

Why Celibacy Is Unpopular

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN
(Second in a Series)

Try to talk reason to the emotional puppy-love of two 16-year-olds who contemplate marriage, and you quickly discover that, like two neighbors gossiping over a back fence, you are talking from different premises. One argues from reason, the other from the glands. Any discussion about celibacy is like that: those who discuss it from the point of view of Christ have no listeners among those who discuss it on the sociological level.

Celibacy is not a problem among the persecuted priests behind the Iron Curtain, but it is a problem in our affluent West. Celibacy is like a tropical plant which grows with difficulty in spiritually frigid atmospheres. The climate of our times is not suitable for so fragile a flower. At least four different moods make the subject of celibacy difficult: Poverty, Pornography, Temporality and Anomie.

Virtue-Vogue

In critical days there is a tendency to rend the seamless garment of spirituality and to choose those virtues which better reflect the spirit of the times. The popular virtue today in the Church is poverty. Among the three counsels of the Gospel, poverty, chastity and obedience, two are under attack: chastity and obedience. Poverty is "in"; chastity is "out". Any extravagance in building or banqueting is today regarded as great a sin as blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Property is considered vile, but sex is holy.

Poverty of spirit was an unpopular virtue in the days of the "Edifice Complex," but is exalted in these days of carnality. To attack the "wealth" of the Church is to exalt one as a defender of the poor. It is the popular indoor sport of the late sixties. But granted its validity, why must one counsel of perfection be purchased at the cost of another? Is this not part of the perversity of human nature that it compensates for any loss by an excess in the opposite direction?

When David began eyeing a beautiful woman sunbathing on a penthouse, and was reproached by Nathan, he became a defender of social justice. When told about a sheep stealer, he threatened to take over his flock and even to do violence to him. When Judas lost a belief in the Lord, he too became a militant, talking-up-to-them champion-of-the-rights-of-the-poor. The woman with five husbands changed the subject of her morals to the theological question of the place of worship. Virtues so quickly become the vices for which we have no taste.

God knows that the restoration of social justice is the key to the Kingdom of Heaven. But why, in so many instances, is its cost the loss of individual justice to God? Why must our love for our brother in the world exclude our love for our brother in Christ's Mystical Body? And why must a demand that the "have's" sacrifice for the poor so often be accompanied by a priestly refusal to make a sacrifice for the sake of the love of God?

In any case, because poverty is "in", celibacy is "out". We shift our restraints and self-denials from a virtue which profoundly touches the flesh self, to that other virtue which leaves the flesh alone, and almost always concerns the possessions or the authority of others. This picking and choosing of virtues, and the exaltation of one to the contempt of another, is the first reason why celibacy is today unpopular.

Pornography Touches Virtue

The second mood is that celibacy is "out" whenever pornography is "in". Pornography is an excessive abstract interest in a thing when its true nature is lost. When true love in the concrete, personal relationship is swallowed up in abortion and adultery, the mind compensates for it by abnormal mental curiosity. Sex, which by nature is intimate and physical, today has become social and mental.

The psychic infatuation with sex is very much like the passion for collecting old coffee grinders. No one ever wants them to grind coffee, which is the concrete reason for their existence. Their natural use is passed; but it is now an "interesting conversation piece". Stoles and chasubles have been abandoned by those who once vowed themselves to the altar, and are now hanging as interesting decor on the walls of the wealthy.

Sex today has moved from the biological realm to the intellectual. It is not just something done; it is something "talked about", to be analyzed, to be subject to techniques and computer analysis in a madness to discover new "dimensions". The image makers, the Madison Avenue celluloid hucksters, cannot advertise a tire, an automobile, or sell chewing gum without the "hang up" of the erotic.

