

1 July 2016

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Sydney, NSW 2000

Dear Commissioners,

Submission to the Issues Paper 11: Catholic Church Final Hearing

Catholic theology and doctrine relevant to responses to child abuse; celibacy; governance

Notes on the theological basis for priestly celibacy

Theologian Max Thurian explains the theology behind priestly celibacy; please find it here: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_010_11993_theol_en.html

The first two sentences of the introduction state: “*Christ never married. His life is valid justification for the vocation to celibacy.*” Later, he advises: “*As followers of Christ, we must aim for that pure love which renounces life.*” Near the end of the introduction, he further advises: “*We shall seek our strength in Christ and accept that we have to make breaks with the world.*”

Comment: celibacy appears to imply imitating Christ, renouncing life, and breaking with the world.

Under the subtitle “*The offering of priestly celibacy*”, Theologian Max Thurian wrote:

“*Celibacy is one of those signs that reminds us of Christ’s absolute demands, of his liberating return, of the economy of the kingdom of heaven, of the need to be vigilant, to break with the world, with the flesh, with lust, and, with joy in our hearts, to accept renunciation of the passions for pure love of Jesus.*” Also: “*Observing celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven does not mean being any the less a man; by renouncing a natural form of existence, the priest discovers life in all its fullness.*” Moreover: “*This new order expressed by the celibate lives of John the Baptist and Jesus tells us we need to be in the world without being of the world, «for time is short... let those who deal with the world live as though they had no dealings with it... For the form of this world is passing away» (1 Cor 7:29-31).*” He finishes this section of his paper by writing: “*In the new order of the Last Days, in which we live, God sets certain signs of the kingdom of heaven in his Church, of which celibacy is one.*”

Comment: It seems that there is an absolute demand of using celibacy to break with the world; that being a celibate priest means discovering life in all its fullness; that celibate priests are in the world but not of the world; and that celibacy is a sign of a kingdom of heaven.

Under the subtitle “*Practical significance of celibacy*”, Theologian Max Thurian wrote:

“Celibacy allows such freedom and availability in Christian life and ministry as to make it highly suited to the service of the Church. The priest who is celibate for the sake of the kingdom can carry out particularly difficult missions more easily and freely than a married man, tied down by family responsibilities.” Also: “This was what Christ intended when founding the state of voluntary celibacy «for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven». Establishing a resemblance to Christ which is not only spiritual but physical and practical too, voluntary celibacy is a state particularly suited to the service of the kingdom. Like Jesus, the priest can commit himself entirely — spiritually and humanly — to the ministry. He is not celibate so as to be more tranquil but to resemble Christ in his commitment to the kingdom. If he means to live his state as it should be lived, all his efforts and all his thoughts will have to be directed to a living proclamation of the gospel, so as to hasten Christ’s return. He must be ready freely to obey the Church’s calls.” Moreover: “It is wrong to think he cannot understand people because he does not live as many of them do, with their marital problems and family difficulties. To be guided by the Holy Spirit in directing souls, one need not have experienced every human situation oneself.”

Comment: It appears that a key advantage of celibacy is that priests can spend far more time on Church matters than people with family responsibilities; that celibacy is a form of establishing a resemblance to Christ; that by being celibate, priests can hasten Christ’s return; and that celibate priests do not need (among others) to have children to understand what caring for a child means because priests are guided by the Holy Spirit.

Under the subtitle “***The inner significance of celibacy***”, Theologian Max Thurian wrote:

“The celibate priest has the opportunity of being consecrated directly to Christ in his complete humanity, soul and body.” Also: *“In St Paul’s invitation to the celibate life, he wishes to bring Christians to a state of nobility and to that which is needed to unite them «without impediments to the Lord» (cf 1 Cor 7:35). These words completely sum up the inner meaning of celibacy. It is an honour, a beautiful and noble condition.”*

Comment: celibacy is an honour and a noble condition.

