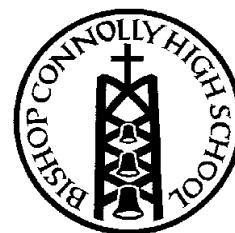


From the Chaplain's Office...

Father Roger J. Landry
Chaplain



*Not Only Hearers
but Doers of the Word*

March-April 2001
Chaplain's Conference #2

The All-Male, Celibate Priesthood & The Dignity of Women

Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. Why is Ordination reserved to baptized men?
 - A. Christ's Example of Sacred Scripture
 - B. The constant practice of the Church in imitation of Christ
 - C. The constant living teaching of the Magisterium
 - D. Possible Objections to the teaching
 - E. Further reflections
- III. Why is there mandatory priestly celibacy in the Roman Rite?
 - A. Discipline, not doctrine
 - B. Concise position of the Church
 - C. More developed reasons from Vatican II
 - D. Attitude of the Priest and Faithful toward Priestly Celibacy
 - E. Possible objections to the Church's practice
- IV. Is the dignity of woman in the Church lessened by her exclusion from the ordained ministry?
 - A. Mulieris Dignitatem
 - B. Equal dignity of women to men in the Church
 - C. The apostolic mission of women
 - D. Holiness is much more important than hierarchy

I. Introduction

- 1) Today we will discuss three related topics concerning ordained priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. The first topic is why Ordination is reserved only to baptized men. The second will concern the reasons why there is a celibacy requirement for priests in the Roman Catholic Church. Thirdly, we will turn to the question of the dignity of women within the Church. Many critics of the Church's position will charge that the Church discriminates against women in not allowing them to be ordained priests, and the exclusion of women from the ordained ministry hence makes women "second-class citizens" in Catholicism. We will take up these objections toward the end of this session.
- 2) Many of you have asked questions concerning the topics we're tackling today, both in some question-and-answer periods I have done in your classes, to your teachers in general, and also in the survey you filled out. In the survey you filled out in February, there was a question on priestly celibacy which BCHS students answered in the following manner:

6. In your opinion, the Church's teaching on the inability to ordain women as priests is based in reality on (you may circle more than one)?	29 7
A. A trust that Christ had a good reason for ordaining only men.	33
B. A discriminatory posture of the Church toward women.	13
C. A cultural discrimination at the time of Jesus against women that Jesus shared.	10
D. A human decision of those in the Church like Pope John Paul II that can be changed.	27
E. The fact that Christ was a male and priests are ordained in the person of Christ the Bridegroom of the Church.	49

- 3) Like the last one, this handout is meant to facilitate your following the flow of the arguments and also to allow you to keep this as a handy reference to review or to use in case someone ever asks you the reason for the Church's position on these matters (and someone will!). You can receive a copy of your own by emailing me at rlandry@bishopconnolly.com. It is not meant to be an exhaustive resource, merely an outline of some of the central points. This outline will be expanded upon during the conference, by means of questions, asides and other relevant points. But it is a good starting point and a good means for review.
- 4) I repeat that this is an issue, like many of the subjects we'll tackle in these chaplain's conferences, that is controversial or often misunderstood. That is because Catholics disagree about them, and, sometimes occasionally, Catholic priests. For this reason, I will stick as closely as possible to the documents of the official magisterium of the Church, with particular emphasis on the Documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), and the encyclicals, constitutions and exhortations of Pope John Paul II. As a result, these positions here are more than merely my "opinions" about these issues, but this is what the Catholic Church holds. When I interject my own opinions, I will do so clearly. But in a setting in which there is some confusion about these issues, you have a right to the teaching of the Church unfiltered, and I have tried to give that to you in the course of these conferences.

II. Why is Ordination reserved to baptized men?

(This presentation is based largely on Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter of 1994 on reserving priestly ordination to men alone, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*).

