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INTRODUCTION

The issue of compulsory priestly celibacy is raising much discussion not only in the United States, but in many parts of the world. We must not look upon this phenomenon as new. All through the history of the Roman Catholic Church, celibacy has been discussed at least in local churches at various periods. The encyclical on celibacy has not quieted the issue. The present discussion on celibacy in the Roman Catholic priesthood does not in any way whatsoever call into question celibacy as a charism freely chosen for the sake of the Kingdom of God. It centers exclusively on the law of clerical celibacy. The question raised is whether or not the law of compulsory clerical celibacy is adequate to the needs of the Church or not.

Some look upon the discussion as another tentacle of the spirit of the world forever questioning anything and everything. Others look upon it as a lessening of faith, a giving in to sex and to the world; and still others as another gimmick to bring about a change by those already committed to such a change. It well could be for some a loss of faith, a giving in to the spirit of the world; for others, a yearning for change; and finally it could well be but a normal part of the universal phenomenon of inquiry. But are not these reasons only part of the picture? Are not these discussions rather signs of the times we live in, which the church must scrutinize in order to find new answers? Would it be presumptuous to think that perhaps these discussions are brought about by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to help the church understand more clearly the vocation of the priesthood?

Furthermore, why not discuss a subject that is uppermost not only in the minds of priests, but also of laymen. Is it because of fear on the part of those opposing a change, that a discussion might bring about a change? Is not the fear of debate an implicit admission of a taboo or of uncertainty as to the value of celibacy? It seems, on the contrary, that one way or another, the objections raised against it, the questions asked about it, are helpful. The law of celibacy will either stand on its own merits or fall by the wayside. I think we should be courageous enough to look with realism and objectivity at the problem of compulsory celibacy for the priesthood, and to give it a fair and critical examination.

We should search for truth on the subject unrelentingly, and look at the facts as they are, not as we wish them to be or not to be; but honestly, as they are, without coloring them with personal or institutional views. We must not conceal facts or turn away from reality. Doctrinal advances spring from contact with life, with reality.

On "Sacerdotialis Caelibatus"

Without doubt the encyclical is worthy document in praise of chastity chosen freely by those who have been called by God to this special charism. In the perspective of a chastity freely and deliberately assumed, the document is admirable. One can ask himself, however, if this hymn to chastity, not as such, but as linked to the priesthood, is not out of proportion with the theological and psychological foundations on which the encyclical bases itself.

I will touch very briefly on certain major aspects of the encyclical from a theological, psychological and sociological point of view.

A. From the theological point of view

The encyclical insists on the value of celibacy as an eschatological sign. Well and good, on the condition that celibacy is clearly seen as a sign by those for whom it is supposed to be a sign. It will be a sign only if it is assumed through a free personal choice and not forced by circumstances or imposed by an institution. No one questions the fact that celibacy accepted freely, is a remarkable sign. On the other hand, celibacy accepted as a conditio sine qua non to the priesthood is not truly a sign, because it is chosen directly only to a point. It is imposed from the outside; it does not spring from the inside, from a personal decision absolutely free from external imposition. In a rather large number of instances the aspirant to the priesthood becomes a priest in spite of celibacy. He is not forced to be a priest, but he is forced to celibacy if he wants to be a priest. Many consent to celibacy not because they want celibacy but because they want to be ordained. They do not choose celibacy directly.

In this sense celibacy is not truly a free choice but a conditio sine qua non to which one submits himself because he wants to be a priest. People more and more are becoming cognizant of this fact. Deep down it is a good thing, for they must not be led to think that there is a sign when objectively the substance that gives meaning to the sign is absent. Only its shadow is there. More and more, priests are expressing their personal convictions about celibacy, as for example: "If I had permission, I'd marry tomorrow," etc. etc. The public at large have been made aware of this situation. The surveys in revealing that 50 to 60% of the clergy favor an option between celibacy and marriage have helped to make the public aware of this situation. Celibacy as a sign is disappearing precisely because it is not voluntary and is judged as such by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. A law in itself is not a sign; only a celibacy personally desired and lived is a sign. This situation is not particular to celibacy. It exists wherever people see that the reality behind the sign is not deliberately assumed but merely accepted out of necessity. Take for example the poverty of the priests of France. Their extreme poverty is not a sign because the French know that the poverty of their pastors and curates is forced upon them by circumstances peculiar to France. Whether they want to or not, priests in France cannot but practice poverty. No doubt many assume it in a personal way; nevertheless their poverty does not transmit a supernatural meaning to their people, for they cannot in the present circumstances distinguish those who live it freely and gladly and those who purely labor under it. If the French priests had an option to live in affluence, then those who had chosen poverty would really be a sign to the world. As it is, their poverty is not a sign.

Even though the encyclical affirms clearly that the priesthood per se does not call for celibacy and that the theological arguments linking priesthood with celibacy are arguments of convenience, de facto, in its theological argumentation, the encyclical implies a quasi essential connection between celibacy and the priesthood, not only in Christ, but also in those who participate in His priesthood.

