

Joel I. Barstad, Ph.D.
St. John Vianney Theological Seminary
Denver, Colorado
Revised August 29, 2008

MONOGAMY, CELIBACY, AND FATHERHOOD:
MEDITATIONS ON CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD

There are no footnotes in this essay. It is not my intention to enter into polemical relationships with other authors or to make complex historical arguments. Such work is important, but here my aim is to extract and address, as simply as possible, the essential arguments and realities of clerical identity as I understand them. Plenty has been written on the origin and diverging development of the Eastern and Western disciplines regarding priestly marriage and celibacy. As long as the focus of such research remains the defense of one tradition over against another, and as long as each tradition articulates its identity primarily in terms of what distinguishes it from the other, there will be no reconciliation. What is needed is to discover and focus on an element of vital concern to both traditions, something central enough to both to serve as a common point of affirmation and shared identity.

In these meditations, I have tried to stay close to the Scriptures, not because they are the last word—on the contrary, they contain many tensions and ambiguities that must be wrestled with, balanced, and resolved in concrete ways for circumstances that the inspired authors never imagined—, but because they are the first word, to which the Church perennially returns, a place where struggling brethren can meet one another in hope. Whatever ambiguities and tensions the Scriptures contain are creative and life giving. Wrestling with God Jacob found himself changed, given a new identity that prepared him to meet his estranged brother.

I would be remiss, however, if I did not acknowledge here my debt to Monsignor Luigi Giussani (1922-2005). His teaching on such matters as authority, obedience, and virginity has had a profound influence on my thinking. I make no claim that his views are represented in these pages, only that the thoughts expressed would have been very different had I not met him.

Abbas qui praeesse dignus est monasterio semper meminere debet quod dicitur et nomen maioris factis implere. Christi enim agere vices in monasterio creditur, quando ipsius vocatur pronomine.

—Regula sancti Benedicti 2:1-2.

In the ecumenical age in which we live, an adequate theological articulation of priestly identity must do justice to both the Latin tradition of priestly celibacy and the Eastern tradition of a monogamous clergy.

The tensions between those two traditions have been with us for a long time. Already at the end of the Seventh Century at the Synod in Trullo, one hears a scornful note in the Eastern attitude toward the Latin discipline. And in the Twentieth Century the suppression of the Eastern discipline among emigrant communities of Eastern Catholics in North America at the insistence of their Roman neighbors merely expressed what to many still appears as an obvious practical impossibility of the two traditions coexisting in the same place. Such impossibility, however, is hard to defend theoretically now that a general council, the canon law governing Eastern Catholics, and a universal catechism affirm the “honorable” legitimacy of both disciplines (Vatican II, *Presbyterorum ordinis* 16; CCC 1579, 1580; CCEO 373). Moreover, there has been a partial restoration of a married clergy within the Roman rite itself in the form of a married diaconate which carries an increasing share in the Church’s pastoral ministry, not to mention the exceptions granted Anglican and Lutheran married clergy who enter communion with Rome and receive permission to be ordained and to serve in the Roman rite.

In fact, in less than a century, even within the Catholic communion, the tables have turned and the Latin discipline finds itself on the defensive, at least in the sense that those who have the duty of fostering that discipline must respond to more and more insistent demands from their own faithful for a wholesale abandonment of the traditional discipline and find themselves struggling to articulate its value persuasively enough to attract and keep vocations. These changed circumstances, however, do not rise from a new awareness or expansion of Eastern Christian experience, but from a cultural context conditioned by centuries of Protestant and secular repudiation of celibacy itself. In responding to this cultural context, however, it is important to make a distinction between the *mandatoriness* of priestly celibacy and the *value* of

priestly celibacy for the Church lest the value of Eastern tradition and experience for the universal Church be lost.

At this stage in the Church's history, the mandatoriness of the Latin discipline cannot be defended as springing directly from priestly identity in the same way as do other aspects, for example, its reservation to males only. To do so would be to repudiate the tradition of the East. The mandatoriness of the discipline, therefore, cannot rest on an argument from the *necessity* of celibacy for priesthood but on arguments from *fittingness* and only such fittingness as does not denigrate the venerable tradition of the East.

The mandatoriness of the Latin discipline is a response proportioned to the perceived value that celibacy brings to priesthood. The value and its preservation is what is at stake in the discussion of priestly celibacy. Without a clear and persuasive presentation of its value, men will not readily embrace a mandatory celibacy; on the other hand, with a clear and persuasive presentation of its value, men might embrace it even if it were not mandatory. I do not know whether the mandatoriness of the Latin discipline will ever become an open question, but surely before it can be debated, the value of celibacy must be clear. Not all the arguments currently used to support the Latin church's traditional discipline are conducive to a full recognition of the Eastern tradition. When coupled with a merely verbal expression of respect for the East, they create a cognitive dissonance felt by members of both traditions.

The value of celibacy to priesthood must be understood relative to the essential aspects of priestly identity present in both traditions. My suggestion is that by looking to spiritual fatherhood as the core of priestly identity we will find a perspective in which both the Eastern and Western traditions make sense. These reflections explore the possibility that monogamy and celibacy both manifest essential, complementary aspects of the divine fatherhood, which the Church's ministers are called to reflect.

Just as in the Church generally marriage and monasticism manifest complementary and mutually edifying aspects of baptismal consecration; so, for the Church's clergy monogamy and celibacy manifest complementary and mutually reinforcing aspects of the divine paternity.

Putting fatherhood at the core of priestly identity and then showing the complementary value of both monogamy and celibacy relative to paternity provides a solution that is traditional, applicable to both Eastern and Western traditions, and proportioned to the modern need for a positive, realistic appraisal of human love, sexuality, and fulfillment relative to man's divine archetype and eternal destiny.

Perhaps the easiest arguments for priestly celibacy for modern Christians to understand are utilitarian, that is, arguments for how the celibacy of the clergy makes it easier for the Church and her ministers to do their work. Ministers, freed from the demands of marriage and family life, can cultivate their interior relationship with Christ without distraction and give themselves with greater freedom to the work of ministry.

This latter freedom has obvious benefits for the Church as institution. A celibate clergy is more mobile. They can be sent into poor or dangerous environments where it would be difficult to support or protect families. They can be moved more often and more quickly. A celibate clergy is cheaper. They can work longer hours at less cost to the institution. If something goes wrong, their health breaks or they misbehave, there are fewer lives at risk, the damage should be easier to contain and repair. A workforce dedicated solely to their work is simply easier to use. Any military or corporate leader can appreciate this benefit.

In his correspondence with the church at Corinth, St Paul himself urges all unmarried Christians to seriously consider celibacy as a way to simplify their lives and keep them focused on doing the will of the Lord, as opposed to becoming entangled in relationships of responsibility and dependence that might complicate one's loyalties and risk diluting one's service to Christ. With respect to his own apostolic mission, he says in the same letter that although he like Peter and other apostles are entitled to support from the church not only for himself but for a wife, yet not only he has chosen not to burden his churches by the added expense of a wife, but has renounced this claim even for himself, supplying his own needs and those of his companions by making tents. Such devotion has an obvious economic value to the churches, but more importantly for Paul such devoted service is a strong witness by example to the kind of love God has shown us in Jesus.