Under the subtitle “***The eschatological significance of celibacy***”, Theologian Max Thurian wrote:

“Besides the practical and the interior senses which we have described, the state of celibacy also has an eschatological meaning. Voluntary celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is the sign of a new order in which marriage is no longer, as it was in the Old Testament, necessary to assure a holy progeny to Abraham, the father of all believers. For in the Church, our being children of God and the fellowship of believers are of the spiritual order.” Also: *“The eschatological sense, the certainty of being at the last act of history and the expectation of Christ’s second coming, prompts the Christian not to be too attached to the realities of human life, to marriage, to suffering, to joy or to property.”* Moreover: *“This eschatological attitude should be that of every Christian, but the priest lives it in a more concrete fashion. Among his fellow Christians who all ought to deal with this world without being attached to it, he represents a sign of that detachment which waiting for the kingdom requires. So priestly celibacy does not involve this eschatological sense in an exclusive way, but is a striking sign of the new order which is detached from this world which is passing away.”* In addition: *“Furthermore, celibacy relates to the resurrection of the dead; it is a sign of eternity, of incorruptibility, of life.”*

Comment: Again, being a priest seems to mean not to be too attached to realities of human life such as marriage or joy; that priests should be detached from this world. Celibacy is a sign of incorruptibility.

Notes on a letter about priests by then Pope Benedict XVI

In June 2009, on the 150-year anniversary of the birth of John Mary Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests worldwide, then Pope Benedict wrote a letter to honour priests. It is here: http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20090616_anno-sacerdotale.html

Pope Benedict wrote, including quotes from writings of John Mary Vianney:

“The Curé of Ars was very humble, yet as a priest he was conscious of being an immense gift to his people: *“A good shepherd, a pastor after God’s heart, is the greatest treasure which the good Lord can grant to a parish, and one of the most precious gifts of divine mercy”*. [3] He spoke of the priesthood as if incapable of fathoming the grandeur of the *gift* and *task* entrusted to a human creature: *“O, how great is the priest! ... If he realized what he is, he would die... God obeys him: he utters a few words and the Lord descends from heaven at his voice, to be contained within a small host...”*. [4] Explaining to his parishioners the importance of the sacraments, he would say: *“Without the Sacrament of Holy Orders, we would not have the Lord. Who put him there in that tabernacle? The priest. Who welcomed your soul at the beginning of your life? The priest. Who feeds your soul and gives it strength for its journey? The priest. Who will prepare it to appear before God, bathing it one last time in the blood of Jesus Christ? The priest, always the priest. And if this soul should happen to die [as a result of sin], who will raise it up, who will restore its calm and peace? Again, the priest... After God, the priest is everything! ... Only in heaven will he fully realize what he is”*. [5] These words, welling up from the priestly heart of the holy pastor, might sound excessive. Yet they reveal the high esteem in which he held the sacrament of the priesthood.”

Comment: It is apparent that the Catholic Church considers priests to be almost divine beings. Even God seems to obey priests. Note the sentence that then Pope Benedict XVI chose to give respectability: “After God, the priest is everything!” It appears that God is first, priests are second, and last are ordinary humans; therefore, the message seems to be that priests are superior humans.

Notes on ‘elevating’ a seminarian to the priesthood

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states regarding the sacrament of Holy Orders (please find it here: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c3a6.htm) that:

“**1587** The spiritual gift conferred by presbyteral ordination is expressed by this prayer of the Byzantine Rite. The bishop, while laying on his hand, says among other things:

*“Lord, fill with the gift of the Holy Spirit
him whom you have deigned to raise to the rank of the priesthood,
that he may be worthy to stand without reproach before your altar
to proclaim the Gospel of your kingdom, [...]*”

Comment: Note the words “raise to the rank of the priesthood”, which appear to imply that priests – and, by extension, Bishops and Cardinals – are above ordinary people.

Notes on 'reducing' a priest to the lay state

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith detailed how to 'reduce' a priest to the lay state: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_197206_26_declaratio_en.html

The first paragraph says:

“On January 13, 1971, this Sacred Congregation issued the new Norms for preparing, in diocesan Curias and in the general Curias of clerical religious, petitions for reducing priests to the lay state with a dispensation from all the obligations arising from Sacred Orders.”