Put celibacy and the total love of priests and religious for Christ into this pornographic atmosphere, and celibacy too becomes abstract, speculative and experimental. No longer is celibacy my relation to Christ, but the "problem of celibacy". Charts, statistics, surveys, sociological over-kill and questionnaires keep the subject on the notional, academic and non-personal level. The I-Thou relation of the priest to Christ gives way to the Church-is-too-slow-sexuality-syndrome.

Sex and Death

Almost the same thing is happening on the subject of death. Freud said that sex and death went together. Certainly, the pornography of death does match the pornography of sex. The interest in death today is also abstract, which is the essence of the pornographic. In order that we may not have to face death personally, headlines scream about death on highways, murders and muggings. Television magnifies the violence and makes death commonplace and general, but it always is something related to others. It is not personal or concrete; it will not happen to me. New devices for killing must be found on James Bond's automobile, lest death rear its ugly head as personal. New ways are found to do violence to others to de-personalize individual death. In the Victorian era, sex was taboo. In fact, the more one stresses sex and the intensity of the immediate pleasure, the less one may think about death or an end to all pleasure.

As death is generalized to escape the thought of personal judgment and responsibility, so sex is made abstract and pornographic to give little time to discover the goal of all love's yearnings. What chance does celibacy have in an Era of Pornography, when art is abstract, music only a beat and sex is made more abstract than personal and intimate?

Celibacy in such a mood must become statistical and sociological. If 6% of any religious group can be found who break their vows, then it is argued that personal celibacy is no longer necessary, or related to love of God. As Rollo May wrote: "When the sexual act is abstracted from love, it becomes repetitive and dull; therefore, pornographic literature rescues its readers from boredom by filling the fantasy with the sex act performed in a variety of ways". Technology replaces love of partner in marriage, and statistics replace love of God in the sanctuary.

Years ago the divorced were "off the reservation", so also was the priest who broke his vows. Today, the media of communication put vow-breakers of marriage and Holy Orders on the reservation, while he who loves one wife and God through her, and the one who loves God directly, are today off reservations. These are the new "out-laws".

It is indeed curious that the priest who justifies his leaving on the abstract, pornographic grounds that the Church is "too slow in renewal", or "that celibacy is only of ecclesiastical origin", or that "statistics prove celibacy is passe" is the very one who, when he marries, falls down into the concrete, personal, work-a-day-reality of the human situation. Many a thing is beautiful in the abstract, like an elephant, but who wants to live with one? The point here is merely that what is justified in the sociological, historical and metaphysical level, is practiced in the down-to-earth, personal and day-after-day routine. Many a priest who has taken refuge in "Jezebel understands me", suddenly realizes that now he has to practice the very virtues he refused to practice as a priest, and the doing of which would have saved his priesthood. He may also discover later on that the want of sacrifice which puts his marriage "on the rocks", is the same sacrifice which, if followed in the rectory, would have kept him celibate and happy.

Another Mood Is Temporality

Perhaps because of fear of the mushroom cloud after a nuclear blast, perhaps because violence on the streets threatens our next step, perhaps because as Cox told us, the Kingdom of God is only a Secular City, there is a dread of making a pledge for anything over a period of a few years. As men talk most about health when they are sick and about freedom when they are enslaved, so they babble most about "commitment" when they are least inclined to make a commitment. The love songs used to be "until the sands of the desert grow cold", now they beat to "I will love you until I get my new motorcycle".

Eternity is no longer penetrating time. Time is not Kalros, or a moment when we make decisions for life, but Chronos or the passage of moments unrelated to another. To say "I will love you and you alone" either to Christ, or to a woman in this atmosphere of temporality, is to some, a surrender few will make.

Hence, in the discussions of celibacy, one hears: "Maybe it will change". "Maybe I will change". Because celibacy is a-temporal and eternal, it means little to that immature mentality which can put away loves as it puts away toys. When life is a flight leaving nothing behind but a "sonic boom", it is so hard to raise celibacy to that eternal point where it responds to the Lover Who rises from a table to go to a garden to "show them how perfect His love was" (John 13/1).

