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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEYS ON CLERICAL CELIBACY

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE
SURVEYS ON CLERICAL CELIBACY

A Thesis

Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Psychology
Kansas State College of Pittsburg

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Psychology

by
Robert M.
~~Rev. James~~ Basham

July 1968

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ABSTRACT

Within the Catholic Church at the present time there is a great deal of unrest with regards the problem of compulsory clerical celibacy. The purpose of this thesis was to analyze the results of the various surveys of diocesan priests on the question of compulsory clerical celibacy. Although there have been many surveys, there was a need to analyze the data from these surveys. Through this analysis it was hoped that a factual basis for serious discussion of the issue of optional celibacy could be established.

In order to put the results from the surveys in true perspective a short history of compulsory clerical celibacy within the Catholic Church was added to the review of pertinent literature. The results from the surveys were then analyzed and put into Table form so that the salient points would be highlighted.

Five major conclusions were yielded from the data of these diocesan surveys:

1. Support for Episcopal Leadership. Priests who want optional celibacy desire that the Bishops of the country take the initiative to resolve this problem. Support for change is not an indication of current rebellion against episcopal leadership but rather of substantial

dissatisfaction with official attitudes towards the celibacy problem.

2. More than 7,000 Priests want Optional Celibacy. The surveys conducted in fifty-two dioceses yielded 3,666 responses favoring optional celibacy. Since the surveys reached forty-six per cent of the diocesan priests in the United States, it seemed a reasonably conservative estimate that not less than 7,000 diocesan priests want the freedom to marry.

3. Assistant Pastors Lead Support for Change. More than half of the priests who want optional celibacy (2,052) are currently assistant pastors. In practically all dioceses, whether large or small, and in all parts of the country, assistants favor the right to marry in meaningful majorities.

4. Differences Between Regions: Size of Diocese is Key Factor. The surveys show that support for optional celibacy is weak in some geographical regions and strong in others. The explanation seemed to lie in the fact that the smaller the diocese the more favorable the attitude towards optional celibacy.

5. Celibacy is not a Closed Issue. The results of the surveys do not support the view that priests have understood the Encyclical, Sacerdotalis Coelibatus, as a final word on the subject.

The survey results reported give adequate proof that clerical celibacy is an urgent problem in the American Catholic Church. As such, it was recommended that a detailed report of each diocesan survey should be sent to the National Conference of Bishops, and also that a formal presentation of the data of the surveys be made at the next meeting of the

National Conference of Bishops. Finally, it was recommended that an independent study should be conducted to determine the reasons why priests are leaving the ministry.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

On January 25, 1959 when Pope John XXIII decided to call an Ecumenical Council, few people, if any, were able to envisage the vast ramifications of this Council. When the Council finally was convoked after two years of intense preparation, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council noted the universality and rapidity of social change in contemporary society. What is even more significant, and not so often perceived, is the fact that social change is a permanent phenomenon of our technological and industrial society. Hence, the Council Fathers were quick to perceive that the Church as a human institution is caught up in this phenomenon of social change. Therefore, the renewal, the "aggiornamento", must be a continuing renewal and not something that is ever accomplished.

Within this framework of renewal, the question of clerical celibacy is one which has received a vast amount of publicity both in secular and religious journals. Nevertheless, there is probably no aspect of the life of the Catholic priest of the Latin Rite which stands today in more desperate need of open, frank and honest discussion than that of celibacy. Despite the fact that Pope Paul VI withdrew it from public discussion in the closing days of the last session of the Council and informed the bishops that they could transmit their views privately to him, the subject will not die down.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study is to give an analysis of the various surveys of diocesan priests on the problem of compulsory clerical celibacy within the Catholic Church as revealed through a review of the pertinent religious and secular literature and the diocesan questionnaires.

Need for the study. Since the beginning of the Vatican Council, there have been a number of surveys on the question of clerical celibacy; however, there has been no attempt to compile the various survey results on this delicate question or to analyze the results. Thus, this study was undertaken in order to meet this need.

Delimitations. The delimitating factors in this study will be that only surveys dealing with Catholic priests who belong to the American clergy, who belong to the Latin Rite, and who are diocesan priests will be studied.

Limitations. One of the major limitations is the fact that because of the delicacy of the question not all the survey results have been made public. Another important limitation is the fact that some of the surveys excluded pastors and only included assistant pastors.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Apostolic. The term refers to the time of the apostles of Jesus Christ or to the type of work which the apostles performed: preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹

Archdiocese. An ecclesiastical province containing one or more dioceses presided over by an archbishop.²

Canonical. The term refers to the "statutes and regulations enacted by the highest church authorities for the government of ecclesiastical affairs."³

Celibacy. "The law which forbids those in Holy Orders to marry."⁴

Clerical. The term applied to those separated from the laity and attached in some special manner to the church. The term is often synonymous with priest. Cleric is the ecclesiastical noun form.⁵

Council. The term applies to "assemblies of the rulers of the Church legally convoked for the settlement of ecclesiastical affairs."⁶

¹Felician Foy, O.F.M., 1967 National Catholic Almanac, (Paterson: St. Anthony's Guild, 1967), p. 245.

²Conde Pallen and John Wynne (ed.), The Catholic Dictionary, (New York: Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1949), p. 62.

³Ibid., p. 163.

⁴Charles Henry Bowden, Catholic Dictionary, (New York: Paulist Press, 1955), p. 11.

⁵Conde, op. cit., p. 224.

⁶Bowden, op. cit., p. 16.

