

priests must be retained; she knows it is and will be a source of spiritual graces by which they will be ever more closely united with God." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

✦ **A celibate priest doesn't understand the problems of married life and is therefore less able to help married parishioners.** On the contrary, one does not have to be married to understand problems. A priest is a human being who encounters rejection, betrayal, disappointment, arguments, etc. all the time. In addition, he is trained to deal with various problems and has much experience in dealing with the problems of marriage. It may even be argued that since he is celibate, he is looked upon as an even more trustworthy and reliable source of assistance. Furthermore, as a 'neutral' party, he is able to counsel without bias, whereas a married priest may be more likely to have some personal bias.

"If this means that the priest is without a direct personal experience of married life, he nevertheless will be able through his training, his ministry and the grace of his office, to gain even deeper insights into every human yearning. This will allow him to meet problems of this kind at their source and give solid support by his advice and assistance to married persons and Christian families. For the Christian family, the example of the priest who is living his life of celibacy to the full will underscore the spiritual dimension of every love worthy of the name, and his personal sacrifice will merit for the faithful united in the holy bond of matrimony the grace of a true union." (Pope Paul VI, 1967)

✦ **Celibacy forces priests to lead a lonely life.** Being "alone" is not the same thing as being "lonely". Even married people may sometimes experience loneliness, even though they are not alone. Although a priest is not married, he is never really "alone", rather he is "filled with God". Furthermore, he may associate with other priests, and, of course, a good priest becomes the "spiritual father" of many children.

"By reason of his celibacy the priest is a man alone: that is true, but his solitude is not meaningless emptiness because it is filled with God and the brimming riches of His Kingdom. Moreover, he has prepared himself for this solitude - which should be an internal and external plenitude of charity" (Pope Paul VI)

"At times loneliness will weigh heavily on the priest, but he will not for that reason regret having generously chosen it. Christ, too, in the most tragic hours of His life was alone - abandoned by the very ones whom He had chosen as witnesses to, and companions of, His life, and whom He had loved 'to the end' - but He stated, 'I am not alone, for the Father is with me.' He who has chosen to belong completely to Christ will find, above all, in intimacy with Him and in His grace, the power of spirit necessary to banish sadness and regret and to triumph over discouragement. He will not be lacking the protection of the Virgin Mother of Jesus nor the motherly solicitude of the Church, to whom he has given himself in service. He will not be without the kindly care of his father in Christ, his bishop; nor will the fraternal companionship of his fellow priests and the love of the entire [faithful] most fruitful of consolations, be lacking to him. And if hostility, lack of confidence and the indifference of his fellow men make his solitude quite painful, he will thus be able to share, with dramatic clarity, the very experience of Christ, as an apostle who must not be 'greater than he who sent him', as a friend admitted to the most painful and most glorious secret of his divine Friend who has chosen him to bring forth the mysterious fruit of life in his own life, which is only apparently one of death." (Pope Paul VI, 1967 A.D.)

✦ **Celibacy is impossible.** This argument is easily refuted by the countless souls who have heroically - and successfully - embraced it over the past thousands of years. Further, it should be pointed out that Jesus and St. Paul - both of which were celibate - would not recommend celibacy were it truly impossible. If God calls a man to the priesthood, He will give him the grace to remain celibate.

"If any one saith that clerics constituted in sacred orders or regulars who have solemnly professed chastity are able to contract matrimony, and that being contracted it is valid notwithstanding the ecclesiastical law or vow; and that the contrary is nothing else than to condemn marriage; and that all who do not feel that they have the gift of chastity, even though they have made a vow thereof, may contract marriage; let him be anathema: seeing that **God refuses not that gift to those who ask for it rightly, neither does He suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able** (1 Cor. 10:13)." (Council of Trent)

"Moreover, the Church cannot and should not fail to realize that the choice of celibacy - provided that it is made with [proper] Christian prudence and responsibility - is governed by grace which, far from destroying or doing violence to nature, elevates it and imparts to it supernatural powers and vigor. **God, who has created and redeemed man, knows what He can ask of him and gives him everything necessary to be able to do what His Creator and Redeemer asks of him.** St. Augustine, who had fully and painfully experienced in himself the nature of man, exclaimed: 'Grant what You command, and command what You will.'" (Pope Paul VI, 1967 A.D.)

