

✦ **Scripture further tells us that only the virgins follow the Lamb wherever he goes.**

"Then I looked and there was the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of rushing water or a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. They were singing (what seemed to be) a new hymn before the throne, before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn this hymn except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been ransomed from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women; they are virgins and these are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been ransomed as the firstfruits of the human race for God and the Lamb. On their lips no deceit has been found; they are unblemished." (Rv. 14:1-5)

Other Reasons For / Benefits of / Facts Regarding Priestly Celibacy:

- ✦ **Priestly celibacy is a source of grace for the Church which has contributed much both to her growth and to the salvation of souls.**
- ✦ **Priestly celibacy is necessary due to the tireless work of a priest.**
- ✦ **Priestly celibacy is admired by the flock - and those outside the flock. It sets a good example of chastity, so necessary in today's world.**

"Virginity fully deserves the name of angelic virtue, which St. Cyprian writing to virgins affirms: 'What we are to be, you have already commenced to be. You already possess in this world the glory of the resurrection; you pass through the world without suffering its contagion. In preserving virgin chastity, you are the equals of the angels of God.' To souls, restless for a purer life or inflamed with the desire to possess the kingdom of heaven, virginity offers itself as 'a pearl of great price,' for which one 'sells all that he has, and buys it.' Married people and even those who are captives of vice, at the contact of virgin souls, often admire the splendor of their transparent purity, and feel themselves moved to rise above the pleasures of sense. When St. Thomas states 'that to virginity is awarded the tribute of the highest beauty,' it is because its example is captivating; and besides, by their perfect chastity do not all these men and women give a striking proof that the mastery of the spirit over the body is the result of a divine assistance and the sign of proven virtue?" (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

- ✦ **Priestly celibacy enables priests to be free for missionary activity - so necessary for the salvation of souls.**
- ✦ **Priestly celibacy shows the world one's faith.**

"Finally, virginity consecrated to Christ is in itself such an evidence of faith in the kingdom of heaven, such a proof of love for our Divine Redeemer, that there is little wonder if it bears abundant fruits of sanctity. Innumerable are the virgins and apostles vowed to perfect chastity who are the honor of the Church by the lofty sanctity of their lives. In truth, virginity gives souls a force of spirit capable of leading them even to martyrdom, if needs be: such is the clear lesson of history which proposes a whole host of virgins to our admiration, from Agnes of Rome to Maria Goretti." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

- ✦ **Priestly celibacy gives the priest more time for his flock.**
- ✦ **Priestly celibacy prevents a man from being torn between his wife and the Church.**
- ✦ **Consecrated virginity brings countless benefits to mankind.**

"We feel the deepest joy at the thought of the innumerable army of virgins and apostles who, from the first centuries of the Church up to our own day, have given up marriage to devote themselves more easily and fully to the salvation of their neighbor for the love of Christ, and have thus been enabled to undertake and carry through admirable works of religion and charity... Who can ever praise enough the missionaries who toil for the conversion of the pagan multitudes, exiles from their native country, or the nuns who render them indispensable assistance? To each and every one [as applicable] We gladly apply these words of Our Apostolic Exhortation, 'Menti Nostrae': "...by this law of celibacy the priest not only does not abdicate his paternity, but increases it immensely, for he begets not for an earthly and transitory life but

for the heavenly and eternal one." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

"Those who so bind themselves by the vows of religion, far from having suffered a loss of liberty, enjoy that fuller and freer kind, that liberty, namely, by which Christ hath made us free. And this further view of theirs, namely, that the religious life is either entirely useless or of little service to the Church, besides being injurious to the religious orders cannot be the opinion of anyone who has read the annals of the Church. Did not your country, the United States, derive the beginnings both of faith and of culture from the children of these religious families? to one of whom but very lately, a thing greatly to your praise, you have decreed that a statue be publicly erected. And even at the present time wherever the religious families are found, how speedy and yet how fruitful a harvest of good works do they not bring forth! How very many leave home and seek strange lands to impart the truth of the gospel and to widen the bounds of civilization; and this they do with the greatest cheerfulness amid manifold dangers! Out of their number not less, indeed, than from the rest of the clergy, the Christian world finds the preachers of God's word, the directors of conscience, the teachers of youth and the Church itself the examples of all sanctity. Nor should any difference of praise be made between those who follow the active state of life and those others who, charmed with solitude, give themselves to prayer and bodily mortification. And how much, indeed, of good report these have merited, and do merit, is known surely to all who do not forget that the 'continual prayer of the just man' avails to placate and to bring down the blessings of heaven when to such prayers bodily mortification is added." (Pope Leo XIII, "Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae", 1899 A.D.)