1. The Catholic Church holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood, for very fundamental reasons. The Church "does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination."
2. The fundamental reasons include:
 - A) the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men;
 - 1) This is the most important reason. Paul VI says in *Inter Insigniores* (II), "The real reason is that, in giving the Church her fundamental constitution, her theological anthropology-- thereafter always followed by the Church's Tradition--Christ established things in this way."
 - 2) Christ's way of acting did not proceed from sociological or cultural motives peculiar to his time.
 - a) JP II: "In calling only men as his Apostles, Christ acted in a completely free and sovereign manner. In doing so, he exercised the same freedom with which, in all his behaviour, he emphasized the dignity and the vocation of

women, without conforming to the prevailing customs and to the traditions sanctioned by the legislation of the time."

3) In fact, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles attest that this call was made in accordance with God's eternal plan:

a) Christ chose those whom he willed:

Mark 3:13 He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message,

John 6:70 Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil."

b) He did it in union with the Father, "through the Holy Spirit"

Acts 1:2 until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

c) After having spent the night in prayer

Luke 6:12 Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles:

B) the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men;

1) Therefore, in granting admission to the ministerial priesthood, the Church has always acknowledged as a perennial norm her Lord's way of acting in choosing twelve men whom he made the foundation of his Church.

Rev. 21:14 And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

2) These men did not in fact receive only a function which could thereafter be exercised by any member of the Church; rather they were specifically and intimately associated in the mission of the Incarnate Word himself.

Matt. 10:1 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

Matt. 10:7 As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' 8 Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

Matt. 28:16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Mark 3:13 He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, 15 and to have authority to cast out demons. 16 So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);

Mark 16:14 Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. 15 And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.

3) The Apostles did the same when they chose fellow workers who would succeed them in their ministry.

1Tim. 3:1 The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. 2 Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way — 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil. 8 Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; 9 they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. 11 Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; 13 for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

2Tim. 1:6 For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands;

Titus 1:5 I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: 6 someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. 7 For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; 8 but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. 9 He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

CCC 1577 "Only a baptized man (vir) validly receives sacred ordination." The Lord Jesus chose men (viri) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry. The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible.

4) Also included in this choice were those who, throughout the time of the Church, would carry on the Apostles' mission of representing Christ the Lord and Redeemer.

LG 20. That divine mission, which was committed by Christ to the apostles, is destined to last until the end of the world (cf. Mt. 28:20), since the Gospel, which they were charged to hand on, is, for the Church, the principle of all its life for all time. For that very reason the apostles were careful to appoint successors in this hierarchically constituted society. In fact, not only had they various helpers in their ministry, but, in order that the mission entrusted to them might be continued after their death, they consigned, by will and testament, as it were, to their immediate collaborators the duty of completing and consolidating the work they had begun, urging them to tend to the whole flock, in which the Holy Spirit had appointed them to shepherd the Church of God (cf. Acts 20:28). They accordingly designated such men and then made the ruling that likewise on their death other proven men should take over their ministry. Amongst those various offices which have been exercised in the Church from the earliest times the chief place, according to the witness of tradition, is held by the function of those who, through their appointment to the dignity and responsibility of bishop, and in virtue consequently of the unbroken succession, going back to the beginning, are regarded as transmitters of the apostolic line. Thus, according to the testimony of St. Irenaeus, the apostolic tradition is manifested and preserved in the whole world by those who were made bishops by the apostles and by their successors down to our own time. ... The bishops have by divine institution

taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ (cf. Lk. 10:16).

LG 21. In the person of the bishops, then, to whom the priests render assistance, the Lord Jesus Christ, supreme high priest, is present in the midst of the faithful. Though seated at the right hand of God the Father, he is not absent from the assembly of his pontiffs;[17] on the contrary indeed, it is above all through their signal service that he preaches the Word of God to all peoples and administers without cease to the faithful the sacraments of faith; that through their paternal care (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15) he incorporates, by a supernatural rebirth, new members into his body; that finally, through their wisdom and prudence he directs and guides the people of the New Testament on their journey towards eternal beatitude.

C) and her living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God's plan for his Church."

- 1) The teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium.
- 2) No example ever of breaking this precedent throughout time.

