love with someone, we are very much tempted to seek signs they may feel the same way. So it goes.

Regardless, even if there is reciprocity, there is guilt and the difficulty of making a choice. The greatest pressure, of course, is on the priest, not so sure that he really doesn't want to stay one. It may seem cynical, but one of the greatest perks to being a priest is that a lot of people tend to revere one. God's representative on earth. Where does a man find such a position of "authority" and even adulation unless he becomes a rock or movie star? It's heady and compensates for plenty of deprivation. But not to all--far from it. For many priests, that gets old fast and, in spite of all the "reverence", they feel pretty alone. Some can become narcissists, the by-product of essentially being involved only with oneself, having to keep a certain distance from everyone, especially women. One would think priests would confide in one another, but I think few do--or dare to do for fear of being judged by their peers. I know I have written a lot, but it's only the tip of the iceberg of the whole problem with the lifestyle.

April 22, 2009 12:32 AM

Henry said...

I find the above comment very insightful and whoever wrote it understands the priesthood well and seems to have gotten a peek behind the external facade into their hearts.

I think there are a variety of reasons why priests enter the seminary and it is probably a very mixed bag for most. Perhaps other priests would be willing to share what motivated them.

I entered via the Catholic charismatic movement which was going very strong back in 70's. I definitely had a spiritual sense about my call and felt driven to enter. But, from the beginning the issue of mandated celibacy did not sit well with me. I spoke about it with spiritual directors and slowly saw it as part of the package and even found some meaning in it during my 15 years in ministry. But, I also knew

that a very important part of my life was being sacrificed and I begin to understand that the sacrifice was not so much for Christ as it was for an ecclesiastical institution whose reasons for mandatory celibacy became more contrived in my mind. I began to see it more and more to be about maintaining power and the spiritual aura around it diminished.

Your comment about the empowerment the priesthood gives the priest's ego is very true. Perhaps this is the hardest to leave - having your ego massaged regularly. But, that too wears thin as the priest looks into his love and intimacy deprived soul. Wholeness beckons and we transitioned priests found this wholeness could no longer be found within the priesthood. We are finding it in the intimate sharing of our souls with another. But, most miss the priesthood and are saddened by church laws that make love a disqualification to the priesthood. The choice is often between heartless law and intimate love. This is a choice that should not have to be made.

April 22, 2009 7:42 AM

Anonymous said...

Hello, Henry

Thanks for your affirmation and I also want to say that I have read your own story, so eloquently told.

I do believe that the majority of the young men entering the priesthood have sincere motives. But sincere does not necessarily equate "wise". One of the saddest [for me] reasons for entering the church is using it for a refuge or even an escape from one's basic nature. I don't think it comes as a surprise to anyone that many priests have a gay orientation. The RC does not maintain that this, in itself, is a sin [recognizing that no one can choose his orientation] but that to act upon it is. So here are some of these Catholic youths with strong religious beliefs saying to themselves, "If I can't be myself, at least I can be a priest!" Well...it really isn't funny. Repression of any basic human need always results in a backlash sooner or later. The way that happens is one hurts oneself or somebody else. I have watched EWTN a few times and was amazed to see the number of young priests who

appeared grossly overweight. It doesn't take a Dr. Freud to understand why they are eating so much. There's a void that needs to be filled somehow. Or one can pour alcohol into it. A priest can hardly turn around in a broom closet without committing a sin--but he's allowed to have a drink and there's no clear rule that I know of regarding how many per day are too many.

At any rate, I wonder how many women attracted to priests realize that an ever-growing number [so say some] do not have heterosexual orientations. And, really, there is no reason why they should appear overtly gay. Therefore, he truly may just want to be FRIENDS with you and that is the only attraction. Contrary to some ignorant opinion, gay men really do like women. It is much easier to be friends with them than the straight ones. I tend to believe that few of the latter, including priests, want to be close to women to whom they are not attracted. I don't mean just sexually--but attracted in a general sense. If they believe otherwise, they are probably just fooling themselves. Straight men, although they can have a camaraderie with their female co-workers, for example, and treat the ladies in a generally friendly way--do not go out of their way to look for a mere buddy in a woman. I would believe that, most times, when a man has a platonic female friend it is someone with whom he had already had a failed romance or marriage--a la Seinfeld and Elaine. It is the friendship of familiarity and lack of rancor.

