

**AN APPRAISAL OF CELIBACY IN NROMAN CATHOLIC
CHURCH**

BY

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BENIN CITY**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the research work was carried out by UWANOGHO FAVOUR JESURURUART1901858 in the Department of Religions, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin city.

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Dedication

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty for His love, grace and mercies throughout my academic pursuit in University of Benin.

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the ethical and religious issues surrounding celibacy in Roman Catholic Church. In Roman Catholicism, celibacy is seen as one of the primary and major steps taken by Priest and religious persons. This work employed the historical and analytical research method. To ascertain reliable data, various methods of data collection were employed, these includes oral interview and personal observation, literature were also reviewed. Journal, articles and internet were consulted. This research work revealed the following: the doctrine of celibacy is not a biblical law. It also revealed types of celibates, this work revealed the negative and positive impacts of celibacy on Roman Catholic Priests, however this research work recommended that the law of celibacy should be maintained, but with proper scrutiny to minimize abuses.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Celibacy is one of the cardinal laws that guides the priestly class in the Roman Catholic Church. In the Catholic Church, celibacy is of high value among the Roman Catholic ministerial priesthood. This means that every male person aspiring to be a priest must abstain from marriage and subsequently from procreation. It is seen as principal sacrifice for total concentration and consecration to God. Priesthood is a vocation for those who feel that they are called to live this type of life. The essence of this is for the priest to work freely (1 Cor. 7:32-35); to be more available for pastoral work, and free from family ties. It is aimed at avoiding distractions that comes with marriage and family in order to enable the priest to face his priestly duties squarely. Issues about celibacy among the Roman Catholic cannot be trivialized because it is seen as the whole essence of a priest which is handed over by the early church fathers. It is paramount to note that Celibacy is not peculiar to the male members of the Catholic Church.

Virginity, chastity and celibacy are the major key-pass into the circle of female clergies in the Catholic Church, popularly known as “Revered Sisters.” The Reverend Sisters just like the Priests are expected to strictly adhere to the doctrine of celibacy, that is, abstinence from sexual intercourse and procreation. However, the doctrine of celibacy in Roman Catholicism have tend to pose a problem to many who intends to join the priestly class, as they see it as a fight against nature.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Celibacy is a prerequisite to joining the priestly class in the Roman Catholic Church, however biblical exegesis and in-depth study of the lives of the Apostles have called the attention of many to question the importance and value placed on celibacy among the priestly class in Roman Catholicism. Furthermore, records of misbehaviors of some Catholic priests have made many to point accusing fingers on the doctrine of Celibacy, linking these ill-behaviors to the doctrine of celibacy.

In as much as celibacy is of high value in the Roman Catholic Church, it have been a topic for debate, as many have viewed it to be a man-made

limitation to the worship of God. This doctrine of sexual abstinence have made many to give up their passion for the priestly service in the Catholic Church, while some who insisted in joining have dent their priestly office due to the inabilities in human nature. This task has been a major problem to many who have desired to partake in the service of the religion in order to attain a level of Enlightenment, Freedom or Salvation. Hence this research carried out an in-depth study on the concerns of Priests and Clergy men on the issue of Celibacy, whether or not it is a Religious piety or punishment (bondage). This study intends to carefully examine the celibacy among the priestly class in Roman Catholic Church, to know whether or not it is a religious piety or bondage.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The primary aim of this study is to ascertain the effects of celibacy on Roman Catholic priesthood. Other objectives of this study are:

- i. to know and understand the concept of Celibacy

- ii. to have an idea of the historical origin of celibacy in the Catholic Church
- iii. to know and understand the types of Celibacy in Catholic Church
- iv. to know and understand if the doctrine of Celibacy is religious piety or punishment.

1.4 Definition of Terms

In order to have a clear appraisal of celibacy in Roman Catholic Church, some key terms and concepts are to be defined. Some of these key terms and concepts are:

Celibacy

Robert (2005) defined celibacy as the ecclesiastical law in the Western Church imposed on clerics forbidding those in the married state from being ordained and those in holy orders from marrying. It includes the obligation of observing perfect chastity under a vow.

The reasons for this are: that those being ordained may serve God with a greater singleness of purpose (1 Cor. 7:32), and that

so living a life of continence they observe the state of virginity, which is pure and higher than that of marriage.

Celibate

A celibate is generally one who is not married and one who abstains from sexual relationship with anybody (male and female). This maybe for conscientious, religious or moral reasons (Dictionary.com, 2020,).

Abstinence

The practice of restraining oneself from indulging in something, typically alcohol or sex.