The question of ecclesiastical celibacy is not discussed at its true level; namely, as a disciplinary measure - not of the universal church - but of the western church. The distinction between religious celibacy assumed by vow, on the one hand, and the celibacy of the diocesan clergy which appears more and more as a conditio sine qua non and not as a freely chosen prophetic charism, on the other hand, is not brought out. Neither is the important distinction between the priesthood of all the faithful and the ministerial priesthood. True, those distinctions have already been made. Vatican II, in particular, insisted in very clear terms on the distinctions between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood of priests. The problem of celibacy, however, would have been seen more clearly if these distinctions, each one in relation to the other, had been grouped together and developed.

B. From the Psychological point of view

The whole of our classical theology including all of our moral theology is based on a simple and outdated understanding of psychology. This is a fact. The theology of celibacy as developed in the encyclical is no exception. It rests on a static view of human nature and of psychology. Our moral theology is made in the image of static psycho-sociological structures. The relationships between men and women as conceived in our moral theology are judged in terms of the sociological institution of marriage and are left to jurists and canonists.

The truth of the matter is very different. In the contemporary world, the psychological function of the couple (fulfillment) is replacing the sociological and economic function of the family. The real problem is the natural and supernatural fulfillment of the whole man, body and soul. No institution can of itself give a total solution, but only a partial one. This solution depends ultimately on the liberty and make-up of the persons in marriage. With celibacy it is the same.

The clergy as a body suffers from an "iceberg complex" in the sense that its members refuse to look squarely and honestly at certain problems. For instance, the clergy have an unconscious fear of tackling the problem of celibacy. The members of the clergy embody the defensive reaction of this sacralized institution. I know of no stronger defensive reaction.

To make a profound study of the motives for priests' leaving would demand confronting certain church structures with many searching questions. The Christian character of the institutional church leads the church to solve problems on the level of supernatural charity and not on the level of a direct investigation of the problems themselves. The Church, it is sad to say, is often more at the service of the status quo than of the truth, more concerned with not changing the structures, than investigating the possible irrelevance or decay inherent to the structures rooted in time. If you have doubts on this score, simply recall the tribulations of Fathers Chenu, Congar, and De Lubac prior to their becoming the architects of Vatican II.

C. From the Sociological point of view

In the Latin American culture, celibacy is frowned upon. The idea of manliness (machisms), of sexual prowess, is exceptionally strong in its tradition. A man is a man - macho - only when he begets children. In the context of the Latin American culture, a celibate is not truly a man. A priest is called cura, a pejorative expression, akin to "fairy" in the context of the American civilization. Cura connotes lack of virility, of manhood. A man in Latin America can become either a man, macho, a man in the true sense of the word, or a poor cura. That is why in the mind of the Latin American male, religion can only concern women. Priests are not true men.

The majority of parents (5/6 as revealed in surveys) in Latin America precisely because of their culture's accent on macho oppose their son's entry into the priesthood. This is the true cause underlying all others for the tragic lack of native priests in Latin America. For example, from 1959 to 1964, Caracas, with a population of two million, has had just eight native priests ordained. The city's population grew by 200,000 a year during that period. Only 25% of the clergy in Venezuela is native born. In Chile the native born clergy is about 40% - a high percentage for the countries of South America. As of 1967, there is one native aspirant to the priesthood in Chile for 135,000 people. Not long after the publication of the encyclical a group of leading missionary priests stationed in Chile sent a collective letter to the bishop on the eve of their synod in which they asked that a dual clergy be instituted: a married clergy and a celibate clergy.

They asked themselves in view of the low number of native priests - now lower than ever before - if their presence does not retard the finding of a solution to the problem of priestly vocations in harmony with the mentality of Latin America. In their minds, there can be but one solution to the problem of the dearth of priestly vocations, namely a married and a celibate clergy working together.

There is a tremendous problem facing the Church today; the problem of evangelization, of spreading the faith, of reaching those outside the fold, of establishing contact, of communicating with them. All that concerns the Church today has to be thought out in terms of evangelization, of missionary work in the strict sense of the word. Everything else is secondary. The Church must above all evangelize. The urgency of the problem is obvious. For every pagan converted, fifty are born into paganism.

In the Orient where people are entering the flow of history for the first time, where the destiny of the world will perhaps be sealed, the Church is almost absent. In ten years from now, two out of every three persons in the world will come from the Orient where actually the population of the Church is less than two per cent. The Asiatic block has not been touched by the Church. In Japan, for example, there are less than three hundred thousand Catholics out of a population of more than a hundred million (three tenths of one per cent). In India the Catholics number six million out of a population of over four hundred forty million (about one and one half percent). In a continent teeming with two thirds of humanity, where, except for the Buddhists, the representatives of the various religions are married men, who indeed can say that the celibate priest and only the celibate priest of the occidental church has a place in the ministerial service of the Church? Is

a celibate clergy more in harmony with the customs and mores, more attuned to the sociological dimensions of Asia? It is an historical fact that at the time of the great Moslem upheavals, the married clergy saved the faith of the Catholic population in the Middle East and that the celibate clergy in North Africa did not. Perhaps the faith in North Africa would not have been saved even if the clergy had been married. But the fact remains that a married clergy in the Middle East saved the faith and a celibate clergy in Africa, not as deeply rooted, did not. In Castro's Cuba, would a married clergy have left the country as scandalously fast as the celibate clergy? In the vast need to bring the message of Christ to Asia, is uniformity not too great a price to pay?