Recently, I came across a blog where a priest actually maintained that he and his colleagues were justified in treating women to which they were attracted badly--actually being mean to them. This is one of the most immature things I have ever come across. What justification can there ever be for being "mean" to someone just because one finds them attractive??? What kind of advertisement for the priesthood in general is that? You know, this is a real mess. Catholicism seems to be sending the message that it is wrong to be human, have human needs and still be "holy". Few people on earth ever achieve this kind of saintly state. Most of us have to be content with "human". Even though a homosexual is as God created him, God must make mistakes because he cannot act on his needs without sinning. Everybody is stuck with his youthful decisions [read "vows"] even though years down the road he may not even be the same person any longer. And then, all

around the Catholic universe, there is clergy of other faiths doing OK even though they have wives and children. Their congregants do not feel cheated [out of what?] by their lack of celibacy and they perform their duties. Certainly, sometimes these clergymen get divorced, have affairs--but priests are having affairs, too [and worse] and their mandatory celibacy hasn't done one bit of good there, hasn't prevented a thing. Just ask the bishops whose dioceses are going bankrupt from civil suits filed by victims of abuse. Los Angeles--at least \$600,000,000 in reparations. It's just staggering.

April 22, 2009 12:24 PM

Anonymous said...

The fact is--some priests may be arseholes and some are just trying to keep themselves away from temptation...I have been on the receiving end of a detaching priest and it is hurtful.. but I understand. It's not about me, it's about remaining true to his calling.

June 16, 2009 11:31 AM

Comment deleted

This post has been removed by the author.

June 16, 2009 12:46 PM

Anonymous said...

I found some of the postings quite insightful. I have been in love with a priest since I was 15 years old. He was transferred. Then, 20 years later, I found him again, and felt the exact same way. I met with him as much as I could without raising eyebrows. We never engaged in any inappropriate behavior, though, I must admit, it was his strength, not mine. For if he were to make an advance, I am not sure I would have the willpower to resist. Since, we have become good friends. I never have told him how I truly felt about him. Now, he has been transferred once again, but since I am in my mid thirties, and not fifteen, it has been possible to maintain communication with him, though, not as often as I would like. I think about him almost everyday, but have come to realize that it is just something that he can't do given his commitment to God, despite his probable attraction to me, too. (I hope that doesn't come across too conceitedly)

How can I make these feelings go away? Evidently, distance and time just aren't enough? Should I tell him how I feel when I see him? I'm not sure I have the nerve to jeopardize our friendship. Please, advise.

July 19, 2009 9:20 PM

Lucy said...

Anonymous,

How long was he in your parish the second time around?

You can't make the feelings go away by sheer force of will. It is just a cross for you to bear. If you tell him, he most likely will withdraw from you and cut off any further communication. I wouldn't do it; learn from my mistake. As much as you are bursting inside to let it all out; the ones who want to remain a priest will do so for fear of many things: simply trying to be true to his calling and promise to God ranks at the top, followed by disobedience to the bishop and fear of losing his security in the priestly lifestyle. Guaranteed salary, room and board. Also fear of being thought a "Judas" and being treated like a pariah for deserting the church

I am sure there are so many priests who feel love but don't dare express it or reciprocate it when a woman comes forth, so they "tough it out" and act like you simply don't exist to avoid any further temptation. They look at it as a supreme sacrifice made for God and the Catholic Church.

The fact you found him once again after all these years must have had you thinking "this is meant to be" - but I would look at it as just another test from the Big Man upstairs. You will quite possibly lose the friendship you have with him now if you tell him romantic feelings. Also, be prepared for him not to be in touch too much if he is transferred, even as a friend. If they get caught communicating regularly with a woman someone might tell the bishop on them. Who knows if their emails or phone calls are monitored or not?

Good luck and God Bless

Lucy

July 23, 2009 6:03 PM

Anonymous said...

You ask, "How can I make these feelings go away?" Try staying away--permanently. That way you'll have a chance to get over your feelings. If you were satisfied with a platonic relationship with the priest, that would be fine, but it's obvious that you're not and so you're just torturing your heart by hanging on. Believe this--a priest is just a man. If he had reciprocal feelings for you, wanted you, he would have made that plain long ago. Priests don't have a superhuman ability to combat true love if it is really there. They want to give in to it, too, but if they don't...then they don't and there is not much point in a woman humoring the decision by hanging on. Cut your losses, cut loose, and give yourself a chance to fall in love with someone who is available to you.

July 23, 2009 6:04 PM

Susan said...