Deacon. One ordained to the second of the major orders: the last step before one is ordained a priest.⁷

Diocesan. This term refers to a definite ecclesiastical territory with its population, priests and laity, who are under the jurisdiction of a bishop.⁸

Ecclesiastical. This term refers to the Church or the Church's authority.⁹

Ecumenical. This term is synonymous with general or world wide Council presided over by the Pope or his representative.¹⁰

Ecumenical Movement. The term means "those activities and enterprises which, according to various needs of the Church and opportune occasions, are started and organized for the fostering of unity among Christians."¹¹

Encyclical. A letter from the Pope "which is addressed to all bishops and ordinaries in communion with the Holy See on matters which are predominately doctrinal and social in character."¹²

⁷Foy, op. cit., p. 307.

⁸Ibid., p. 308.

⁹Ibid., p. 319.

¹⁰Bowden, op. cit., p. 16.

¹¹Foy, op. cit., p. 303.

¹²Ibid., p. 208.

Jesuit. A member of a society of priests and brothers in the Catholic Church founded in 1534.¹³

Laicization. "The act of reducing ecclesiastical persons or things to a non-ecclesiastical or lay condition; secularization."¹⁴

Latin Rite. A rite is the manner in which liturgical worship is carried out. Within the Catholic Church there are different liturgical forms; however, in the Western Church the Latin or Roman Rite prevails and Latin is the official language.¹⁵

Manichean. A teaching, which was condemned by the Church, based on the "assumption that there are two supreme principles of being, one which was good, and the other evil."¹⁶

National Association for Pastoral Renewal. "The Association is a nationwide group of priests and laymen that seeks to provide a forum for the constructive study of current pastoral problems of the Church and a workshop for devising practical solutions for these problems."¹⁷

National Conference of Bishops. The term refers to the meeting of

¹³Ibid., p. 486.

¹⁴Conde, op. cit., p. 539.

¹⁵Foy, op. cit., p. 262.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 170

¹⁷Editorial in the Renewal, (New Haven: 1968), p. 1.

the Catholic Bishops of the United States "which has juridical status and authority in law to take binding action in some matters concerning the life of the Church in the United States."¹⁸

Papal. The term refers to the Pope the head of the Catholic Church or to the Vatican, the place where the Pope resides.¹⁹

Synod. The term given to "meetings of priests and other persons of a diocese called to consider matters for the welfare of the clergy and faithful."²⁰

Vatican Council. The term refers to the latest General or Ecumenical Council held in Rome.²¹

Western Church. The term refers to that section of the Catholic Church where the Roman or Latin Rite is the predominant rite.²²

¹⁸Foy, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁹Conde, op. cit., p. 724.

²⁰Foy, op. cit., p. 354.

²¹Bowden, op. cit., p. 53.

²²Foy, op. cit., p. 263.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND A SHORT HISTORY

The unrest among the American clergy over the question of celibacy first leaked to the public when a leading secular magazine carried an article by a Catholic priest who clamored for the right to marry.²³ The priest, who wrote under a pseudonym, had been ordained for fourteen years. The question for him was a vital one. After his many years of service, he felt that he was not completely a man. He said he felt the need to seek his other half so that he could be a whole man and thereby be a whole priest. Although he did not claim that every priest should be a married man, he did claim that some priests are only half men because they are not allowed to get married.

He went on to point out that clerical celibacy is not a theological necessity and that only the discipline of the Church has made celibacy the mark of the priesthood of the West. The author further stated that although celibacy has been beneficial to the Church in some areas, it has also been detrimental in other areas. The priest pointed out that we live in a modern age and the demands of celibacy are tearing thousands of priests asunder and that there is no argument which can support this growing travesty.

In one Catholic journal, a report by a psychiatrist and psychologist

²³Fr. Stephen Nash, "I am a Priest - I want to Marry," The Saturday-Evening Post, 6:10-12, March, 1966.

working with priests stated that the binding of celibacy to the priesthood is a badly motivated package deal.²⁴ Having worked with priests for a number of years, they claimed that men can live in accordance with a freely accepted celibacy provided they have been raised in favorable circumstances and have truly experienced emotional maturity before they definitely decide to accept celibacy. In short, they recommended that celibacy should not be a law or condition "sine qua non" but rather a conscious choice.

One priest wrote that diocesan priests are affected more by underneath the surface problems of a mixed or indeterminate sort than they are by the external, clearly limned and much publicized problem of clerical celibacy.²⁵ To him, celibacy was not a main problem. On the other hand a priest wrote in a recent psychological journal that the Church cannot deny him the right to be a man, that he would not live with the religious hang-ups which make a man a slave.²⁶

One bishop wrote that celibacy is being questioned not only outside the Church but also within it.²⁷ He mentioned that some envisage the

²⁴L. Van Wersch and Henk Suer, "Celibacy in Holland," The Catholic World, 204:177-179, August, 1966.

²⁵Patrick Sandford, "Problems Facing Parish Priests," America, 116:870-873, June, 1967.

²⁶Rev. James Kavanaugh, "Religious Hang-Ups," Psychology Today, 1:16-24, July, 1967.

²⁷Bishop Alfred Ancel, "The Celibacy Question Frankly Considered," Pastoral Life, 15:389-397, July-August, 1967.

possibility of a married clergy in the Western Church such as there is in the Eastern Church. He then went on to make the distinction between a married clergy and the marriage of priests. He stated that the Council did not envisage that a priest would be given permission to marry and continue his priestly ministry. However, there would be married men who would be called to be priests. In other words, once a man was ordained, he could not hope to get married and continue to function as a priest. On the other hand, a married man could be ordained a priest and then function as a married priest. In short, the bishop recommended the practice which now exists in the Eastern Church.