It is regrettable that psychologists, psychiatrists, and sociologists were not asked to collaborate with the theologians in the writing of the encyclical. They would have brought their acumen to bear on the problem of celibacy at deeper levels. Their outlook would have opened up new vistas and new depths. Their existentialist and scientific approach linked to the essentialist perspective of the theologians would have given a holistic view of the problem of celibacy more consistent with reality. Pope Paul VI asked a group of experts outside the field of theology to help theologians study the problem of birth control. The contributions of these doctors and experts among other things pointed out how complex reality is and how deep the problem is. If this birth control study had been given exclusively to moral theologians, it is very probable that a definitive text of a negative outlook would have been edited and published in less than three months. One can only surmise now what the effects of bringing in psychologists, psychiatrists, and sociologists would have been in the actual composing of the encyclical on celibacy. For my part, I think, as in the case of the birth control study, that the Pope would not have published it, but would have asked for more research on the subject.

Historical Sketch of Celibacy

In the New Testament Christ considers the priesthood and celibacy as two distinct realities operating in altogether different spheres. When He speaks of celibacy (Mt. 19-10-12), He is referring to perfection in a general way. The priesthood is a function and virginity is a state of perfection. St. Paul expresses the same idea in different terms. His discourse on marriage and virginity is addressed to all indiscriminately. (I Cor. 7/1-40). When he does speak of qualifications necessary for the priesthood (2 Tim 3/3 and Tit. 1/5-9) he presumes marriage is one.

What does tradition say about the marriages of the apostles? There are two opinions. Those influenced by the Manichean philosophy of marriage and sex say that of all the apostles, Peter alone was married. They declare with St. Jerome that "even if any of the apostles were married they certainly separated from their wives after they were called to the apostolate." The other opinion, as is stated by St. Basil, takes a more balanced view that the apostles were all married and continued to live as man and wife even after their call to the Apostolate.

If we take into consideration the customs, ideas and practices of the times, most probably all the apostles including John were married. Whether married or not cannot be proven definitely but the former thesis is more consistent with history. The claim of a certain tradition that the Apostle John was not married has no foundation. We see in the New Testament that the apostles were often accompanied by women. Many commentators presume that these women were secretaries and not wives! Would it not be more normal that these women were their wives? (I Cor. 9/1-23).

At any rate, whether the apostles were married or not, whether they separated from their wives or not, it is a fact that Christ never made celibacy a necessary qualification for the priesthood either explicitly or implicitly. The law of celibacy for priests did not exist at the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles, and neither did it exist in the second or third centuries. However, beginning in the third century, a current of thought was born urging the non-remarriage of priests. Gradually, in the following century this motive was replaced by a loftier ideal, as St. Epiphanius states it, that is, the ideal of perpetual celibacy. One must bear in mind here that the ideal is urged, only in general not in particular. It stresses neither obligation nor institutionalization. It is presented as a more perfect ideal to be freely embraced by some and not by others. This trend within the Roman Church continued to grow. Already the church was trying, although hesitantly, to forbid priests in certain areas from having relations with their wives. (The regional council of Elvira 305 a.d.). Gradually this trend culminated into law in the 11th century. In the council of Bourges in 1031, the Roman Church definitely and universally imposed perpetual celibacy as a requirement for the priesthood. Since the 12th and 13th centuries the church of Rome, in contrast to the church of the Eastern Rite, has maintained this discipline of celibacy as a *conditio sine qua non* for the priesthood.

Briefly this is the historical evolution of celibacy in the Western Church. But now let us turn to the causes and reasons behind this legislation. Why did the Church of Rome take this definite stand on celibacy? There are many explanations and many motives but for the sake of clarity and brevity without sacrificing the essentials let us select a few of the main influences.

Without doubt the real inspiration for celibacy came from the doctrine of Christ in the New Testament and the epistles of St. Paul on perfection. To assume celibacy for the kingdom of God was to give testimony to Resurrection, to Heaven. The Christian became aware early and quickly of the harmonious relation "in se" between celibacy and the priestly vocation and ministry. This did not imply that there was a necessary link between the two, that every priest had to assume celibacy. It was understood in a much wider perspective, in a more general framework of perfection. It was an ideal to be attained if possible, but it implied freedom of choice - spontaneity: never necessity demanding every individual priest to live it by law. It was a goal at which to aim, but not necessarily to achieve in every particular case. It was the frank acknowledgement of the value of celibacy in principle in the life and work of a priest, but of choice and freedom according to the qualifications of each individual. The Eastern Rite of the Catholic Church has continued this tradition to the present day. However, in the Roman Catholic church the obligation "in se" of celibacy became an existential obligation. The spiritual ideal of celibacy assumed freely became a necessary, compulsory, personal juridical and administrative de facto obligation.