"He's a priest", "no he is a human being who is a priest..." women are taught at a young age to evaluate a man by his profession...the doctor, the lawyer those are good catches...but when it is the priest you hear, "thornbird...loving someone who is unobtainable"...oh my God I have heard so many varieties on the topic...and alot of people seem to think they are the authority on the subject...bottom line we are talking about human beings, we can even take this beyond a man and a woman, but won't to keep it simple...so what's the diff..it's not a profession it's a calling and part of the job description is something called "celibacy" ...which seems to also be defined in a variety of ways. For whatever reason the human spirit tends to require love, affection and attention...in the priest and the women scenario, we have the forbidden love, the secret longing love, the friendship that grew love and so on...it is as complex as any man/woman relationship is. I believe it is the duality that bothers people about this type of love so much...so see it as duplicity, which it is in some situations a mistake, ill advised, a cruel trick from God and some even see it as a calling. I am going to label it a "reflection". Many relationships between men and women are reflections...is it good? is it bad? it is

what it is ...and what you make of it...many of us who have not taken vows have chosen celibacy on our own accord, fundamentally it simplifies life, it really does...still the human spirit's desire for connection comes out in one way or another. So why do I love the Priest? actually I love the man who happens to be the priest...funny thing about that though...I did not see him as a man first, I saw him as someone safe, non sexual, non demanding...actually I thought of him as a neuter...I am very serious here, what precipitated the change? the crossover...growth, personal growth..ok I will leave it this for now...please let no one else tell you what your feelings are, or what you should do with them...if you are looking here for answers..realize you are simply viewing reflections, and there are many...

August 10, 2009 9:32 PM

susan said...

Our perspectives change with time..Fr James Lex wrote a book about his life as a priest ... "50 years in a jealous marriage" it was recommended to me amazing read...he really examined himself and put it out there for others I believe he did it purposfully to help other men such as himself what I also found so facinating was that even though he was writing of a priest's life I could apply alot of his insights to my own life , my own journey thru decades, and how perstective changes, regarding sexuality, initmacy,love, and marriage. He explores what celibacy meant to him, it changed over the years. It seemed he longed, hopped for intimacy up to the very end of his long life...but he could not let go of the power being a priest afforded him,and felt great guilt and responsibility towards those who looked up to him.. it was sad, very sad I read his book but really appreciated the fact that he wrote it...with such candor, i think is a great gift to us all that he bared his reflections with such honesty and candor.

August 10, 2009 9:49 PM

Anonymous said...

I had a relationship with a priest for 12 years....we were involved even before ordination. He wanted me as a girlfriend, knew how to draw the line, kept involved with other women - going to lunch, dinner, wherever he could grab some intimacy - yet he wanted exclusivity from me. When I wanted marriage, that was

the end.

I spent years in tremendous pain, always going back and forth. I am now on my way to healing and thank God I had the strength to leave the relationship.

August 19, 2009 3:47 PM

Henry said...

Anonymous,

Glad you had the courage to call him to responsibility. It appears he wanted to continue to use you for his emotional purposes. It is sad that so many priests who want intimate companionship try to do so within the oppression of mandated celibacy. They expect the people they love to also live in the same shaming celibate shadows as they do. It is a very strange world indeed and your call for marriage called him to honesty but he preferred to stay in the shadows where honesty and integrity are not allowed.

August 19, 2009 8:50 PM

Anonymous said...

Anon,

Completely understand what you went through. Similar situation for me - minus a few years, but are still in "relationship" and have had "no call to honesty" as of yet. We seem close and have some kind of intimate "thing" going on, nothing sexual (we know the limits) but he goes out for meals, etc with other women (and men) and basically seems to "want it all" but in the end, he talks on occasion how he's lonely and you can just tell how he's actually depressed and not truly happy. It's all very sad, but, as Henry has mentioned - the institution of the Church has a tight grip on these guys and they, I'm sure, also fear the unknown of "the world" and what on earth they would do without the priesthood..... It is a "shadowy" world..... and all very sad in so many ways. Especially when the man loves being a priest and yet longs for intimacy and family..... It is downright cruel in many respects..... The suffering of the priest is no doubt on par with that of the woman - it's just different pain. Optional celibacy seems the only "humane" thing to do! I can see the pain it has caused the priest I have a "friendship" with..... health-wise and

emotional/spiritual..... Indeed a mess.

Thank you for this website, Henry and all that work with you!

August 20, 2009 12:04 PM

Anonymous said...

Henry,

Thank you for your response especially when you said my priest wanted to keep me in the "shaming celibate shadows". How true!!

I always felt shame and know he did and still does.

Thank you for helping me to label it!

August 20, 2009 8:23 PM

Anonymous said...

Henry,

You mentioned in your last post about the priest "using you for his emotional purposes." This seems to be the "recurring theme" with many of these relationships - is that a fair statement from your experience? Are there many priests who "use" women to feed those intimacy needs they have while yet having no intention of leaving the priesthood for her? It also seems many priests have "many women friends" - almost like a "rotation" of sorts - perhaps to keep them "at bay" so then it just "looks like Father is helping many folks" and no ONE woman could be "under suspicion" to threaten his reputation? I'm not trying to get at priests, just wondering if this is a common pattern that some priests live. I am the same Anonymous that just posted last, so it's a personal question, too. Just wondering if this is part of the celibate "culture" in some way? Or, perhaps it's just a personality thing of individual priests..... Just needing a little understanding.

