

ANNOUNCING

TOP TEN REASONS

WHY THE POPE SHOULD ALLOW A MARRIED PRIESTHOOD

- ① **THE RULE OF MANDATORY CELIBACY WAS DECREED BY A POPE AND CAN BE DISMANTLED BY A POPE**

Jesus chose married men to be apostles; for this reason the first priests were married. It was only eight hundred fifty-six years ago (1139) when Pope Innocent II decreed mandatory celibacy for all priests in response to concerns about ownership of Church property and a negative perception of sexuality. ¹ Pope John Paul II has allowed more than ninety married Protestant ministers in the United States to convert and become Catholic married priests. It is within the Pope's power to also allow "cradle Catholics" (baptized Catholics who are ordained and then marry) the same privilege.

- ② **CELIBACY IS NOT REQUIRED TO BE A GOOD PRIEST**

Research has shown that at any given time only fifty percent of priests actually practice celibacy. ² Pope John Paul II has stated: "Celibacy is not essential to the priesthood"; it was "not a law promulgated by Jesus Christ." ³ Celibacy is less important to the People of God than the celebration of the Eucharist, the pastoral care of people and the proclamation of the Gospel. ⁴ Poor recruitment of priests and adequate retention of priests after ordination are blamed on problems with mandatory celibacy ⁵.

- ③ **THE CATHOLIC CHURCH NEEDS ITS PRIESTS**

Priests remind us of God's presence in our lives. They act as a witness to the Gospel mandate to serve and to love. Most importantly, they call the community of believers together to celebrate the presence of God in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. By the year 2005 there will be a forty percent decline in priestly vocations and a sixty-five percent increase in the Catholic population. ⁶ Canon Law #290 states: *Once a priest, always a priest.* Marriage does not negate priesthood.

- ④ **THE SHORTAGE OF PRIESTS IS MORE THAN CRITICAL; IT HAS REACHED CATASTROPHIC LEVELS**

To date, 20,000 priests have left active ministry in the United States; 100,000 worldwide. ⁷ 90% wish to remain active as priests but they also wish to marry. By the year 2000 there will be more married priests in the U.S. than institutionally active priests. As of 1990, ten percent of parishes are currently without resident pastors; the figure is 50% worldwide. Statistics prove four out of ten newly ordained priests are needed just to replace resigned priests; the other six newly ordained priests can't begin to fill vacancies created by retirement and deaths. ⁸

- ⑤ **MARRIED PRIESTS BRING A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE AND SENSITIVITY TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES ~ FACING CATHOLICS IN A CHANGING WORLD**

Married priests are barred from working officially for the Church in full-time ministry. Many have transformed their seminary training into other careers (lawyers, physicians, accountants, CEO's, psychotherapists, social workers, college professors, health service directors, consultants, etc.) ⁹ Today's Catholics face complicated issues; there are no easy or simple answers. Married priests use their education, seminary training *and* life experience to help people find God in all aspects of their lives. It is an injury to the People of God to deprive the Church of the full-time ministry of tens of thousands of ordained priests simply because they wish to marry.

6 DISCUSSION ABOUT THE ORDINATION FOR PREVIOUSLY ORDAINED MARRIED MEN, AS WELL AS WOMEN HAS BEEN FORBIDDEN BY THE VATICAN

Bishops met openly with representatives of *CORPUS* in June 1990¹⁰. Several months later, the Vatican issued a directive that all dialogue on the issue of a married priesthood is forbidden. Previously in 1989, Rome released a decree forbidding Catholic scholars from criticizing official church teachings in public. Theologians and others were to raise their doubts in private and if not satisfied "suffer for the truth in silence and prayer" or to face "serious measures".¹¹

7 CARDINALS, BISHOPS, AND THEOLOGIANs THROUGHOUT THE WORLD HAVE CALLED FOR A MARRIED PRIESTHOOD

Conferences of Bishops in North America, Latin America and Asia recognize the pastoral crisis. They have formally requested the Pope consider a married priesthood. Recently, Cardinal Carlo Martini of Milan, one of the leading candidates for the papacy said: "The church should be open to allowing married Latin-rite priests..."¹² Bishops and theologians throughout the world have spoken in favor of a married priesthood.¹³ The Pope has silenced any discussion on the matter. Recent surveys show declining support for mandatory celibacy among priests.¹⁴

8 PRIESTLESS SUNDAY SERVICES ARE NOT CATHOLIC

The celebration of the Mass (Eucharist) is at the core of what it is to be Catholic. The critical shortage of priests has led to priestless communion services, similar to Protestant services. Many question how pre-consecrated communion and the reading of Scripture replace the ancient tradition of the Catholic Christian community gathering to "do this in memory of me (Jesus)". Rather than priestless communion services, several Bishops have requested an examination of the question of permitting a married priesthood, notably, Archbishop Weakland of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Bishop Untener of Saginaw, Michigan.¹⁵

9 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS ALLOWED MARRIED CATHOLIC PRIESTS TO RETURN TO ACTIVE INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE ONLY IF THEY ARE DIVORCED OR THEIR SPOUSE HAS DIED

The Congregation for the Clergy has issued a paper which outlines the conditions and procedures an ordained married priest can pursue to be reinstated into active canonical ministry once he is divorced or his spouse has died.¹⁶ Several dioceses, including Chicago, now include Catholic priests, who have been ordained, resigned, married and widowed. They now serve co-equally with their celibate brothers.

Married Catholic priests in Brazil have been recognized as institutionally acceptable once they signed an agreement not to have conjugal relations with their spouses.¹⁷ More than thirty married priests were ordained in Czechoslovakia by Bishop Felix Davidek to meet the needs of the underground Church during the Communist regime. Rome will not recognize them as Latin-rite priests unless their marriages are dissolved.¹⁸

10 AN EXCLUSIVELY MALE, CELIBATE PRIESTHOOD IS UNJUST

If we believe that the first gift God gave was marriage—the sacred, intimate bond between man and woman; if we believe we all are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis); and if we believe we all have the right to be baptized, then it is right, just and holy to grant equal access to the privilege of serving the People of God in ordained ministries. There would be no shortage of priests if the Church accepted all the people God calls to priestly ministry.¹⁹

ULTIMATELY THE QUESTION IS WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

CORPUS, THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR A MARRIED PRIESTHOOD 1-888-2-PRIEST

¹ A History of Celibacy, *FUTURECHURCH*, (1991)

² A Secret World, Richard Sipe

³ New York Times, July 18, 1993

⁴ Gallup Poll (1992)

⁵ Goodbye Father: Celibacy and Patriarchy in the Catholic Church, Richard Schoenherr (1995)

⁶ Full Pews, Empty Altars, Richard Schoenherr (1994)

⁷ Journal for Scientific Study of Religions (12/90)

⁸ Commonweal April 7, 1995

⁹ *CORPUS* Directory, 1990, 1994

¹⁰ *CORPUS REPORTS*, July/August 1990

¹¹ "Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian" (Origin, 7/5/90)

¹² National Catholic Reporter, March 31, 1995

¹³ *The Church and Married Priests: Ten Years of Reflection* (IFMCP) 1993

¹⁴ America, June 18, 1994

¹⁵ New York Times, September 24, 1994

¹⁶ The Jurist (1994) 617-622

¹⁷ New York Times, October 24, 1990

¹⁸ New York Times, April 12, 1992

¹⁹ *FUTURECHURCH*, Cleveland, OH (1991)

