

"The priest has as the proper field of his activity everything that pertains to the supernatural life, since it is he who promotes the increase of this supernatural life and communicates it to the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. Consequently, it is necessary that he renounce "the things of the world," in order to have care only for "the things of the Lord." And it is precisely because he should be free from preoccupation with worldly things to dedicate himself entirely to the divine service, that the Church has established the law of celibacy, thus making it ever more manifest to all peoples that the priest is a minister of God and the father of souls. By his law of celibacy, the priest, so far from losing the gift and duties of fatherhood, rather increases them immeasurably, for, although he does not beget progeny for this passing life of earth, he begets children for that life which is heavenly and eternal." (Pope Pius XII, "Menti Nostrae", 1950 A.D.)

✦ **Priestly celibacy sets priests apart from the world.**

✦ **Celibate priests may merit higher respect than married priests.**

✦ **Priestly celibacy allows men to dedicate themselves completely to God and to the Church.**

"This then is the primary purpose, this the central idea of Christian virginity: to aim only at the divine, to turn thereto the whole mind and soul; to want to please God in everything, to think of Him continually, to consecrate body and soul completely to Him. This is the way the Fathers of the Church have always interpreted the words of Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Apostle of the Gentiles; for from the very earliest days of the Church they have considered virginity a consecration of body and soul offered to God." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

✦ **Priestly celibacy gives priests more freedom.**

"[T]his complete renunciation of marriage frees men from its grave duties and obligations." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

"Those who so bind themselves by the vows of religion, far from having suffered a loss of liberty, enjoy that fuller and freer kind, that liberty, namely, by which Christ hath made us free." (Pope Leo XIII, "Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae", 1899 A.D.)

"Can. 277 §1 Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven, and are therefore bound to celibacy. Celibacy is a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can more easily remain close to Christ with an undivided heart, and can dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and their neighbor." (1983 Code of Canon Law)

"The consecration to Christ under an additional and lofty title like celibacy evidently gives to the priest, even in the practical field, the maximum efficiency and the best disposition of mind, mentally and emotionally, for the continuous exercise of a perfect charity. This charity will permit him to spend himself wholly for the welfare of all, in a fuller and more concrete way. It also obviously guarantees him a greater freedom and flexibility in the pastoral ministry, in his active and living presence in the world, to which Christ has sent him so that he may pay fully to all the children of God the debt due to them." (Pope Paul VI, 1967)

"For the duty of the married life to which they are bound clearly demands: 'They shall be two in one flesh.' For spouses are to be bound to each other by mutual bonds both in joy and in sorrow. It is easy to see, therefore, why persons who desire to consecrate themselves to God's service embrace the state of virginity as a liberation, in order to be more entirely at God's disposition and devoted to the good of their neighbor. How, for example, could a missionary such as the wonderful St. Francis Xavier, a father of the poor such as the merciful St. Vincent de Paul, a zealous educator of youth like St. John Bosco, a tireless 'mother of emigrants' like St. Francis Xavier Cabrini, have accomplished such gigantic and painful labors, if each had to look after the corporal and spiritual needs of a wife or husband and children?" (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

✦ **Priestly celibacy is fitting.**

"What hast thou to do with women, thou that speakest familiarly with God at the altar?" (St. Jerome, Doctor of the Church)

"It is impossible to treat of the piety of a Catholic priest without being drawn on to speak, too, of another most precious treasure of the Catholic priesthood, that is, of chastity; for from piety springs the meaning and the beauty of chastity. A certain connection between this virtue and the sacerdotal ministry can be seen even by the light of reason alone: since 'God is a Spirit,' it is only fitting that he who dedicates and consecrates himself to God's service should in some way 'divest himself of the body.'" (Pope Pius XI, "Ad Catholici Sacerdotii", 1935 A.D.)