✦ **Priestly celibacy, a continual act of self-denial which "frees the priest from the flesh" and from temporal concerns, may help advance the priest in sanctity.**

"There is yet another reason why souls desirous of a total consecration to the service of God and neighbor embrace the state of virginity. It is, as the holy Fathers have abundantly illustrated, the numerous advantages for advancement in spiritual life which derive from a complete renouncement of all sexual pleasure. It is not to be thought that such pleasure, when it arises from lawful marriage, is reprehensible in itself; on the contrary, the chaste use of marriage is ennobled and sanctified by a special sacrament, as the Fathers themselves have clearly remarked. Nevertheless, it must be equally admitted that as a consequence of the fall of Adam the lower faculties of human nature are no longer obedient to right reason, and may involve man in dishonorable actions. As the Angelic Doctor has it, the use of marriage 'keeps the soul from full abandon to the service of God.'" (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

✦ **Priestly celibacy maintains a priest's purity - so necessary since he daily handles the Holy Eucharist - the Body of Christ.**

"We are no less assured by St. John Chrysostom's treatise on the priesthood, which is still a fruitful subject for reflection. Intent on throwing light on the harmony which must exist between the private life of him who ministers at the altar and the dignity of the order to which his sacred duties belong, he affirmed: "...it is becoming that he who accepts the priesthood be as pure as if he were in heaven." (Pope Paul VI, 1967 A.D.)

"Show me the man who is able to explain or understand the value and excellence of purity, a virtue beyond all the common laws of nature. It is on earth a perfect type, and a lively picture of the virginal purity which reigns in heaven. It is that which has passed through air, clouds, and stars, and which, soaring above the angels, has found the Divine Word in the bosom of His Father, and has drawn Him to earth to be united to it in an inexpressible manner. Now, after having been so fortunate as to find a pearl of so great a price, on what plea can we allow it to be lost? Nevertheless, it is not I, but the Son of God Himself, who assures us that the pure and chaste will be like unto the angels in heaven; and at this we need not be astonished if such souls are placed in the rank of angels, souls who have for their spouse the King and Lord of angels." (St. Ambrose, Doctor of the Church)

- ✦ **Priestly celibacy frees the priest from many duties and obligations that would otherwise interfere with his priestly ministry.**
- ✦ **In times of persecution, priestly celibacy prevents a priest from being torn between competing loyalties.**
- ✦ **Priests simply don't have time for a wife and children.**
- ✦ **Virginity is angelic.**

"In other sciences men have devised certain practical methods for cultivating the particular subject; and so, I take it, virginity is the practical method in the science of the divine life, furnishing men with the power of assimilating themselves with spiritual natures." (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 4th century A.D.)

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✦ **The vow of celibacy has led to the priest scandals.** This argument is also used by the misinformed who simply believe that if priests could marry there would be no more scandal. What they do not realize is that the majority of the atrocious acts have been committed by homosexuals and many involve adolescents. Obviously, allowing priests to marry would not change this sad state of affairs. In fact, even if there were no longer a celibate priesthood, scandals would still occur (in addition to those which have already been committed by homosexuals and against adolescents, you would likely then have to add adultery to the list of scandals). In fact, it may be argued that it is harder for married persons to obey God than those who take a vow of celibacy. Furthermore, the scandals involving priests vowed to celibacy have been shown to be not out of proportion with those of other persons who are married, and involve only a small amount of all priests. Also, it should be remembered that it is not celibacy that caused the scandals - it is some priests' failure to live up to their vow of celibacy that caused the scandals. It would be an error in logic to say that since something is abused, it is bad! Rather, it is the abuse of a good thing that is bad, not the thing abused! "The value of a thing must not be judged by its abuse." And finally, the failure on the part of some prelates to thwart further problems exacerbated the scandals. These factors cannot rightly be blamed on priestly celibacy.

✦ **The Church doesn't have the right to force someone to take a vow of celibacy.** This, of course, is true. However, the Church does not force priests to take a vow of celibacy. Although she may require celibacy for admission to the priesthood - and it is in her power to set down requirements for her ministers - the candidate makes this conscious choice on his own. He gives this gift of himself only after full reflection and preparation. It is a fully conscious choice with the realization that he is making a life-long commitment. Since the Church is our loving Mother who knows what is best for us, she seeks to provide her children with the best priests possible - those priests dedicated to God and zealous for our spiritual welfare. Those who are unwilling to vow celibacy are *not* forced to do so - they are simply considered unsuitable candidates for the priesthood.

✦ **Ending priestly celibacy would open the priesthood up to many more candidates.** While ending the requirement of priestly celibacy may open the priesthood to more candidates, this is not necessarily desirable. First of all, the priesthood is only open to those with a calling. Many who seek to "open up the priesthood to more candidates" may wrongly tend to think of the priesthood as a job rather than a vocation, or a calling. In fact, it is the Church's solemn duty to "close" the priesthood to unworthy candidates. By having serious requirements for the priesthood, the Church automatically gets rid of many unsuitable candidates - candidates that are unwilling to sacrifice themselves for God and their flock. God will continue to call those He desires, and we can be certain that He will not call those who could not live up to His Church's requirements.