August 26, 2009 5:14 PM

Henry said...

Anonymous,

I do not think most priests set out to use women for their emotional purposes. But, once in a relationship, whether emotional or more, many priests find themselves frustrated that they cannot enter more deeply into the relationship because of the requirements of mandated celibacy. Some find the internal strength to leave the priesthood and pursue the relationship in an open and honest way. Those who do not, may appear to use women for their purposes, but they are probably attempting to love within the parameters imposed upon them by the Church. Women may interpret this as using them, but that is not always the case. They are going as far into the relationship as celibacy will allow. However, over time some priests may enjoy this emotional game and women end up used very hurt. No doubt, these guys are assholes.

Unfortunately, there are priests who set out from the beginning to intentionally abuse women emotionally and sexually, but I would like to think they are a small percentage of priests. These priests are far more than assholes, they are emotionally sick and using the priesthood to prey on others, which is an evil beyond comprehension.

However, there are other very sad cases (as if the above are not sad enough) where a priest does love a woman (or man if gay) and would prefer to marry but they cannot find the interior strength to leave. They may continue in a long term relationship with their beloved, if the beloved allows it to continue. These priests more than others, understand they are owned men, slaves of the institution, who have been emotionally and sexually neutered (even if they are sexually active). This is a very dehumanizing place for a priest to live and it is sad that he has drug his beloved into the same sick celibate shadows he himself chooses to live.

Hopefully, women who are in this situation will somehow find the emotional strength to leave and find someone with whom they can love in the light of day and out of the shaming shadows of mandated celibacy. Under the "Theology" link on www.leavingthepriesthood.com you will find the article "Son Finds Out His Father is a Priest", which is quite a story. Imagine attending mass and seeing your father at the altar!

All this could be changed if Church officials made mandated celibacy optional. Not doing so is where the real evil is.

August 26, 2009 6:42 PM

Anonymous said...

Henry,

Thank you for your very insightful reply to my questions - it has helped to gain some insight into what the priest experiences. I suppose the difficult question is knowing what YOUR situation actually is - sometimes it's not always plain to see or know. I am in "a relationship" with a priest, but cannot be sure exactly "what we are to one another" beyond friendship and enjoying one another's company/spending occasional time together. Common interests allow a "bond" of sorts and attraction on many levels - physical, faith, interests, etc.... My sense of this relationship is one of him "going only as far as celibacy will allow" as you said and the 6th commandment, as was discussed on this blog earlier, I believe - only within marriage would sexual intimacy be allowed. But I also think we border on your paragraph about priests who ideally would prefer to marry but either cannot find the inner strength to leave, probably feel sexually neutered and owned and so remain because they feel "trapped" in that regard, while knowing how much the priesthood does make them happy in all other ways. This is where optional celibacy seems the right thing to have. It would eliminate much pain and suffering of having to choose. And some priests are probably so "brainwashed" by the institution that they believe that celibacy is a necessary requirement for priestly service. To me it seems rather "anti-God" when God Himself is RELATIONAL - Father, Son & Holy Spirit - Word made flesh, Son incarnate, etc!!!! Then to expect some kind of "anti-relational relationship" of the priest just seems so illogical. I'm really at a loss about it all. In my situation, I can see the "struggle" of my priest friend and he seems to really want to be able to love but is so "caught up" in the institution and the "way of life" that I think he fears the "outside" to some extent - it's what he knows and that makes it safe and him feel safe, I suspect. So, "keeping women friends" I'm sure helps to "dispel the loneliness". It sure does seem to be a sad way of life to some extent and very lonely, too. That always strikes me when being in the rectory - it seems so "lacking in life" in some way. You know, like he

lives there, but it's not HIS house, the office is in "his house", the main room is always used for "appointments" and just a sense of "nothing much that's personal" despite personal things being around. They truly are "owned" and almost everything they have is "owned", too. What kind of life is that to live? I'm sure some enjoy the fact of not having the "responsibility" of "ownership" but I would also think that smacks at a basic sense of "arriving" as an adult - earning your own, so to speak.

Perhaps I will be able to have an open talk about all this with my priest friend at some point - I think it would benefit us both as it will allow things to be brought out in the light and express what we're feeling about things. Maybe he'd find the strength to leave, maybe he's "too far in" as a priest now, maybe he's not "in love" enough to leave, maybe he loves being a priest more, maybe so many things..... Maybe I'm not "in love" enough for him TO leave..... Maybe sometime the best thing is to "let go" and allow something else to come into your life....