In the other epistles that bear Paul's name and in the Catholic Epistles, these arguments against marriage are not repeated. Many commentators suggest that Paul's earlier insistence on remaining free of earthly attachments arose from his expectation of the imminent tribulation leading up to the Lord's return. The Gospels, of course, preserve the call to radical adherence to Christ, but in the life of the early churches that call is not felt as incompatible with the basic forms of social life. The Petrine rather than Pauline model seems to have taken root and been assumed as normal. The bonds of marriage, family, even servitude, are not cast as obstacles to

serving the Lord, but, on the contrary, all are urged to view their service as rendered “to the Lord.”

In the Pastoral Epistles, the preparation gained for pastoral ministry by marriage and family life is emphasized rather than their negative potential as competitive distractions from divine service. This pattern does not contradict the radicalism, but represents the loaf in which the Pauline leaven of total consecration can work its good effect. Surely, Peter and the others who did not renounce their claim on the Church for the support of themselves and their families were reminded by Paul’s example of the essence of their own ministries and so were better guarded against the abuses denounced by Christ for those who would shepherd his flock. The Western discipline is a partial preservation of the Pauline radicalism. Unfortunately, it is often diluted; the renunciation of a wife becomes an entitlement to the kind of support that Paul was so unwilling to ask of his churches. Nonetheless, insofar as the ideal is lived, married Orthodox and Protestant clergy of our own day can benefit from the example of their celibate brothers; how that example is presented and understood, however, is vital to the effectiveness of its witness.

In the modern period, especially in Protestant countries where the notion of vocation became so closely tied to profession and work, giving rise through secularization to careerism and the assumption that human dignity is proportionate to social and economic value, the utilitarian arguments for clerical celibacy risk reducing the value of the minister to his function, to the work he does. In such an environment, power is entrusted first to those who have shown themselves willing to put professional, corporate, political, or academic identity and functions above all others, even to the detriment of relationships with spouse and children and other communities to which they belong. The job defines the person and his value, relativizing all other identities and relationships. St Paul’s mentality seems to have been quite different. One has only to be attentive to the personal greetings in his letters to become aware of how deeply attached he was to the people he ministered to. It was precisely his capacity to sustain relationships and give himself to others that motivated his apostolic sacrifices.

Many kinds of work and service require a readiness to sacrifice oneself and the security of one’s family: soldiers, police officers, fire-fighters, physicians daily live with the risk and the choice for the common good over their own and that of their families. Scholarly pursuits often demand long days over longer years. I often think of the story of Etienne Gilson, who paced back and forth amid the flurry of his wife and daughters packing up their house to move, muttering to

himself, "A philosopher should not be married. A philosopher should not be married." There is no trade, craft, or profession that does not benefit from increased devotion to its practice; but work, like the sabbath, is made for man, and not man for the work.

Utilitarian arguments for clerical celibacy alone are insufficient in part because they do not respect the real sacrifices of countless men and women in countless lines of work. It is not enough to argue that celibates can give themselves to their work more completely and with less risk. If such a criterion were applied generally, marriage would soon become a voluntary (and often temporary) association and having children would be a luxury reserved for the rich. Sacrifices must be made by persons for persons within the context of sustained relationships, not for the sake of carrying out some work, however sacred. It is the relationship that makes the man, not the effectiveness or efficiency or value of his work. As one of my spiritual fathers once told me, "What you do matters, but not much; it's who you are that counts."

One line of utilitarian argument makes this danger clear by challenging the tradition of a male clergy. Our sex is the primordial mode in which we are brought into relationship and mutual dependence with others of our kind; but if only the work matters and relationships are secondary, then the traditional gender-related contours of all social roles including the priesthood quickly become meaningless. If a woman can do the job better, let her do it. Only at the symbolic, sacramental, and relational level does gender retain its distinctive value. Priestly identity and celibacy, therefore, must find their ground there and not in utilitarian efficiencies.

3

"Hands that have touched a woman, cannot confect the sacrament!" This was one of the more extreme slogans of the 11th-century Gregorian Reforms, one that expressed the widely held conviction in both East and West, that sexual continence was a matter of ritual purity.

In the Fourth and Fifth Centuries, when we see the emergence of canonical legislation imposing celibacy or at least perpetual continence on lower and lower ranks of the clergy, the Church of the Roman Empire was imbued with the general Hellenistic ambivalence about sexuality and marriage. All communicants, whether clerical or lay, were expected to abstain from marital relations as part of their preparatory fast. In this climate certain aspects of the Jewish law of purity were typologically applied to the Church and its clergy. If the priests and Levites of the Old Covenant were required to purify themselves for their divine ministry by temporary

abstinence from sexual intercourse, how much more so should the priests and deacons of the New Covenant purify themselves by a perpetual abstinence!

The blood taboos of the Old Law, according to which blood flow—whether from a wound or menstruation or seminal discharge or postpartum bleeding—makes one ritually impure, also found echoes in religious sensibilities of many tribes and nations. For the Hellenistic imagination any association with the processes of birth and death was incompatible with divinity. The principled pagan rejection of the Gospel by Celsus, for example, took its stand on the judgment that any god who was capable of or willing to suffer birth and death was not worthy of worship. Within this context, the value of human sexuality was further diminished by the specifically Christian concerns about the relationship between procreation and the transmission of original sin. The Church of the patristic and medieval period made room for these sensitivities, but not without reservation, for to have conceded them entirely would have required the denial of the incarnation and the resurrection of the body and the unique and irreplaceable value of the natural lives of individual human beings.

A symbolic system of ritual purity has value inasmuch as it educates people to the holiness of God and the holiness that must be possessed by those who would draw near to him: the guilt of sin must be forgiven and the internal causes of sin healed before we can endure his unveiled presence. Jesus himself, however, made it clear that the impurity which serves as a pedagogical symbol of sin must not be confused with sin itself. In fact, to understand the drama of human morality in terms of the maintenance of ritual purity is the great Pharisaic perversion of the Old Covenant that Jesus combated in his own teaching, which is expressed so beautifully in the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which the priest and Levite sacrifice the love of neighbor for the sake of their own ritual purity while the unclean Samaritan is made the exemplar of fulfilling the Law. Christ himself did not prize his own purity as highly as the priest and Levite of the parable, but was made sin for us so that we might be cleansed, that is, forgiven and healed, of sin through faith and repentance. The Pauline mission to the gentiles, in which circumcision of the heart and not of the flesh was the sign of election, further relativized the symbolic, pedagogical system of ritual purity. Paul warns his people to approach the communion of the Body of Christ with care, but fraternal charity not ritual purity is the criterion of worthiness.

Ritual purity arguments for clerical celibacy depended in the past on Jewish and pagan religious sensibilities that have disappeared not only from the broader culture, but from within the Church itself. The consistent application of the traditional purity principles would require perpetual continence of daily communicants as well as clergy, not to mention the other traditional proscriptions pertaining to blood flow and seminal emission. Such a direction runs counter to the relaxation of fasting regulations and the emphasis on the positive aspects of marital sexuality seen in recent decisions and teachings of the magisterium. In a time when the pre-communion fast has been reduced to an hour and the marital act is understood to have a unitive as well as a procreative dimension, it is much harder to argue for clerical celibacy on the basis of ritual purity. If sexual abstinence has value as a form of consecration, its meaning lies elsewhere.

4

The most promising arguments tying celibacy to the relational core of priestly identity are those that find an analogy between the gift of self a man makes to his wife in marriage and that which a priest makes to the Church by his celibacy.

