

JAN. 2023



IDAHO VOCATIONS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DISCERNING CELIBACY

A supernatural call to a radical lifestyle

(The following article was written by a priest in the diocese of Portland who touches upon some of the principle questions concerning celibacy)

Celibacy is always a top concern for men thinking about the priesthood: *"I like girls too much to become a priest."* But rest assured that every priest had the same thought before he went to seminary.

Even Pope Francis himself admitted to having to discern celibacy very carefully as a young seminarian: *"I was dazzled by a girl I met at an uncle's wedding...I was surprised by her beauty, her intellectual brilliance...and, well, I was bowled over for quite a while. I kept thinking and thinking about her. When I returned to the seminary after the wedding, I could not pray for over a week because when I tried to do so, the girl appeared in my head. I had to rethink what I was doing."*

If even the pope had second thoughts about celibacy, you should not be surprised that you yourself struggle with the issue!

Here's the fact: no bishop will ordain a man if he doesn't have a normal sexual attraction to women. That's the way God made us, and it is an indication that a man is psychologically healthy.

Celibacy isn't about repressing your sexuality. Rather, it's about giving up a single woman—a wife— in order to serve all people.

OTHER GREAT READS INSIDE:

- Nurturing a Culture of Priestly & Religious Vocations at Home
- Seminarian Update
- Upcoming Events
- Vocation Director's Corner

Celibacy means giving oneself wholly to the Bride of Christ, the Church. It's a radical, supernatural call from God.

The difficulty, of course, is that in secular society, celibacy is portrayed as impossible or ridiculous. As Fr. Benedict Groeschel once wrote, *"The media trumpets the message that sex brings happiness. If this were true, we would indeed live in an earthly paradise and the world would be 'happy valley.'"* But the truth is that there are over 400,000 celibate priests in the world, and the vast majority report great happiness and fulfillment.

Even if you struggle with chastity right now, God can give you the grace to become sexually pure. Don't let a concern about celibacy prevent you from considering the priesthood.



CELIBACY FAQ

AM I ALLOWED TO DATE WHILE IN THE SEMINARY?

The seminary is like the engagement period for a couple: you do not date others if you desire to create a true relationship with your fiancé. Likewise, to truly prepare for and discern the calling to priesthood in the seminary, you should not be dating.

WHAT IF I HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY INTIMATE IN MY PAST, DOES THAT MEAN I CAN'T BE A PRIEST?

No. But, you must now be in the process of embracing chastity. St. Augustine led a very wild life as a young man, but he gave up his unchaste, sinful ways when he decided to live a fully Catholic life. There must be a significant period of "sexual sobriety" before entering the seminary, usually at least two years.

MY ATTRACTION TO WOMEN IS SO STRONG AT TIMES THAT I FEAR I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO REMAIN CHASTE.

If you ask God, He gives abundant graces to live a chaste life. You of course, must respond to those graces by using them to make chaste choices. As you grow in chastity, as it becomes a habit of your life, you will experience a strengthening, and an ease to being and remaining chaste. Celibacy is a serious undertaking that must be at the forefront of your discernment; it is not for everyone, but it is possible for those who are called.

IT SEEMS UNNATURAL TO ME TO LIVE YOUR WHOLE LIFE WITHOUT SEX.

Most men and women are called naturally to the married life. So, obviously, living a celibate, chaste life goes beyond the ordinary; in fact it is a supernatural call from God to live a life of radical love for the Church. Yes, it is a sacrifice, but the rewards are great. Many great saints, religious, monks, nuns, and priests over the centuries have lived very fulfilled and happy lives.

WHY CAN'T PRIESTS MARRY?

“I’m very impatient with some of the pragmatic arguments for celibacy—that it frees up your time and allows you to focus your energy in different ways. I’d rather see celibacy as a kind of irrational, over-the-top, poetic, symbolic expression of the soul in love.”

– Fr. Robert Barron

- Celibacy is a normal requirement for priesthood in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, for several reasons. Practical reasons are often cited—for example, that an unmarried man can more easily dedicate himself to the work of the Church. While this is a valid reason that has roots in scripture (1 Cor 7:32-35), it is not the most important reason. More important are the spiritual realities signified by celibacy:
- Celibacy marks the priest as a man consecrated to the service of Christ and the Church. It shows in a concrete way that he is not merely someone who exercises a set of functions or who holds a certain office but that he has been changed on an ontological level by his reception of the sacrament of Orders.
- Celibacy configures the priest more closely to Christ, the great High Priest, who forsook earthly marriage for the sake of the Kingdom and for the sake of uniting himself more perfectly to his heavenly Bride, the Church.
- It is fitting that the priest who offers this same Jesus in sacrifice to the Father, show in his own person (albeit to an imperfect degree) the purity and holiness of his unspotted Victim.

WHY CELIBACY?

Sister Anna Marie McGuan, R.S.M.