3. Formal Definition

Lest anyone consider the topic "still open to debate," or that the Church's judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a "merely disciplinary force," Pope JP II declares that:

In order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. <Lk> 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.

4. Possible Objections

A) Ancient Jewish society discriminated against women and Jesus was just following the cultural discrimination of his time.

RESPONSES

1) Jesus, in fact, was extraordinarily progressive in his treatment of women. Women were essentially his CFOs, before Judas got the money bags:

Mark 15:40 There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

MD 12: It is universally admitted--even by people with a critical attitude towards the Christian message--that in the eyes of his contemporaries Christ became a promoter of women's true dignity and of the vocation corresponding to this dignity. At times this caused wonder, surprise, often to the point of scandal:

- a) "They marveled that he was talking with a woman" (Jn 4:27), because this behavior differed from that of his contemporaries. Even Christ's own disciples "marveled."
- b) The Pharisee to whose house the sinful woman went to anoint Jesus' feet with perfumed oil "said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner'" (Lk 7:39).

c) Even greater dismay, or even "holy indignation," must have filled the self-satisfied hearers of Christ's words: "the tax collectors and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you" (Mt 21:31).

d) MD 13: There is a situation which is perhaps the most eloquent: a woman caught in adultery is brought to Jesus (cf. Jn 8:3-11).

e) MD 13: In all of Jesus' teaching, as well as in his behavior, one can find nothing which reflects the discrimination against women prevalent in his day. On the contrary, his words and works always express the respect and honor due to women. The woman with a stoop is called a "daughter of Abraham" (Lk 13:16), while in the whole Bible the title "son of Abraham" is used only of men. Walking the Via Dolorosa to Golgotha, Jesus will say to the women: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me" (Lk 23:28). This way of speaking to and about women, as well as his manner of treating them, clearly constitutes an "innovation" with respect to the prevailing custom at that time.

2) The fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, received neither the mission proper to the Apostles nor the ministerial priesthood clearly shows that the non-admission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity, nor can it be construed as discrimination against them. Rather, it is to be seen as the faithful observance of a plan to be ascribed to the wisdom of the Lord of the universe.

3) Ultimately the central crux of the Church's response is that either Christ knew what he was doing in choosing only men and did it for a good reason, or that

a) he knew what he was doing and did it for a bad reason (i.e., he was a misogynist); or

b) that Christ did not know what he was doing.

c) Either of these two responses is hard for a Christian to assert. It is a thoroughly Christian assumption that the Son of God made Man, the God-man, knew what he was doing and did it for a good reason.

B) Many women today claim that they feel a vocation to be priests.

No one has a right to receive the sacrament of holy orders. The Church must confirm every vocation.

CCC 1578 No one has a right to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. Indeed no one claims this office for himself; he is called to it by God.[69] Anyone who thinks he recognizes the signs of God's call to the ordained ministry must humbly submit his desire to the authority of the Church, who has the responsibility and right to call someone to receive orders. Like every grace this sacrament can be received only as an unmerited gift.

C) Times change and therefore the Church should change.

RESPONSE

Church cannot change what is in the deposit of faith. Church preserves the deposit of faith.

CCC 85-86: The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome. "Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith."

5. Further reflections

A) In choosing only men, Christ did not give us the reason why he did so.

B) Nevertheless, we can venture a few reasons why it makes sense.

a) Functional reason: The vocation he gave to his first priests was to spread the Gospel throughout the entire world. They often were beaten, stoned, killed in gruesome ways. Just as civil society has historically considered men more fit for physical combat, so Christ might have considered men more capable for the physical vicissitudes of priestly life as he intended it.

b) Anthropological reason: Christ himself was a man. Priests serve literally in the person of Christ. Therefore it is fitting that only men are priests, because Christ was a man.

c) Theological reason: Christ was the Bridegroom of the Church. Priests serve in persona Christi Sponsi, in the person of Christ the Bridegroom, and hence it would make little sense for women to stand in the person of the Husband, just as it would for men to stand in place of the Bride.