The union of divinity and humanity accomplished by the incarnation of the Divine Word is the central mystery of Christianity. By his incarnation Christ joins human nature to himself; by his death and resurrection he purifies it and raises it to immortality; by the diffusion of his Spirit he communicates this renewal of nature to all mankind who are willing to receive him. Through this union with his humanity he accomplishes in their humanity what he has accomplished in his own. His redeemed and divinized humanity replaces the fallen, fragmented, mortal humanity inherited from Adam. It is no longer they who live, but Christ who lives within them. Instead of a collection of hypostases, each with its own individualized nature, mankind becomes a single, polyhypostatic nature sustained by the Incarnate Word; it becomes the Body of Christ, the Church, the Living Temple of God, the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ.

For this reason the eternal Son left his Father to cleave to humanity and through it to all creation. St Paul, perceiving the analogy of the nuptial union of Adam and Eve to the union of Christ and his Church, proclaims marriage a great “mystery,” that is, a typological, symbolic foreshadowing of a plan hidden in the depths of the divine counsel, the proper form of which

came to light only with the revelation of Jesus Christ. Marriage is thus a privileged symbol of the incarnational dispensation, and married love finds its perfection in the light of this archetype. But the archetype, the reality, established a relationship between Christ and human nature that is more profound than the “one flesh” of natural marriage. To the degree that a human being’s life is reshaped and configured by that union of God with man, it will be ringed about with the glory of that supernatural marriage.

It is not surprising then that monastic consecration, beginning with the ancient Christian virgins, has been seen as a metaphorical marriage, for in it the unity of Christ with each soul begun in baptism becomes the defining form of the consecrated person’s temporal life. There are dangers, though, if one pushes this imagery too far. One cannot speak of monastic consecration and the marriage of a man and woman as if they were two species within a genus. Monastic consecration is an intensification of the union established by baptism, which all believers have in common and which is not sexual. Psychologically, it may be possible for Christ to become a kind of surrogate husband for a consecrated virgin; but how would that apply to a man? I think that is why consecrated virgin women constitute a distinct class among celibates and saints. But perhaps even here it would be better to recover the biblical image of virgins as the Bride’s maids, waiting and watching with the Bride for the coming of the Bridegroom.

In any case, to extend that psychological privilege of virgins as brides of Christ to men would involve a homosexualizing that is frankly repugnant to traditional Christian piety. Hence when the psychological analogy is applied to men, as is often done for celibate priests, it is more common to betroth men to the Church rather than to Christ. Again, as long as this “marriage” is understood metaphorically and not univocally, there is no problem; but where it is univocally applied (that is, as an alternative form of marriage comparable to natural marriage between a man and a woman) and used as the key to priestly identity, there is a problem.

John Paul II has clarified this analogical approach for the Latin tradition by insisting that the prime analogate of marriage, when considering the three vocational forms of life within the Church, namely, sacramental marriage between a man and a woman, priestly service to the Church, and religious consecration, is not the monogamous, sexual union of man and woman, but the union of Christ and the Church, the divine prototype of marriage. Other forms of life are “marriages” insofar as they partake in the character of Christ’s union with the Church. For the Eastern tradition the question of the relation between the three vocational forms becomes critical. To what degree are these forms mutually exclusive? Is a married priest a bigamist, as

some argue? Should a monk avoid ordination to the priesthood? To what degree is the monogamous aspect (mutually exclusive relationship between two persons) of sacramental marriage of a man and a woman transferred to the other forms. If priestly marriage to the Church is exclusive of sacramental marriage, then the Eastern discipline is hard to defend.

Some Westerners try to harmonize mitigate this problem by arguing that while a monogamous relationship with the corporate person of the Church is proper to the fullness of priesthood, as found in the episcopates of both East and West, lower orders of the priesthood, namely, priests and deacons, might still be married. In other words, celibacy is seen as an essential quality of priestly identity, which is diminished in the case of married clergy. From this it follows that celibate priests have a richer priestly identity than their married counterparts, a position that is hard to reconcile with Vatican II's assurances that priests of the Eastern discipline are not second-class priests.

In the Eastern tradition, however, the celibacy of bishops and of monastics generally has a different meaning. In the East celibacy is only one dimension of the ascetical, monastic ideal. To reduce monastic consecration to celibacy or to tie priestly identity to celibacy, not only risks excluding married priests from priestly identity, but erodes the ideal of Eastern monasticism, which differs so greatly from the plethora of forms of religious life in the West.

The analogy of priesthood to marriage also risks undermining the nature of Christian monogamy as a symbol of the divine love it is intended to represent. The analogy of a spousal relationship between priest and the corporate person of the Church tends to lose the visibility of concrete monogamy. Priests serve many parishes and even bishops are transferred from one see to another; a priest thus has many wives and a church or parish many husbands. The element of concrete singularity in monogamy is lost in a theological abstraction.

Moreover, what becomes of baptism and Eucharistic communion in which the union of Christ with the Church is actually wrought? If the priest's role *in persona Christi capitis* implies celibacy, would not reception of baptism and communion in the Body and Blood likewise entail the same, as certain early forms of Syriac Christianity believed? Although an apostle may stand in the place of the one who sent him, the distinction between him and the sender is never blurred, even when he stands *in persona Christi capitis*. When, as an ambassador and messenger of Christ, a human being takes the hope of the Cross to the suffering, he is stopped at the door to the chamber of an irreducible solitude. He may look in perhaps and witness the mystery of that suffering, he may suffer alongside it, but only the Bridegroom can enter into that solitude and

share that suffering truly and completely; and what happens in that embrace is veiled from our sight. Ministers of the Gospel are friends of the Bridegroom not his surrogates. There are no Levirate marriages in the kingdom.

For the celibate, too, there may be a danger of thinking too literally of their state as a marriage. Do consecrated virgins in their relationship with God, and priests in their relationship with the Church, experience the satisfaction of their sexual needs and desires? They may experience sublimated satisfactions of a deeper kind, including the profound satisfaction of the natural human need and desire to be chosen and loved by God as unique and irreplaceable and the desire for that participation in the divine paternity which we call fatherhood and motherhood, but those seem to me—granted, I am an outsider to such experience—to be satisfactions of a different order than those that can be found in marriage. I have no doubt that is possible for celibates, while experiencing the mortification of their sexual needs, indeed, through that mortification, to become elders within the Christian people, that is, to become spiritual fathers and mothers; just as married people through and beyond the travails of family life can achieve a similar spiritual paternity and maternity that makes them elders in the Church.

Hence, I propose spiritual fatherhood as the deeper, unifying element in priestly identity, common to East and West, containing within itself the complementary moments of virginity and monogamy.

5

From the standpoint of creation, *eros* directs man towards marriage, to a bond which is unique and definitive; thus, and only thus, does it fulfill its deepest purpose. Corresponding to the image of a monotheistic God is monogamous marriage. Marriage based on exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa. God's way of loving becomes the measure of human love. This close connection between *eros* and marriage in the Bible has practically no equivalent in extra-biblical literature.

—Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, no. 11

When the ancient Church asked monogamy of its clergy, it asked for the fullness of monogamy. Still in the Orthodox and Catholic churches married priests and deacons cannot remarry if their wives die unless they are willing to return to a lay state. To love “till death do us part” is not enough, only a radical “for the rest of my life” adequately expresses the monogamous spirit, “a

love strong as death, a jealousy as relentless as the grave.” Widowed clergy are not celibates; they are monogamists in the strict sense. To remarry after the death of one’s spouse is to become a bigamist.