"In short the very height, or, to use St. Epiphanius' phrase, 'the incredible honor and dignity' of the Christian priesthood...shows how becoming is clerical celibacy and the law which enjoins it. Priests have a duty which, in a certain way, is higher than that of the most pure spirits 'who stand before the Lord.' Is it not right, then, that he live an all but angelic life? A priest is one who should be totally dedicated to the things of the Lord. Is it not right, then, that he be entirely detached from the things of the world, and have his conversation in Heaven? A priest's charge is to be solicitous for the eternal salvation of souls, continuing in their regard the work of the Redeemer. Is it not, then, fitting that he keep himself free from the cares of a family, which would absorb a great part of his energies?" (Pope Pius XI, "Ad Catholici Sacerdotii", 1935 A.D.)

"Indeed celibacy has a many faceted suitability for the priesthood. For the whole priestly mission is dedicated to the service of a new humanity which Christ, the victor over death, has aroused through His Spirit in the world and which has its origin 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God' (Jn. 1:13). Through virginity, then, or celibacy observed for the Kingdom of Heaven, priests are consecrated to Christ by a new and exceptional reason. They adhere to Him more easily with an undivided heart, they dedicate themselves more freely in Him and through Him to the service of God and men, and they more expeditiously minister to His Kingdom and the work of heavenly regeneration, and thus they are apt to accept, in a broad sense, paternity in Christ. In this way they profess themselves before men as willing to be dedicated to the office committed to them - namely, to commit themselves faithfully... and to show themselves as a chaste virgin for Christ and thus to evoke the mysterious marriage established by Christ, and fully to be manifested in the future, in which the Church has Christ as her only Spouse. They give, moreover, a living sign of the world to come, by a faith and charity already made present, in which the children of the resurrection neither marry nor take wives." (Second Vatican Council)

✦ **Virginity is superior to marriage.**

"So then, the one who marries his virgin does well; the one who does not marry her will do better." (St. Paul, 1 Cor. 7:38)

"[V]irginity should be esteemed as something more perfect than marriage" (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

"Both solid reason and the authority of Holy Writ show that neither is marriage sinful, nor is it to be equalled to the good of virginal continence or even to that of widowhood." (St. Augustine, Doctor of the Church)

"If any one saith that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity or in celibacy than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema." (Council of Trent)

"That virginity is good I do agree. But that it is even better than marriage, this I do confess. And if you wish, I will add that it is as much better than marriage as heaven is better than earth, as much better than the angels are better than men. And if there were any other way in which I could say it even more emphatically, I would do so." (St. John Chrysostom, Doctor of the Church, c. 391 A.D.)

"Virginity, the conduct of the angels, is the property of all incorporeal nature. We do not say this a speaking ill of marriage, perish the thought! For we know that the Lord blessed marriage by His presence, and we know the saying, 'Marriage is honorable and its bed undefiled.' But we say this by way of recognizing that however good marriage may be, virginity is better." (St. John of Damascus, Doctor of the Church, c. 8th century A.D.)

"[H]oly virginity surpasses marriage in excellence. Our Divine Redeemer had already given it to His disciples as a counsel for a more perfect life. St. Paul, after having said that the father who gives his daughter in marriage 'does well,' adds immediately 'and he that gives her not, does better.' Several times in the course of his comparison between marriage and virginity the Apostle reveals his mind, and especially in these words: 'for I would that all men were even as myself... But I say to the unmarried and to widows; it is good for them if they so continue, even as I.' Virginity is preferable to marriage then, as We have said, above all else because it has a higher aim: that is to say, it is a very efficacious means for devoting oneself wholly to the service of God, while the heart of married persons will remain more or less 'divided.'" (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

"According to Jerome (Adversus Jovinianum i) the error of Jovinian consisted in holding virginity not to be preferable to marriage. This error is refuted above all by the example of Christ Who both chose a virgin for His mother, and remained Himself a virgin, and by the teaching of the Apostle who (1 Cor. 7) counsels virginity as the greater good. It is also refuted by reason, both because a Divine good takes precedence of a human good, and because the good of the soul is preferable to the good of the body, and again because the good of the contemplative life is

Continued On Next Page...