Roman Catholic Church

According to Catholic Encyclopedia, Roman Catholic Church is the Christian church of which the pope, or bishop of Rome, is the supreme head.

Appraisal

The act of examining someone or something in order to judge their qualities, success or needs (Dictionary.com, 2020).

1.5 Significance of Study

This research is of the following benefits: It will clearly explain the meaning of celibacy to the public. Information from this study will explain the reason behind the value placed on celibacy by the Roman Catholic Church. Information from this study will also help people aspiring to be Catholic priests, to understand the price of celibacy they are expected to pay. It will also show the challenges faced by Catholic priests due to celibacy. Finally it will show whether or not celibacy is a religious piety or punishment.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of the study is on the appraisal of celibacy in Roman Catholic Church.

Emphasis will be on whether Celibacy in Catholic Church is a religious piety or not. This work is limited to only priest and clergy men in the Roman Catholic Church.

1.7 Research Methodology

This study adopts the historical and analytical methods of research. Oral interview were also carried out, the persons interviewed were Priests, Reverend Sisters and some lay faithful. The secondary source, were materials such as journals, article handbooks that were relevant to the course of this study.

1.8 Organization of the Work

This work is grouped into five chapters. Chapter One provides a general background to the study, which includes statement of problem, definitions of terms, aims and objectives of the study, significance of study, methodology, organization of the work, and lastly scope and limitation of the study. Chapter Two deals with the meaning of Celibacy, Characteristics of Celibates, Rules that governs celibacy, Reasons for being a celibate, Type of Celibacy. Chapter three covers the doctrine of celibacy in Roman Catholicism, historical trace of celibacy in catholic church, types of celibacy in Catholicism, reasons for being a celibate, qualification of celibacy in

Roman Catholicism, rules that governs celibacy Roman Catholicism. Chapter four clearly explained the Challenges Catholic celibates encounter, Influence of celibacy on Priestly duties, Priestly concerns on the Issue of Celibacy, Negative effects of celibacy to the priestly class. In chapter five, the work is evaluated and concluded.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Meaning of Celibacy

The term celibacy has been associated with the idea of being unmarried by volition, most times due to religious purposes. Celibacy is the explicit renunciation of marriage made, for the more

perfect observance of chastity, by all those who receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders in any of the higher grades. Etymologically, Celibacy is gotten from the Latin word caelibatus, which means the state of voluntarily being unmarried, sexually abstinent, or both, usually for religious reasons. Sandra (2001) stated that within the western context, celibacy originated from the Latin term caelebs which means “alone or single”. O'Brien (2009) opined that the term celibacy is applied only to those for whom the unmarried state is the result of a sacred vow, act of renunciation, or religious conviction. Boettner (1966) opined that Celibacy's origins trace back to antiquity, with early Christian communities valuing asceticism and spiritual purity. In the Merriam Webster Dictionary (Webster 2020b) and Dictionary.com (2020), celibacy refers to the state of not being married or abstinence from sexual relations and/or marriage usually for religious reasons. According to Barrett (1971), ‘celibacy is the state of voluntarily being unmarried, sexually abstinent, or both, usually for religious reasons’ (cited in Ekpendu 2016:1). It is important to note that the

decision of celibacy is not taken on the basis of unavailability of spouse or financial constraints to marry or any other factor, rather the decision is taken solely on the basis of religious reasons.

In many religious traditions, celibacy reflects a concern for maintaining purity. Purity is connected to holiness, whose root meaning implies being set apart. Because holiness is characterized by completeness, it requires that individual conforms to the class or category to which they belong. According to Robert Broderick (2005)

Celibacy is the ecclesiastical law in the Western Church imposed on clerics forbidding those in the married state from being ordained and those in holy orders from marrying. It includes the obligation of observing perfect chastity under vow. The reasons for this are: that those being ordained may serve God with a greater singleness of purpose (1 Cor. 7:32), and that so living a life of continence they observe the state of virginity, which is holier and higher than that of marriage.

Holiness represents order, unity, and perfection in respect to person (Kraft, 1979). Hence in many religious traditions, celibacy is part of the process of becoming holy, complete, perfect and clean. Within a personal and social context of inhabiting a human body

and being driven by desire, temptation and possibly transgression, one may choose to practice celibacy in order to control oneself so as to achieve a short term goal or permanent goal beyond the everyday world. In practicing celibacy, one is denying the body what it naturally strives to exercise in terms of its biological urges, with the result that the body is brought to further attention. Clerical celibacy being a prerequisite to religious position such as priesthood, can be liken to be a type of ascetic decision which involves harnessing of spiritual drives and rechanneling them to more spiritual ends (Robert, 1995).

