



Celibacy's Many Facets

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Last week I tried to present a case for the possibility of finding fulfillment and a real mature masculine sexuality and love even in the context of celibacy. Just as mature sexual intimacy in marriage involves a loving response to the other, so does mature celibacy.

It is an identical response except that the biological or physical element is sublimated in service.

Now lets take up some of the other aspects of the question. One of the best arguments for clerical celibacy is the freedom it offers for total service of the people of God. It does not require the focus of one's loving service upon a small segment of the community, namely, one's own family.

It goes without saying that there can be a rather large gap between the freedom one has in such a circumstance and the use of that freedom. Obviously the freedom from multitudinous family responsibilities can be turned to selfish purposes. But this does not detract from the validity of the possibility.

The priest, both throughout his training and in the actual exercise of the priesthood, must have a consistently generous attitude, one involving real availability and approachability here and now. This person before me now is the object of my primary concern. This other person with a need must be sought and helped. In this way personal considerations become quite secondary, though obviously they cannot be totally removed any more than they can for the married person.

We hear occasionally arguments about the expense to the Church of a married clergy. I think these arguments have little or no validity. For one thing, it is done in churches which have much smaller congregations. For another, the total extra cost is puny compared to the potential and real assets of the Church today. Finally (and I think this is the best refutation), if any real contribution could be added to the Church by a non-celibate clergy, the matter of money would be unimportant.

It is also said that at the time of ordination a priest does not really know the implications of his vow. Married people must be chuckling over that one — they'd say, "You think you didn't know what you were letting yourself in for?"

But there still could be some importance to the argument if it is true that the isolated nature of seminary training prevents knowing the full story. Or it may be true that the decision for celibacy is of a kind which must be made over and over again. The opening up of seminary training in the last few years has this as one of its purposes. If in the course of their seminary life boys will constantly have to renew their commitment to celibacy, there is a much greater chance of it being a firm and clear-headed decision.

Some will answer that we'll lose more seminarians. Maybe we will, although I'm not at all certain of that, but even if we do, we can better expect the

Students Ask CO Support

Washington—(NC)—Some 15 students from the Catholic University of America and Georgetown University demonstrated in front of St. Matthew's cathedral here against the recent statement concerning the Vietnam war by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The students protested that the statement did not emphasize sufficiently "that this war can be conscientiously opposed as well as conscientiously supported."

From that nice New England family, Prince:



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Today seminaries are making constantly better use of the scientific means to detect these psychological problems early enough. And finally, the Church will treat each of these cases with "individual mercy." We must not forget that man does have free will and it is possible for any human being to deliberately back down on a serious and permanent commitment. When this is the case is not for us to judge.

One of the newer objections to priestly celibacy is that the priest is the president of the worshipping community and as such should share fully in the life of the community by being married and raising a family. The answer here is that the priest is much more than the president of the worshipping community. He stands in the place and the Person of Jesus Christ as the mediator, the bridge between God and man. According to St. Paul he is "taken from among men." He must relate to men and bring God to them but he also must relate in a special way to God. In the light of this, the argument tumbles, and in fact becomes something of an argument for celibacy. It enables him in some special sense to witness to this fact of being taken from among men.

Most people sense this, in knowing that while the priest will have close friends and have a special love for some just as Jesus did, that no one person or small group of persons will have that claim on him which

marriage postulates. They know he can be "on call", without withdrawing him from the attention which his family would need and deserve.

One final note. Perhaps some of the objections to celibacy are based upon the fact that certain priests are very cold and aloof from people, that they seem unfeeling, not at all empathetic. Maybe this is attributed in many cases to their celibacy — it makes them something less than human.

I don't think it would be their celibacy at all. It might be that they were taught to be quite impersonal, emotionally uninvolved, especially with women. But assuming that a priest is mature and prudent, should he not relate to persons as persons in a warm loving way despite the danger? That danger was all too often made to appear far greater than it really is.

So we end this discussion inconclusively and imperfectly. It is unlikely that we changed anyone's mind. But maybe as we pray over this matter, and ask the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and keep our minds open and try to be objective, we will come nearer to the truth — what Jesus Christ desires of his priests of the twentieth century.

Famed Maryknoller, Lepers Friend, Dies

Maryknoll —(RNS)— Father Joseph A. Sweeney, a Maryknoll missionary who spent 33 years working among lepers in the Orient, died Nov. 27 in Seoul, Korea, at the age of 71.

A memorial service was held here at the order's seminary, Bishop John W. Comber, former Maryknoll superior general, led a concelebrated Requiem Mass.

One of Father Sweeney's goals was to destroy the myth surrounding leprosy that it is a highly contagious disease. In fact, it has been called the least contagious of the communicable diseases. Father Sweeney, in all his years working with lepers, never contracted it. His death came from stomach cancer.