1) Biblical References

Matt. 9:15 And Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

John 3:29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled.

Eph. 5:22 Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. 24 Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, 27 so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind — yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. 33 Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Rev. 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready;

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

Rev. 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let everyone who hears say, “Come.” And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

2) JP II’s Mulieris Dignitatem, 26

a) Against the broad background of the "great mystery" expressed in the spousal relationship between Christ and the Church, it is possible to understand adequately the calling of the "Twelve."

- 1) In calling only men as his Apostles, Christ acted in a completely free and sovereign manner. In doing so, he exercised the same freedom with which, in all his behavior, he emphasized the dignity and the vocation of women, without conforming to the prevailing customs and to the traditions sanctioned by the legislation of the time.
- 2) Consequently, the assumption that he called men to be apostles in order to conform with the widespread mentality of his times, does not at all correspond to Christ's way of acting.
 - a) "Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men" (Mt 22:16). These words fully characterize Jesus of Nazareth's behavior.
 - b) Here one also finds an explanation for the calling of the "Twelve." They are with Christ at the Last Supper. They alone receive the sacramental charge, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24), which is joined to the institution of the Eucharist. On Easter Sunday night they receive the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (Jn 20:23).
- b) We find ourselves at the very heart of the Paschal Mystery, which completely reveals the spousal love of God.
 - 1) Christ is the Bridegroom because "he has given himself": his body has been "given," his blood has been "poured out" (cf. Lk 22:19-20). In this way "he loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1).
 - 2) The "sincere gift" contained in the Sacrifice of the Cross gives definitive prominence to the spousal meaning of God's love.
 - 3) As the Redeemer of the world, Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of our Redemption.
 - a) It is the Sacrament of the Bridegroom and of the Bride.
 - b) The Eucharist makes present and realizes anew in a sacramental manner the redemptive act of Christ, who "creates" the Church, his body.
 - c) Christ is united with this "body" as the bridegroom with the bride. All this is contained in the Letter to the Ephesians.
 - d) The perennial "unity of the two" that exists between man and woman from the very "beginning" is introduced into this "great mystery" of Christ and of the Church.
 - 4) Since Christ, in instituting the Eucharist, linked it in such an explicit way to the priestly service of the Apostles, it is legitimate to conclude that he thereby wished to express the relationship between man and woman, between what is "feminine" and what is "masculine."
 - a) It is a relationship willed by God both in the mystery of creation and in the mystery of Redemption.
 - b) It is the Eucharist above all that expresses the redemptive act of Christ the Bridegroom towards the Church the Bride.
 - c) This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, in which the priest acts "in persona Christi," is performed by a man.

III. Why is There Mandatory Priestly Celibacy in the Roman Rite?

1. Discipline, not doctrine

- A. Unlike the teaching on the inability of the Church to ordain women to the priesthood, which is part of the deposit of faith and is therefore irreformable, the teaching on priestly celibacy in the Roman rite is a discipline of the Church, not a doctrine.
- B. As such, the teaching on priestly celibacy could possibly be changed, or there could be occasional exceptions granted, as in the Oriental Churches or with some cases of married Protestant ministers converting to Catholicism and being ordained priests (see below).
- C. But the fact that it is a discipline does not mean that there are not good theological reasons for priestly celibacy. In fact, the discipline of priestly celibacy was confirmed by the theological reflection over the ages.

2. Concise position of the Church

- A. CCC 1579 All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain celibate "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."

Matt. 19:10 His disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." 11 But he said to them, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. 12 For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."

- B. CCC 1579 (continued) Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to "the affairs of the Lord," they give themselves entirely to God and to men. Celibacy is a sign of this new life to the service of which the Church's minister is consecrated; accepted with a joyous heart celibacy radiantly proclaims the Reign of God.

1Cor. 7:32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord;

3. More developed reasons for the position (from Vatican II's *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 16).