Thanks for the link, too!

August 27, 2009 7:42 AM

M said...

I found this site through searching, trying to understand and forgive, myself and the priest I was "involved" with.

10 Years ago I joined the parish. 45 Years ago I made my first Holy Communion.

I have this sadness in my heart. Our Parish observed the day of fasting for priests and vocations today.

Took me almost 10 years to feel I belonged there, and two seconds to feel unwelcome.

I wish I were there today, with the people, in the church, feeling at home.

I cannot understand how after all these years, in an intimate "friendship" with my priest things could turn so uncomfortable.

He gave me a gift this priest, he comforted me, we comforted each other...and then....being ignored, and finally being told to my face that I was not as important in his life as he was in mine.

I cannot tell exactly when these intense feelings started, but they are there and I

am fighting to get over them.

I wish for nothing else but being in peace with him. I can understand that people change, feelings change, but cannot understand why he chose to demean me.

I am struggling spiritually, although I am in constant prayer, I feel disconnected, as if God is punishing me by taking leave of my heart.

10 years, we used to laugh, cuddle, I felt such love in his touch. I feel like such a fool, for giving so much of me, physically, emotionally and mentally to somebody who just used me to strike his ego and manhood. How naïve of me to think what we had was special. How stupid of me to accept unacceptable behaviour on account of his position.

How about me? All these years of keeping our secret! And when I finally had the courage to speak up, to tell my story - confiding in another priest he turned things around. Its not about me.....He felt betrayed that I spoke to somebody else.

How I wish I could be like him, just pretend that I don't exist. This priest is very good at his job. I would never compromise it. To think of the extent of my commitment to this priest is mind boggling, How could I? An intelligent, attractive and good woman have treated myself so badly, caused such injury to my self-esteem. I pray for reconciliation and peace between us. I am willing, but seems he is not.

How much in common I find with the other women in this site.

October 24, 2009 11:56 AM

Anonymous said...

I have been in a relationship for almost 7 years with a man and priest whom I love deeply. I have an ongoing war in my heart because I want a commitment from him, i want him to leave the priesthood to be with me. I have requested this and he can not leave the shadows of celebacy for me. I try to honor his commitment, afterall I did know he was a priest. I am constantly disappointed by what I can't have, and jealous by the time he spends with other people and families for his ministry and work. I do not regret falling in love with him or our time together. I only wish I could have a public relationship and a LIFE with him, I know I never will. I hope I am able to someday find the emotional strength to move on with my life with out him, because he will not move on with me. After reading these posts I realize that he doesn't have the strength to leave, and sadly, I can not bear to leave him

because I know it will be just as painful for him as it is for me now, and I do not want to hurt him. What advice could you offer to me? my pain is great and my heart is broken.

D.

January 22, 2010 9:30 PM

Henry said...

Interesting article from <http://www.innerexplorations.com/jctext/priests.htm>

What is the anima? It is a feminine dimension of a man's psyche intimately connected with his ability to relate to women and to express his feelings in regard to them. In every relationship a man has with a woman he is also relating to his own anima. But the question of the anima takes on a special character in the lives of celibate priests. Most priests, in virtue of their ministry, are in constant contact with women, and no matter what his ministry, can never escape from his own anima. She is always influencing his feelings whether he is conscious of it or not.

...

The Anima and Celibacy

These anima problems afflict the celibate priest in a particular way. Candidates for the priesthood in the past often entered the seminary before they had a chance to reach some level of psycho-sexual maturity. Their formation neglected for the most part this aspect of their lives. They could not openly relate to women, especially as potential girlfriends or wives, and they often could not relate to the anima within because nothing in their training informed them of such a possibility.

Therefore a great deal of powerful psycho-sexual energy had no normal outlet. In certain cases the seminarians may even have had difficulties in these areas, and chosen the priesthood as a safe haven from them. The result was a dangerous

situation in which these energies could grow more powerful over time, generate fantasies and impulses, and in some cases, inappropriate actions. Is it impossible to imagine a situation in which these energies, denied their normal outlets, could seek inappropriate goals in terms of the age and/or sex of the person they were directed to? Can we immediately dismiss the possibility that pedophilia, an attraction to preadolescent boys and homosexuality among the Catholic clergy may not just be the result of inclinations that existed prior to their entrance into the seminary, but in certain cases the result of a lack of any way in which to develop psycho-sexual maturity.