Celibacy has existed in one form or another throughout history, in virtually all the major religions of the world, and views on it are varied. As a religious observation, it is not peculiar to Christianity, celibacy is a practice that is seen across various religions, observed by priests, monks, and few core religious adherents. Among some eastern religions, celibacy goes with asceticism (Kato, 1976). In Hinduism for instance, celibacy is usually associated with the sadhus ("holy men"), ascetics who

withdraw from society and renounce all worldly ties. Celibacy, termed 'brahmacharya' in Vedic scripture, and the word literally translated means "dedicated to the Divinity of Life" (Kraft, 1979). It is often used to refer to denial of pleasure. The purpose of practicing 'brahmacharya' (celibacy) is to keep a person focused on the purpose in life, the things that instill a feeling of peace and contentment. It is also used to cultivate occult powers and many supernatural feats, called siddhi.

While religions like Islam and African traditional religion do not accept celibacy due to the divine importance place on marriage, reproduction and continuity of human race, religions like Buddhism and Hinduism accepts it and sees it as a means to open the hidden powers in man (Richard, 1990).

It is pertinent however to give a clear cut between abstinence and celibacy, in as much as they are used interchangeably they are not necessarily the same. Johannes P (2006) opined that sexual abstinence, also known as continence, is abstaining from some or

all aspects of sexual activity, often for some limited period of time, while celibacy may be defined as a voluntary religious vow not to marry or engage in sexual activity. Sipe (1990) while focusing on the topic of celibacy in Catholicism, opined that "the most commonly assumed definition of celibate is simply an unmarried or single person, and celibacy is perceived as synonymous with sexual abstinence or restraint. Brown (1989) explaining the difference between abstinence and celibacy, argued that abstinence is a response on the outside to what is going on, while celibacy is a response from the inside. According to her definition, celibacy (even short-term celibacy that is pursued for non-religious reasons) is much more than not having sex. It is more intentional than abstinence, and its goal is personal growth and empowerment. Although the Gabrielle Brown repeatedly states that celibacy is a matter of choice, she clearly suggests that those who do not choose this route are somehow missing out. The view of the Church is that celibacy is a reflection of life in Heaven, a source of

detachment from the material world which aids in one's relationship with God.

Celibacy is a practice of abstaining from sexual relations, often rooted in religious or cultural beliefs. It has been particularly significant within the Roman Catholic Church, where clergy members voluntarily commit to a celibate lifestyle. This commitment is grounded in historical, theological, and practical considerations, shaping the lives of priests and raising debates within the Church and society at large (Kraft, 1979). Over time, the Roman Catholic Church elevated celibacy as a means of imitating Christ's selflessness and devotion. By abstaining from sexual intimacy, clergy members aim to emulate Christ's singular dedication to God's work, unburdened by familial obligations. The theological rationale for celibacy extends to notions of holiness, sacrifice, and undivided service (Schaff, 1960). Within the Catholic worldview, celibacy symbolizes a priest's consecration, setting them apart for sacred duties. It reflects a profound sacrifice of personal desires for a higher purpose, echoing the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

This renunciation of physical pleasure allows priests to focus entirely on spiritual matters, ministering to their congregations, administering sacraments, and nurturing the faith of their followers (Kraft, 1979).

In recent times, the Catholic Church has grappled with reevaluating celibacy. Some argue that allowing married clergy in specific contexts, such as remote areas with priest shortages, could address pastoral needs more effectively. Pope Francis's openness to considering exceptions illustrates the ongoing evolution of the Church's stance. Ekpend (2016) opined that celibacy's role in the Catholic Church remains a multifaceted topic with global implications. It symbolizes commitment to a higher calling, resonating with ancient traditions while sparking discussions on modernity, human nature, and the Church's adaptability. The question of celibacy's place within the Church prompts broader conversations about spirituality, sexuality, and the delicate balance between tradition and change (O'Brien, 2009).

However, according to Sipe (1990) celibacy's path through history has not been devoid of controversy, the medieval Church mandated celibacy for priests, partly to prevent inheritance disputes over Church property. This enforcement sparked resistance and criticisms, and calls for reform have echoed through the ages. Critics argue that celibacy can lead to emotional isolation, potentially fostering unhealthy psychological conditions. Moreover, celibacy's connection to clergy sexual abuse scandals has ignited fervent debates about its implications for human nature and the potential for repression (Walker, 1974).