- A. Perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven was recommend by Christ the Lord (cf. Mt 19:12)
- B. It has been freely accepted and laudably observed by many Christians down through the centuries as well as in our own time, and has always been highly esteemed in a special way by the Church as a feature of priestly life. For it is at once:
 - 1) a sign of pastoral charity
 - 2) and an incentive to it
 - 3) as well as being in a special way a source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world.

LG 42: [In a paragraph on charity] Likewise the Church's holiness is fostered in a special way by the manifold counsels which the Lord proposes to his disciples in the Gospel for them to observe. Towering among these counsels is that precious gift of divine grace given to some by the Father (cf. Mt. 19:11; 1 Cor. 7:7) to devote themselves to God alone more easily with an undivided heart (cf. 1 Cor 7:32-34) in virginity or celibacy. This perfect continence for love of the kingdom of heaven has always been held in high esteem by the Church as a sign and stimulus of love, and as a singular source of spiritual fertility in the world.

C. It is true that priestly celibacy is not demanded of the priesthood by its nature. This is clear

1) from the practice of the primitive Church

1Tim. 3:2 Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way — 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?

Titus 1:5 I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: 6 someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious.

2) and the tradition of the Eastern Churches where in addition to those --- including all bishops --- who choose from the gift of grace to preserve celibacy, there are also many excellent married priests.

D. While recommending ecclesiastical celibacy this sacred Council does not by any means aim at changing that contrary discipline which is lawfully practiced in the Eastern Churches.

1) CCC 1580 In the Eastern Churches a different discipline has been in force for many centuries: while bishops are chosen solely from among celibates, married men can be ordained as deacons and priests.

2) ... This practice has long been considered legitimate; these priests exercise a fruitful ministry within their communities.

3) ... Moreover, priestly celibacy is held in great honor in the Eastern Churches and many priests have freely chosen it for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

4) In the East as in the West a man who has already received the sacrament of Holy Orders can no longer marry.

E. Rather the Council affectionately exhorts all those who have received the priesthood in the married state to persevere in their holy vocation and continue to devote their lives fully and generously to the flock entrusted to them.

F. There are many ways in which celibacy is in harmony with the priesthood.

1) For the whole mission of the priest is dedicated to the service of the new humanity which Christ, the victor over death, raises up in the world through his Spirit and which is born "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1:13).

2) By preserving virginity or celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19:12) priests are consecrated in a new and excellent way to Christ.

a) They more readily cling to him with undivided heart ...

1Cor. 7:32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; 33 but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin are anxious about the affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please her husband.

b) and dedicate themselves more freely in him and through him to the service of God and of men.

c) They are less encumbered in their service of his kingdom and of the task of heavenly regeneration.

d) In this way they become better fitted for a broader acceptance of fatherhood in Christ.

3) By means of celibacy, then, priests profess before men their willingness to be dedicated with undivided loyalty to the task entrusted to them, namely that of

a) espousing the faithful to one husband

b) and presenting them as a chaste virgin to Christ.

2Cor. 11:2 I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

4) They recall that mystical marriage, established by God and destined to be fully revealed in the future, by which the Church holds Christ as her only spouse.

Perfectae Caritatis 12 (Vatican II document on religious life): The chastity "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 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 to be fully revealed in the future age in which the Church takes Christ as its only spouse.

5) Moreover they are made a living sign of that world to come, already present through faith and charity, a world in which the children of the resurrection shall neither be married nor take wives.

Luke 20:34 Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; 35 but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. 36 Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.

G) For these reasons, based on the **MYSTERY OF CHRIST AND HIS MISSION**, celibacy, which at first was recommended to priests, was afterwards in the Latin Church imposed by law on all who were to be promoted to holy Orders.

H) The Second Vatican Council approved and confirmed this legislation so far as it concerns those destined for the priesthood, and "feels confident in the Spirit that the gift of celibacy, so appropriate to the priesthood of the New Testament, is liberally granted by the Father, provided those who share Christ's priesthood through the sacrament of Order, and indeed the whole Church, ask for that gift humbly and earnestly.