Comment: Note the words “reducing priests to the lay state”, which appear to imply that priests were above ordinary people but, after being ‘reduced’ to the lay state, priests will become equal to ordinary people.

Notes on celibacy

Pope John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, N. 32:

“As a way of showing forth the Church's holiness, it is to be recognized that the consecrated life, which mirrors Christ's own way of life, has an objective superiority. Precisely for this reason, it is an especially rich manifestation of Gospel values and a more complete expression of the Church's purpose, which is the sanctification of humanity. The consecrated life proclaims and in a certain way anticipates the future age, when the fullness of the Kingdom of heaven, already present in its first fruits and in mystery, will be achieved, and when the children of the resurrection will take neither wife nor husband, but will be like the angels of God (cf. Mt 22:30). The Church has always taught the pre-eminence of perfect chastity for the sake of the Kingdom, and rightly considers it the "door" of the whole consecrated life.”

Pope Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, N. 32:

“This doctrine of the excellence of virginity and of celibacy and of their superiority over the married state was, as We have already said, revealed by our Divine Redeemer and by the Apostle of the Gentiles; so too, it was solemnly defined as a dogma of divine faith by the holy council of Trent, [57] and explained in the same way by all the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Finally, We and Our Predecessors have often expounded it and earnestly advocated it whenever occasion offered.”

Council of Trent, page 225:

“As it is the duty of the pastor to propose to himself the holiness and perfection of the faithful, his earnest desires must be in full accordance with those of the Apostle [Paul], when, writing to the Corinthians, he says [1 Corinthians 7:7]: “For I would that all men were even as I myself.” That is, that all embraced the virtue of continence. [...] A life of continence is to be desired by all.”

Comments: The Catholic Church believes that celibacy is superior to non-celibacy as revealed by Christ.

Notes on the Catholic Church's structure and governance

The Catholic Church claims that each Bishop is responsible for his diocese and almost anything (such as child sexual abuse by priests or cover-ups by Bishops) that happens outside each Diocese is the concern of other Bishop. Also, it seems that Catholic religious orders respond to their global superiors - often in Rome - but not to Bishops in Australia; as a result, Catholic Bishops say that Catholic religious orders are not their responsibility. Cardinal Pell used to state that he was not responsible for what happened in Dioceses other than his own, REDACTED

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Government intervention is required to stop this situation.

Conclusions

- It appears that the Catholic Church believes that celibate priests (and by extension, Bishops and Cardinals) imitate Christ by breaking with the world. Celibate priests are in the world but are not of the world, which seems to imply that priests are different and superior to ordinary people.
- Note the words “After God, the priest is everything” which appears to imply, again, that celibate priests (and by extension, Bishops and Cardinals) are different and superior to ordinary people.
- Seminarians are “raised” from the lay state to the priesthood, and priests could be “reduced” to the lay state. The implication, once again, seems to be that celibate priests are different and superior to ordinary people.
- It is apparent that the Catholic Church considers celibate priests a superior kind of human and encourages celibate priests to “break with the world” to follow Church rules, in an extreme case even when such rules conflict with Criminal Law and community standards.
- The above is consistent with the main conclusion of the book “Potiphar’s Wife: The Vatican’s Secret and Child Sexual Abuse”, by Kieran Tapsell, which is that Bishops and priests were inclined to follow Church Law rather than Criminal Law at least until 2010; after 2010 if there is no conflict between Church Law and Criminal Law the Bishops and priests around the world still seem to prefer Church Law instead of the community standard of reporting clergy pedophilia to police.

Suggestions:

- Recommend the Australian Government to make any adult a mandatory reporter of not just allegations but also suspicions of crimes against children and vulnerable adults, with no exceptions for members of religious organisations.
- Recommend the Australian Government to force religious organisations to have a standard organisational structure where there is one person at the top in Australia who is accountable for what happens in Australia, and appears in the media and in the organisation’s website as such.

Yours sincerely,

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Aldo Bayona

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