A Lutheran clergyman wrote that the articles by priests have left him with mixed emotions.²⁸ He wrote that his oscillation was perhaps symptomatic of the inner turmoil which he periodically experienced when his marriage vow and his calling to serve God polarized. He said he knew the inner discord which the basic dichotomy of his two vows produced in his soul. Of one thing he said he was certain -- that marriage has provided him with one possible solution to the essential loneliness of his calling. A loneliness which came from the fact that he was set apart from his fellow man by the sacredness of his office. He further stated that although he needed a wife and a family to fulfill himself as a person, this need was obtained at a price paid by his family and by his ministry.

²⁸Unus Lutheranus, "A Lutheran Clergyman Looks at Marriage," The Catholic World, 204:174-176, December, 1966.

A young cleric responded to the Lutheran clergyman's article on the tension of being a married pastor.²⁹ The respondent, after agreeing with the Lutheran minister that marriage is not a panacea for the problems of the Catholic priest, went on to state that the minister's essay had several difficulties: (1) an overly dramatic and idealistic conception of the ministry; (2) a rather naive notion of what it means to be celibate; and (3) an inference that his experience is necessarily common to all devoted married ministers. The author then stated some of his own conclusions. First, neither celibacy nor marriage was for all servants of the Lord the better way, but rather that each was a unique style of Christian life, to be freely accepted as an invitation by those to whom each was offered by the Spirit. Second, the tension created by unattained ideals was a malady which was not reserved only to the married clergy. Finally, the author stated that the task before the Catholic Church was not to find better arguments to prove that celibacy was the only way of life for ministers of the Word but to decide whether the Church was to offer to married men through ordination a full share in the bishop's priestly powers.

A young man who has only one year left in his preparation for the priesthood wrote why he wanted to be a priest.³⁰ After a short background of his Seminary training and experiences, the author pinpointed his own reflections

²⁹William P. O'Connell, S.J., "A Celibate Cleric Responds to a Married Minister," Pastoral Life, 23:575-579, May, 1968.

³⁰Patrick J. Ryan, "Why I Want to be a Priest," America, 118:751-752, June, 1968.

by bringing in the concept of ministerial priesthood. He wrote that ministerial priesthood is a life of religious dedication or prophetic witness to society. It has been his experience that ministerial priesthood is meaningful both within and without the christian community. The seminarian concluded by stating that he wants to be a priest because of his belief in God, as a response to the call of God, and because God deigns to use human instruments to speak to his people.

A Catholic theologian writing in a popular clerical magazine stated three main reasons for a married as well as a celibate priesthood.³¹ First, a married priesthood might dispel forever the Manichean aura of guilt that still surrounds many Catholics in the area of marital relations. Second, a married clergy might well open the door to more vocations to the priesthood since there is at present a crisis in clerical vocations. Finally, a married clergy would give a strong impetus to the ecumenical movement. Many dedicated Protestant clergymen might well come into the Catholic Church if they could enter as priests rather than layman because of the law of celibacy.

Another theologian stated that a renunciation such as that of celibacy could only be intelligible when it was in some sense "for God."³² The decision then testified to the person's faith, his belief in God. Thus, the renunciation became the basis of a prophetic witness. In other

³¹William R. Murphy, S.T.D., "Must We Live Without Sex," The Priest, 23:531-536, July, 1967.

³²Rev. Felix F. Gardegna, S.J., "Religious Celibacy," The Sacred Heart Messenger, 250:16-20, March, 1967.

words, religious celibacy brought into existence a special Christian 'community of faith.' The purpose of this 'community of faith' was to witness to the fact that 'God is' and to the person's personal belief in God. Celibates were meant to be living witnesses to God. Otherwise, they make no sense! They risk everything in order that they might proclaim by their very lives that God is and that this is all-important to man.

In a monthly review of the Christian world, a Catholic layman asked the question: "Must Celibacy be Compulsory?"³³ After citing Pope Paul's letter "Sacerdotalis Caelibatus" which expressed the Pope's insistence on the maintenance of the present Latin discipline of priestly celibacy, the author went on to line up the arguments against celibacy which were as follows: (1) that the New Testament did not demand compulsory celibacy as a condition for entering the priesthood; (2) that the connection which the Fathers of the Church encouraged between priesthood and celibacy seemed often to be based ultimately on an over-pessimistic view of man's earthly condition or on a certain notion of the purity necessary for contact with sacred things, while also reflecting a different social and cultural milieu; (3) that maintaining celibacy damaged the Church in regions where there was a shortage of priests; (4) that celibacy was detrimental to the development of a mature and well-balanced human personality. The article after demonstrating that the Pope's letter answered the main objections to celibacy went on to

³³Robert Nowell, "Must Celibacy be Compulsory?" Herder Correspondence, 5:67-72, March 1968.

state that the argument from the standpoint of a shortage of priests seemed virtually unanswerable especially in regions such as Latin America and Africa. For example, the ratio of priests to Catholics in Africa in 1966 was 1:1800 (one priest for every thousand Catholics is a fair ratio). And in Nigeria the ratio was 1:3043. The author concluded by stating unless the present discipline of celibacy was modified, the missionary effort expended by the Church over the last century or so would be brought to naught.