4. Attitude of the Priest and the Faithful Toward Priestly Celibacy

A) This sacred Council also exhorts all priests who, with trust in God's grace, have of their own free choice accepted consecrated celibacy after the example of Christ:

1) to hold fast to it with courage and enthusiasm,

2) and to persevere faithfully in this state,

a) appreciating that glorious gift that has been given them by the Father and is so clearly extolled by the Lord,

Matt. 19:11 But he said to them, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given.

- b) and keeping before their eyes the great mysteries that are signified and fulfilled in it.
- B) And the more that perfect continence is considered by many people to be impossible in the world today, so much the more humbly and perseveringly in union with the Church ought priests demand the grace of fidelity, which is never denied to those who ask.
- C) At the sametime they will employ all the helps to fidelity both supernatural and natural, which are available to everybody.
- 1) Especially they should never neglect to follow the rules of ascetical practice which are approved by the experience of the Church and are as necessary as ever in the modern world.
- D) So this sacred Council asks that not only priests but all the faithful would cherish this precious gift of priestly celibacy, and that all of them would beg of God always to lavish this gift abundantly on his Church.

5. Possible objections to the Church practice

- A) Removing priestly celibacy would solve the “crisis” of the number of priestly vocations. We can look at the burgeoning number of deacons in the US for verification.

RESPONSES

- 1) A look at the situation in the Eastern churches (with the option of its married clergy) shows clearly that, historically, the Roman Catholic Church has had an enormously greater per capita ratio of priests to faithful than Eastern churches have.
- 2) The present vocations decline is probably historically anomalous, a result of cultural and ecclesial factors deriving from the 1960s and 1970s. There has been a slow, but noticeable increase in the amount of men studying for the priesthood over the past several years, both here in the United States and worldwide.
- 3) Very few deacons work full-time for the Church. If they did, the Church would have to give them a family wage, such that they would be able to support their family, send their children to college, etc. Such would demand about 300% increase in what priests are paid (and most parishes, based on present 1.4% per parishioner giving patterns) would go bankrupt.
- 4) We might question whether quality might suffer, since married men, in addition to all of their studies, prayer time, etc., would need to be full-time parents.
- B) Having married priests would eliminate or decrease the amount of cases of pedophilia and other sexual scandals.

RESPONSES

- 1) Pedophilia is a mental and moral disease that has little to do with whether one is married or single. Incest records speak for themselves. Moreover, the amount of priests involved in pedophilia is infinitesimally small.
- 2) In terms of other sexual scandals among the clergy, we can compare those with Catholic priests to those among married Protestant clergy. Per capita, the rate among Catholic clergy is much smaller than among married Protestant clergy.
- C) The book of Genesis seems to indicate that man and woman are meant to get married, increase and multiply, that there is something anthropologically rooted in man and woman towards marriage.

- 1) **Gen. 1:27** So God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”
- 2) **Gen 2:18** Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” ... 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” 24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.
- 3) It is true that there is a spousal meaning of the body, which is part of the Image of God.

RESPONSE

- 4) Ultimately the response is to be found in the mystery of Christ, who was fully God and fully man — and fully celibate. In him, however, there was clearly a spousal meaning to his body, which becomes one flesh with his bride, the Church, in holy Communion (see below)

D) Priestly celibacy deprecates marriage, by making married Christians “second-class citizens.”

RESPONSE

- 1) Quite the contrary. If marriage were not something very special, it would not be a sacrifice at all for the priest to give up this way of life. The fact that the priest makes this sacrifice of such a good, a good given by the Lord himself, testifies not that it is a good, but that there is something better in store even than Christian marriage, eternity with God in heaven.

6. Reasons behind the practice

A) Functional: A celibate priest simply has much greater availability to serve the people of God.

- 1) He does not have to take care of his own wife and human family.
- 2) He is able to go much more easily wherever the Church needs him to serve. He has no need to have his children change schools, wife change jobs, etc.
- 3) Experience of US Military chaplains has shown that most soldiers (Catholic and non-Catholic) prefer to go to the Catholic chaplains, because the soldiers realize that the Catholics are much more available to spend the time it takes with them, whereas Protestant and Jewish chaplains need to “schedule” them into appointments so that they can get home to their families, much like businessmen.

