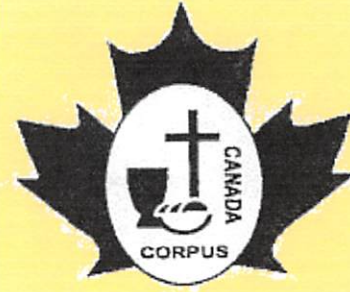


# The Journal



Summer 2003 Vol. 6 No. 3

## Restore Optional Celibacy

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In 2002 Robert Pledl, the Catholic lawyer who represented the St. Lawrence Seminary sex-abuse victims in Mount Royal, Wisconsin, believed that mandatory celibacy created a clerical world where women and children were the enemy and that the accumulating scandals signaled the need for reform. Ernesto F. Herrera of Manila Times, in his article "Should priests be allowed to marry?" asked: "Would there be no more sex scandals in the Church once priests are allowed to marry? The latest crisis to hit the local Church further begs the question, whether it is time for the Catholic hierarchy to tackle some much-needed reform... An examination of compulsory celibacy should be an element of such reform."

Rev. Dr. Heinz Vogels agrees with lawyer Pledl: I see a connection between the necessity to suppress sexual instincts because of the law of mandatory celibacy, and the escapes that some of the priests seek with those who are easily available, that is, children and women, especially young ones and married ones. No profession has so many child and other sex abuse cases as priests.

Edward Kelly in his book "Sex and the Church," p. vi, points out: "It is wrong to reject our full humanity or be ordered to reject it. A person may freely decide to live a celibate life; an institution may encourage it. But compulsory celibacy contravenes the law of nature, and nature will have its revenge. So we see many priests today, unable to endure lifelong celibacy. They live a double life, and many people

( especially women ) get hurt. Their ministry is compromised. They themselves are compromised as human beings, often yielding to drink, despair or loneliness."

Last June 17/03 the Editorial and Opinion on Celibacy in the Philippine Daily Inquirer ([www.inq7.net](http://www.inq7.net) ) concluded: It is no surefire guarantee, but if Catholic priests were given the option of marriage, the Church might see fewer cases of sexual harassment, seduction and unwanted pregnancies. That conclusion is corroborated by Prof. Thomas Groome who writes in *CITI Salutes Integrity ( Celibacy Is The Issue 10th Anniversary Issue, p. 10 )*: There are some 13, 000 married deacons in the U.S. Catholic Church, but there is no sex abuse scandal among them.

Cardinal Karl Lehmann, President of the German Bishops' Conference, told the reporter of the magazine *Bunte* in Oct./01: "During the Bishops Synod in Rome, I was seated next to Cardinal Husar, the Archbishop of Lemberg in Ukraine, who has 540 married priests and only 38 celibate ones. The same ratio applies to some Near East Churches in Lebanon and so on. Rev. Dr. Vogels asked: Did you ever hear of pedophilia cases in these Churches where a married Catholic priesthood is admitted ? Remove the legal pressures by restoring optional celibacy and you'll have no scandals. Jesus said: Not all are capable of not marrying, but only those to whom it has been given ( Mt. 19:11 ).

Rev. Dr. Richard Sipe in *A Secret World, Sexuality and the Search for Celibacy*, 1990, shows that only 10% of the priests are capable of charismatic celibacy. All the others ( 90% ) are forced by law to live a celibate life.

Prof. Dr. Beatrice Ferrolli, Austria, remarked at the burial of Cardinal Hans Herman Groer who was involved years back in a homosexual scandal with minors in Austria: Not he is guilty who fails in complying with an unfulfillable legal demand of mandatory celibacy. Guilty is the one who issues such a demand. The leaders of the Church did that. Jesus did not demand it.

Then on June 28, 2003, 3:34 PM EDT, Nicole Winfield, Associated Press Writer, writes the following: The Vatican reaffirmed celibacy for priests Saturday, rejecting arguments that the Roman Catholic Church could resolve the 'crisis' of decreasing numbers of clergy by opening the priesthood to married men.

Instead, the Vatican said, current priests should dedicate themselves to attracting more candidates by better explaining the priesthood to lay Catholics and encouraging families and children to consider religious vocations...

The document acknowledged there were fewer and fewer men signing up for the priesthood, but said removing the celibacy requirement wasn't the answer.

A revision of the present discipline in this regard would not help to resolve the crisis of vocations to the priesthood being felt in many parts of Europe," the document said. "A commitment to the service of the Gospel of hope also demands that the Church make every effort to propose celibacy in its full biblical, theological and spiritual richness."

Dr. Vogels said: "I read this statement in Germany, as well. We have a proverb: 'It is like whistling in the woods because of being frightened by the darkness.' They know their case is lost, they have no arguments, but they want to keep the discipline as long as the present Pope lives, who made too strong statements in favor of mandatory celibacy as to be able to withdraw from that position."

As to their only argument: You can explain the richness of celibacy as long as you wish, you will never increase the number of charismatic celibates by instruction! It is a matter of grace, as Christ says, and this grace is given only to a few: "Not all are capable of this but only those to whom it has been given, for there are (a few) eunuchs from their birth, and (a few) eunuchs made so by man, and (obviously also a few) eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom" (Mt 19:11-12). Against this there are no efforts by better instruction that will be able to create celibates.

"The official Church," Rev. Dr. Anthony Padovano contends, "has no biblical arguments, theological reasoning or pastoral benefits to support its present policy on mandatory celibacy. The policy has become almost absurd in its full articulation. It reads as follows: 'Celibacy is mandatory for all priests of the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church who were not Protestants first, or who, if they are Catholics, have not yet divorced their wives, or separated from them sexually, or buried them.'"

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