✦ **By requiring celibacy, the Church appears to reject marriage.** Those who make such an accusation would also have to say that Christ and St. Paul rejected marriage, since they both recommended celibacy (see above). This is obviously false, and especially so considering that Christ raised marriage to the dignity of the Sacrament. In the case of the Church, it would be fair to say that the Church is the *strongest* defender of marriage in the entire world. Not only does she honor it as a Sacrament and rejects practices harmful to it, but she emphatically rejects divorce, holding that marriage is indissoluble until death.

✦ **Celibacy goes against nature.** If this was true, why would Christ and St. Paul both recommend it? Why did the apostles practice it after they were called by Jesus - even the married ones?

"Virginity is natural and marriage came after the fall." (St. Jerome, Doctor of the Church, 5th century A.D.)

"Considering what contemporary scholarly investigation has ascertained, it is not right to continue repeating that celibacy is against nature because it runs counter to lawful physical, psychic and affective needs, or to claim that a completely mature human personality demands fulfillment of these needs. Man, created to God's image and likeness, is not just flesh and blood; the sexual instinct is not all that he has; man has also, and pre-eminently, understanding, choice, freedom, and thanks to these powers he is, and must remain, the chief work of creation; they give him mastery over his

physical, mental and emotional appetites. The true, profound reason for dedicated celibacy is, as we have said, the choice of a closer and more complete relationship with the mystery of Christ and the Church for the good of all mankind: in this choice there is no doubt that those highest human values are able to find their fullest expression. The choice of celibacy does not connote ignorance or contempt for the sexual instinct and man's capacity for giving himself in love. That would certainly do damage to his physical and psychological balance. On the contrary, it demands clear understanding, careful self-control and a wise elevation of the mind to higher realities. In this way celibacy sets the whole man on a higher level and makes an effective contribution to his perfection." (Pope Paul VI, 1967 A.D.)

✦ **Celibacy is unhealthy or injures a man's development.** Again, if such were true, why would Christ and St. Paul both recommend it? Why have so many celibate and saintly priests been so healthy and "well developed" throughout the 2,000 year history of the Church? Celibacy rather than injure a man's health or development, helps enable his true development towards Christ.

"In any case, the Church of the West cannot weaken her faithful observance of her own tradition. Nor can she be regarded as having followed for centuries a path which instead of favoring the spiritual richness of individual souls and of the [faithful], has in some way compromised it, or of having strifed, with arbitrary juridical prescriptions, the free expansion of the most profound realities of nature and of grace." (Pope Paul VI, 1967 A.D.)

"[I]t is against common sense, which the Church always holds in esteem, to consider the sexual instinct as the most important and the deepest of human tendencies, and to conclude from this that man cannot restrain it for his whole life without danger to his vital nervous system, and consequently without injuring the harmony of his personality. As St. Thomas very rightly observes, the deepest natural instinct is the instinct of self-preservation; the sexual instinct comes second. In addition, it is for the rational inclination, which is the distinguishing privilege of our nature, to regulate these fundamental instincts and by dominating to enable them." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

"We readily grant that the natural and lawful desire a man has to love a woman and to raise a family is renounced by the celibate in sacred orders; but it cannot be said that marriage and the family are the only way for fully developing the human person. In the priest's heart love is by no means extinct. His charity is drawn from the purest source, practiced in the imitation of God and Christ, and is no less demanding and real than any other genuine love. It gives the priest a limitless horizon, deepens and gives breadth to his sense of responsibility - a mark of mature personality - and inculcates in him, as a sign of a higher and greater fatherhood, a generosity and refinement of heart which offer a superlative enrichment." (Pope Paul VI, 1967 A.D.)

"The virtue of chastity does not mean that we are insensible to the urge of concupiscence, but that we subordinate it to reason and the law of grace, by striving wholeheartedly after what is noblest in human and Christian life. In order to acquire this perfect mastery of the spirit over the senses, it is not enough to refrain from acts directly contrary to chastity, but it is necessary also generously to renounce anything that may offend this virtue nearly or remotely; at such a price will the soul be able to reign fully over the body and lead its spiritual life in peace and liberty. Who then does not see, in the light of Catholic principles, that perfect chastity and virginity, far from harming the normal unfolding of man or woman, on the contrary endow them with the highest moral nobility." (Pope Pius XII, "Sacra Virginitas", 1954 A.D.)

"Finally, it may not be asserted, as some do, that the 'mutual help,' which is sought in Christian marriage, is a more effective aid in striving for personal sanctity than the solitude of the heart, as they term it, of virgins and celibates. For although all those who have embraced a life of perfect chastity have deprived themselves of the expression of human love permitted in the married state, nonetheless it cannot thereby be affirmed that because of this privation they have diminished and despoiled the human personality. For they receive from the Giver of heavenly gifts something spiritual which far exceeds that mutual help' which husband and wife confer on each other. They consecrate themselves to Him Who is their source, and Who shares with them His divine life, and thus personality suffers no loss, but gains immensely. For who, more than the virgin, can apply to himself that marvelous phrase of the Apostle Paul: 'I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.' For this reason the Church has most wisely held that the celibacy of her

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