In the third century, a very important change in the concept of the priesthood gradually evolved. In the beginning, in apostolic times and immediately following, the role of the priest was above all the role of a prophet, a witness. However, in the third century, a shift of emphasis from the prophetic role to the cultic and sacrificial role of the priest took place. This has been the role of priests through the centuries to our own times, up to Vatican Council II.

We might now ask how it is that gradually in the Roman Catholic Church celibacy traditionally became associated and essentially linked to the priesthood, not only on a conceptual level, but on an existential level. Monasticism indeed played a part in this gradual process. Although most monks were not priests, this way of life greatly influenced the spirituality of their contemporaries. It was thought that priests should live in a similar state. The distinction between function and state of life was neglected.

Another factor was the question of money, property, and inheritance. The hierarchical church had grown not only in supernatural status, but also temporally. The clergy formed a "class" together with the nobility. It was a powerful, closed society and economically speaking celibacy was a very practical means of keeping the lands and the money to itself. Marriage would have entailed dissipation of worldly goods through inheritance, a continuous leakage and drain on the Church.

An underlying motive, not always acknowledged but ever present, persuasive but often unconscious was the low esteem in which sexuality and marriage were held by the Church. The warped views of some of the Fathers of the Church relative to sexuality and marriage shock us today.

They indicate an unhealthy attitude certainly bordering on heresy. Tertullian and St. Jerome, both of whom had a great influence on this question, were guilty of excesses of this in their writings. For St. Ambrose even, celibacy is necessary because the priesthood is so sacred that in comparison to it, begetting children is impure and a violation of the sacred. Because of the emphasis on the cultic aspect of the priesthood, 'continence' was linked in an essential manner to the concept of the priesthood.

It is true that the Church reacted to the excesses and condemned certain sects such as the Encratites, Mersalians, and the Cathars. These groups hold that sexuality was intrinsically evil. Their influence at the time was great even though the Church condemned them; still through a process of osmosis, she was infected by them, affected by their doctrine, and unconsciously by many of their viewpoints. Later another sect emerged with still greater influence. The Manichean philosophy was a strong factor in the imposing of clerical celibacy.

Down through the ages the church has suffered and is suffering from a complex against sexuality. Sex is taboo in the church. Moral theology has become polarized on sex. The place of woman in the church is affected by this syndrome. Note, for instance, the place of women in the church; feel the emotional response often engendered amid clerical discussions on celibacy and sex contrasted with the coolness in discussions on social justice; recall that until only recently married people were cautioned not to receive Communion if they had had intercourse the evening before. The Church is still influenced by this Manichean view of sex and marriage. It continues to generate an incompatibility between sex and priesthood. One only needs to assess the contamination of Manicheism in St. Augustine's writings to see the degree of its influence today. Seminary training, the place of women, the reluctance of Catholic parents to educate their children in matters of sex. . . On and on the examples arise. The Church has shown and still shows a kind of obsessive, unhealthy preoccupation with sex and this in turn has helped to color her thinking on celibacy. If such is still the thinking, is it not possible that such warping would likewise affect the thinking on celibacy? Is it not valid to state that Augustinian Manicheism is still very prevalent and influential today?

These are, in brief, the reasons for the law of celibacy in the Roman Church. To conclude, the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church relative to celibacy is the same as the Eastern Rite: celibacy "in se" ideally, is more in harmony than marriage for the priest and his ministry. But the tradition has come down to the present day on two very different levels. On the existential level, the Eastern Rite favors optional celibacy, and the Roman Church makes it compulsory. Therefore what must be the concern of the Church on this matter? Two extremes are to be avoided. One that would deny evolution and consider only married clergy as it existed in apostolic times as most conducive to the good of the Church. The other which a priori would not admit of any change in the present law no matter what circumstances might arise, or new theological development take place on the matter. Both extremes are contrary to the proper notion of tradition.

Vatican II with its emphasis on service to mankind would seem to call for a reconsideration of the present exclusive law on celibacy. Perhaps

it is time to see if there is not a place in the western church for a married clergy - alongside a celibate clergy - which would better attain the goal of Christianity.

Let us look at South America. Due to a shortage of priests, parishes have been turned over to nuns who preach, baptize and give communion. This practice fails to consider that in South America, men do not go to church precisely because they look upon it as a woman's organization. Many will be more convinced than ever that a man, if he is to be a man, must stay out of the church. Is not the Church afraid to face the real question? The need of a married clergy! A mature and more flexible consideration of tradition as far as celibacy is concerned is called for, at least in South America.