A Jesuit sociologist wrote in a recent publication that the priesthood was in a critical period.³⁴ Critical because it was a period of change and because there have been very high expectations for change on the part of priests as a result of the Second Vatican Council. The priest-sociologist stated that he did not think that there was a shortage of vocations but that there was a maldistribution of talent. Furthermore, he proposed the ordaining of married laymen and laywomen who are well-educated and apostolically orientated. The article concluded by stressing the fact that the real problem facing the Catholic Church is not birth control or married clergy but the problem of maladministration.

In another article the same Jesuit sociologist stated that bishops ought to marry and to have large families.³⁵ The main argument of the priest was sociological rather than theological or scriptural. If priests

³⁴Fr. Joseph Fichter, "The Priesthood Today and Tomorrow," U.S. Catholic, 34:6-11, June, 1968.

³⁵Fr. Joseph Fichter, "Bishops Ought to Marry," Commonweal, 88:289-292, May, 1968.

married and their bishops stayed single, a new wedge of separation would be introduced into the Christian community. This sociological expectation has been the experience of the Eastern Church. The married priest stayed at the lowest rung of the ecclesiastical ladder. He had no hope of promotion in his priestly career because all of the important higher positions in the Church were reserved for celibates. He was often assigned to the least desirable parishes in the most poverty-stricken areas, and he was treated like a second-class citizen by his celibate fellow priests. The article concluded by stating that there are intelligent arguments for and against the change to optional clerical marriage. However, if reason were to govern the reform of Church law allowing a married clergy, it was not feasible to exclude bishops and other Church dignitaries from the option and from a sociological point of view it was preferable that bishops be required to marry.

A discussion among three married clergymen revealed that although many responsibilities are placed on a wife and family of a minister or priest, there are also advantages which help to foster good family situations.³⁶ One participant felt that celibates should remain in a monastic setting and not be placed in a parochial setting. All three clergymen spoke of the conflict between the two roles -- married man and minister. Nevertheless, they believed that celibacy, although a good, should not

³⁶Dr. William Johnson, Fr. Thomas Pike, and Fr. Thomas Volaitis, "A Wife in the Rectory," Jubilee, 14:12-19, January, 1967.

be enforced but rather be voluntary. On the other hand, they felt that marriage should not be entered into lightly by the clergy because of the dual demands -- on the minister and on his family.

A question closely related to celibacy is the discussion concerning the restoration of the diaconate.³⁷ One author described that this was a burning subject of discussion among the Bishops at the Council. One of the main reasons for the restoration of the diaconate was the urgent need of clergy. For example, in Latin America, the author reported that there is only one priest for 5,000 parishioners and in some areas the ratio is 1:20,000 whereas in the United States the ratio is 1:900. However, even though there is a great need, the author stated that there was much discussion on whether the deacons would be married or celibate and if married, what effect this would have on celibate priests. The consensus was reported to be in favor of married deacons.

³⁷ Paul Velde, "The Lay Deacons," Jubilee, 11:22-23, April, 1964.

A SHORT HISTORY OF CLERICAL CELIBACY

Clerical celibacy has its roots in the Old Testament.³⁸ Although celibacy was in no manner common or imposed, a certain requirement of chastity can be seen in the prescription of the Old Testament about priests: for the seven day period of their consecration, Aaron and his sons had to stay in the Tabernacle day and night, and so to practice continence. However, before the time of Christ Judaism considered marriage as a duty and had only scorn for the celibate or the sterile. Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, was himself celibate and all celibacy is directly related to him; yet he himself did not oblige all to follow his example. In fact, Christ declared that celibacy was a particular vocation or way of life which was not given to all. The apostle Paul recommended celibacy as a special way of life particularly adapted to the service of the Kingdom of God. Celibacy became an unique ministerial commitment whereby preachers of the gospel were able to give all their time and all their preoccupations to the direct service of God and Church.³⁹

In the early Church the frequency of communal living grew apace with the increasing insistence upon a celibate clergy.⁴⁰ There was a tendency among the members of the clergy themselves to voluntarily embrace

³⁸Joseph Fichtner, O.S.C., "The Relevancy of the Patristic Priesthood," Pastoral Life, 16:203, April, 1968.

³⁹Joseph Lecuyer, C.S.Sp., What Is a Priest? (Vol. LIII of the Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, ed. Henri Daniel-Rops. 150 vols; New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1959), p. 51.

⁴⁰Fichtner, loc. cit.

celibacy. On the other hand, the faithful came to consider those priests who lived in complete continence as the most perfect. Nevertheless, in the apostolic era and into the fourth century, there was no law of celibacy in the West and married priests were common. Some bishops at the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 proposed a new law forbidding bishops, priests and deacons to have marital relations with their wives after ordination, but their proposal didn't carry.⁴¹

The first council to impose celibacy upon priests was a local council at Elvira, Spain early in the fourth century.⁴² Thereafter, many Western councils repeated the law, extended it to deacons and subdeacons and even, at times, forbade the married clergy to have intercourse with their wives. The centuries following upon the patristic period--9th, 10th, 11th--submit ample evidence that the clergy quite commonly disregarded the law.

In the East during the same period legislation was less severe and revealed a great diversity in practice.⁴³ In 420 bishops were to observe continence, but there was no law limiting the marriage rights of priests. It was the Council of Trullo of 692 which finally fixes the practice of the Eastern Churches. Bishops were bound to absolute continence. Priests, deacons and subdeacons could not marry after ordination; but if they were married before their ordination, they could continue to live

⁴¹Lecuyer, op. cit., p. 53.