This statement would be shocking to most Catholics because the Western tradition has nearly lost consciousness of ideal monogamy, except perhaps at that level of experience expressed in popular romantic literature where one still hears about finding one’s “true love” and “living happily ever after,” or about suffering at the hands of an evil step-mother. Monogamy has been diminished to mean having one marriage at a time. The remarriage of widowed persons no longer registers as problematic. With the loss of a married clergy, the Western church no longer has a place for affirming the ideal in its fullness; its energy shifts, instead, to defending the difference between marriages dissolved by death and those ending in divorce. The ideal is eclipsed by a concept of legal and sacramental validity. The Western church holds a strict interpretation of the Lord’s words about divorce, but otherwise leaves the Mosaic sensibility intact. Consequently, a radical affirmation of the monogamous ideal Jesus refers to as constituting the beginning of marriage is hard to find.

The Eastern churches, having a place where the ideal is upheld (a monogamous clergy), can afford to be more realistic about the difficulty of the ideal, and more merciful toward the human weakness or even sin of those who fall short of it by tolerating up to three marriages, regardless of whether the later marriages were preceded by the death of a spouse or by divorce. The Byzantine marriage rites make distinctions between these marriages; the unqualified blessing of a first marriage is replaced by a penitential note and prayers that stress the accommodation being made to human weakness. Nonetheless, where the penitential note is lost in the actual consciousness of people, such accommodation can become mere laxity and mask the erosion of the ideal rather than serve it.

When the ideal is understood in its fullness, however, to be the “husband of one wife” does not appear as a concession to weakness for those who cannot commit to celibacy. It is a crucible in which one learns love as it was intended in the beginning. When Jesus advocated a return to this idealism of the beginning, his disciples could not look on the heat and glare of that furnace: “If such is the case between a man and his wife, it is better not to marry.” The Lord’s cryptic endorsement of this saying was surely not an approbation of their cowardly weakness of faith.

Monogamy represents an essential quality of divine love in the biblical revelation. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is known by his covenant, kept and sustained by his faithfulness alone. He is not a benign thought thinking itself, he is not a dreamer dreaming himself in a multitude of fantastic and ephemeral forms, he is not a motionless font of change and equilibrium in the oscillations of time. He is the tri-personal Creator whose work is so real that he can bind himself to it by an everlasting covenant giving it a share in his own immortality; perhaps it is this binding itself which gives the creature its reality. This covenant of creation, of which human marriage in the beginning was a sign, was confirmed with splendor and a frightening mercy, by the incarnation, passion, and resurrection when in the face of sin the Son of God took his creation to himself in an inseparable union, suffering its death, sharing with it his own divine life. And so the sign, too, becomes a sacrament of the renewed and everlasting covenant.

Monogamy is not some second-best for those who cannot stand to be alone with the Alone. For it is not good to be alone! Even the blessed communion of the Holy Trinity, fullness, source, and end of all life and light and love, expresses itself precisely by a gratuitous act of transcending itself, expanding itself, opening itself to those it calls into being *ex nihilo*. God makes what-was-not to be, eternally, in relation with him. Monogamy is an icon of such love, of an identity grounded in a relationship, in the voluntary and irrevocable affirmation of the other as the content of one's own identity. No wonder it is so rare. No wonder the disciples thought it was impossible.

6

In truth, the Church's entire history is a history of holiness, animated by the one Love whose source is God. Indeed, only supernatural love, like the love that flows ever new from Christ's heart, can explain the miraculous flourishing down the centuries of Orders, male and female religious Institutes and other forms of consecrated life.

—Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus Address
on Consecrated Life (January 29, 2006)

The condition out of which monogamy can emerge and be sustained is a state of self-possession and self-denial; of interior vigil; of attention to reality and respect for its destiny; of respect for

oneself as belonging to another and a resolve to be employed only for purposes that one's Maker has deigned. This interior state is the virtue of virginity.

Even when the physical state of virginity is left behind, this virtue remains the interior condition out of which love can emerge. The interior reality of virginity need not disappear with marriage; on the contrary, it remains the necessary condition of agape, charity, divine love, within marriage. Without the mutual awareness of the spouses that they belong first to God and only secondarily to each other according to his vocation, marriage would be mutual slavery, possession without liberty. What allows divine love to possess and to liberate simultaneously is the virginity of heart that places the self at the service of the truth of the other and thus affirms, as a free act of its own meaning, the truth of the other. Even God, it seems, who is the sovereign source of the truth of all beings, serves that truth with such a furious, fiery self-abnegation, as though it were greater than himself, that we experience it with overwhelming terror and awe and call it holiness. The numinous *mysterium tremendum*. Holiness is the virginity of God. It is also the source of his paternity, of the ineffable love with which he loves what he has made, loving it as offspring and not as thing, as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

In Christian celibacy exterior virginity is transformed into a living symbol of the interior, necessary, and permanent condition of that love for which exterior Christian monogamy is a symbol. Christian celibacy and Christian monogamy are correlative manifestations of the revealed love of God in Jesus Christ. Even Christian virginity in anticipation of marriage, that is, premarital chastity, should be seen in this perspective as a spiritual achievement that requires the asceticism of divine love. Virginity of heart is the readiness to serve the truth of things with one's life.

Where celibacy is despised, monogamy becomes unsustainable; where monogamy is undervalued, celibacy becomes monstrous. Monogamy has the advantage here because, as Solovyov noted, it is implicit, though far from inevitable, in the unfolding dynamic of sexual, romantic love. A human being is drawn out of his own solitude and self-centeredness when he encounters an other—not an extension of himself, or a reflection, but truly, formally different from himself—yet possessing an essential content and value equal to his own, such that affirming the value of the other implies no denigration of his own. Such an encounter implies a vision of the other as ideal, as beauty. When the vision is mutual, the encounter naturally leads to mutual possession, the consummation of sexual love. But at some point a crisis arises, for sooner or later the vision alters and the lover sees that the beloved falls short of his or her ideal self. At this

point, the lover will either sink into disillusionment or rise to true charity, either falling back into self-serving or entering more deeply into the mystery of holiness, by which one serves the truth of the other, helping the other move toward their destiny.

Celibacy is ambiguous because it can be a sign of either motion, either disillusionment with the world of persons and their meaning, or selfless service to that world for the sake of life and its meaning. Unless it is configured to the aspect of divine love of which monogamy is the privileged symbol, celibacy can be dangerous. Just as monogamous love cannot be sustained without interior virginity, so celibacy, if it does not contain within itself the complementary note of monogamous love, tends toward a detachment from temporal human relationships that ultimately denies the biblical truth about God, creation, incarnation, and the resurrection of the body, all of which flow from the fatherhood of God, who calls all men into an eternal communion with himself. There is a good reason why the apostolic writings warn against heresies that forbid marriage: the whole substance of the revelation of God is at stake.

Nonetheless, we have the Lord's own testimony that it can be better not to marry, at least for those to whom it is given. Some are unmarriageable because they were born defective, casualties of mortal, corrupted nature; some have been wounded and mutilated by human violence; others have made themselves unmarriageable for the sake of the kingdom of God. Being a eunuch is different from being a virgin. The marring of nature that makes one a eunuch, stands in dramatic contrast with the original order both of virginity with its physical and psychological integrity and of the healthy cleaving of a man to his wife, becoming one flesh with her. The whole chapter of Matthew 19 is an exploration of the hardness of men's hearts that confronts and thwarts the kingdom of God as it strives to break into this world and of the readiness to suffer required of those who would be its citizens. Those who wish to belong to the kingdom can expect to be broken and violated in this life.