One would think that in days when destruction threatens humanity, many would seek out a love stronger than death. But nuclear fear has worked just the opposite. Our Lord Who said: "Heavens and earth will pass away, but My Word will not pass away", is today challenged by those who claim they are His very own. The altar, where bride and groom joined hands and where the priest prostrated himself, is no longer the guarantee of pledged devotion.

Celibacy flourishes only when eternity is in the heart; it has less importance in the passage of sand in an hour glass and the tick of a clock. In this ambience where "my rights" are eternal, and "my freedom" is everlastingly inviolable, any discussion of "my duties", or "my commitment" can hardly find oxygen with which to breathe. Celibacy is intelligible only in the supra-temporal, but it gets little hearing when "Time" and the "Weekly Review" become our theology.

Anomic Mentality

The fourth reason why celibacy finds, like the subject of hell, no "welcome to ears polite", is the present human temper which might be called anomie. Nomos, in Greek, means law; anomos means without law. Anomie is that contemporary temper which dreads boundaries, limitations, borders, rules, law or authority, even in leadership.

In its ecclesial form, anomie is the affirmation of the ego's love for novelty, and any check upon it as an infringement of liberty. Signs like "Shake before using", "Keep to the right", "Off limits to military", "Canon Law", "police", "authority" — all these are regarded as curbs and chains to the absolute autonomy of what is really relative and conditioned.

This neurosis which would have no caps on bottles, no radar for planes and no foul lines for baseball, simply cannot place celibacy in the larger context of dedication for the sake of serving the Other. It sees it only as an ecclesiastical rule, not bound up with heaven, where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

To the anomic mind, celibacy is a negation, not an affirmation: a chain put on erotic drives, not a "passionless passion, a mild tranquility". Statistics are gathered to show that since 5% of the clergy in the affluent areas of the world break their vows, therefore celibacy is an intolerable

(Continued on Page 8)

LETTERS to the editor



'Last Summer' Draws Criticism

I am grateful that your columnist occasionally review a current movie, recognizing that some modern films (unlike the rapid reruns on TV) have a message or times should think about. But reviewers should be more objective and call bad things bad.

I read the novel "Last Summer" when it was serialized in a magazine but have not seen the movie. After reading the film-review by Father Torney (Courier-Journal 9/12/69) I know I will not go to see the shock and vulgarity and nudity which I recall from the novel.

Why didn't he flatly state that there were enough items in the movie unfit for viewing by anyone, and that parents should rule this picture out for their children?

Should even adult movie-goers pay money to support such films, no matter how many "lessons" they may derive when they study the scenes subjectively? I agree that good films should be praised as strongly as bad ones used to be condemned, but reviews which straddle the moral issue may do more harm than help.

—Angela Komiskey, Rochester.

Laymen Must Help Future of Church

In the Courier-Journal, 3/7/69, Monica Sullivan, then a Nazareth College senior, expressed the opinion that "the voice of the layman must be expected to play a major role in the future of the Church if religion is to retain... its meaning and relevance as modern society becomes more secularized."

Since Miss Sullivan discussed this interesting subject, the lay voice has, indeed, made itself heard in the Rochester Diocese in a number of important areas. Such subjects as liturgical renewal, priorities in Catholic education, the program of sex education in the Catholic schools and the issue of racial justice have been discussed and, in some cases, debated by laymen in the pages of the Courier-Journal.

An important medium in these discussions has been this column contributed by members of the Lay Voice Commission of R.E.A.C. Undoubtedly of greater value have been the spontaneous and intelligent contributions of other lay correspondents throughout the diocese. The editors of the "Courier" are to be commended for giving recognition to the fact that if a lay voice is to be heard within the Church, as indeed it should, it must be primarily through the medium of the Catholic press.