Poor formation is one issue. The relative isolation of priests is another. Men in the diocesan priesthood are often much on their own, living without family around them, and without an outlet to express their feelings. The absence of normal feeling outlets can lead to repression of those feelings which can be followed by their explosive release in outbursts of temper, or in some form of destructive behavior like alcoholism. Priestly culture, itself, provides little guidance on how to deal with the question of the feminine. Those in charge have suffered from the same deficient formation and are not equipped to deal effectively with psycho-sexual problems. Therefore, they take refuge in denial or repression. The whole problem is compounded by the long-standing history of celibacy enshrined in Church doctrine and practice. Largely unconscious and deficient relationships to the anima, instead of being dealt with precisely as deficiencies, become protected from examination by being considered as spiritual virtues. There is a genuine charism of celibacy following the councils of Jesus about dedicating oneself to God and the service of others, but to impose this from above as an essential requirement for the Latin rite Catholic priesthood is to imagine that God is constrained by our arrangements, and will make good our deficiencies in dealing with the feminine. What takes place, instead, could be called a sacralization of the fear of women and the anima in which a male celibate institution tries to hold them at arm's length. They must somehow be kept away from the priesthood, and this unconscious feeling mixes itself in any attempts to have a rational discussion about married priests or the ordination of women. Then Rome's insistence on these issues becomes more suspect precisely because of its unwillingness to look at the issues we have been discussing.

January 23, 2010 1:03 PM

Annie said...

Dear M and D:

How I see myself in your posts. My heart breaks for you. Here's all I can offer...walk away...physically and emotionally. It's the hardest thing you'll ever do, and it's the best thing for your overall emotional health. You are worth someone's full attention, not just the crumbs that are left over. Better to be alone with your dignity. You'll find the abbreviated version of my story above. It took a long time, but I finally reached my pain threshold and said, "Enough." Now it's 7 years later, and I'm ready to move on. It sounds trite, but you need to give time, time. I wish you well.

-Annie

January 31, 2010 9:41 AM

Comment deleted

This post has been removed by the author.

February 13, 2010 5:55 PM

Anonymous said...

I understand Henry's point about repressed feelings followed by destructive behavior. But I have to believe that priests have the typical issues of grief that touch everyone's life, like a loss of a friend, sibling, parent. How do they deal with these issues? Do they turn to their parish community? Do they cry, suffer in silence, turn only to the Lord? I've seen a pastor cry when talking about being re-assigned. The parish still misses him. He was very unhappy in his new church. Was there anything we could have done for him? He suffered to the point that his health was effected. The faithful's hands are tied in these situations. It seems we cannot address the person in charge and ask that the priest who for years was apart of our lives could stay on. It was cruel. How do you think he was coping? How could anyone outside of the church help him?

March 1, 2010 8:07 AM

Anonymous said...

Does anyone know how Lucy is doing? She had a compelling story but has she moved on?

March 1, 2010 8:10 AM

Lucy said...

Hello

This is Lucy. I have not visited this blog for some time. It is nice to know that someone was touched by my story.

I have moved on - through painful necessity -- not personal choice. Eventually I had to accept he wanted to remain faithful to his vows and would never address the issue with me...at least not yet.

Interstingly enough, however, I have seen him 2 or 3 times since (never alone however, always with a group of mutual friends) upon visiting him at his new parish and having dinner afterwards. He treated me like everyone else, that is, kind and friendly, but there was no mention of anything personal despite the two of us having a block of time alone... he simply pretended it never happened. as did I.

I took a chance, perhaps a foolish one, and don't know that I can ever have the courage to open up to someone like that again...but I am getting older now so what does it matter. I am comfortable with being alone I don't think I would even know how to act in a relationship.

Despite my pain, he will always have a place in my heart and in my prayers.

Life goes on.

God bless and thank you.

Lucy

March 15, 2010 7:42 PM

Melanie said...

Hello Lucy, I have a story very similar to yours and was poster #77 above. I deleted it after becoming afraid that he would recognize my story! though I don't think he is on this site...I don't know. Basically it is the same story of knowing a priest who then blows me off. He recently flew 4000+ miles to come here and avoided me like the plague even tho he said he would see me. I am trying to forget him but it is hard. I have loved him more deeply with every passing year. I would love to communicate with you. Ask Henry for my e-mail address. Melanie

March 20, 2010 6:26 AM

Anonymous said...

After so many years of marriage, to wake up one day and realize you have fallen in love with another man is so intensely hard.

My husband is a good, but flawed man. Are not we all? How is it that I could be in love with this other man. Such a good, holy gentle man. He is flawed as well. Yet, I am in love with him.

I will be in prayer for you all. Please pray for me. I will NEVER tell him, threaten his vocation, nor break my marriage vows. This is just a combination of awful and wonderful and wrong.

Let us keep one another in prayer.

September 8, 2010 1:19 AM

Louise said...