⁴²Fichter, loc. cit.

⁴³Lecuyer, loc. cit.

as a married couple. In the West, in spite of variations and countless local resistances, the requirement of celibacy became increasingly definite.⁴⁴ In 1123 at the Council of the Lateran marriages by priests, deacons, and subdeacons were declared unlawful and invalid and further that candidates for sacred orders who were previously married must break off all relations with their wives. Nevertheless, these strong measures did not end the custom of a married clergy and disregard for the law of celibacy was fairly widespread for several centuries. Finally, the Council of Trent (1545-63) in its twenty-fourth Session reinforced the decisions of the Council of the Lateran.⁴⁵ The Code of Church Law (Canon 987) renewed these decisions and added certain penalties for clerics who contravened them. After these canonical decisions, the question of clerical celibacy became a closed issue within the Catholic Church until the present controversy.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 53.

⁴⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY

General Method. Between May 15 and October 10, 1967, a series of celibacy surveys were conducted in fifty-two dioceses and archdioceses located in all regions of the United States.⁴⁶ All of the dioceses in the states of California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia were included plus selected dioceses in the states of Missouri, New York and Pennsylvania. A little less than fifty per cent of all diocesan priests in the United States are attached to the dioceses surveyed.

Through these surveys it was hoped that a factual basis for serious discussion of the issue of optional celibacy could be established. It was thought that the National Conference of Bishops could provide more relevant leadership in this matter once the dimensions and location of support for change or for the status quo were clearly known.

Sample. The surveys were not designed as a random sample of diocesan priests in the United States.⁴⁷ All priests in the designated dioceses received a questionnaire. All were free to answer anonymously. No attempt was made to elicit responses from those who did not reply. As a

⁴⁶National Association for Pastoral Renewal, Final Report on NAPR Celibacy Surveys, A Report Prepared by the Board on Clerical Celibacy (New York: National Association for Pastoral Renewal, 1967), p. 9.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 7

result of this choice of survey technique, the percentages of "Yes" and "No" in the results are not strictly applicable to the priests who did not respond or to the priests who were not surveyed. However, the percentages are a rough yet good indicator of the general climate of opinion.

Data. All of the surveys were conducted in a similar fashion.⁴⁸ Members of the National Association for Pastoral Renewal formed an inter-diocesan priests' committee in the state or region to be surveyed. This group undertook full responsibility for the mechanics of the survey. Brief questionnaires were mailed to all diocesan priests in the area selected. Local bishops were informed of the initiative and provided with a copy of the survey results.

Statistical Analysis. A statistical design as such will not be employed since there is nothing to compare the data with at this time. Actually, the very fact of the surveys is, itself, significant since this type of survey is something entirely new within the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, the data will be presented in table form in order to highlight salient points.

Facilities. The literature reviewed was obtained by the usual library procedure. Much of the literature was obtained from theological libraries. The facilities of the National Association for Pastoral

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 8

Renewal were also used in order to obtain survey data and to facilitate diocesan contacts. Likewise, the data which was used to construct the Tables in this study was obtained from the Report of the National Association for Pastoral Renewal.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 9-12

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The diocesan surveys on celibacy, conducted among forty-six per cent of diocesan priests in the United States, yielded five major conclusions.⁵⁰

1. Support for Episcopal Leadership. Priests who want optional celibacy almost unanimously favored an initiative by the National Conference of Bishops to secure the power to introduce optional celibacy in the United States. A comparison of Tables I and II shows this pattern. In other words, priests who favor a change of discipline are not 'rebel' priests. They presume episcopal leadership and regular procedures of canonical change and they favor specific action to effect change at the present time.

Support for episcopal leadership is consistent with measurable dissatisfaction with current Church practice of dismissing priests who have married. Table III, in comparison with Table II, shows this attitude. Asked whether priests who have married should be allowed to return as "married priests" to active ministry, the survey responses become more affirmative or more uncertain, but always less negative. A check of the responses showed many instances where priests opposed to optional celibacy would not disapprove of the readmission to ministry of those who had violated the current law. This kind of response implies a lack of

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 1

confidence in established procedures -- such as long delays in the handling of request for release from celibacy, official reluctance to grant "before the fact" permission for marriage, the implicit degradation of the laicization process, and the official refusal to concede that dedicated priests might have a right conscience in this matter.

2. More than 7,000 Priests Want Optional Celibacy. As Table I shows, the surveys revealed that 3,666 diocesan priests favor the right to marry. The judgement that twice this number represents a reasonable and conservative estimate of the minimum number of diocesan priests who favor optional celibacy rests on three considerations. First, the surveys reported here reached nearly one-half (forty-six per cent) of all the diocesan priests in the United States. Second, the surveys were carried out in scattered areas all over the United States. Priests not surveyed in each area share the same climate of opinion as those who received questionnaires. Third, the responses came from diocesan priests of all age groups and from men engaged in a full range of clergy occupations. The age and occupation profile of the respondents indicates a broadly representative response from the groups surveyed. With these factors in mind, it is solidly founded deduction that a large body of Catholic priests in the United States, numbering at least 7,000 want the freedom to marry.