Living out chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven means to live one's life as a sign that points to God all the time. The married state is good and beautiful, and at the same time God is more beautiful and better. He is so good, in fact, that it is legitimate to offer everything to him and live for him alone. A consecrated person, whether priest or religious, witnesses to that by the very way he or she lives. The highest form of love is not the love between husband and wife, it is the love of God, charity. This charity can and should inform all other relationships of love. This means that they are rooted in a person's relationship with God and lead to a further and deeper love of God.

In addition, Jesus tells us that there will be no marriage in heaven. Rather, he says, in "the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven" (Mt 22:30). For this reason, the consecrated life or the celibate life is an eschatological signpost that points to heaven. Essentially, the message is: Remember where you ultimately want to be headed. Remember your end. Do what it takes to get there.

Living chastity for the kingdom of heaven is not "unnatural" — it is supernatural. It is to live as God's messenger, all day, every day. Like all vocations, that takes faith, hope and charity. It also takes prayer, asceticism, more prayer and fidelity to the age-old practices that help form the interior spiritual life. Good, holy friendships are also a wonderful aid to chastity, no matter what a person's vocation is.

The goal in each vocation is to love God with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love one's neighbor like one's self. To each person, God will give the graces necessary to grow in holiness if and when we cooperate with him.

Sister Anna Marie McGuan, R.S.M.

Director of Christian Formation in the Diocese of Knoxville.



Nurturing a Culture of Priestly & Religious Vocations at Home

Lindsay Dyson

How do you raise children with vocational awareness? I am no expert. After all, my children are all under 10 years old. But it is something to which I've given a bit of thought and we try to do intentionally in our family.

Our kids have a front row seat to Catholic marriage every day, through our own marriage and those of family members and friends. However, there are not many religious in our neck of the state, besides our parish priests, so we try to normalize religious vocations by learning about the saints who were religious and by welcoming into our lives real-life people who are living out their religious vocations whenever the opportunity arises.

Our kids love to listen to audio stories of the saints, like Glory Stories from Holy Heroes or podcast stories of the saints. We read books about the saints, and try to get our hands on as many books (picture books and early chapter books) about religious as we can. It's hard to find a book for our older children to read that does not have some sort of romance aspect, so our goal is to balance that with just as many stories about nuns and priests so that their database is more balanced.





We want choosing a religious vocation to be normal, not rare and unusual, in their minds. We're always grateful for a chance for our kids to interact with a seminarian, priest, or religious. We love to have our parish priests over for dinner, and relish opportunities like Family Camp to spend time with priests and religious outside of a liturgical setting.

Kids are constantly being asked, *"What do you want to be when you grow up?"* but we try to frame the question differently. We might say, *"I wonder what God wants you to be when you grow up,"* more focused on their future state in life than on an occupation, and with an undertone of discernment, rather than their own preferences.

But mostly, raising kids with vocational awareness is not separate from how we live the rest of our lives. We pray every day as a family and try to take some personal prayer time as well. We try to create a Catholic culture in our home, by living out the fasts and feasts and seasons of the Church, and prioritizing our faith over secular interests. We strive to be open to the life God wants for us. If we seek the voice of the Lord in prayer each day, and model that for our children, teaching them to do the same, then they will be ready to hear His call. If we do not cave to the culture while raising our children, then they won't find a counter-cultural call from the Lord so difficult to respond to. If we radically and generously do the will of God (easier said than done!), then our children will learn to respond to the love of the Father, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, in their lives with a radical and generous response to the call.

May the Lord grant us many holy priests and religious, and may He choose from our home those who are needed for His work.



UPCOMING EVENTS



Monthly Zoom with seminarians.
Contact Vocation's Office for more information.



Join us for Mass at St. Paul's
Sat Vigil - 5:15 pm
Sun - 11:00 am
Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri - 5:15 pm
Wed - 8:00 pm



Come chat with us at The Frassati House of Discernment on Sunday afternoons. Contact Vocation's Office for more information.

Reflection on Religious Sisters

NICHOLAS SOWER
Bishop White Seminary, College II



Praise be Jesus Christ! A few weeks ago, the seminarians of the Diocese of Boise met with Fr. Nathan Dail, over zoom, to talk about our ongoing formation in the seminary and our discernment. But something especially stood out in our discussion; the powerful and important witness of religious sisters.

I want to share a personal story about how a religious sister encouraged me in my own discernment. I had a difficult time in my first year of seminary. I had frequent thoughts of leaving the and every morning the same question would rush to the forefront of my mind: Why am I doing this with my life? Why Seminary?

Questions like these continued to pile up and I felt they would topple over me completely – I felt burnt out. In the middle of my first school year I was certain that I should leave seminary. But I am convinced that God placed, with mercy and compassion, people in my life that urged me to persevere in those difficult moments. One such person was a religious sister.

She had answered God's call in her life by devoting herself to prayer and sacrifice for the sake of priests. In the midst of my uncertainties I met with this religious sister and she did something for me I was not expecting.