The major seminary of the archdiocese of Mariana, Brazil was recently closed temporarily. A confidential questionnaire administered to the seminarians revealed that 94% of them were against celibacy. If such a questionnaire would be given to all the seminarians in South America, it is very probable that all seminaries would have to be closed. Not long ago, a survey on celibacy was begun in Brazil sponsored jointly by the Conference of Bishops of Brazil and the Conference of Religious Superiors. The survey was stopped, apparently at the urging of the Vatican!

Theology shows rather distinctly from a historical perspective that the priesthood is a function of the ecclesial church and not a distinct state of life. In Europe in general today, the life of the Church is at low ebb; only 2 to 8 per cent of the Catholic population of France, for example, actually practice their faith. There are many reasons to consider, it is true, but perhaps we should ask ourselves if one of these is not the fact that the celibate priesthood has not been too successful in establishing and maintaining a Christian community.

Vatican Council II, in its Decree on Priestly Ministry, emphasizes once more the prophetic and witnessing role of the priesthood. This role, although predominant in the beginnings of the Church, little by little was de-emphasized and replaced by the cultic and sacrificial role. Vatican II retains the cultic and sacrificial function of the priesthood, but at the same time proclaims the equal necessity of the prophetic and witnessing role of the priest. The Council insists that the role of the priest in today's world is especially one of witnessing. The priest is not at the service of the Catholic laymen, but at the service of the whole People of God. The role of the priest is twofold: anthropological and theocentric; never must these two functions be disassociated.

Pope Paul VI in his speech at the closing ceremony of the Vatican Council on the seventh of December reiterated this message, namely that the doctrinal riches of the Council have but one end: serve man.

Should we not re-examine the whole concept of the priesthood today in the light of Vatican II and look at the law of celibacy with an open mind?

Sexuality and Consecrated Celibacy

Celibacy for the priest consists in giving up marriage and sex pleasures for the Kingdom of God. It is a renunciation of the companionship, tenderness and love of a woman forever, of a family, of children. It is the privation on the human level of completeness, of human fulfillment. It is the giving up of marriage, of the pleasures attached to heterosexual relations, of a father-son relationship, but, paradoxically enough, not a giving up of sexuality. Sexuality is a fundamental dimension of life which no one can give up. It has a much broader meaning in life than mere copulation. Sexuality is not co-extensive with the sexual act. The act specific to sexuality can be sacrificed, but the essence of sexuality, i.e. the psychological force at work in every relationship of the "ego" to the "alter" can never be sacrificed. Sexuality is a factor absolutely central to life, a life force which can be inhibited, submerged, oppressed, but never destroyed, eradicated or killed. Every human being whether he wants to or not, whether he is conscious of it or not, must live with his sexuality. Consecrated celibacy, then, is not the death of sexuality, nor its suppression. Consecrated celibacy in the priesthood is the consecration of sexuality. It is the way of living sexuality in the priesthood; it is the structuring of sexuality to a way of life different from the life of sexuality in marriage. The celibate priest does not live his sexuality the way his married friends live it, true, but the important thing is that he live it.

Perhaps the difference between the way a layman lives sexuality and the way a priest lives it, can best be brought out by comparing the way a bird and a plane fly. Air is necessary to flight. If the whole sky was a vast air pocket, there would be neither bird nor plane. They both need air absolutely in all their relationships, qua bird and qua plane. Air is the substance of their life, of their flying, of their movements, of their relationships. The difference lies in the way they live in the air, in the way they fly, in the way they live their relationships with the air. The bird flies instinctively, swoops up and down gracefully, alights on a twig, hovers over a flower, lands at will, travels at night unerringly. When it meets death in flight it is really not an accident but a freak of nature; the air, the sky, the firmament is the fundamental dimension of the life of the bird. The bird is in his element in the air.

A plane and a pilot are by their nature called to fly, to soar in the air, to travel above the clouds, to fly by night, to land on air fields. Air is vital, air is the substance in which plane and pilot operate qua plane and pilot. The plane and the pilot do not, however, live the same relation to air as the bird. The plane and the pilot are at ease, at home in flight, but the relationship to air is not as connatural as the relationship of the bird to the air. The pilot needs alertness of mind, coolness, physical and psychological stamina. The plane needs constant checking - oil, gas, tuning, replacements. Instruments, gauges, electronic gadgets of all kinds are necessary. It cannot live the same relationship with air that the bird lives. It cannot give up the air, any more than a bird can; but it uses the air in a way peculiar to itself. The pilot knows that as pilot he has to fly, and he has to adapt his way of living to the air.

Paradoxically, even though the bird is more at home, the pilot can fly faster, longer, higher. But then again, if something goes wrong, whether with the plane, the pilot, or the instruments, immediately the problems involved are of a nature far more serious than those which the bird faces.

It is a daring challenge to live in the air like this. Some like it so much that flying becomes a second nature. In contrast some pilots qua pilots prefer to live on land, and do the least possible flying on weekends. They take short flights, only if the weather is good, if the wind is in the right direction, if the mechanic is along, if...