3. Assistant Pastors Lead Support for Change. The survey shows that the group most favorable to optional celibacy is that of assistant pastors, and support may be growing within this group. Table I shows

TABLE I

RESPONSE OF DIOCESAN CLERGY TO QUESTION: "DO YOU FAVOR A CHANGE TO OPTIONAL CELIBACY FOR THE DIOCESAN CLERGY?" BY TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT *

	Pastors	Assistants	Others	TOTAL	No. of respondents
Yes	38.8	65.7	54.4	54.6	(3,666)
No	59.5	32.1	40.5	42.7	(2,872)
No opinion	1.7	2.2	5.1	2.7	(175)
No. of respondents	(2,189)	(3,121)	(1,403)	-	(6,713)

*Due credit for the data which was used to construct these Tables must be given to the National Association for Pastoral Renewal. Cfr. p. 21.

TABLE II

RESPONSE OF DIOCESAN CLERGY TO QUESTION: "DO YOU FAVOR A REQUEST TO THE SYNOD OF ROME BY THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN BISHOPS THAT THE CONFERENCE BE EMPOWERED TO INTRODUCE OPTIONAL CELIBACY IN THE UNITED STATES?" BY TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT

	Pastors	Assistants	Others	TOTAL	No. of respondents
Yes	39.0	65.0	54.7	54.4	(3,658)
No	58.5	32.2	42.4	43.0	(2,887)
No opinion	2.5	2.8	2.9	2.6	(168)
No. of respondents	(2,189)	(3,121)	(1,403)	-	(6,713)

that assistants favor the freedom to marry by a margin of two to one. Table IV suggests that the "Yes" response may be understated due to a growth of support over the past three months. When one contrasts the surveys conducted during May and June, with those carried out in September, there is a spread of twenty percentage points between the two groups of assistants. Admittedly, the assistants surveyed in late spring live in dioceses where conservative thought is the dominant style; also, they are an older group of men on the average (due to lengthy waits for pastoral appointments), and they were the first to express their views on a sensitive subject. But these factors are inadequate to account for such a substantial difference in attitude. It is, therefore, likely that support for optional celibacy has been growing among assistant pastors and that the "Yes" response of eastern seaboard assistants reported here is considerably understated.

Assistants favored change in fifty of the fifty-two dioceses surveyed. The two dioceses reporting opposition to optional celibacy account for only ten responses. The surveys show the overwhelming support for change among assistants in more than half of the dioceses surveyed. In sixteen out of twenty midwestern dioceses, seventy-five per cent or more of the assistants favor optional celibacy. The same proportions hold in six out of eight dioceses of the Northwest and in both dioceses of Florida.

The solid support for change among assistants carries a message that cannot be ignored without jeopardizing the present and future welfare of the Church. In all but the smallest dioceses, assistant

TABLE III

RESPONSE OF DIOCESAN CLERGY TO QUESTION: "DO YOU FAVOR THE READMISSION TO ACTIVE MINISTRY OF THOSE MARRIED PRIESTS WHO WISH TO RETURN TO PRIESTLY MINISTRY?" BY TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT

	Pastors	Assistants	Others	TOTAL	No. of re- spondents
Yes	43.2	65.7	49.8	56.5	(3,794)
No	50.7	29.6	38.5	38.3	(2,567)
No opinion	6.1	4.7	11.7	5.2	(352)
No. of re- spondents	(2,189)	(3,121)	(1,403)	-	(6,713)

TABLE IV

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE OVER TIME TO QUESTION: "DO YOU FAVOR A CHANGE TO OPTIONAL CELIBACY FOR THE DIOCESAN CLERGY?" BY TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT

	Pastors	Assistants	Others	TOTAL	No. of re- spondents
May-June	24.9	56.0	44.7	46.7	(1,317)
September	44.3	76.0	61.8	60.3	(2,349)
TOTAL	39.8	65.7	54.4	54.6	-
No. of re- spondents	(850)	(2,052)	(764)	-	(3,666)

TABLE V

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE OVER TIME TO QUESTION: "DO YOU FAVOR A REQUEST TO THE SYNOD OF ROME BY THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN BISHOPS THAT THE CONFERENCE BE EMPOWERED TO INTRODUCE OPTIONAL CELIBACY IN THE UNITED STATES?" BY TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT

	Pastors	Assistants	Others	TOTAL	No. of respondents
May-June	25.2	56.5	46.4	47.5	(1,338)
September	44.5	74.2	61.3	59.5	(2,320)
TOTAL	39.0	65.0	54.7	54.4	-
No. of respondents	(855)	(2,034)	(769)	-	(3,658)

TABLE VI

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE OVER TIME TO QUESTION: "DO YOU FAVOR THE READMISSION TO ACTIVE MINISTRY OF THOSE MARRIED PRIESTS WHO WISH TO RETURN TO PRIESTLY MINISTRY?" BY TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT

	Pastors	Assistants	Others	TOTAL	No. of respondents
May-June	29.1	57.5	49.0	49.5	(1,394)
September	48.8	74.8	61.8	61.6	(2,400)
TOTAL	43.2	65.7	56.3	56.5	-
No of respondents	(946)	(2,058)	(790)	-	(3,794)

pastors constitute the largest clergy group. These assistants represent an entire generation of priests on whom the Church depends for her future pastors and bishops. More importantly, Fichter's 1966 survey of assistant pastors showed that those who support optional celibacy are also the ones most committed to the reforms initiated by the Second Vatican Council.⁵⁰ Finally, assistants comprise the age-group for whom marriage is most likely to be a personal concern and a decision that they will not long postpone.