2.2 Characteristics of Celibates

There are glaring features that are readily observable in celibates. These features makes them outstanding and different from the normal people. According to Sipe (1990) these characteristics are summarized thus:

1. They are not married:

This is one of the major characteristics of celibates that is seen across all the religions that practices or advocates celibacy. They are not involved in any kind of conjugal relationship. The only marriage they know of is the marriage between them and God's work. However, while some hindu or Buddhist priests have gone into marriage before their celibacy vow, they tend to separate themselves from their wives, avoiding any form of sexual gratification. Their refusal to marriage is aimed at total commitment and submission to the work of God, and to avoid any form of family-related distractions. According to Sipe (1990) by renouncing marriage and family life, catholic priests aim to emulate the life of Jesus Christ, who was celibate, and to focus wholeheartedly on their pastoral duties and the needs of their congregations.

2. Sexual abstinence:

Celibates are believed to be free from any form of sexual entanglement. They are not involved in any form of sexual practice. Their sexual libido and drive is believed to have been tamed or brought under control through self-discipline and other mechanism. Any practice that leads to sexual gratification is avoided by celibates. Celibacy probably is derived from taboos that regarded sexual power as a rival to religious power, and the sexuality of the opposite sex as a polluting factor, especially in sacred situations.

3. Self-sufficient:

Celibates are able to take care of themselves financially and otherwise. This is because they do not have anybody they are catering for. A celibate is able to fully commit their time and energy towards their chosen cause because they do not have a spouse, in-laws or children to look after

4. Dress pertain:

Celibates are easily recognized by their dressing when seen. This is due to the way and pattern they are dressed. They do not dress luxuriously, either do they wear the best of clothes. Their dress depicts the kind of life they have chosen to live, which is life of simplicity and purity.

5. Full commitment:

Celibates are known for their full time commitment to the work of God. Due to the kind of life they have chosen to live, they have little or no distraction from family and relatives. Hence the entirety of their time is committed to the duty of God. Most celibates, especially in the Roman Catholicism live in designated places appointed to them by the church, hence they do not have contact with the outside world. These restrictions tends to channel their life to the wholly to the church (Sipe, 1990).

2.3 Rules that Governs Celibacy

Ekpendu (2016) opined that celibacy is the renunciation of marriage implicitly or explicitly made, for the more perfect

observance of chastity, by all those who receive the Sacrament of Orders in any of the higher grades. An unmarried person without a sexual partner may be able to give more time to God's work. However, the rules that governs celibacy differs across the various religions of the world, although there are similarities in these rules yet they are not the same. Donnelly (2001) avers that the rules that guides celibates covers almost all aspect of life, physical, spiritual and social inclusive. Some rules that governs celibacy in Asian religions according to Georgen (1974) includes:

1. Celibates are expected to refrain from watching videos, reading books or looking at images that create sexual desires or impulses within you. The five sensory organs are expected to be guided with all carefulness in order to avoid anything that will trigger any sexual feeling or fantasies. Do not indulge in sexual fantasies about anyone; if they occur then you have to erase them right away.

2. They should avoid the company of the opposite sex. They are not permitted to discuss about sex, or even listen to anyone talking about it. They are expected to avoid all circumstances that may lead to a sexual encounter. If thoughts of sex arise in the mind, you must ask for forgiveness. The fault that occurs through the mind (sexual thoughts) can be tolerated, there is a solution for that. The fault that occurs through speech and action (act of sex) must never occur. Purity is must!
3. Avoid touching at all costs even by mistake. Masturbation is highly prohibited.
4. Celibates are expected to be mindful of their foods. They must be aware of the fact that sexual impulses increase with certain foods, hence these types of foods are consumed in small quantity. Fatty foods, such as those with fats and oils, should not be consumed at all. Milk is also taken in small quantity. Georgen (1974) opined that eating of any *kandmood* - root crop such as onions,

garlic, potatoes are prohibited among celibates. Foods like curries, rice, vegetables, and chapattis but in appropriate proportion. Over eating is seen as sin among celibates. The amount of food you should eat as a celibate is such that you do not feel lethargic. Eat only enough to make you sleep three to four hours at night. Celibates are expected not to eat much at night, due to the inability to stop the discharge of semen at night caused by over eating.

5. Staying in the company of fellow celibates (Self-Realized people) is a necessity in order to sustain ones spiritual growth, whereas one's doom is certain when he associates with the worldly environment. This is due to the poisonous influence from the bad company which affects your mind, your intellect, your ego and your body. The effect of one year of associating with bad company will last up to twenty five years.