First, there is the hardness of men's hearts leading to neglect and adultery, which makes divorce a civil necessity. Hence the Mosaic law permitted divorce. Then, there is the hardness of the hearts of the disciples who not only share the abhorrence with which the followers of Moses viewed strict monogamy, but who are immediately seen in the next pericope rebuking those who sought to bring children to the Lord. Eunuchs, indeed, who not only reject the risk of monogamy but that of children as well! Next, we have the rich young man, whose heart, hardened by riches, nonetheless aches that it cannot, will not, follow Christ. Again, the disciples are amazed by the

unreasonableness of the Lord. They could not imagine, anymore than the rich man himself, someone being expected to give up all of that wealth: “Who then can be saved?!”

But here at last we have a glimmer of hope for the disciples, a flash of distinction, a moment of new self-knowledge. Almost with amazement at the fact, Peter realizes, “We have left everything.” What makes the hearts of the disciples any different from the hardness around them? Only this, that they love Christ more than anything else in this broken world. And they are willing to risk their lives for this love. Peter, who on the witness of the Gospels and the later testimony of Paul was married both before and after the earthly ministry of Jesus, could nonetheless at this moment, and again at the sea shore after his denial, truly say that he loves Jesus, that he has left everything for him.

In this hard world that one soft spot can wreck a life and make a eunuch. To love Jesus more than anything is to risk losing everything. But Jesus consoles his disciples with the promise that the loss will not be final nor will it be as great as they fear. Those whose love for Christ costs them home, family, wives, children, lands will have a reward, a hundred-fold, and will inherit eternal life. Even martyrdom is reasonable: Jesus, the kingdom of God made flesh, is worth it.

Celibacy as a living sign of the choice of this ultimate value, like martyrdom, is indeed better than marriage for those to whom it is given. Why is it better? Because to choose Christ is to choose the truth of things. He is the one in whom the truth of things is united and sustained, by creation, incarnation, passion, and resurrection. Love of Christ is the condition for loving everything else. Love of Christ and interior virginity coincide.

7

The first and greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. With your whole heart, soul, and mind committed what else can you love? Nothing, unless in loving God you also love what he loves, namely, your neighbor as yourself.

The second commandment is like unto the first because it is contained within it and derives from it. Romantic love, filial and parental love, as well as friendship, are all called to take root in the ground of divine love and to be animated by it. This growth in charity requires always the readiness, for the sake of God, to risk rejection from all those we love, the readiness to love God first and best always. Husbands and wives must be ready to make this sacrifice with respect

to one another, parents and children with respect to one another, friends with respect to one another.

Just as God's holiness is the foundation of his love, so virginity is the condition for our love. The sign of celibacy is greater than the sign of marriage inasmuch as the font of which it is the sign is prior to the stream of which marriage is the sign; but no one, celibate or married, should lack within themselves the interior realities of either stream or font. If you must choose, it is reasonable to choose the font in hope that the stream will follow in time. Such is the superior witness of Christian celibacy. Christian marriage and family life, and the social life that grows from it nonetheless witness in an external way the restoration of charity as the soul of all human relations. Nobody is exempted by their form of life from either of the two commandments, nor is anyone guaranteed to fulfill them simply by virtue of their external form of life.

8

When the Sadducees decided to challenge Jesus, they did it on the basis of his doctrine of marriage and of the resurrection. They do so with a hypothetical example: a woman is married to seven brothers in succession, each dying without leaving any children. In the resurrection, they ask, which of the brothers' wife will she be? They are as cynical about monogamy as they are about resurrection. Monogamy may be all right in paradise, but we live in the real world where people die.

Their conundrum seems to assume that the resurrection would merely restore the dead to life but would leave the cosmic order otherwise intact. Indeed, who would want to live forever in a cosmos in which the rest of nature remains subject to the futility of death? Jesus' response acknowledges a radical discontinuity between man's current mortal condition and his future resurrected state. "The children of the resurrection will neither marry nor be given in marriage but will be like the angels." Does this mean that Jesus shares their cynicism about monogamy? No, only that the transformation of the resurrection wrought by the power of God will be greater than they know.

Christian celibates have long understood themselves as anticipating this angelic state which is the common eschatological destiny of all men, the Seventh Day when we will enter into the divine rest, resting from our labors, neither marrying nor given in marriage. By symbolically anticipating this sabbath, Christian celibates become signs in history of the fullness of the

kingdom that will be realized at the end of history. They serve as reminders to married Christians that the meaning of their lives cannot be reduced to the duties, joys, or sorrows of marriage, family, kinship, or nation, or to any other dynamic of mortal existence. Birthing as well as dying will be left behind in the resurrection. But this fact must not be used to denigrate marriage and procreation, for without them there would be no children of the resurrection; without the six days of work, there would be no sabbath.

Should we understand Jesus' teaching as looking forward to the dissolution of all temporal relationships? Will husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and enemies who labored together for the six days meet as strangers on the sabbath? Does resurrection negate life? Surely what is good and true in all temporal relationships will be purified and saved; only evil and impurity and uncertainty will be left behind. The indefinite will become definite, the uncertain, sure; the undecided will be resolved, and the imperfect brought to completion. All good things of time will become eternal joys; little joys within the Master's great joy, the joy into which his faithful servants are bidden to enter. Death does not dissolve marriage because the resurrection is the end of marriage not as its negation but as its fulfillment. In the resurrection the woman who had seven husbands will be able to rejoice in whatever good inhered in her relationships with those men. But what joy the monogamous will have! Surely they will have joy proportioned to their unusual good fortune and merit, just as every triumph of love will have its own distinctive crown.

Nonetheless, something is left behind. Levirate marriage, the social institution the Sadducees used in their example, shows the inextricable connection in the fallen world between marriage and mortality. Levirate marriage reduces marriage itself to a means of securing a blood line and the orderly distribution of land and property that depends on it. Such marriage is not about love, it is about one's duty to family and tribe, the duty to serve the clan by securing its land holdings for future generations. These brothers do not marry this woman because they love her but because they must raise up heirs for the first brother so that his inheritance can be preserved. Marriage becomes a tactic for cheating death, not for the individual perhaps, but for the tribe and species. Marriage becomes a form of slavery for the individual. Perhaps the Sadducees, too, believed it was better not to marry.

The Lord's answer to their riddle need not be read as endorsing their reduction of marriage. For Jesus the beauty of the beginning remains the origin and norm even in the midst of this life, but it is a beauty ever tarnished by sin and bounded by death. By the time death is

overcome, marriage will have fulfilled its blessed and appointed task of fruitful multiplying; it will be left behind, no new marriages will be needed. The resurrection does not reset the story of paradise to its beginning; it is the end of the story that began there; the somber order of birth and death is the middle.

Nonetheless, marriage is about more than child bearing. Love is still possible in this fallen world, though it must be ever prepared to take the form of suffering, of the cross. Yet, the Cross is only the middle of the story and not the end. Everything else may pass but love remains. Resplendent in the end, love sparkles even now. Even in the middle of the story we glimpse the end, moments of joy, moments of anticipation, of promise, signs that love is not in vain, provided it is grounded in the angelic world of God's resurrecting love. Marriage reminds celibates that every human being is unique and irreplaceable, that risk and suffering for the sake of another is reasonable. Celibates provide the married with a reminder of what is most important within their marriages, of what will blaze forth when all the goods and pleasures inextricably bound to the conditions of mortal life are left behind.

