

Marriage and Priesthood as Ascetic Vocation

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This talk considers the theological foundation for the charism of celibacy as a fitting discipline or charism for the ordained priesthood. It locates that foundation in a broader theology of the Church and an ecclesiology that especially features the character of the Church as Bride and of Christ as Bridegroom. It is the language of love and the logic of love which informs this ecclesiology, and which, in turn, informs the spirit and practice of clerical celibacy. Specifically, it is the language of the self-emptying love revealed in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ that is in question here, which ultimately goes back to the love by which the Father "so loved the world that He gave His only-Begotten Son" (Jn. 3:16). It is this love which the celibate priest makes operative in the world in his own special way.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does the Scriptural image of the Church as Bride of Christ mean to you?
2. Do you see an underlying relationship, or even kinship, between the marital fidelity of Christian spouses and the lifelong profession of celibacy by the priest?
3. How would you explain the "fittingness" of the discipline or charism of celibacy for the ordained priesthood to someone who asked you about it, for example, a parishioner, or a young man considering the priesthood?



SPIRITUAL CONTEMPLATION

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.”

John 6:51

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.”

Revelation 22:1-2

“Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”



RESOURCES

[ESSAY] [Celibacy in the Church: A Brief Theological Account](#)

by John C. Cavadini, Ph.D.

[POEM] [Good Friday Poem](#) by Bro. R.C., O.Carm.

[ARTICLE] [The Importance of Geographic Stability for the Church](#)

by Gwendolen Adams



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Dr. John C. Cavadini is a Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, having served as Chair from 1997-2010. Since 2000, he has served as the Director of the McGrath Institute for Church Life at Notre Dame. Cavadini specializes in patristic and early medieval theology, the theology of Augustine, and the history of biblical and patristic exegesis. The author of several theological books, he also writes essays, articles, and reviews in popular journals and is frequently called upon by Church leaders, ministers and teachers to talk on these subjects. Recent publications include Pope Francis and the Event of Encounter, which he edited with Donald Wallenfang, Mary on the Eve of the Second Vatican Council, edited with Danielle M. Peters, and the essay, “The Kingdom of Irony: Augustine, Sin, and Dante’s Inferno” in Dante, Mercy, and the Beauty of the Human Person. He received a B.A. from Wesleyan University, an M.A. from Marquette University, an M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. from Yale University.