6. A celibate should remain in the company of celibates otherwise you cannot be recognized as celibate. All the celibates have to live together. A place where they can sit together and talk and have some fun times as well. It becomes a problem if they do not live together but go to their own homes instead. Celibacy cannot be practiced without associating with other celibates. There should be a group of at least fifteen to twenty celibates. There is no problem if they all live together. An association of two or three does not work. You will continue to have the influence from a group of fifteen or so. This maintains the atmosphere at a very high level. Otherwise it is not easy to practice celibacy.

7. It is important to have a living Gnani Purush (who is completely free from sexuality) above you, to whom you are answerable. Kraft, (1979) affirms that they can provide you with the necessary guidance on your celibacy and you can disclose your mistakes to them. By

following whatever guidance they provide you, you can come out of your mistakes of sexuality and progress spiritually.

2.4 Reasons for being a Celibate

Sipe AWR. (2008) in his book titled “Celibacy Today: Mystery, Myth, and Miasma” said *that*:

The decision of celibacy has been triggered in different people based on various reasons, ranging from religious, to sexual, to mental or health reasons. Celibacy is often practiced to uphold religious, spiritual, or cultural beliefs that often view sex as a sacred virtue to only be experienced once a person is married.

Celibacy is not always a choice related to religion. According to Donnelly (2001), some make the decision to be celibate because of personal beliefs, values, or curiosity. They may decide to wait to engage in sexual intercourse until they find a long-term partner. Celibacy is also practiced as a preventive measure to avoid possible undesired outcomes associated with sex, such as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), unwanted pregnancy, or emotional distress. Some

of the things that can trigger celibacy in people according to Donnelly (2001) includes:

1. Previous bad sexual experience:

A previous sexual experience which is bad might affect the psychological well-being of its victim, hence making him/her to be scared of any sexual related relationships. Ekpendu (2016) affirm that trauma of past experience of sexual violence like: rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse can make one to decide to be celibate for some time, for his/her psychological health.

2. Previous emotional breakdown:

For some people, healing from a breakup requires taking sex out of their lives for a bit before they dive back into the dating scene. Although, this is not considered celibacy in religious setting. One of the primary benefits of celibacy is that it can increase emotional stability and well-being. When individuals are not constantly challenged by emotional turmoil, it can lead to a

sense of calm and tranquility. This can be especially beneficial in times of stress or anxiety.

3. Asexuality:

While asexuality is totally different from celibacy, it can be a force that can trigger the decision of celibacy. An asexual can decide to be a celibate due to his low sexual libido or drive, hence he is not interested in by sexual activities.

4. Religious reasons:

This is the primary reason of celibacy among Roman Catholics and some other religions. Donnelly (2001) opined that priests and some other religious figures are expected to take the oath of celibacy in order achieve total commitment and consecration to the work of God, and also to help them access the zenith of the power innate in them.

Why celibacy is a requirement among clergies is that it can lead to increased spiritual growth. When we are not sexually aroused, our minds and bodies are more open to the spiritual realm. This

can lead to a greater understanding of our personal beliefs and spiritual growth.

Enyioha (2023) in his opinion affirms that so many of the major world religions have some version of clergy who abstains from sex, whether it's Catholic priests or Buddhist nuns, these people believe that sex distracts from their love and devotion to their deity.

5. Increased focus. While abstaining from sex doesn't directly clear your mind, some people feel more able to concentrate on school or work if they're not thinking about sex. Choosing to be celibate frees them from thinking about or planning sexual encounters. Without sex as a distraction, they can put all their energy into other activities. Studies have found that girls who delay sexual activity are more likely to finish high school.

2.5 Type of Celibacy

There are three major types of celibacy, namely:

1. Sacerdotal celibacy

2. Monastic celibacy
3. Institutional celibacy

Sacerdotal Celibacy

Ekpendu (2016) avers that one type of celibacy is sacerdotal, the celibacy of priests and priestesses. A priest according to Ekpendu (2016) may be defined as one who, as a mediator, performs the sacred function of communicating through rites the needs of the people to heaven and the sacred power and presence from heaven to the congregation. He is a person who has the authority to lead or perform ceremonies in some religions and especially in some Christian religions.

