

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

- *“Some Western missionaries no longer understand the profound meaning of celibacy and project their doubts onto the Amazonian peoples.” Cardinal Sarah*
- *The rejection of the celibate priesthood by influential churchmen is a sign of the erosion of the supernatural sense in our times. Fr.Gerald Murray*

*Many prelates do not understand celibacy, nor do many of us priests. It is a gift to be embraced, lived, and integrated into our souls. It is not always smooth and easy for a priest.*

*Many who decry celibacy have not lived it, not necessarily with unchaste acts with others, but through fantasy, imagination, or without sufficient spiritual reflection on the gift.*

*Still others have fallen into sin, and wish others to join them so that they feel better about themselves. Satan does that.*

*Some who have fallen have had a hand extended to them such as Jesus did to Peter when he was sinking; such men took their second chance and live celibacy, not drawing others down with them, but lifting up the fallen as they too were lifted up*

*On an interview with Church Militant years ago, Michael Voris asked me if homosexual men should be ordained. He did not give me the question in advance, nor did he nuance “homosexual men”.*

*My response was that I knew men in the seminary who were still developing their psychosexuality, but had embraced chastity in ordination, so I said as much in reflection of these men and their celibate chaste priesthood, because I do not know what is in their mind, heart and spirit, rather only from their chaste life and action.*

*In other cases, continuing acting out is present among clergy from deacon to priest to bishop. Such men need help in their psychosexual development, a gift which is denied by those in power who are overcome with lust and other vices. One bishop raised his voice in anger, “They don’t need to convert! They don’t need to convert!”*

*So these bishops say the catechism needs to change to reflect their views rather than Jesus’ teaching.*

*Chastity is a virtue to be embraced by all. Celibacy comes from a chaste life.*

*Our Catechism teaches,*

**2343** Chastity has laws of growth which progress through stages marked by imperfection and too often by sin. "Man . . . day by day builds himself up through his many free decisions; and so he knows, loves, and accomplishes moral good by stages of growth."<sup>130</sup>

**2344** Chastity represents an eminently personal task; it also involves a *cultural effort*, for there is "an interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society."<sup>131</sup> Chastity presupposes respect for the rights of the person, in particular the right to receive information and an education that respect the moral and spiritual dimensions of human life.

**2345** Chastity is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a *grace*, a fruit of spiritual effort.<sup>132</sup> The Holy Spirit enables one whom the water of Baptism has regenerated to imitate the purity of Christ.<sup>133</sup>

### **The integrality of the gift of self**

**2346** Charity is the *form* of all the virtues. Under its influence, chastity appears as a school of the gift of the person. Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self. Chastity leads him who practices it to become a witness to his neighbor of God's fidelity and loving kindness.

## What Priestly Celibacy Means

By Fr. Gerald E. Murray  
MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2020

The publication of *From the Depths of Our Hearts – Priesthood, Celibacy and the Crisis of the Catholic Church* written by Pope

Emeritus Benedict XVI and Robert Cardinal Sarah, caused great unease among promoters of the ordination of married men to the priesthood in the Amazon region (and, surprise, everywhere else). Now that the controversy over the joint authorship has receded, it's worth looking at what the two distinguished churchmen actually said on the subject.

Because they present an eloquent defense of the fundamental evangelical and pastoral value of priestly celibacy. Their essays remind us that the celibate priesthood in the Latin Church is not a merely contingent choice made in a less enlightened period, nor a convenient managerial strategy for avoiding inheritance disputes and reducing clergy costs.

Celibacy is a radical call to those who would represent Christ to his people *in persona Christi capitis*, in the person of Christ the head of His Mystical Body, to embrace wholly Christ's entire way of life. To discard this requirement would be to deprive God's people of shepherds after the heart of Christ, the chief shepherd, who laid down His life for His sheep not simply at the crucifixion but at every moment. Celibate priests bring Christ to the world in a way that powerfully proclaims that He is worth the total gift of one's life.

When I read an advance English translation of the book, I was deeply moved, especially by Cardinal Sarah's reflections on his own pastoral experiences.

Sarah writes, citing Pope Benedict XVI's address to the clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone: "How could a Christian community understand the priest if it is not obvious that he is 'removed from the common sphere' and 'delivered to God'? How could Christians understand that the priest gives himself to them if he is not entirely given over to the Father?"

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BENEDICT XVI  
ROBERT CARDINAL SARAH



## From the Depths of Our Hearts

*Priesthood, Celibacy, and the  
Crisis of the Catholic Church*

IGNATIUS

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He continues: “In early 1976, when I was a young priest, I traveled to certain remote villages in Guinea. Some of them had not had a visit from a priest for almost ten years, because the European missionaries had been expelled in 1967 by Sékou Touré. . . .I will never

be able to forget their unimaginable joy when I celebrated Mass, which they had not experienced for such a long time. Allow me to state forcefully and with certainty: I think that if they had ordained married men in each village, they would have extinguished the Eucharistic hunger of the faithful. They would have cut the people off from that joy of receiving another Christ in the priest. *For, with the instinct of faith, poor people know that a priest who has renounced marriage gives them the gift of his spousal love.*” (Emphasis added)

As a celibate priest, Sarah knew the Lord’s gift of peace given to those who have left behind the blessing of wife and family, to follow Him: “How many times, while walking for long hours between the villages, with a briefcase-altar on my head, under the blazing sun, I myself experienced the joy of self-giving for the Church-Bride. . . .How I would love it if all my confreres could someday experience the welcome of a priest in an African village that recognizes Christ the Bridegroom in him: what an explosion of joy!”

Sarah continues:

The ordination of married men would deprive the young churches that are being evangelized of this experience of the presence and of the visit of Christ, delivered and given in the person of the celibate priest. . . .A plan that would consist of depriving communities and priests of this joy is not a work of mercy. As a son of Africa, I cannot in conscience support the idea that people who are being evangelized should be deprived of this encounter with a priesthood that is fully lived out. The peoples of Amazonia have the right to a full experience of Christ the Bridegroom. We cannot offer them ‘second-class’ priests. On the contrary, the younger a Church is, the more she needs an encounter with the radical character of the Gospel.

Perhaps the most patently objectionable reason given at the Synod on the Amazon for doing away with the requirement of priestly celibacy is that the people of the Amazon do not understand celibacy.

Sarah is at his best when addressing this patronizing judgment: “Through the instinct of faith, the faithful of all cultures unfailingly recognize Christ offered for all in the celibate priest. Consequently, I would like to express my deep indignation when I hear it said that the ordination of married men is a necessity since the peoples of Amazonia do not understand celibacy or that this reality will always be foreign to their culture. I see in this sort of argument a contemptuous, neocolonialist and infantilizing mentality that shocks me. All the peoples of the world are capable of understanding the Eucharistic logic of priestly celibacy. . . .Is it reasonable to think that God’s grace would be inaccessible to the peoples of Amazonia and that God would deprive them of the grace of priestly celibacy that the Church has guarded for centuries as a precious jewel? There is no culture that God’s grace cannot reach and transform. When God enters into a culture, he does not leave it intact. He destabilizes and purifies it. He transforms and divinizes it.”

Sarah then zeroes in on what is going on in these discussions: “*Some Western missionaries no longer understand the profound meaning of celibacy and project their doubts onto the Amazonian peoples.*” (Emphasis added) I would add that it is not just missionaries who fall into this way of thinking.

The rejection of the celibate priesthood by influential churchmen is a sign of the erosion of the supernatural sense in our times. The reaffirmation of the value of celibacy by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Cardinal Sarah is a providential gift to the Church.

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