9

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

—John 15:16-17

So far I have explored the complementarity of monogamy and virginity within the life of the Church generally, but how does this complementarity relate to priesthood and to the exercise of authority within the Church?

Like marriage ecclesial authority is a necessity of mortal life bound to the dynamic of human maturation: human beings are born, grow in wisdom and virtue, and pass beyond the horizon of biological existence, replaced by a new generation. The life cycle requires a principle of transmission from one generation to the next, and of guidance from immaturity to maturity within each generation.

In its simplest, most natural form authority is what gives life and growth, the power that moves and guides a being from its beginning to its end, from shapelessness to form, from imperfection to maturity. "One man plants, another waters, but God gives the growth." Here is

the context of human authority. Can a plant grow if its seed is not sown or if its soil has no water? And yet growth cannot be reduced to these nor can those who plant and water claim too much for themselves; theirs is a little power dependent upon the greater mystery. The interior principle of life unfolds within a given environment. Human parents not only pass on life but are the first mediators between the unfolding person and his environment. They are responsible to educate their child; to aid the inner principle of the child's personality as it expresses itself in character and action; to sustain, nurture, and educate for maturity; they are the child's first authorities. The first responsibility of the child is to acknowledge its dependence on this help and guidance as it unfolds toward its destiny. "Honor your father and your mother that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you."

While father and mother are the first and foundational authorities for a child, they are not the only or last ones he will need. The Church is the place where all human relationships have begun to be restored to their primordial foundation in love, the kingdom of heaven. That restoration is an organic and progressive dynamic, from imperfection to perfection, a companionship guided toward its destiny by those who have been called and given for that task. This is the apostolic principle of authority by which it is made clear that those who lead represent another. But they cannot represent the other in a merely formal way; and for that reason Paul tells Timothy to find men who can guide not by means of "a knowledge falsely so called," but a true knowledge, a wisdom that springs from likeness. All are brothers on the way, but the elder guides the younger, and it is from them that Timothy should choose those who carry the apostolic standard for all to follow. The wisdom of eldership is thus seen as the fitting disposition for the exercise of apostolic authority.

The elder is one who is more perfect in love, a love that unfolds as mercy and wisdom: mercy to lay down one's life for another; wisdom to teach and persuade, admonish and console. How does the elder gain his likeness to the living Word of love? The answer: "He must be blameless, the husband of one wife ..." and so on. Fatherhood is already implicit in Christian marriage. It has its natural foundation and first expression in the headship and service of love that a man exercises relative to his wife. It matures as he raises his children in a way that evokes from them a reverent submission to his authority. At the end of this development, eldership represents a social extension from within this natural fatherhood, a movement from a particular to a general sphere of paternity.

The Pastoral Epistles present the experience of being a husband and father, leading to the social paternity of an elder, as the basic model of formation for pastoral ministry—not because such maturity is the inevitable fruit of married and family life, but because it was the fruit intended in the beginning. Just as Jesus reorients marriage to the original monogamous ideal, so here, in the relationships of authority within the ecclesial community, the natural progression from son to husband to father to elder provides an image of the path for attaining the loving wisdom of a guide. “For if a man has not learned how to govern his own house, how will he take care of the Church of God?”

The authority of the youthful Timothy prevents any reduction of the apostolic principle to that of a natural maturity, nor does Timothy have to be married to reach this natural maturity; but St Paul nonetheless urges him to exercise his role from within that natural progression: “Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.” Timothy’s apostolic authority will grow in the dimension of paternal likeness as his love for his brothers and sisters deepens along the path of natural maturity. Like Christ’s, his pastoral charity will become in time a spiritual fatherhood. Instead of leading as St Paul’s favored son, he will become a father in his own right, a father after the example of Christ whose fatherhood consists in declaring the Father’s love by his own love.

Perhaps at this point we can see the reason for the ancient discipline, common to East and West, of not allowing marriage after ordination. For the married this canon underlines the value of monogamous love in imitation of the divine love; whereas for the unmarried it underlines the value of maturity in love. Both married and celibate clergy should have reached that level of maturity where their pastoral relations are characterized by a stable paternal affection rather than the restlessness of youthful affection directed to finding a wife but not yet prepared for the responsibilities of fatherhood or eldership.

The possession of this maturity, capable of sustaining relationships with all members of the community on the basis of a divine-paternal love, is the kind of eldership which is the fitting disposition for exercising apostolic ministry.

There is one dark theme that requires treatment: Power. During the last millennium the Western tradition of a celibate clergy has been associated with discussions of power and control between

Church and State. Even earlier, during the Iconoclastic controversies of Byzantium, as well as the debates within Byzantine over imperial attempts reunion with the West, monks enjoyed tremendous prestige among the Orthodox faithful because their relative freedom from imperial power enabled them to rise up as defenders of traditional Orthodoxy.

Sometimes, clerical celibacy has been the object of power struggles between ecclesiastical spheres. The largest defection from the Catholic Church in recent centuries, for example, happened in North America during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries when the American Roman Catholic bishops and the Roman curia worked together to impose the Western discipline on the Eastern Catholic churches outside their traditional homelands. Hans Urs von Balthasar, himself a passionate defender of the Western discipline of mandatory clerical celibacy, nonetheless once wrote, referring in general to the forced latinization of the Eastern Catholic churches, "There is such a thing as genocide among Christians."

From the Gregorian Reforms of the Eleventh Century to the dramatic events surrounding Vatican I at the end of the Nineteenth, clerical celibacy was an essential feature of a theocratic system, grounded in the doctrine of the *plenitudo potestatis*, that sought to subdue secular society and political power to the control of the Church. On one level, the Investiture Controversies were about securing the independence of the Church over against the State. In the feudal world of medieval Europe celibacy provided a clear social line of demarcation between the two, allowing two spheres of law and loyalty to exist within the social order. By promising celibacy, whether as a religious or a cleric, one left the world and entered the Church.

On another level, the struggle was the occasion by which the Roman Church articulated socially its sacramental vision of itself as the continuing presence of Christ in history. Precisely because of his sacramental identification with Christ as his Vicar, the Pope could claim to be the continuing presence of the plenitude of power which the Lord claimed for himself before his Ascension: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Celibacy embodied this sacramental vision by showing the coincidence between undivided loyalty to God and undivided loyalty to the Church and its head, the Pope. It is this functional, sacramental equivalence of Pope and Christ that stands behind those medieval acclamations of the Pope as "God on earth" which sound so extreme to modern ears. It is this vision properly qualified that Pius IX sought to secure at Vatican I against the rising flood of modernity. It is this vision that continues to justify the mandatoriness of clerical celibacy

within the Roman Church. The Eastern discipline can do justice to the complementarity and fittingness of a celibate priesthood alongside a married priesthood, but does not express as well as the Western discipline the radical identity of the priesthood with Christ which culminates in the vicariate of the Pope, the undivided loyalty to God in the person of his Vicar, to whom one can truly be obedient “as to the Lord.”