Sacerdotal also known as priestly celibacy is, in some churches considered a requirement for serving as an intermediary between a congregation and God. The roots of sacerdotal celibacy may be found in the ancient cults. Gallacher & Vandenberg (1987) opined that sexual abstinence was an absolute requirement in the well-

organized priesthood of the Egyptian cult of Isis (about 2350–2100 BC). The pre-Christian idea that sexual activity was unsuitable for those who officiated at the altar was assimilated by Christians, and it became common for ordained men to give up sexual relations with their wives. In the Roman Catholic Church the first and second Lateran Councils (1123 and 1139) put an end to clerical marriages. They declared priestly orders an impediment to marriage and vice versa. This is still the official position of the Church. In 1967, Pope Paul VI reaffirmed the traditional law on celibacy by citing New Testament texts: for the sake of Christ and the coming Kingdom of Heaven, the priest must be totally available and free of domestic responsibilities; he must witness by his way of life to the transcendent reality that fills and grips him (Enyioha, 2023).

Ekpendu (2016) further stated that sacerdotal celibacy deals with the voluntary abstinence from sex primarily for religious purpose, which is aimed at the undivided attention and consecration of the priest to his priestly duties. His function is objective. Its efficacy is assured if the priest conducts the proper rite and has

the proper qualifications of ordination and, perhaps, of ritual purity, regardless of whether he is particularly moral or fervent. Sacerdotal celibacy serves as such an objective mark of special state and ritual purity. It is probably derived from taboos that regarded sexual power as a rival to religious power, and the sexuality of the opposite sex as a polluting factor, especially in sacred situations (Ekpendu, 2016).

Monastic Celibacy

This deals with celibacy among monks. Unlike the sacerdotal celibacy that deals with ritual purity, the main purpose of monk's celibacy is moral and spiritual advancement. Gallacher & Vandenberg (1987) avers that the willful sexual abstinence creates an avenue for asceticism and meditation which helps the monk to achieve inner freedom. Buddhism began as a celibate order in India dedicated to the attainment of enlightenment through the control of the passions and the withdrawal of the senses from attachment to external objects. Types of monasticism include the solitary, the

hermit in the woods or the desert, the anchorite living in isolation in a church or monastery, the cenobite living a stabilized monastic life in community, and the mendicant ascetic who wanders from place to place gathering alms. In any case, the celibate state is viewed as an inseparable part of the monk's way of life (Gallacher & Vandenberg, 1987).

Institutional Celibacy:

According to Walker (1974) institutional celibacy is the female counterpart of monastic celibacy and usually practiced by cloistered nuns. Virginitly and celibacy are regarded as assets in the attainment of spiritual growth.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 CELIBACY IN ROMAN CATHOLICISM

3.1 Doctrine of Celibacy in Roman Catholicism

Clerical celibacy as it is popularly known among the Catholics, is the discipline within the Catholic Church by which only unmarried men are ordained to the episcopate, to the priesthood (with individual exceptions) in some autonomous

particular Churches, and similarly to the diaconate (with exceptions for certain categories of people). Celibacy in this context still retains its original meaning of "unmarried". Though even the married may observe abstinence from sexual intercourse, the obligation to be celibate is seen as a consequence of the obligation to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven. In Code of Canon Law of the Roman Catholics, celibacy is seen as a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can more easily remain close to Christ with an undivided heart, and can dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and their neighbor."

Celibacy in Roman Catholicism however, is a requirement for entering the priestly circle rather than a cohesive act. Priesthood among the Catholics is seen as a vocation not a profession, hence it is not an office that is accessible to anyone and everyone. Angelo (2010) stated that theologically, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that priesthood is a ministry conformed to the life and work of Jesus Christ. Priests as sacramental ministers act *in*

persona Christi, that is in the mask of Christ. Thus the life of the priest conforms, Church believes, to the chastity of Christ himself. The sacrifice of unmarried life is for the "sake of the Kingdom" (Luke 18:28–30, Matthew 19:27–30), and to follow the example of Jesus Christ in being "married" to the Church, viewed by Catholicism and many Christian traditions as the "Bride of Christ" (following Ephesians 5:25–33 and Revelation 21:9, together with the spousal imagery at Mark 2:19–20, Matthew 9:14–15).

Priesthood as a vocation in the Catholic church is hinged on the call of God on that particular individual, hence, on answering the call of God, Celibacy become a prerequisite step to take. Celibacy among the Catholics is not a compulsion, however it is a nitty-gritty in becoming a priest in the Roman Catholic Church.

In as much as there are no biblical passages that categorically affirms clerical celibacy, neither has any apostle or church father admonish it as a vision gotten from God, however, some passages

has given it as a form of suggestion to priests that aim to attain a significant height of consecration and commitment to God's call.