better than that of the active life. Now virginity is directed to the good of the soul in respect of the contemplative life, which consists in thinking 'on the things of the Lord,' whereas marriage is directed to the good of the body, namely the bodily increase of the human race, and belongs to the active life, since the man and woman who embrace the married life have to think 'on the things of the world,' as the Apostle says (1 Cor. 7:34). Without doubt therefore virginity is preferable to conjugal continence." (St. Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church and "greatest theologian in the history of the Church")

"This doctrine of the excellence of virginity and of celibacy and of their superiority over the married state was, as We have already said, revealed by our Divine Redeemer and by the Apostle of the Gentiles; so too, it was solemnly defined as a dogma of divine faith by the holy council of Trent, and explained in the same way by all the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Finally, We and Our Predecessors have often expounded it and earnestly advocated it whenever occasion offered. But recent attacks on this traditional doctrine of the Church, the danger they constitute, and the harm they do to the souls of the faithful lead Us, in fulfillment of the duties of Our charge, to take up the matter once again in this Encyclical Letter, and to reprove these errors which are so often propounded under a specious appearance of truth... We feel it opportune, moreover, to touch somewhat briefly here on the error of those who, in order to turn boys and girls away from Seminaries and Religious Institutes, strive to impress upon their minds that the Church today has a greater need of the help and of the profession of Christian virtue on the part of those who, united in marriage, lead a life together with others in the world, than of priests and consecrated virgins, who, because of their vow of chastity, are, as it were, withdrawn from human society. No one can fail to see, Venerable Brothers, how utterly false and harmful is such an opinion. Of course, it is not Our intention to deny that Catholic spouses, because of the example of their Christian life, can, wherever they live and whatever be their circumstances, produce rich and salutary fruits as a witness to their virtue. Yet whoever for this reason argues that it is preferable to live in matrimony than to consecrate oneself completely to God, without doubt perverts the right order." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954)

✦ **Priestly celibacy is fitting since a priest is already married - to Christ.**

"Moreover the Fathers of the Church considered this obligation of perfect chastity as a kind of spiritual marriage, in which the soul is wedded to Christ; so that some go so far as to compare breaking the vow with adultery. Thus, St. Athanasius writes that the Catholic Church has been accustomed to call those who have the virtue of virginity the spouses of Christ, And St. Ambrose, writing succinctly of the consecrated virgin, says, 'She is a virgin who is married to God.' In fact, as is clear from the writings of the same Doctor of Milan, as early as the fourth century the rite of consecration of a virgin was very like the rite the Church uses in our own day in the marriage blessing." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

✦ **Priestly celibacy prevents a priest from spreading Original Sin.**

"It was not possible that Death should cease his works so long as mankind by marriage was working too; he walked the path of life in all generations past, he started with every new-born child and accompanied it to the end; but he found at last in virginity a barrier beyond which he could not pass. Just as in the time of Mary, the Mother of God, the Death who had reigned from Adam until then found, when he came to her and dashed his forces against the fruit of her virginity as a rock, that he was himself shattered against her, so too in every soul that passes through this life in flesh that is protected by virginity, the strength of Death is shattered and annulled, when Death finds no place to fix his sting." (St. Gregory of Nyssa, c. 370 A.D.)

✦ **Priestly celibacy may be traced back to the earliest ages of the Church.**

"[T]he Virgin Christ and the Virgin Mary have dedicated in themselves the principles of virginity for both sexes. The Apostles were either virgins or remained continent after their marriages. Those persons chosen to be bishops, presbyters, or deacons are either virgins or widowers; or certainly, having once received the priesthood, they remain forever chaste." (St. Jerome, Doctor of the Church, c. 392 A.D.)

✦ **Priestly celibacy has been recommended and praised by numerous popes, saints, and councils - even recent popes and the Second Vatican Council highly praise celibacy.**

"We consider [priestly celibacy] one of the purest glories of the Catholic priesthood" (Pope Pius XI, "Ad Catholici Sacerdotii", 1935)

"Holy virginity and that perfect chastity which is consecrated to the service of God is without doubt among the most precious treasures which the Founder of the Church has left in heritage to the society which He established." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

"Priestly celibacy has been guarded by the Church for centuries as a brilliant jewel, and retains its value undiminished even in our time when the outlook of men and the state of the world have undergone such profound changes." (Pope Paul VI, 1967 A.D.)