4. Regional Differences and the Factor of Size. Clear regional differences appear in Tables VII, VIII, and IX. The dioceses of the Northwest and of Florida are most favorable to change; even the pastor-group in these regions shows a majority of "Yes" responses. The Midwestern and California dioceses fall into a middle position, favorable but by smaller majorities, and the Eastern seaboard remains the only region with a small majority of "No" responses. However, for the same reasons that suggest that support for optional celibacy among Eastern assistants may be understated, the overall results for Eastern seaboard priests may represent an underestimate of the current climate of support for change.

A key factor that may explain the regional differences is reported in Figure I. When the forty-five dioceses with majorities of "Yes" responses and the seven dioceses with majorities of "No" replies are arranged by size (number of priests), a clear pattern emerges. The smaller the diocese, the more likely that a majority of its priests will favor optional celibacy. The tendency is confirmed both by the

⁵⁰Fichter, op. cit., p. 290.

TABLE VII

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE BY REGION TO QUESTION: "DO YOU FAVOR A CHANGE TO
OPTIONAL CELIBACY FOR THE DIOCESAN CLERGY?" BY TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT

	Pastors	Assistants	Others	TOTAL	No. of re- spondents
*Eastern seaboard	24.9	56.0	44.7	46.7	(1,317)
West-California	36.6	66.3	59.8	54.2	(461)
*Midwest	37.9	73.8	60.3	57.5	(1,450)
South-Florida	70.2	89.7	85.3	81.5	(106)
*Northwest	80.4	91.0	75.8	84.2	(332)
TOTAL	39.8	65.7	54.4	54.6	-
No. of re- spondents	(850)	(2,052)	(764)	-	(3,666)

*Eastern seaboard includes all of the dioceses of Connecticut and New Jersey; also Brooklyn, New York, Rockville Centre, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Wilmington and Washington, D.C. Midwest includes all dioceses in Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri (except Jefferson City), and Wisconsin. Northwest includes all dioceses of Oregon, Washington, Montana and Idaho.

TABLE VIII

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE BY REGION TO QUESTION: "DO YOU FAVOR A REQUEST TO THE SYNOD OF ROME BY THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN BISHOPS THAT THE CONFERENCE BE EMPOWERED TO INTRODUCE OPTIONAL CELIBACY IN THE UNITED STATES?" BY TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT

	Pastors	Assistants	Others	TOTAL	No. of re- spondents
Eastern seaboard	25.2	56.5	46.4	47.5	(1,338)
West-California	35.4	64.7	61.7	53.3	(454)
Midwest	38.7	74.6	59.3	56.9	(1,434)
South-Florida	68.0	85.7	82.3	78.5	(102)
Northwest	80.4	90.4	72.3	83.7	(330)
TOTAL	39.0	65.0	54.7	54.4	-
No. of re- spondents	(855)	(2,034)	(769)	-	(3,658)

FIGURE I

DISTRIBUTION OF DIOCESES BY NUMBER OF PRIESTS: "/" INDICATES A MAJORITY "YES" AND "-" A MAJORITY "NO" TO QUESTION: "DO YOU FAVOR A CHANGE TO OPTIONAL CELIBACY FOR THE DIOCESAN CLERGY?"

Average no. of priests	1,144	436	210	82
Average "Yes" response	48.5	53.6	61.9	69.8
			/Belleville /Bridgeport /Joliet /Kansas City /Madison /Miami /Mount Fresno /Norwich /Oakland /Paterson /Peoria /Portland /Rockford /Sacramento /Seattle -Springf'd, Ill /St. August. /St. Cloud /Winona	/Baker /Boise /Crookston /Duluth /Helena /New Ulm /Santa Rosa /Spokane /Springf'd, Mo. -Stockton /Superior /Wilmington /Great Falls /Yakima
	-Brooklyn /Chicago /Newark -New York -Philadelphia	/Baltimore /Camden /Green Bay /Hartford /LaCrosse /Los Angeles /Milwaukee -Rockv. Cent. /San Diego /San Francisco -St. Louis /St. Paul /Trenton /Washington		

TABLE IX

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE BY REGION TO QUESTION: "DO YOU FAVOR THE READMISSION TO ACTIVE MINISTRY OF THOSE MARRIED PRIESTS WHO WISH TO RETURN TO PRIESTLY MINISTRY?" BY TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT

	Pastors	Assistants	Others	TOTAL	No. of respondents
Eastern seaboard	29.1	57.5	49.0	49.5	(1,394)
West-California	41.5	65.8	63.0	56.3	(479)
Midwest	43.0	74.5	59.5	58.6	(1,477)
South-Florida	68.0	91.8	85.2	81.5	(106)
Northwest	82.8	91.6	75.8	85.7	(338)
TOTAL	43.2	65.7	56.3	56.5	-
No. of respondents	(946)	(2,058)	(790)	-	(3,794)

TABLE X

PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRES RETURNED BY PRIESTS OF EACH DIOCESE: COMPARISON OVER TIME

Percentage of dioceses where	Less than 40% returned	40-49.9% returned	More than 50% returned	Average return
May-June	57.1	42.9	0.0	36.2%
September	41.7	36.8	21.5	41.3

average "Yes" response for each size group and by the fact that five out of the seven dioceses with "No" response majorities fall into the two largest size groups.

Figure I also shows that four out of the five major dioceses with "No" majorities belong to the Eastern seaboard. These results also imply that attitudes toward a married clergy vary considerably within each region. Hence, no plan for introducing optional celibacy will prove widely acceptable unless its design will tolerate a continuation of the present discipline in some dioceses while others initiate a married clergy at a pace that responds to local needs.