Dear Lucy,

I feel for you so much, I can relate to you, as I have too a similar story, very much a like indeed, except that I am suffering the situation for 12 years now since his superiors put him under very strict restrictions of some kind they didn't tell me anything I just got brushed a side in a conspiracy of silence. No explanations nor consideration for me or how I was coping. They have been reading all my letters I sent him over the years, they intimidated me in their office, they broke my reputation amongst the parishioners, I had to endure persecution. I had to move away. I got married too, trying to put everything behind me and start a new life, it

didn't work, I am now separated. I still feel the same excruciating pain day after day. I loved him for 15 years and in another 15 years I will still love him. I wrote another letter recently hoping this time to get an answer. Meanwhile I started to write an autobiography about my experience with this priest and the church, I find it to be a very good therapy! I believe that you should do the same, your story is so beautiful! I think that would reach and sensitize the public and maybe the church! Hang in there and don't lose hope! We never know, maybe the next pope will allow the priests to be married.

September 17, 2010 7:33 PM

Anonymous said...

Dear Lucy,

I feel for you so much, I can relate to you, as I have too a similar story, very much alike indeed, except that I am suffering the situation for 12 years now since his superiors put him under very strict restrictions of some kind they didn't tell me anything I just got brushed aside in a conspiracy of silence. No explanations nor consideration for me or how I was coping. They have been reading all my letters I sent him over the years, they intimidated me in their office, they broke my reputation amongst the parishioners, I had to endure persecution. I had to move away. I got married too, trying to put everything behind me and start a new life, it didn't work, I am now separated. I still feel the same excruciating pain day after day. I loved him for 15 years and in another 15 years I will still love him. I wrote another letter recently hoping this time to get an answer. Meanwhile I started to write an autobiography about my experience with this priest and the church, I find it to be a very good therapy! I believe that you should do the same, your story is so beautiful! I think that would reach and sensitize the public and maybe the church! Hang in there and don't lose hope! We never know, maybe the next pope will allow the priests to be married.

September 17, 2010 7:43 PM

Anonymous said...

I can't believe there are so many women with such similar stories. For awhile, I thought it was just me in this relationship with a priest. Mine has been over 20 years. His characteristics are so much like the priests you all described. Just

unbelievable!

These guys just don't have the courage to make a commitment. It's so sad. I'm not about to give up just yet.

God bless you all.

September 19, 2010 8:26 PM

louise said...

God bless you too Anonymous! I find you very courageous! I'm not about to give up either! I believe that us, women, should have a right to speak up and defend our love instead of letting ourselves to be brushed aside, and believe me it is not by the priest who we are in love with that comes this rejection and conspiracy of silence but by the church the superiors and their spiritual advisers. I didn't have a slight chance to argue my point with the priest I'm in love with, they (the superiors and his spiritual adviser), didn't wait a second to push me away without explanation and of course that gave them more power to convince and brainwash my lover that our love was wrong and that I was a threat, a tool from the devil to seduce him and take him away from his vocation. That God sent him a test to see if he would remain faithful. The priest who are in love are struggling even more than we do I believe, because they have no other way to see the situation then the one that the church make them to see. For them it is hopeless to desire to have both; their vocation and the woman. A lot of us women don't even want to think about trying to do something about it alone or all together because we know that the church is to big to fight against. Or most of us are scared of the consequences that would occur against us, and of course we don't want to harm in anyway the one we love. So nothing will ever be done? Are we doomed to suffer in silence for the rest of our lives? Well I'm not the type of person to let anyone down this earth have control over me than God Himself. So my way of fighting is that I will put my story public by writing my autobiography. If I can't be heard by the Church I will be by the public, and hopefully this will sensitize the reader and make them realize how many of us are suffering in secret. I've got nothing to loose! I think that it is not fair to just be contempt with therapy and support groups, we deserve better. You will ear from my book hopefully in a year from here! I do it for myself and all of us women and priest that are reduced to silence.. Priests were married before, and I don't see why they couldn't today. I think that the church should give them

the freedom of choice. As we know women have been pushed aside from the priests lives because the church didn't want to have to take care of the widows of those priest and of course they can keep their assets. That is the reason why priest couldn't be married anymore after the middle age. (see this link <http://www.libchrist.com/bible/catholiccelibacy.html>) Now the reason they give us today is that they want to take the example of Jesus? Really???

September 26, 2010 10:16 AM

Anonymous said...

dear anonymous-please consider adding your story to the list of those under women who love priests on this site.

September 28, 2010 6:08 PM

Anonymous said...

Last month I sent him a letter asking him to take responsibility, I don't know why but he refuses to face me. I know that he is under very severe restrictions but, I don't understand why he leaves me hanging for so long. I know that he read my letter but I'm not so sure that he will reply. Please pray for him. I can't say his name but God knows who he is. Thank you.