This is an image of the way the married man lives his sexuality, and the way a priest lives it. Just as air is vital for the bird and the plane, so is sexuality a necessary component of every "other-centered" relationship. If there were no sexuality, but only "sexual pockets", man would not be man, and the priest would be neither a man nor a priest. For both the married man and the celibate, sexuality is the substance of their relationships to others. The difference lies in the way they live this sexuality, in the way they relate to others. The married man takes sexuality for granted, he lives his sexuality according to his state of life, according to marriage which is the natural way of living this sexuality. On the other hand, the consecrated priest lives a state of life which is not connatural with sexuality. Celibacy inherently carries within itself risks and temptations, tensions, regressions - not that married people are free from these tribulations - but those of the celibate are more intense. It is an exceptional way of living sexuality, and as such engenders more tensions than the other way of living sexuality, which is connatural to it. As the pilot does not live the same relationship to air as the bird does, so the consecrated celibate does not live the same natural relationship to sexuality as the married man does.

The consecrated celibate lives his sexuality in a less natural, more studied, more circumspect, more complicated way. As the pilot needs good and swift reactions, so the consecrated celibate needs excellent motivation, maturity, psychological equilibrium and "oblative" love. The married person needs this maturity and oblativ love, but not as absolutely as the priest. Paradoxically however, as the plane has tremendous advantages over the bird, so the consecrated celibate over the married man. He is free to move where the Spirit beckons, unhampered by any restrictions or limitations. His "oblative" love is more intense, more moving. The consecrated celibate's way of living his relationship to others, of living the essence of his sexuality, gives him an approach, a warmth, a vitality, an expansiveness unsurpassed by the married person, however mature, however well-integrated his sexuality, however tremendous his "other-centeredness". Like the pilot, a celibate's consecrated sexuality is a hymn to life. But again as a pilot in difficulty, the celibate's situation is fraught with danger, if at a certain period in his life he finds it difficult to live his sexuality in this way. His fall can be more rapid, devastating, violent. He must always be very alert, careful, prudent. Like the apprentice pilot who crashes on his first solo flight, the newly ordained priest in his first venture of living his sexuality in a pastoral setting, which the seminary never prepared him for, can run into frightening obstacles, especially if he is called to give solutions to problems which he has himself never resolved, but only suppressed. The middle-aged priest, too, like the veteran pilot grown careless in his routine, may if he has never really lived his sexuality in an "oblative" way, lose his course, wreck his life and the lives of others.

On the other hand, just as some pilots prefer the land to the air, the priest can live his life of sexuality away from the world, away from the "other", alone in his room or his monastery. He can do this much better than the mar-

ried man who must live in the world, with the "other". The priest then becomes inhibited, timid, distant, fearful; his life of sexuality becomes narcissistic, self-centered, and he degenerates into a bachelor, mean, egotistical man, bitter and filled with resentment. He knows that as a celibate priest he must lead his life of sexuality fully centered on the "other", but unconsciously more often than consciously, he leads his life of sexuality in a withering, depressive, inhuman way. Instead of living the life of sexuality special to him, he turns to substitutes. Unconsciously his psychological force at work in every relationship will be diverted to the "other", not as a person, but as a "thing", in the form of alcohol, money honors, good food, horse-racing, construction, or golf. He will be related not to the "other" but to his own "ego". He becomes intransigent, authoritative, rigid, dogmatic, aggressive, inactive, hypochondriac, ascetic with a taint of masochism, self-centered engaged in dialogue with himself, never paying attention to the "other" or listening to the "other".

In truth, consecrated celibacy is not an easy life - it is far more difficult than people seem to think, or, for that matter, even priests. What strikes us is the young priest who abandons it all and the middle-aged priest falling into an abyss of sexual aberrations. This is terrible, yes. But what I consider much more tragic on a personal level and on an institutional level is the number of priests who, to all appearances, are "good" priests, but are not in fact fully living their consecrated lives of sexuality. They are withering in their cells, in their parish rectories, in their high school halls and college dormitories, unaware, unconscious of their treason. They say Mass, perform their services, but are not really celibates; they are not priests; they are not human; they are leading an ersatz life of sexuality. Who is to blame for the sorry condition of the Church if not these priests! The young fallen away priests and the old fallen away priests are not to blame; those to blame are those 46.7%¹ of priests who keep up the facade of the Church by their two-timing, by their use of substitutes, by their failure to live fully their consecrated sexuality. They remain "good priests", but they sap the strength of the Church from inside. They disappear from the mainstream of life, lose their humanity, their sense of values, their perspectives, and become absorbed in child play, because they are not men.

There are others, good priests too, morally speaking, but not pastoral priests. They live their lives of sexuality, not in a relationship to others, but in a relationship to their work. Work becomes a substitute for "the other". In one country, for example, there are seventy priests engaged in scientific work for the government. Only five of these priests are living their sexuality in relation to others. The other sixty-five are absorbed in their work excessively. They are less priests than the competent laymen in the world who, sharing the common priesthood, live their sexuality in relation to others.