5. Celibacy is Not a Closed Issue. After the encyclical, Sacerdotalis Coelibatus (official letter of Pope Paul IV on priestly celibacy), appeared in June of 1967, some Church publications suggested that priests would no longer feel free to discuss the issue of optional celibacy in the Latin Rite. Tables IV, V, and VI offer evidence that contradict this opinion. All of the surveys conducted several months after publication of the encyclical yielded larger "Yes" responses than those carried out in May and June. Regional differences in attitudes contribute to the stronger support for change in September, but it is difficult to believe that these regional factors are so strong that the percentage gap was much larger in June (1967) and has been narrowing since the publication of the encyclical. It is more likely that the percentage difference between late spring results and those of September is too large to be explained simply by regional differences; rather it is an indication of the support for change that has been growing among the clergy in all parts of the country.

Another indication of the willingness of priests to discuss celibacy since Pope Paul's letter in June is the larger percentage of survey questionnaires returned. Table X reports these results, notably an overall improvement of fourteen per cent in the percentage of questionnaires returned. There is no reason to interpret these results as a rejection of the principle of Papal authority or the authority of local bishops. Rather, the responses indicate the great personal interest of many priests in this issue and their strong desire to express their views to those responsible for the maintenance or alteration of Church discipline.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Five major conclusions were yielded by the data from the diocesan surveys conducted among forty-six per cent of the diocesan priests in the United States.

1. Support for Episcopal Leadership. Priests who want optional celibacy will strongly support episcopal initiatives to resolve this problem for the United States. Support for change is not an indication of current rebellion against episcopal leadership. It is associated, however, with substantial dissatisfaction with official attitudes towards priests who wish to marry and who have married.

2. More than 7,000 Priests want Optional Celibacy. The surveys in fifty-two dioceses (to which nearly half of all diocesan priests in the United States are attached) yielded 3,666 responses favoring optional celibacy. Surveys among the remaining diocesan priests would most probably produce similar results. It is, therefore, a reasonably conservative estimate that not less than 7,000 diocesan priests in the United States want the freedom to marry.

3. Assistant Pastors Lead Support for Change. More than half of the priests who want optional celibacy (2,052) are currently assistant pastors. In practically all dioceses, whether large or small and in all parts of the country, assistants favor the right to marry in meaningful majorities.

4. Differences between regions: size of diocese is key factor.

The surveys show that support for optional celibacy is weak in some geographic regions and strong in others. The explanation may lie in the survey indications that, the smaller the diocese, the more favorable the attitude of its priests towards optional celibacy.

5. Celibacy is not a Closed Issue. Survey results do not support the view that priests have understood the encyclical, Sacerdotalis Coelibatus, as a final word on the subject. A comparison of surveys conducted during May and June--shortly before and after the encyclical was published--with those run in September shows that the response (questionnaire returned) has grown markedly, and that the favorable replies have also increased by substantial proportions.

Concluding Observations

The survey results reported here should serve as adequate proof that celibacy is an urgent problem of significant dimensions in the American Catholic Church. As such, it deserves the urgent and serious attention of the National Conference of Bishops lest those who now look to their bishops for leadership be disappointed and turn elsewhere. However one interprets the percentages yielded by these surveys, the fact remains that a large body of American priests are on record as favoring optional celibacy. Unless this problem is resolved in the very near future, an alarming number of these priests may swell the ranks of those who have already withdrawn from pastoral work in order to marry.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A detailed report on each diocesan survey, along with the total survey results, should be sent to the National Conference of Bishops throughout the nation.

2. The National Association for Pastoral Renewal should request permission to make a formal presentation of the data on clerical celibacy at the next meeting of the National Conference of Bishops.

3. An independent study should be conducted to determine the reasons why priests are leaving the ministry.

LIST OF FIGURES

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Diocese _____ Diocesan Priest
_____ Religious Priest

Principal Work: _____ Pastor _____ Assistant
_____ Chaplain _____ Teacher
_____ Chancery Office _____ other work _____

Do you favor a change to optional celibacy for the Diocesan Clergy?

_____ YES _____ NO _____ NO OPINION

Do you favor a request to the Synod of Rome by the National Conference of American Bishops that the Conference be empowered to introduce optional celibacy in the United States?

_____ YES _____ NO _____ NO OPINION

Do you favor the readmission to active ministry for those married priests who wish to return to priestly ministry?

_____ YES _____ NO _____ NO OPINION

APPENDIX B

REPORT ON PRIESTS WHO HAVE LEFT THE MINISTRY IN 1966 and 1967

TABLE I

DIOCESAN* PRIESTS BY YEAR OF DEPARTURE AND MARITAL STATUS

	<u>1967</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>Total</u>
Married:	138	84	222
Not Married:	147	50	197
Not Reported:	<u>60</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>82</u>
TOTAL:	345	156	506

*Of the 501 Diocesan priests reported in the survey, 70 were ordained more than fifteen years. Of the remainder, 355 were in the category of three to twelve years ordained. On the basis of actuarial tables probably 8000 Diocesan priests in the United States are in this category. Thus, approximately 4.5 per cent of all Diocesan priests in this category left the ministry in the two year period. Of all departures, 70.8 per cent occurred in this category.

TABLE II

DIOCESAN PRIESTS ACCORDING TO TYPE OF ASSIGNMENTS HELD

Chancery officials	8
Seminary professors	18
Pastors	34
Parish Assistants	341
Newman Chaplains	17
Teachers in high schools	49
Special work	<u>34</u>
TOTAL	501

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