Furthermore, Pope Benedict XVI saw the practice of Celibacy in words of Jesus in Mathew. 19:12 which reads: "Some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it." Apostle Paul while speaking on celibacy in 1 Cor 7:7-8 vividly stated that it is not a command from God, however, for effective commitment to the work of God he recommended it, stating celibates (unmarried) are not bothered about the cares of this life, his only care is how to please the Lord. From what have been said so far, it is obvious that celibacy is not an express command from God, hence it is not an act of cohesion or compulsion, however, it is a requirement for entering the cadre of priests in the Roman Catholic Church.

3.2 Historical Trace of Celibacy in Catholic Church

"For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and

another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am....(1 Corin. 7:7-8).

Turning to the historical development of the present day law of celibacy in Roman Catholicism, the statement of Apostle Paul in 1Corinthians.7:7-8 will be of paramount importance. Apostle Paul without underestimating the place and importance of marriage, still admonished the early Christians on the importance of Celibacy for undivided service to God.

According to Robert Broderick (2005), Celibacy is the ecclesiastical law in the Western Church imposed on clerics forbidding those in the married state from being ordained and those in holy orders from marrying. It includes the obligation of observing perfect chastity under vow. The reasons for this are: that those being ordained may serve God with a greater singleness of purpose (1 Cor. 7:32), and that so living a life of continence they observe the state of virginity, which is holier and higher than that of marriage.

From the inception of the Church however, celibacy was practiced by the majority of the clergy without any known rule especially during the first three centuries of the Church. The first attempt to make it definitive for all the clergy came after the Council of Elvira in 305 AD. This was strengthened by subsequent Councils especially one held in Rome in 386 and two later ones held at Carthage. These Councils proposed continence on all the bishops, priests and deacons, indeed all endowed with the sacrament of orders (Broderick, 2005).

The first legislation of celibacy came with the Spanish Council of Elvira in 300 AD. That council decreed continence for all members of the clergy, stating in Canon 33 that "It is decided that marriage be altogether prohibited to bishops, priests, and deacons, or to all clerics placed in the ministry, and that they keep away from their wives and not beget children; whoever does this shall be deprived of the honor of the clerical office" (Synod of Elvira 305). Canon 3 of the Council of Carthage (390) also concurring to the synod of Elvira stated:

It is fitting that the holy bishops and priests of God as well as the Levites, i.e. those who are in the service of the divine sacraments, observe perfect continence, so that they may obtain in all simplicity what they are asking from God; what the Apostles taught and what antiquity itself observed, let us also endeavor to keep.... It pleases us all that bishop, priest and deacon, guardians of purity, abstain from conjugal intercourse with their wives, so that those who serve at the altar may keep a perfect chastity.

However, not all did refrain, the Western Church limited ordination to unmarried men and required a commitment to lifelong celibacy, while the Eastern Churches relaxed the rule. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, celibacy is the normal for bishops; married men may be ordained to the priesthood, but even married priests whose wives pre-decease them are not allowed to remarry after ordination (Enyioha, 2023). So that Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches now require their married clergy to abstain from sexual relations only for a limited period before celebrating the Eucharist. The Church in Persia, which in the fifth century became separated from the Church described as Orthodox or Catholic, decided at the end of that century to abolish the rule of

contenance and allow priests to marry, but recognized that it was abrogating an ancient tradition (Enyioha, 2023).

Record has it that practice of celibacy led to so many controversies in the Church. In the Western Church, this was widely imposed by Pope Siricius. As a general rule, the Eastern Church was more lenient than the Latin Church in this regard (Demetrius, 1996). Thus, after the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire there was frequent disregard of the rule. However, in the reforms of Pope Gregory VII sacerdotal celibacy was forcefully restored. This trend was confirmed by the Second Lateran Council (1139) which declared clerical marriages to be not only illicit but invalid. Another period of decline in the practice of clerical celibacy occurred during the turmoil occasioned by the Black Death plague and the Hundred Year's War (Broderick, 2005).

Then, in the Protestant Reformation, this law was explicitly rejected by the Reformers. Celibacy as a requirement for ordination to the priesthood (in the Western Church) and to the episcopate (in East as well as in West) and declaring marriages of priests invalid

(in both East and West) were important points of disagreement during the Protestant Reformation, with the Reformers arguing that these requirements were contrary to Biblical teaching in 1 Timothy 4:1–5, Hebrews 13:4, and 1 Corinthians 9:5, and implied a degradation of marriage, and were one reason for "many abominations" and for widespread sexual misconduct within the clergy at the time of the Reformation. With these controversies and argument, celibacy lost its force in the Eastern Church. However. It still thrives in the western church till date.

3.3 Reasons for Being a Celibate

Many have taken the vow of celibacy based on various reasons that is best known to them, which they term valid and hold at high esteem. Some of the reasons that can necessitate the vow of celibacy in some people can range from health reasons, psychological/emotional reasons, religious reasons etc.