1. The following statistics are drawn from a survey made of 1098 priests, secular and religious: 24% fully lived their consecrated life of sexuality. Their lives were a continuous hymn to God. 46% were "good" priests, but did not fully live their consecrated lives of sexuality. 14.6% were not able to live their consecrated lives of sexuality. 14.7% could not be adequately judged.

This is the case of many priests - so absorbed in their work that it becomes "the other".

Consecrated chastity is beautiful, inspiring. It is a charism given to certain persons by God. It is a profoundly personal project. Only those chosen by God can assume it. Can it really be imposed and linked to a necessary function in the Church?

Could the present law of compulsory celibacy to a certain extent be responsible for the small number of priests in relation to the worldwide need, for the mediocrity of many in the priesthood, and in consequence, for the plight in which the Church finds herself? It is always the practice to extol priestly celibacy. Let us look, for a change, at the disadvantages it entails. The fact that only those who want to stay celibate can be considered for the priesthood considerably restricts the choice. The majority of men marry. This is a very serious restriction in itself, but much more serious in countries where there is also an educational problem. In the majority of underdeveloped countries, the educational limitations added to the celibacy restriction make the priesthood almost inaccessible. This is a serious problem for the Church in these countries. Many men never have an opportunity even to learn to read and write, and of those young people who begin grade school, only about 70 out of 1000 reach the equivalent of a high school education. Taking into consideration other factors, such as physical, psychological, mental, moral, and family - in addition to the educational and celibacy factors - the choice has to be made from one or two males out of every 1000. This is one of the fundamental causes for the shortage of priests in less developed countries. The Church in these lands is forced to import missionaries.

This educational problem does not play in the picture of vocations in industrialized countries. The question of celibacy as a restriction is still very serious however. Paradoxical as it may seem, studies show that the proportion of neurotic and immature candidates for the priesthood is greater here than in other professions. It does not follow that neurotics become priests or that priests are neurotic. But it is a fact that the high ideal of consecrated celibacy attracts three types of men: those with the physical, psychological and moral attributes conducive to the realization of a genuine priesthood, those absolutely incapable of the priesthood with a psychological or emotional make-up clearly unfavorable to the priesthood, and finally those whose imagination leads them to see themselves in an altogether untrue light. This every priest knows from experience. After a vocation talk these three types of youth are interested - the ill-adjusted ones often being the more enthusiastic. The majority of these aspirants never even cross the seminary threshold, but some are taken and manage to stay.

The greatest disadvantage of consecrated celibacy lies in the automatic exclusion of married men and of men who have no desire to live celibate lives. A great number of normal, healthy, psychologically balanced intelligent, mature individuals are automatically banned from exercising the function of the priesthood. Why should a young man who wants to be a priest, and who has the character, the integrity, and the personality for it be prevented

from becoming a priest because he wants to live his life of sexuality in marriage? It is presupposed very often that he lacks ideals, that he lacks the spirit of sacrifice. In contrast to many seminarians, who are supposed to have had the spirit of sacrifice at the seminary, but who later on in life realize that it was never really there, and consequently begin to compensate for it, these men are more realistic, have a greater grasp of reality, know their qualifications and their limitations, and are not ill at ease with them, but accept them as normal, as part of destiny, in the knowledge that they are what they are and do not wish to be anything else than what God intended them to be. This is the supreme mark of adulthood. Because of their sense of reality in wanting to live their lives of sexuality in the normal way it is to be lived, they are not accepted. Others lacking this sound grasp of themselves are admitted and turn out to be much less priests than the others would have been, much less priests than the others are in the common priesthood of the faithful.

There are some who claim that marriage would not increase vocations to the priesthood and cite in this respect the example of the Protestant Churches. Perhaps there would not be an increase, and then again, perhaps the priests would be better priests. Admittedly, a change in clerical celibacy would not necessarily bring about more vocations unless there was at the same time a change in the structure of the Church as regards parishes, communication, community worship, etc. etc.

In the modern world a man is respected for his competence, integrity, personality, sense of moral values - not for his celibacy alone. In the contemporary world the priest is at the service of the People of God, of Catholics, Protestants, unbelievers, atheists. The present civilization does not put a premium on clerical celibacy primarily, but primarily on the service that such a man by his personality and competence offers.

Is it really better to continue to link celibacy necessarily with the priesthood? Is the identification of celibacy with the priesthood, practically speaking, beneficial to the People of God? It is not celibacy which makes a priest dedicated to service, but the person - the whole person - viewed not in an idealistic perspective, but in an existential one.

There exists in each and every adult community married men endowed by God with certain natural and supernatural qualities which make them apt and ready to assume priestly duties. This principle is based on two observations: first, the level of intelligence is independent of the level of schooling, and secondly, in every human group or community there exists a certain number of people whose lives are not necessarily taken up with large responsibilities, but who are leaders of men, responsible, prudent, open, socially respected and deeply religious. These people could very well be the married priests of the future especially in Latin America, Asia, and Africa...and even other parts of the western world. The Church's task is to search out these men and train them to become dynamic men of God without ever removing them from their community. This is essential. There are potential priests among married men in all human groups; the proportion is the same whatever be their level of culture, whether the group be made up of

Ivy College Graduates or a group of tribesmen. There is exactly the same percentage of potential priests in one group as in the other.