"And yet, although chastity pledged to God is a difficult virtue, those who after serious consideration generously answer Christ's invitation and do all in their power to attain it, can perfectly and faithfully preserve it. For since they have eagerly embraced the state of virginity or celibacy they will certainly receive from God that gift of grace through whose help they will be able to carry out their promise. Wherefore, if there are any 'who do not feel they have the gift of chastity even though they have vowed it,' let them not declare they cannot fulfill their obligations in this matter. 'For,' says the Council of Trent, quoting St. Augustine, 'God does not command the impossible, but in commanding serves notice that one do what he can, and pray for what he cannot,' and He helps us to accomplish it.' This truth, so full of encouragement, We recall to those also whose will has been weakened by upset nerves and whom some doctors, sometimes even Catholic doctors, are too quick to persuade that they should be freed from such an obligation, advancing the specious reason that they cannot preserve their chastity without suffering some harm to their mental balance. How much more useful and opportune it is to help the infirm of this type to strengthen their will, and to advise them that not even to them is chastity impossible, according to the word of the Apostle: 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it.'" (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

Conclusion

In short, there are many reasons for priestly celibacy. Not only is it recommended in Scripture and proven by countless good fruits, but it is clearly of great benefit to the Church and to souls - not to mention to the priests themselves. Since our salvation actually depends on priests - *priests who have powers not granted even to the angels* - it is highly desirous that they focus solely on the things of God and of his Church. Priestly celibacy helps ensure that the Church has better and holier priests and spares her the many difficulties arising from married clergy. Those who question or attack it are most likely uninformed, misinformed, or are enemies of the Church. Truly, priestly celibacy is a precious treasure.

"[T]he priest in all his activities seeks nothing beyond the good of souls, and looks toward no one but Christ to Whom he consecrates his energies and his whole self." (Pope Pius XII, "Menti Nostrae", 1950)

"May chastity, the choicest ornament of our priesthood, flourish undimmed amongst you; through the splendor of this virtue, by which the priest is made like the angels, the priest wins greater veneration among the Christian flock, and his ministry yields an even greater harvest of holiness." (Pope St. Pius X, "Haerent Animo", 1908 A.D.)

"Now, however, We want you to rally to combat the abominable conspiracy against clerical celibacy. This conspiracy spreads daily and is promoted by profligate philosophers, some even from the clerical order. They have forgotten their person and office, and have been carried away by the enticements of pleasure. They have even dared to make repeated public demands to the princes for the abolition of that most holy discipline. But it is disgusting to dwell on these evil attempts at length. Rather, We ask that you strive with all your might to justify and to defend the law of clerical celibacy as prescribed by the sacred canons, against which the arrows of the lascivious are directed from every side." (Pope Gregory XVI, "Mirari Vos", 1832 A.D.)

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Why Priestly Celibacy?

"An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided." (St. Paul, 1 Cor. 7:32-34)

✦ Reasons For Priestly Celibacy ✦ Benefits of / Facts Regarding Priestly Celibacy ✦ Refuting Objections

Note: Emphasis may be added on quotations.
Warning: May contain some graphic language.

Introduction

Unfortunately, many people today fail to realize the great importance of priestly celibacy. Not only are there excellent reasons for the imposition of priestly celibacy, but having celibate priests brings *immeasurable* benefits both to the Church and to souls. It is truly a precious treasure.

Reasons For Priestly Celibacy

Some Biblical Reasons For Priestly Celibacy:

✦ **In Old Testament, the priest would only give the holy bread to David and his men if they had abstained from women (see below). Since a Catholic priest handles the true Holy Bread daily - the Body of Christ - such abstinence should be perpetual - in fact, this fact alone may be considered to necessitate priestly celibacy.**

"David went to Ahimelech, the priest of Nob, who came trembling to meet him and asked, 'Why are you alone? Is there no one with you?' David answered the priest: 'The king gave me a commission and told me to let no one know anything about the business on which he sent me or the commission he gave me. For that reason I have arranged a meeting place with my men. Now what have you on hand? Give me five loaves, or whatever you can find.' But the priest replied to David, 'I have no ordinary bread on hand, only holy bread; if the men have abstained from women, you may eat some of that.' David answered the priest: 'We have indeed been segregated from women as on previous occasions. Whenever I go on a journey, all the young men are consecrated - even for a secular journey. All the more so today, when they are consecrated at arms!' So the priest gave him holy bread, for no other bread was on hand except the showbread which had been removed from the LORD'S presence and replaced by fresh bread when it was taken away." (1 Sam. 21:2-7)

In fact, the Catechism of the Council of Trent reminds us that even *lay married couples* should abstain prior to receiving Holy Communion.