In recent months, two events have demonstrated that the importance of the lay voice has achieved a significant new level of recognition among the hierarchy. During the summer Catholics across the United States were polled in an effort to determine lay preferences on the subject of possible revisions in the list of holy days of obligation.

More recently, the bishops of New

York State announced that the time had come to consider seriously the elimination of some or all of the parochial schools in the state for economic reasons, and that "after the pastors have consulted with their people, a decision will be made..."

Such official recognition of the lay voice brings two thoughts to mind. The first is that the time must also have come for the layman to develop a new sense of responsibility. Since his opinions are now being solicited and will influence the future of the Church as never before, it is more important than ever that these ideas be arrived at by well-informed and thoughtful consideration.

A second reaction concerns the need for Catholic laymen to keep talking to one another and to the hierarchy and clergy. Exchanges of the ideas of laymen such as have occurred in the pages of the Courier during the past few months must be continued and extended if members of the laity are to carry their share of the burden of forming the Church of the future.

—J. E. Koller, Rochester.

'Sex' for Kiddies A Defiling Thought

"Sexual Play Pens Proposed for the Kiddies" was the title of a recent article defiling the women's section of the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle. The article was written by

Stuart Auerbach of the Washington Post and concerned recent sessions of the American Psychological Association. Psychologists quoted were Dr. Robert A. Harper of Washington and Dr. Harold Greenwald of New York.

Dr. Harper recommends pre-adolescent sexual play supervised by parents to prevent "sexual hangups" caused by "America's prudish culture." He also recommends "a more open attitude on contraception and abortion" and goes so far as to suggest that people no longer be allowed to reproduce, so that we may have effective population control. Let Americans have their cake and eat it too, the government will solve all your problems.

Dr. Greenwald says mothers are responsible for sexual anxiety in their children because they remove the child's hands from the genitals when changing diapers. Dr. Greenwald should have to diaper a baby for a week!

Dr. Greenwald further has the effrontery to complain that parents don't tell their children that sex is fun — "that sex is exquisitely pleasurable." This is fine if you desire to douse a fire with gasoline.

It seems fairly evident that our society will rather shortly finish the trip down the garden path. The obnoxious article in question was published over a month ago. To date there have been no protests in either the D & C or the Courier-Journal.

—Mrs. Anne M. O'Donnell, Rochester.



Sullivan 8/20
"CONGRATULATIONS! THIS WEEK IT ONLY TOOK YOU TWO MINUTES IN THE PARKING LOT TO CANCEL OUT AN HOUR IN CHURCH."

Word for Sunday

Give Sunday Back to God

By Father Albert Shamon

A common mistake once made concerning the Word of God was to listen to it simply as a record of the dead past, having nothing to say to the listener. How often we listen to the Gospel as though it had nothing at all to do with us.

Consider the celebrated parable of Sunday's Gospel: the invitation to a wedding feast—and its contemptuous rejection. Each Sunday God invites us to the sacrificial banquet of the Mass. Those who ignore the invitation—are they not like the contemptuous guests? Like them, of course, they have good reasons: but do they not all boil down to one: love of things?

Plus XII in an address in 1947 presented a 5-point program for the re-Christianization of the world. Point two, given priority even to social justice, was, "Help give Sunday back to God."

In our country today the trend is to commercialize Sunday. This trend would be ludicrous, were it not so tragic. For years labor unions agitated for a 5-day week; now laborers are practically demanding a 7-day work week. For if Sunday shopping goes unchecked, competition will demand other shops be kept open; then other businesses; then all businesses; then Sunday becomes like any other day—a work day.

This is tragic, I say, because man does not need to shop on Sunday; whereas his body and soul need the Sunday rest.

Never before in history has man had more leisure. He has a 40-hour week; automation-time galore! More time to shop—for now he has shopping nights as well as shopping days; shopping plazas as well as cars to get him swiftly there and back—air-conditioned goods, frigidaires, and deep freezers—all eliminate the need to shop daily. The drive for Sunday shopping for convenience's sake is sheer bunkum.