How can these potential priests be identified in a group say of peasants? A meeting is held in a local community. A native born priest explains in a few simple talks that the Church wants one of their own between 25 and 45 years of age to be the local priest. Time, at least a month, is given to the members of the community to reflect on this matter...and then they choose the one they would like to see as their priest. The process should be relatively easy; the peasants know the real leaders within their community who possess the necessary characteristics. The one proposed is then asked to accept; not to accept to become a priest, but to consent to leave for a seminar of two week's duration. The seminar should be centrally held. The potential priests from each of eight to twelve communities gather in a dwelling typical of the ones in the country. The sessions should be organized in a permissive atmosphere, in the style of group dynamics adapted to the mentality of the participants, no talking down, no monologue, no teaching "ex cathedra". The leaders of the sessions should be native priests well versed in the dialect and culture of the area. They discuss the spiritual needs of the community, the religious problems, etc. and reflect on basic Christian truths as lived in their particular setting. These candidates must never be paid, must not be the object of special favors, or reimbursed for the time spent away from work. The purpose of the session is to convince them that they can live a better life within and with their community; that they can become better men, mindful that their becoming better men will be conditioned by whether or not their community become better men. Upon return to the community they will gradually hold group prayer meetings, etc. The potential priest who lives the life of the village will gradually grow in stature. But these potential priests will only progress and be able to become priests in as much as they are constantly aided by a team of priests to deepen their faith, encourage and help them establish a meaningful relationship to God.

A few years of such training will produce men for ordination able to serve their people. The making of a priest in such a context must come from their own interior conviction. The people themselves must desire their priests.

This is given by way of suggestion. The methods used in Panama will be different from those in Bolivia. It is up to every diocese to work out a method consistent with its customs, mentality, level of culture and religion. A deacon will not do. Each community must have a priest. A priest alone can form the true Eucharistic community.

CONCLUSION

It is imperative that the subject of celibacy be seriously studied and appraised. It must be thoroughly studied from the point of view of sociology, psychology and pastoral theology. More progress has been made in psychology in the last 50 years than in the previous 1900 years. Is it not the Church's duty to use the tools at her command to examine more deeply the dimensions of human nature on an empirical level in order to better understand the implications of celibacy?

The study of the Church's problems on a world perspective - in Asia, Africa, South America - cannot bypass the problem of celibacy. It is true that tests help in the selection of aspirants for the priesthood. It is also true that deacons and a more active role of the laity in catechetics will help alleviate the shortage of priests, as well as the redistribution of the clergy, the grouping of seminaries, of priests engaged in the same areas of apostolic work, the relinquishing of work belonging primarily to the laymen, a better seminary training, etc. All these things will help. The problem, however, will not be solved by any of these measures in particular, or by the global use of them. The problem is at a deeper level.

Would a change in the celibacy requirement be too much for the ordinary people of our age to grasp? There is a lingering fear in the Church that a segment of the faithful might lose their faith if the teachings of the magisterium on a specific point such as birth control or celibacy would change. For a certain number, it would be a scandal; but the majority would take it in stride. It would be a scandal for those for whom the lifting of the Eucharistic fast laws and the Friday abstinence law, the changes in the Mass, the position of the majority on the birth control issue, the position of Vatican II on religious liberty were a scandal. They have been accustomed to giving unchangeable dogmatic value to truths which never merited such a value, and to identifying the Church as an institution not on the move, but as an institution already perfect - as a museum piece, not as something organically growing, as the People of God on the march towards the City of God. On the whole, the People of God would be favorable to it. Five years ago, the discussion of celibacy was taboo among priests and lay people alike. Today on the whole it is a frequent subject of conversation. In general, the people are very realistic on this score. Some, as on every deep problem of the day, have an intuition of reality, that a more sophisticated clergy is deprived of, perhaps because of its isolation from the current of everyday life. Many young couples are in favor of a change, and to a greater extent than ever before, many young men. The word of two very ordinary and elderly women, excellent Catholics, recently speaking with their pastor, sums up well, in my mind, the thinking on this question now. They had been discussing with their pastor the recent marriages of two priests of their diocese. "Well", they said, "the older we get, the more we see that our husbands need us. When they were younger, they never thought they would need us as much as they do now. For that matter neither did we. The older a man gets, the more he needs his wife. Life is very hard for an older man without a wife. We really pity an old priest. Life must be very difficult for him." Two simple people, without any formal education, lost in a backward area, but with a faith as simple as a child's and a religion deeply anchored in their hearts with an admirable sense of life and of reality. Perhaps the laity see the signs of God better than clerics. Is it not possible that the Holy Spirit is speaking to us through the laity?

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