Father Sweeney began his work among lepers when he founded the Gate of Heaven Leprosarium in South China in 1933. He spent 20 years there until the Communists expelled him in 1953.

After two years, Father Sweeney returned to the Far East when he went to Korea in 1955. In 1954, during his last visit to the United States, Father Sweeney received the Damien-Dutton Award for "outstanding work in the field of leprosy."

The award, given by the Damien Dutton Society, a Catholic group which promotes research, relief and recreation for leprosy patients, was named after Father Damien de Veuster and Brother Joseph Dutton, famed missionaries of the leprosarium at Molokai, Hawaii.

In 1962, Father Sweeney received two honors from the Korean Government. The first was a commendation from Hl Sup Chung, Minister of Health and Social Affairs. Korean

President Chung Hee Park, later that year, awarded him the Order of Cultural Merit National Medal.


In its citations, the Korean Government called Father Sweeney a "warm-hearted humanitarian, a true friend and apostle" who had worked "tirelessly and with a deep spirit of devotion among our people, promoting their spiritual, physical and social welfare."

Father Sweeney had three mobile clinics in Korea that cared for victims of leprosy at 30 centers. The centers—each treated 30 to 60 lepers—were visited monthly.

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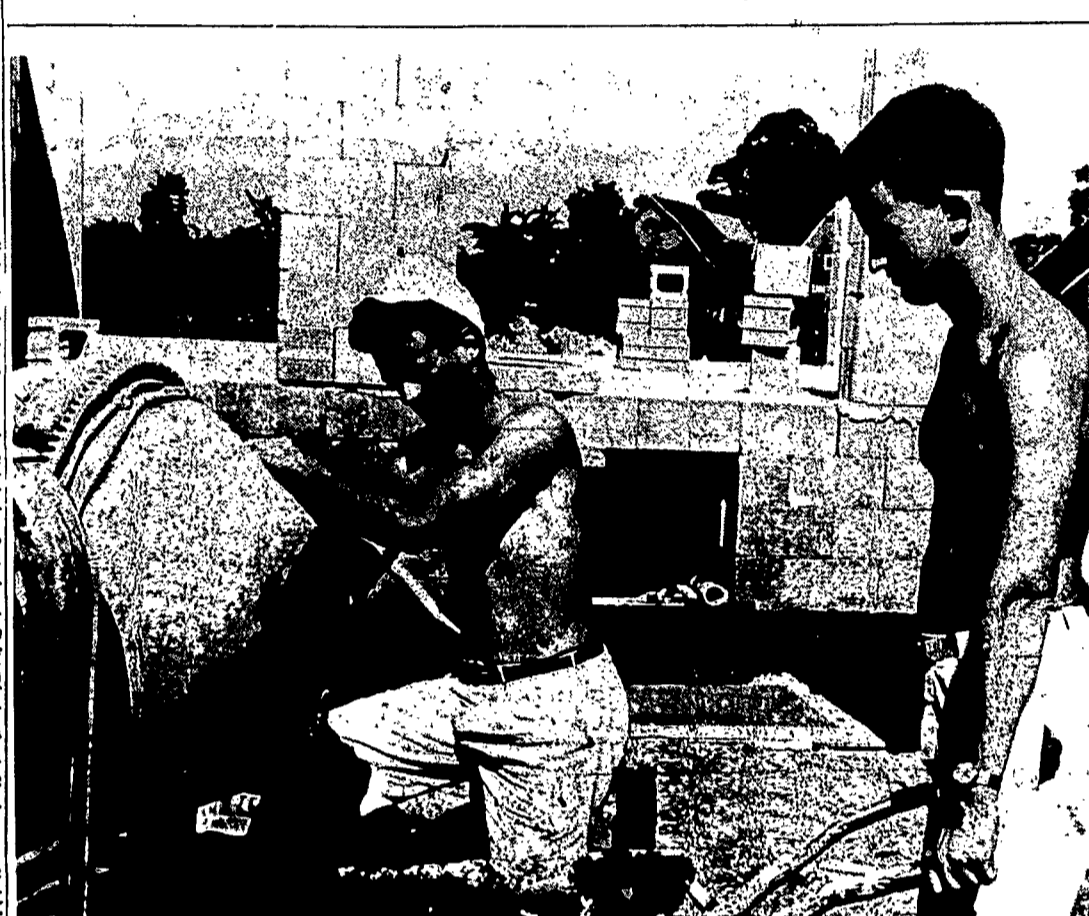
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Seminarians Build Homes

Muenster, Germany—(RNS)— Jesuit students from Heythrop College in Chipping-Norton, England, spent part of their summer building houses in Streckenhorst, near Muenster, Germany. Two of the students were Patrick Handley (left) and John Kennedy. The volunteer jobs were arranged by the Building Companions, a German association which recruits workers to aid the needy.

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