"The dignity of so great a Sacrament [as the Holy Eucharist] also demands that married persons abstain from the marriage debt for some days previous to Communion. This observance is recommended by the example of David, who, when about to receive the show-bread from the hands of the priest, declared that he and his servants had been clean from women for three days." (Catechism of the Council of Trent)

We also know that the priests of the Old Law were required to abstain from women when they performed sacred functions.

"In the Old Law, Moses in the name of God commanded Aaron and his sons to remain within the Tabernacle, and so to keep continent, during the seven days in which they were exercising their sacred functions. But the Christian priesthood, being much superior to that of the Old Law, demanded a still greater purity." (Pope Pius XI, "Ad Catholici Sacerdotii", 1935 A.D.)

"Consider again that sacred ministers do not renounce marriage solely on account of their apostolic ministry, but also by reason of their service at the altar. For, if even the priests of the Old Testament had to abstain from the use of marriage during the period of their service in the Temple, for fear of being declared impure by the Law just as other men, is it not much more fitting that the ministers of Jesus Christ, who offer every day the Eucharistic Sacrifice, possess perfect chastity? St. Peter Damian, exhorting priests to perfect continence, asks: 'If Our Redeemer so loved the flower of unpaired modesty that not only was He born from a virginal womb, but was also cared for by a virgin nurse even when He was still an infant crying in the cradle, by whom, I ask, does He

wish His body to be handled now that He reigns, limitless, in heaven?' (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

"Why does [the Lord] forewarn those to whom the holies of holies were to be entrusted saying: Be ye holy, because I your Lord God am holy [Lev. 20:7; 1 Pt. 1:16]? Why also were the priests ordered to dwell in the temple at a distance from their homes in the year of their turn? Evidently for this reason that they might not be able to practice carnal intercourse with their wives, so that shining with purity of conscience they might offer an acceptable gift to God... Therefore also the Lord Jesus, when He had enlightened us by His coming, testifies in the Gospel, that he came to fulfill the Law, not to destroy it [Mt. 5:17]. And so He has wished the beauty of the Church, whose spouse He is, to radiate with the splendor of chastity, so that on the day of judgment, when He will have come again, He may be able to find her without spot or wrinkle [Eph. 5:27] as He instituted her through His Apostle. All priests and levites are bound by the indissoluble law of these sanctions, so that from the day of our ordination, we give up both our hearts and our bodies to continence and chastity, provided only that through all things we may please our God in these [Holy Masses] which we daily offer. 'But those who are in the flesh', as the vessel of election says, 'cannot please God' [Rom. 8:8]. (Pope St. Siricius, "Directa ad decessorem", 385 A.D.)

✦ **In the New Testament, both Jesus and St. Paul recommend celibacy as a rule of life.**

"[Jesus] said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery.' (His) disciples said to him, 'If that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.' [Jesus] answered, 'Not all can accept (this) word, but only those to whom that is granted. Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.' (Mt. 19:8-12)

"Indeed, I wish everyone to be as I am [that is, celibate], but each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another." (St. Paul, 1 Cor. 7:7)

"I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction. If anyone thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, and if a critical moment has come and so it has to be, let him do as he wishes. He is committing no sin; let them get married. The one who stands firm in his resolve, however, who is not under compulsion but has power over his own will, and has made up his mind to keep his virgin, will be doing well. So then, the one who marries his virgin does well; the one who does not marry her will do better. A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whomever she wishes, provided that it be in the Lord. She is more blessed, though, in my opinion, if she remains as she is, and I think that I too have the Spirit of God." (St. Paul, 1 Cor. 7:32-40)

As Pope Pius XI states in "Ad Catholici Sacerdotii":

"For the Divine Master showed such high esteem for chastity, and exalted it as something beyond the common power; He Himself was the Son of a Virgin Mother, Florem Matris Virginis, and was brought up in the virgin family of Joseph and Mary; He showed special love for pure souls such as the two Johns - the Baptist and the Evangelist. The great Apostle Paul, faithful interpreter of the New Law and of the mind of Christ, preached the inestimable value of virginity, in view of a more fervent service of God, and gave the reason when he said, 'He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God.'" (Pope Pius XI, "Ad Catholici Sacerdotii", 1935)

✦ **Also, in the New Testament, we are told that everything must take second place to following the Lord.**

"If any one comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." (Our Lord Jesus Christ, Lk. 14:26)

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