"On this Holy Thursday then, dear Brother Priests, how can I fail to address you in order to exhort you to remain faithful to the gift of celibacy which Christ has given us? In it is contained a spiritual treasure which belongs to each of us and to the whole Church." (Pope John Paul II)

"It deeply hurts Us that...anyone can dream that the Church will deliberately or even suitably renounce what from time immemorial has been, and still remains, one of the purest and noblest glories of her priesthood. The law of ecclesiastical celibacy and the efforts necessary to preserve it always recall to mind the struggles of the heroic times when the Church of Christ had to fight for and succeeded in obtaining her threefold glory, always an emblem of victory, that is, the Church of Christ, free, chaste and Catholic." (Pope John XXIII, 1960 A.D.)

"Further, the Fathers of the Church, such as Cyprian, Athanasius, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, and many others, have sung the praises of virginity. And this doctrine of the Fathers, augmented through the course of centuries by the Doctors of the Church and the masters of asceticism, helps greatly either to inspire in the faithful of both sexes the firm resolution of dedicating themselves to God by the practice of perfect chastity and of persevering thus till death, or to strengthen them in the resolution already taken." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

"The chastity 'for the sake of the kingdom of heaven' (Mt. 19:12) which religious profess should be counted an outstanding gift of grace. It frees the heart of man in a unique fashion (cf. 1 Cor. 7:32-35) so that it may be more inflamed with love for God and for all men. Thus it not only symbolizes in a singular way the heavenly goods but also the most suitable means by which religious dedicate themselves with undivided heart to the service of God and the works of the apostolate. In this way they recall to the minds of all the faithful that wondrous marriage decreed by God and which is so fully revealed in the future age in which the Church takes Christ as its only spouse." (Second Vatican Council)

"For renouncing thereby the companionship of marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt. 19:12), they embrace the Lord with an undivided love altogether befitting the new covenant, bear witness to the resurrection of the world to come (cf. Lk. 20:36), and obtain a most suitable aid for the continual exercise of that perfect charity whereby they can become all things to all men in their priestly ministry. Let them deeply realize how gratefully that state ought to be received, not, indeed, only as commanded by ecclesiastical law, but as a precious gift of God for which they should humbly pray. Through the inspiration and help of the grace of the Holy Spirit let them freely and generously hasten to respond to this gift." (Second Vatican Council)

"The greatest glory of virgins is undoubtedly to be the living images of the perfect integrity of the union between the Church and her divine Spouse. For this society founded by Christ it is a profound joy that virgins should be the marvelous sign of its sanctity and fecundity, as St. Cyprian so well expressed it: 'They are the flower of the Church, the beauty and ornament of spiritual grace, a subject of joy, a perfect and unsullied homage of praise and honor, the image of God corresponding to the sanctity of the Lord, the most illustrious portion of Christ's flock. In them the glorious fecundity of our mother, the Church, finds expression and she rejoices; the more the number of virgins increases, the greater is this mother's joy.'" (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954)

"The history of the Council [of Trent] is marked by attempts to modify the law on celibacy. We know that in a particular way, emperors, kings and princes, as well as representatives of the Church herself, were involved in an attempt at securing a relaxation of or a dispensation from the obligation to celibacy. They had a positive objective; namely to win back those ministers who had left the Catholic Church. Nonetheless, a commission established by the Roman Pontiffs to treat of this question came to the conclusion, on the basis of the ancient tradition, that the commitment to celibacy was to be maintained without compromise. The Church could not reject an obligation which had been valid from the very beginning and which had been constantly repeated and enforced throughout the centuries." (Cardinal Stickler)

✦ **Priestly celibacy will be rewarded by God.**

"Then Peter said to him in reply, 'We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?' Jesus said to them, 'Amen, I say to you that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the

Continued On Next Page...