September 29, 2010 7:37 PM

Joan said...

Thanks to all for sharing your stories. I am one year out from challenging/inviting my priest-friend to be honest about our nearly ten-year relationship. I came to understand that he has many close relationships with many women, that I was one of many. Notes and comments which seemed to indicate some level of intimacy were, in fact, contrived, and part of his well-developed method of emotional seduction. The longer I keep my distance, the more clearly I see the patterns. I won't say it has been easy. I miss certain aspects of our relationship a great deal. But after reading the stories on this blog and many books (especially memoirs) on the topic, I see and understand the pathology of this behavior. If you're starting to question what's going on, you're on the right track, Keep going.

September 29, 2010 8:25 PM

Anonymous said...

Joan -thanks for your comments. I've been in a relationship for 4 years now. I've felt taken advantage of, used, loved, pushed aside, drawn in, and deceived -all by the same man. I'm just starting to question what's going on. I guess it took me too long, but I will "keep going". PS: I'm glad I found this website..I don't feel so alone

October 21, 2010 1:54 PM

Joan said...

Hi, Anonymous--Joan again.

So sorry for your pain and confusion. Glad you're feeling less alone in a difficult situation.

The following is adapted from an on-line advice column. Although it doesn't specifically address ending a relationship with a priest, it has helped keep me from sending a note to him or picking up the phone to call him and resume things, Even after a year, I still think about it, but this helps me remember why I made the decision to end it in the first place.

Advice for Breaking Up:

Turn off your cell phone, stay off the Internet, don't show up. Don't communicate. The word of the moment is distance. Embrace it.

No matter what you want from the other person, stay away from him until he can give you what you want, whether that's distance or intimacy.

And remember that it's likely this will never happen.

I repeat;

this will never happen.

I don't know your situation, whether "distance" means finding a new parish, a new spiritual director, a new whatever, but regardless, hang in there. And yes, that last line--'this will never happen'-- is a painful one.

You're right. You're not alone in this experience. Keep going.

--Joan

October 22, 2010 9:11 PM

Anonymous said...

Thanks for these posts. My priest "boyfriend" of 10 years went on vacation with me to practice how to be an ordinary guy when he left the priesthood. When he got home, he had a change of heart after calling his old seminary spiritual director. A month later after no communication, I contacted him. He proceeded to have lunch with me in a public place. It wasn't the man I loved for the past 10 years. In his place was Robot Priest who clearly had been coached by the powers that be. He proceeded to give me a VERY SCRIPTED dialog about his commitment to the priesthood, did I think he was leaving to be with me, how he needs to be special, blah, blah, blah. I have not talked to him since. Finally, I ended it after trying for years to do so even though he had the audacity to call me the next day. Do I still love him? Yes, I always will because love is eternal. BUT, I lost respect for him that he allowed himself to become something less of a human being by the hateful way he treated me after leading me on that we would be together soon. And I further lost respect that he allows himself to be so controlled by his superiors. God have mercy on them...

October 24, 2010 6:07 PM

Joan said...

Mercy, indeed.

And mercy on the woman that Fr. F has been having a relationship with since seminary--30+ years. He didn't reveal to me that this out-of-town friend he drove to visit many week-ends after mass was a woman, until a number of years into our relationship. Once he flew to meet her while she was at a convention out-of-state, and he sent e-mail to me from her computer. Initially I was hurt, How could he be so blatant about being with her? Then I felt such pity for her--how would that feel, to be with him, but know he was sending e-mail to another woman? And from my computer?

Worse, much worse.

Mercy.

--Joan

P.S. And mercy on all those other women who have received the same (in an e-mail) poem as I did, asking "Why do I like you? Why do I love you?"

October 25, 2010 7:46 PM

Rosanne Dingli **said...**

I am not amazed or surprised at having found this site. Having been brought up Catholic on a Catholic island, I had the impression that a lot of this kind of thing went on... it had to, because priests are after all men first.

I looked for information on Laicization when I was writing my book: research of this kind was important, but I did not find this site, which would have been of help.

Similarly to the number of personalities and habits among men in general, one finds a number of different habits and characteristics among priests. They are not all the same, just as all journalists are not the same and not all doctors are the same.

I wrote a book where the female protagonist fell in love with a priest, which turned her life upside down in a way.

It is not only about that romantic aspect, but includes other dilemmas propagated by the church. It will be published late in 2010 under the title According to Luke. Perhaps some of the readers and writers here will find it an enjoyable (and lighter) side that they can relate to, seeing how their experiences have coloured their lives.

October 31, 2010 9:57 PM