She told me that she was going to adopt me as her spiritual child, and she would be my spiritual mother. My name would be in her prayers every day she said. Here was a woman who had given her heart completely to Christ, from which came an overflow of love. It was in that charity that she encouraged me to follow Christ through any valley.

I now had courage going forward, that God was going to provide for me always. I was confident in the relationship I had with this religious sister who had sworn a life of fidelity to Jesus Christ. I saw in her a charity that radiated a light which drew my soul towards God. But why? Because God is always offering humanity the fullness of His love and He revealed a glimpse of that unfathomable charity through this religious sister.

Now I thought to myself: wow, I can discern giving myself to this. This life of surrender to the Lord. A life of listening to Him. A way of life that this religious sister was clearly living. I continue to see her as someone totally open to the will of God. In a way, she is an icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary to me. The little girl who said “yes” to God. And afterwards was left in complete silence without any certainty of what exactly would happen next. But she continued on in faith. I think that God places people in our lives who are like windows which allow a little bit of Christ’s light to shine through.

In hindsight I can see how busy I had made my first year of seminary by filling my mind with questions I thought were the most important. I forgot about authentic prayer – the sharing of gazes. Like Peter, who stepped out into the storm following Christ and who began to sink when thinking about all the waves. To any discerners out there, I would encourage you not to be afraid to follow Christ into any storm. As long as our gaze is fixed upon Him, there is no reason to fear. And even if we begin to sink, Christ will always come to us, to pull us out of any storm (Mt. 14: 24-33). For we are His beloved sons and daughters whom He fashioned in His own image and Likeness for the sake of His glory. What is holding us back from giving everything to the One who has given His very self to us for our eternal redemption?



Vocation Director's Corner | Fr. Nathan Dail



I thought we'd focus this month's Newsletter on the topic of celibacy, as it's one of the biggest questions that comes up when someone is discerning a call to the priesthood or consecrated life. *"How can I live without a spouse or family for the rest of my life? Won't it be a life of loneliness and isolation?"*

I've heard many talks from priests who emphasize how full and joyful their life is as a celibate. But I'd like to speak to the contrary. The Priesthood is a lonely life...And that's ok.

As our own Bishop Peter has reminded some of us priests and seminarians at times, *"The priesthood has a built-in loneliness to it."* You can't get around that fact, and those who try to, oftentimes end up falling into addictions or unhealthy lifestyles in order to distract from the loneliness of the vocation.

The truth is, the priesthood is lonely. And again, that's ok. It's supposed to be. Loneliness is not a bad thing, it's the very place of encounter with the One who comes to meet us there. Those of us who Christ calls to follow Him are invited to enter into that space of emptiness so that He can share Himself with us there. The words of Christ that can be spoken to every consecrated celibate were those of His own human experience, *"No one knows the Father except the Son, and no one knows the Son except the Father."* No one really knows the depths of the person called to live in celibacy except the Father. It is a secret, hidden place of intimacy reserved for the Father alone. Jesus Himself lived in this intimacy, which at times brought tears of suffering and loneliness,



Find us on Facebook and Instagram. I am pleased to announce that we have hired a marketing director for our social media presence online.

Help your sons and daughters stay connected with our seminarians by following their stories on Facebook and Instagram. It's my hope that in this way more young people can become familiar with the life of seminarians.

“Oh faithless generation, how long must I be with you, how long must I endure you?” or when He looked to His disciples to comfort Him in the Garden, *“Could you not remain awake with me for even one hour?”* He could endure the times of solitude because He knew the Presence of His Father who always met Him there, *“You will all abandon me and leave me alone, but I am never alone, for my Father is always with me.”* A priest is called to share in that feeling of loneliness with Jesus Christ at time, but with it, the divine answer of His Father who, *“Sees in secret”* and comes to reward His followers with Himself.

This is my one point for this article, the priesthood is lonely, and that's ok, it's supposed to be. At times our hearts are filled, overflowing with the love of our sheep and pastoral ministries, but at other times, we must also endure the loneliness of Christ, of belonging to heaven while living on earth. But it's also important to note that no true Christian is absolved from this experience.

All of us experience the loneliness of *“being chosen out of the world. If you belonged to this world, the world would love you as its own, but since I chose you out of the world, the world rejects you.”* Such is our lot who live for heaven.

One of the primary goals of priesthood that I've come to understand only by experience after ordination was that I am ment to enter willingly into the loneliness of life.

I go there to find the One who comes to answer with His Presence, so that when I minister to my parishioners who find themselves in that same place of loneliness in their lives, I may know how to speak a word to them to introduce the Presence of the Divine Word which alone can find them in that place.

The Priesthood is lonely, and that's ok, it's supposed to be. But it doesn't end there, just as Mary's celibacy wasn't an end in itself. It becomes the very place of Divine Intimacy and pastoral fruitfulness for those who are faithful to it.