The Twentieth Century witnessed some dramatic changes to the medieval feudal system, from the loss of the Papal States to the setting aside of the Papal Tiara. These developments have served to distinguish and emphasize sacramental authority from and over against coercive political power; but the very fact that the institutional articulation of this sacramental vision took place within the medieval struggle for political control has left its marks. It seems likely that a full peace between Eastern and Western churches will require a further disentangling of spiritual fatherhood and the evangelical value of celibacy from the demand for power and control.

What is the role of power within fatherhood? Surely, the test of paternity arrives when the children come of age. Will they still respect and submit to their father when he can no longer coerce them? Will they respect and honor him when in old age he is wholly dependent upon them? If so, he is a true elder, a spiritual father.

There was a time in the United States when orphans were sent from the East Coast to the American West where they were adopted to help on the farm or ranch. These children were a source of cheap labor, slaves with certain rights, but such an adoption could be to their good, too. A man who adopted such an orphan faced a decision: Would he limit the context of his concern to the use he would make of the child until they reached their majority, or would he become a father and set as his final goal the preparation of the child for the moment when they would leave his home? Actually, it is the same choice made by every parent. The adopting parent of the frontier, however, had the advantage that it was starkly presented.

All authority of one man to another is a stewardship, one part acting toward another part on behalf of the whole. The two parts are equal in their dependence on and responsibility toward the whole. Both are equally necessary to its manifestation. There is a certain order by which the interaction of parts is governed and the responsibility for that interaction is exercised by a regulating part; nonetheless, the regulating part does not own the whole but belongs to it.

Only when the one exercising authority recognizes that those he rules do not belong to him, or he to himself, can he truly serve the whole. Thus, an interior poverty gives rise to an interior chastity that enables the steward to direct and employ the other members of the

household, not in terms of his own desires but according to the will of him to whom all belong. From this stock unfolds obedience, both his own and that which he is thus enabled to elicit from the others. This pattern of stewardship is necessary for any effective exercise of authority, whether in the home, the workplace, in civil government, or the Church. It is one of the defining characteristics of a truly Christian culture. “You know how among the gentiles the powerful lord it over their subjects; it shall not be so among you.”

Authority exercised in the evangelical way is perfectly compatible with freedom because so used it enables each part to move toward its own proper destiny within the whole. Here the good of the part and the good of the whole are simultaneously achieved. Each part has an immediate interior relation to the whole. Its action is governed by another part, perhaps, but its nature and destiny are not mediated by that ruling part. Each person has a transcendent relationship with God as their source and destiny. If the relation between parts remains natural, the primary and only necessary expression of authority will be teaching and coordinating direction. But what happens when the relationships between parts become unnatural?

“He who sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.” This injunction is the foundation of any human society within the fallen world, not perhaps in its literal application, but as enjoining on human beings the establishment of courts of justice to restrain the lawlessness of sinful human beings. Because of the disorder introduced between parts of the whole by sin, the regulating parts quickly become ineffective unless they have the power to restrain and constrain the errant parts. Thus the natural functions of authority quickly acquire, and are even eclipsed by, the right to judge and the power to coerce others. Human kingship becomes the defining institution of the Noahic dispensation. In its ideal it combines the paternity of natural authority with power to overmaster the violent with violence. Justice becomes the will and power to protect the innocent and punish the wicked. A king can restrain lawlessness perhaps, but can he root it out? What happens when he is himself unjust or weak? The Noahic cosmos is a stalemate, a dynamic of balancing powers with varying degrees of justice, but it is never unambiguously good like paradise. Surely, it will not last forever!

Indeed, the Church is meant to be the manifestation of that true kingdom which will remain when the Noahic cosmos dissolves by fire in the twinkling of an eye. Jesus, when he teaches the things of God and of the kingdom, enjoins men to imitate a fatherly perfection so removed from what they expect that it can only be represented with images of injustice. He makes the rain to shine on the just and unjust alike. He leaves ninety-nine sheep to search for

one. He pays the laborers who work one hour and those who work twelve the same day's wage. He kills the fatted calf for a prodigal son.

Rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's, Jesus stood before Pilate and taught the truth. Pilate representing Caesar represented the Noahic order of justice in both its God ordained stewardship and its human incompetence. But Jesus has another kingdom which shows that of Caesar to be a mere stop-gap measure, necessary to put a check on the growth of evil but powerless to uproot it.

“For this purpose I came into the world: to bear witness to the truth.” This is the suffering service of Messiah. Christ is King, but in the Noahic realm his throne is the Cross. Only as he passes through the veil—leads us through the veil by emptying his tomb and Hades with it—does he show the way out of the Noahic stalemate back to paradise. Pascha becomes a filtering sieve and a purifying fire through which only those who have been justified and purified may pass, leading to a kingdom where no wicked man may enter or flourish. The instrument, by which the Messiah winnows the grain, separating wheat from chaff, is not a sword but his own shed blood.

The judgment Jesus brought from his Father, and sent his apostles to bring to every corner of the world, was a mercy so great that only those who are scandalized by it are condemned. The authority of the Messiah was exercised above all in witnessing to the true nature of God manifested in the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness and discipleship, freely embraced, heal and liberate, making growth and true human maturity and flourishing possible. “When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.”

11

Human fatherhood, whether in the family or in the Church, is always a relative participation in the absolute fatherhood of God. This relative participation in the authority of another, exercised on behalf of another, is made explicit in apostleship—but it is made fruitful by likeness, a likeness in which the children know themselves to be loved, a likeness which is love.

Such is the fatherhood of Christ. “You have given him authority over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him.” Thus the Lord begins the great prayer that links the Farewell Discourse with the passion. The gift of life for the sake of which he was given authority consists in the revelation of the Father's name, which is nothing other than a

revelation of the Father's love. Jesus loves his disciples with the very love with which his Father loves him. "I have declared to them your name, and will declare it, that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them." And so the great prayer ends. He gives his life to them in a new covenant that is none other than the everlasting covenant of the Father from the beginning.

The Christ is the Master and Teacher of all men because he alone has revealed, and will reveal, the fullness of the Father's love to all. He does not reveal by speaking abstractly of this love; he embodies it; he loves. In revealing his Father to all, he becomes a father to all. In him word and life coincide. The transition from the Chair of Moses to the Cross of Christ consists precisely in this coincidence. The manifestation of love in deed and not merely in word by the one who reveals corresponds to the new law written on the hearts of those who receive. The Gospel reveals the truth as spirit and life.

"Then spoke Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, "Rabbi, Rabbi." But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased: and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.'"

This passage is embarrassing to Catholic clergy—at least in those countries where "Father" is the title of respect that structures their pastoral relationships—because it puts them on the defensive against a trite literalism too common among some Christians. On the other hand, and all too often, the substance strikes home. Some of us do love to be called "Father" and "Teacher" or "Master" in precisely the way Jesus condemns. The Gospels do not condemn the Pharisees and Sadducees, scribes and lawyers because of anti-Semitism, but because those Jewish leaders represent types and temptations, leading to abuses of authority, that are perennially present within the Church herself. The disciples showed themselves on numerous

occasions liable to clericalism and the temptation has not disappeared from among their successors.

Jesus consistently rebuked that tendency. On the last night, as he bade farewell to his disciples, he promised them that they would share in his mission, but only in the same lowly, suffering form as his had taken. Perhaps after his resurrection they were tempted to think they could minister out of his exalted state, but the Farewell Discourse was there to remind them that on this side of their cross, theirs will be a mission of kenosis not exaltation. Only if and after they merit the first resurrection and reign with him as those beheaded for his sake, would they reign in heavenly glory. The path he walked in life, they too must walk. “For the servant is not greater than his master.”