B) Theological: These are by far the most important reasons.

- 1) Christ was celibate — The priest is called to be in persona Christi, and conform his life to Christ, who remained a Eunuch for the kingdom of heaven. This is the most important reason of all. The priest in the Roman rite freely chooses celibacy out of a greater imitation of the celibate High Priest, Jesus.
- 2) Christ, while celibate, was married to his Bride, the Church. The priest, the image of this Divine Bridegroom, is married as well to the particular church, laying down his life for her as Christ did for his bride.

- 3) The priest's whole life, like Christ's whole life, points to the kingdom of heaven, where there will be no giving and taking in marriage. His celibate existence proclaims that eternal reality.

IV. Is the Dignity of Woman in the Church lessened by her exclusion from the ordained ministry?

1. The present Holy Father in 1990 devoted a whole treatise to the dignity and vocation of woman, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, published in 1990. Here we will not go into his whole development, which would require at least several other sessions. The focus of this section is to take up the question of the dignity of woman in light of the exclusion of woman from the ordained ministry. I would encourage all those to read *Mulieris Dignitatem*, which is an extraordinary rich and beautiful document.
2. Women have equal dignity to men in the Church
 - A) Many critics of the Church in general and in particular on the subject of the impossibility of women's ordination argue that women are thereby second-class citizens in the Church. Such is a completely erroneous conclusion.
 - B) *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* takes up specifically the subject of the status of women vis-a-vis the exclusion of women from the ordained priesthood. It says:
 - 1) The fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, received neither the mission proper to the Apostles nor the ministerial priesthood clearly shows that the non-admission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity, nor can it be construed as discrimination against them. Rather, it is to be seen as the faithful observance of a plan to be ascribed to the wisdom of the Lord of the universe.
 - 2) The presence and the role of women in the life and mission of the Church, although not linked to the ministerial priesthood, remain absolutely necessary and irreplaceable. As the Declaration <Inter Insigniores> points out, "the Church desires that Christian women should become fully aware of the greatness of their mission; today their role is of capital importance both for the renewal and humanization of society and for the rediscovery by believers of the true face of the Church".
 - C) Women share in the apostolic mission of the whole People of God:
 - 1) The New Testament and the whole history of the Church give ample evidence of the presence in the Church of women, true disciples, witnesses to Christ in the family and in society, as well as to total consecration to the service of God and of the Gospel.
 - 2) JP II: "By defending the dignity of women and their vocation, the Church has shown honour and gratitude for those women who — faithful to the Gospel — have shared in every age in the apostolic mission of the whole People of God. They are the holy martyrs, virgins, and the mothers of families, who bravely bore witness to their faith and passed on the Church's faith and tradition by bringing up their children in the spirit of the Gospel".
 - D) Position in the hierarchy of service is not crucially important in the longrun: holiness is:
 - 1) Moreover, it is to the holiness of the faithful that the hierarchical structure of the Church is totally ordered. For this reason, the Declaration <Inter Insigniores> recalls: "the only better gift, which can and must be desired, is love (cf. <1 Cor> 12 and 13). The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven are not the ministers but the saints".
 - 2) The Second Vatican Council, confirming the teaching of the whole of tradition, recalled that in the hierarchy of holiness it is precisely the "woman," Mary of Nazareth, who is the "figure" of the Church. She "precedes" everyone on the path to holiness; in her person "the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph 5:27)." In this sense, one can say that the Church is both "Marian" and "Apostolic-Petrine."

E) Everything that has been said so far about Christ's attitude to women confirms and clarifies, in the Holy Spirit, the truth about the equality of man and woman. One must speak of an essential "equality," since both of them--the woman as much as the man--are created in the image and likeness of God. Both of them are equally capable of receiving the outpouring of divine truth and love in the Holy Spirit. Both receive his salvific and sanctifying "visits" (MD 16).