

Priests and Paedophilia

The sexual scandal in the Roman Catholic church has shocked and grieved many people. According to the Economist, all in all, some 2,000 priests stand accused of sexual abuse. A Christian lady wrote to me expressing her concern. "Every day lately there has been something on the news or in the paper about priests molesting kids. Newsweek has an article about it this week. I went to visit my mom tonight and she just shakes her head and wonders if any of her boys were molested as we were very close to all the priests who lived here throughout the years. Yet she still wants to remain Catholic like a devout wife married to a vicious man."

We need to stop and think about this matter. This lady's mother is right not to judge a system on the basis of the scandalous behaviour of some of its members or leaders. What if some prominent evangelical or protestant leaders are exposed as hypocrites and perverts? Would any Christian give up his faith because of them?

As for the priests, I really pity them. They have been forced by a religious system to remain celibate, which is an unnatural state for some of them.

The Word of God gives liberty to every Christian, including ministers, to choose their marital state. The Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul speak about some having the gift of celibacy. By the grace of God, these can remain single and live a fruitful and pure life (Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:7,8). However, most people have been given the gift of marriage. The apostle Paul was single while the apostle Peter and the other apostles were married. "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Corinthians 9:5).

In the apostolic church, the bishops (the pastors or elders) were generally married. "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife...One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:2-5). The Bible says nothing about the celibacy of *priests* because the ministerial priesthood of the Catholic church is unheard of in the pages of Scripture.

According to the New Testament, the church leaders were allowed to marry. Up until the third century, bishops and priests were mostly married. The prohibition against marriage for priests in the Western Church did not occur until the early Middle Ages.

The Roman Catholic magisterium has the audacity to set aside the Word of God and establish canon laws contrary to the Bible. Sadly people continue to trust them as faithful servants of God. The Bible has very strong words against the Catholic magisterium: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. *They forbid people to marry*" (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Priests are men with normal sexual desires but since they are forbidden to marry, some of them end up expressing their sexuality in a perverted way, like fornication, homosexuality or even paedophilia. The imposed celibate priesthood is not the cause of sexual sin per se, but it certainly provides the temptation and occasion for many priests.

May God rescue many Catholic priests from this evil system, and grant them salvation through Jesus Christ, the one and only Priest who offered himself for the sins of his people and who is ever living to intercede for them. May God also grant them the liberty to enjoy life and his good gifts, including the love of a woman in marriage.