When Peter cut off the ear of Malchus in the garden, Jesus rebuked him and healed the ear. “Those who live by the sword will die by the sword.” Jesus never meant for his disciples to resort to coercive force in order to defend or advance his messianic mission. However Christian an emperor may be his authority belongs to the Noahic realm and not to the kingdom of heaven. However pressing the danger to the Church, her ministers may not use coercion in their ministry. As citizens they can appeal to Caesar for justice when their temporal goods and lives are threatened, but in the end they must be ready to stand before Pilate simply as martyrs, witnesses, to the truth.

All earthly things cast shadows. In the shadow we see the distorted shape of the thing itself. A man's greatest virtue may be the occasion of his greatest blind spot, his tragic flaw. Different disciplines of power suffer different forms of corruption. The hereditary monarch is exposed to different temptations than a politician who depends on popular vote. Different ecclesial disciplines are liable to different forms of clericalism. Disciplines that favor asceticism, charismatic gifts, institutional loyalty, or academic learning as the condition for exercising authority will be prone to different abuses of authority. Those who study the forms of earthly institutions do well to consider the shadows they cast.

In civil government a state that comprises mixed forms of authority is more stable than one founded on a single principle. Complementary disciplines of power may serve one another by curbing the particular form of corruption to which each is prone. In the family the complementarity of mother and father, brought into their proper unity, serves the children better than either alone. The unity of monogamous and celibate priesthood have a similar potential. Each is prone to a kind of clericalism that the witness of the other may serve to curb. But what

principle do they look to achieve this effect? That which distinguishes each from the other, or that which they share?

Honor and prestige and power corrupt married priests, creating divisions of class and dynasty with devastating effects for the effective communion of the Church. Men whose motive in seeking the priesthood is tainted by desire for a higher social status magnify this fault when their desire is not only for themselves but for a wife and children. Even the Eastern discipline of monastic bishops, which was in part an effort to curb such tendencies, gives rise to its own abuses. The monastic ideal has suffered in Eastern churches where monastic profession becomes part of a careerist strategy for advancement to an episcopal throne. The proper complementarity of monogamous and monastic clergy would help the East quite apart from its dialogue with the West.

In the West, too, celibacy risks being the “sacrifice” that entitles a man to enjoy rights and privileges within the clerical system. The monastic movement in its original thrust repudiated all positions of power including and in some places especially clerical office. When virginity of heart is replaced by its external form, where the external form becomes a *quid pro quo*, only the sufferings individual priests endure as a consequence of their bargain—if finally embraced for love of Christ—mitigate the disaster. In both East and West, when clericalism replaces spiritual fatherhood, the laity slip away becoming the silent allies of those whose anticlericalism is really a mask for the spirit of antichrist. What ought the laity do, from their side, to avoid giving such an opening to the enemies of the Church, to avoid a deepening spiral of clerical-anticlerical antagonism?

In the passage we have been considering, Jesus establishes the principle that *abusus non tollit usum*, the abuse of authority does not take away its use. The Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses; do as they teach, though not as they do. Jesus speaks both to the multitude and to his disciples because while he warns his disciples, he is also putting the crowd on their guard. He doesn't want them to be blind to hypocrisy in his disciples anymore than in the Pharisees; but neither does he want them to lose sight of the seat of Moses. By separating the cathedra from the one who sits in it, he does not excuse the hypocrisy but he does give hope that the good which that chair was established to bring cannot be wholly annulled by its misuse. The Master frees us to obey a man without sharing his too exalted opinion of himself; we may reap the harvest of wheat while setting aside the tares.

The Lord creates an inner space of freedom for those who are subject to authority, secured by the awareness that all are brothers and each has God as his Father and Christ as his Teacher and Master. No longer can the Pharisee take pride in the multitude's obedience; it is not for his sake that they obey. As brothers we submit ourselves one to another but only in the fear of God and as unto the Lord. Our submission and our exercise of authority, if mature in this awareness, will always be conditioned by a profound recognition both of our equality and of our shared dependence upon the Father. Clericalism seeks to undermine this awareness, to bind the conscience of the other to itself, to be called "Father" and meaning by it "Not Brother." The free conscience will respond by calling the brother "Father" but meaning by it "Elder Brother sitting in our Father's chair." Such a conscience should use its freedom, not for anticlericalism, but to love that brother for the sake of our common Master and Father.

12

Just as we have one Father, God, and one Master, Christ, so we have one Priest, one mediator between God and man.

And yet, just as the absolute fatherhood of God is the source from which all relative, earthly fatherhoods take their name, so the absolute priesthood of Christ has its earthly images. All Christians, conformed by faith and baptism to the pattern of Christ's death and resurrection, offer sacrifice by actualizing in each moment that sacred mystery, mortifying sin and living in the Spirit. In the Spirit they minister to God with thanksgiving and supplication, for themselves, one another, and the world. As they are made like Christ, they too mediate the reality of divine love to the world, they become spiritual fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, a household of priests reconciling God and man. Among them, however, are those chosen and ordained to lead the household in its priestly ministry. To them is committed the celebration of the Eucharist, to "do this in memory of me" until he comes again; they are the sacramental anchors, the standards around which the Church gathers, knowing itself, becoming itself. Theirs is the apostolic participation in the ministry of Christ to which, God willing, the likeness will be added so that their apostleship can bear fruit abundantly, thirty, sixty, a hundred fold.

Ministerial priesthood is a work of a spiritual fatherhood that has as its task to declare the Father's name by revealing his love. That love is a holy virginal love that seeks only the good of

the beloved, that has bound itself eternally to the beloved, one that will lay down its own life to bring the beloved to her destiny. This is the virginal monogamy of the Creator calling the creature into an eternal and indissoluble union with himself. Celibacy and monogamy are both fitting symbols of this love, for each manifests an essential aspect of it, aspects that are complementary one to the other, each clarifying and deepening the meaning of the other. Just as the priesthood rooted in baptism is adorned by these complementary, sacramentally expressive forms of life among the faithful, forms expressive of the meaning of love, so too with the apostolic priesthood. Celibacy and monogamy need not be rival forms of priesthood but can become a sacred pair, as expressive of the mystery of the Father's love as man and woman are of the mystery of human nature.

If the Roman church ever changes its discipline of mandatory clerical celibacy, it ought not to do so as an accommodation to sociological pressures or as a tactical response to a shortage of celibate vocations. To do so would risk diluting the radical nature of Christian discipleship. The change should come only from a mature desire to reap the fruit of the synergy of the monogamous and virginal moments of paternal love manifested as external modes of human, spiritual, and pastoral formation. The cultivation of that synergy, however, need not wait; it can begin now, for example, by fostering greater fraternal bonds between celibate priests and married permanent deacons, by helping Eastern Catholics recover their tradition of monogamous priesthood, and by forging links of cooperation with Orthodox pastors and, where there is sufficient unity of faith, with their Protestant peers. The Eastern churches themselves can reflect on their own life, asking whether there are ways to foster the complementarity of monogamous and monastic clergy which is already present within their traditional discipline. By these means, even without a Western change of discipline, the churches of both East and West can hope to rediscover and affirm the vital elements of pastoral fatherhood, elements central enough to both traditions to serve as common points of shared identity.

Glory to Jesus Christ!