The real reason is greed and god-

lessness, like that of the wedding guests. The Sunday rest, unlike Bingo laws, stems from the natural law in the sense that the natural law dictates we must worship God. On Mt. Sinai God decreed when and how; keep holy the Sabbath. Shortly after, God reinforced this command for forty years in a dramatic way through the manna with which He fed His people in the desert.

There were two interesting things about manna. First it lasted for one day only (it could not be hoarded, to prevent greed). Secondly, it never rained down on the Sabbath. On the day before-enough came down for two days so that the Sabbath rest could be observed.

Later on, after His people had roamed in the Promised Land, they began to trust more in commerce than in God. They chafed at the Sabbath rest. "When will New Moon be over so that we can sell our corn, and Sabbath, so that we can market our wheat?" The prophet Amos thundered against their desecratory attitude and spoke God's warning: "My peo-

ple, Israel, is ripe for destruction... the land will tremble... and all in it shall mourn" (Amos 5). And they did. The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold and swept Israel into captivity (721 B.C.) and into oblivion—history speaks of the ten tribes of Israel as the "lost" tribes.

Christ chose Sunday as the Lord's Day—for on a Sunday He proved Himself Lord by rising from the dead. Christians first sanctified it by breaking bread; and later by adding the Sunday rest.

Sunday shopping attacks this hallowed tradition. Whether or not it will destroy it rests squarely on the shoppers themselves. If people refrain from Sunday shopping, business will not agitate for laws permitting Sunday's profanation.

We are invited to keep the Lord's Day holy. Like the guests in the parable, we can ignore the invitation; but if we should, the consequences for us, as for the wedding guests, will be catastrophic!

(To be continued)

Easte

Auburn — Eleven priest asked diocesan officials her night for more interest ar ment in the problems of county diocesan Eastern Vi

Requests for more pers funds were made at the meeting of the diocesan Pri cil in Mt. Carmel High Sch

More than 200 persons, vided between religious at tended, the 2 1/2-hour sessi in the first meeting open in the two-year history of t

Also present were Bishop Sheen and Auxiliary Bisho W. Hickey and John E. M. Thirteen of the 16 Council from throughout the D tended.

Msgr. George A. Cocuzzi Holy Family Church, Roc president of the council, p explained that because of agenda it would not be



Bishop

Clyde — Bishop Fulton last Sunday visited St. Evangelist's Church in Cl mission, St. Patrick's in and urged parishioners t attitudes of faith and love

The Bishop blessed the Church building and off there at 3:15 p.m., then Jo Clyde to consecrate a p.m. marking the 100th of the St. John's Church

Basing his sermons on Gospel, the Bishop noted challenged for claiming th forgive sins, proved His di both by revealing unspoke and by curing a paralytic.

Christ, he said, "conf same power on the Ap their successors in the Quoting the Gospel, he



Bishop Fulton J. Sheen proceeds from rectory



Bishop Sheen, follo die aisle to answer

25th An Set at E

Elmira — Three Bisho ciate here Tuesday after at ceremonies marking th versary of the Dominica of the Perpetual Rosary.

Bishop Fulton J. She principal celebrant of Thanksgiving at 5 p.m. astery chapel. Concelebr Auxiliary Bishop John ferty; the Very Rev. Sullivan, OP, of New Yo

Fisher Li

Four major changes i tive positions and facul ships have been annou er Charles J. Lavery, CS of St. John Fisher Coll

Dr. Clarence G. Heini of 2048, Five Mile Line I has been named dean (position, which includes planning and instructio staffing and academic p

Dr. Joseph A. Valenti East Ave., has been na student personnel.

Dr. Robert J. McLau 209 Buckland Ave., has l ed chairman of the de

COURIER-JOURNAL
PUBLISHED DAILY EXCEPT SUNDAY AND HOLIDAYS

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