

in the evening. Each night we eat together and share what we've been doing. There's a great camaraderie," Father Jaeger said.

The pastor said he's fortunate compared to priests who live in rectories alone — several, perhaps, against their preferences. He added that the four-person household at St. Ann's is "probably not the norm, but thank God we have what we have."

NOT FOR EVERYONE

Pope John Paul II alluded to the demands of celibacy in March 2002 while responding to the crisis involving priestly sexual misconduct with minors. According to Catholic News Service, the pontiff said: "Those who have responsibility of authorizing a candidate to proceed toward the priesthood must have, here and now, the certainty of their actual suitability. If this is true for every virtue and moral habit, it is clear that it is even more demanding in relation to chastity since, from the moment of receiving (Holy) orders, the candidate will be held to perpetual celibacy."

Father Hart commented that celibacy requires far greater individual effort than simply accepting a gift from God. Much in the same way as marriage, celibacy is "ongoing — the daily giving of one's self," he said.

Whereas celibacy is commonly referred to as a gift, Bishop Clark pointed out that "we don't think of it as five dollars or a million dollars that we lock away and preserve. It's not something that's once given and always secure."

As he approaches the 40th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, the bishop notes that approximately half of his 68-member ordination class have left the priesthood. He's also seen several priests depart during his 23 years as the Bishop of Rochester, and said that the majority claimed celibacy as the reason. Other bishops have told him of similar patterns, he added.

"I'm aware that celibacy is very

demanding and something that some ... can no longer observe. I don't judge that," Bishop Clark said, although he noted that the resignation of a priest is difficult for him to accept. "I hate to lose their priestly service," he said. "I hope to remain friends with them and not treat them like a pariah, but it's a loss, a disappointment, a hurt."

Meanwhile, Dean R. Hoge, a sociology professor at Catholic University of America, told Catholic News Service in October 2001 that celibacy is also a chief factor in the resignation of recently ordained priests. Basing his findings on a survey commissioned by the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators, Hoge reported that of 72 resigned priests ordained in 1992 or later, only 7 percent said they had been very satisfied with the celibate life. Additionally, 94 percent of these men thought celibacy should be optional for the priesthood.

Father Jaeger observed that modern-day societal cues don't make celibacy an easy sell. "Madison Avenue seeks to market sex, lust, greed and power," he said. "That not only attacks celibacy, or makes it difficult to live, but also has an effect on marriage. They want to take what's good and noble and holy and give us something that won't sustain us for very long."

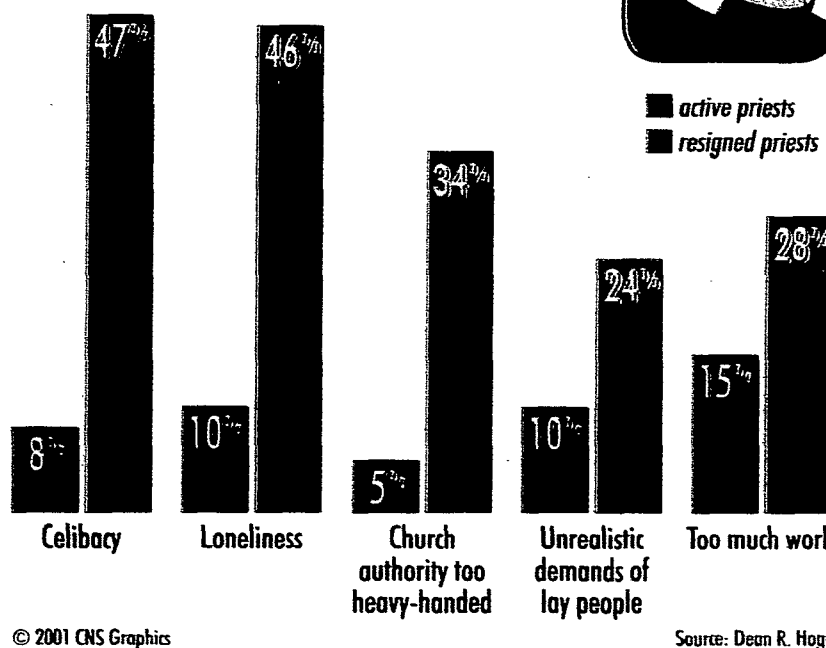
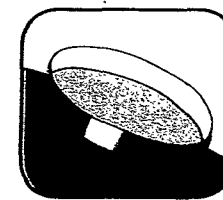
"It's a worldly mentality that infiltrates the church. I'm confident that that's the 'influence of the world' that Jesus talked about," Flansburg agreed.

But he, for one, says he's up for the challenge. "If a person is humble enough to realize (celibacy) isn't their life, then it's better to marry," Flansburg said. "However, it's part of the human experience to overcome things: 'I never thought I could — gosh, I did.'"

Flansburg also predicted that he will face "several things that are much harder (than celibacy) as a servant of Christ ... the issue is not whether or not Paul's going to be able to have sex. I don't imagine Je-

Problems for Priests

Priests rating the following as a 'great problem'



sus not having a girlfriend was his greatest concern. I think the stamina to live consistently and mercifully, to the point of death, was his biggest challenge."

SELF-AWARENESS

Ultimately, a complete sense of self should be the final factor in determining fitness for the celibate life, Father Hart said.

"What one is attempting is a wholeness. The more whole I am, the more able I am to love, to be," he stated. "In celibacy it's not just healthy relationships, it's because you're a whole person. It all moves together. Everything that helps us to become mature and whole is also what moves us toward being holy."

Flansburg said he's still determining whether "it's what I'm meant to do, meant to become. That's not decided and why I'm still discerning. If I'm serious about the commitment to the priesthood, I'm going to fully understand it before I get into it."

Psychologist Robert J. McAllister stressed this point in his 1986 book *Living the Vows: The Emotional Conflicts of Celibate Religious*. McAllister related stories of many priests and sisters whom he counseled as they struggled with celibate life. In many cases, he contended, they had based their call to vocation on a strictly spiritual experience without weighing such factors as family background, personal abilities and deficiencies.

"Vocation should be more than a 5-year-old's wish to 'bring Jesus to the babies in the missions,' a 10-year-old's intense desire to win parental approval by becoming a religious, or an 18-year-old's brief emotional elation during a period of prayer," McAllister wrote. "Are not individuals more likely to know God's will for them by searching the delicate structures within themselves than by straining to find some sign scrawled across the external events of their lives?"

GENERAL

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