However, in the Roman Catholic Church, the primary reason that can necessitate the vow of celibacy is religious inclined. The vow of celibacy is taken by majorly by those who wants to serve God in the Roman Catholic Church in the priestly capacity.

Celibacy is deeply rooted in the notion of service. By eschewing the responsibilities of family life, individuals can focus entirely on their spiritual and pastoral duties. This dedication is often regarded as a way to emulate the selflessness of revered figures in various religious traditions. For Catholic clergy, celibacy is seen as a means of following the example of Jesus Christ, who remained unmarried and dedicated his life to teaching and ministering to others. The practice of celibacy is not undertaken in isolation. Rather, it is often nurtured within a supportive community, where like-minded individuals share their experiences, challenges, and successes. This camaraderie can provide emotional and spiritual sustenance, helping practitioners navigate the demands of celibate living (Enyioha, 2023). Education and preparation play a pivotal role in guiding celibate individuals. Those considering a religious

vocation, like becoming a priest, undergo extensive training that includes theological education, pastoral skills development, and spiritual formation. This comprehensive preparation equips individuals with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of celibate life.

3.4 Qualification of Celibacy in Roman Catholicism

1. They are not married:

This is one of the major characteristics of celibates. They are not involved in any kind of conjugal relationship. It is believed they are married to Christ and his course, hence they are consecrated to him alone. At the Council of Elvira in Spain (c. 310), it was decreed that ‘all clerics having a position in the ministry are ordered to abstain completely from their wives and not to have children’, and anyone who flouted this order was to be deposed (Voice of Faith, p. 3). The only marriage they know of is the marriage between them and God’s work. To celibate

priests, marriage is totally frowned at, As O'Loughlin (2013, p. 205) puts it:

In a series of synods leading up to two councils held in Rome – Lateran I (1123) and Lateran II (1139) – the marriages of clergy were declared not only unlawful, but null and void. The law stated that anyone in Orders could not marry, and someone married could only become a priest if the marriage were set aside (i.e. they no longer lived as husband and wife, but the wife could not re-marry).

Their refusal to marriage is aimed at total commitment and submission to the work of God, and to avoid any form of family-related distractions. It is paramount to note that their unmarried status was not imposed on them by anyone, rather it was a personal decision taken for the sake of God and his work. Furthermore, their decision is not influenced by any physical factor like sickness, ugliness, lack of spouses or even financial constraints.

It is important however to note that in the Catholic Church celibacy does not disrespect marriage but values it, although it is

transcended. To be single is premarital, but celibacy is trans-marital. Celibacy uplifts marriage and highlights its divine component. That is why the highest matrimony was that virginal matrimony between the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. There is no celibacy without the marriage institution to stand in contrast, and without celibacy marriage can be trivialized. The celibate person aspires to love as only God loves: with infinite love that is equal for everybody. The married person loves God through his or her partner, while the celibate person loves everybody in God. Hence, celibacy should be seen as a consequence of a divine encounter and not necessarily the best way to serve God (Leonhard, 1989).

2. Sexual abstinence:

Celibates are believed to be free from any form of sexual entanglement. They are not involved in any form of sexual practice. Their sexual libido and drive is believed to have been tamed or brought under control through self-discipline and other mechanism. Any practice that leads to sexual gratification is avoided by

celibates. Celibacy probably is derived from taboos that regarded sexual power as a rival to religious power, and the sexuality of the opposite sex as a polluting factor, especially in sacred or crisis situations.

In 386, the Elvira decree was reinforced by the Council of Rome, and it was declared that intercourse was defilement (Voice of Faith, p. 4). The writings of a group of influential thinkers helped to reinforce the position of the church, as they ‘held that celibacy was a higher spiritual condition than marriage and that the cultic purity of the priest required abstinence from sexuality’ (O’Loughlin 2013:203).

3. Dress pertain:

The dress pertain among celibates differs based on the offices they occupy. The priests and clergy men cloths are totally different from that of monks, eunuchs and reverend brothers. Monks dress included habit, girdle or belt, hood or cowl, and scapular (a long narrow cloth worn over the tunic). The salient characteristics of

monastic dress have always been sobriety and conservatism. The orders proved even more retentive of archaic fashions than the hierarchy, and, in contrast to the deliberate splendor of ecclesiastical vestments, monastic dress was expressive of a renunciation of luxury. Nuns and Reverend Sisters normally are dressed in long white flowing cassock, which covers all their body part with a hair turban. This white cassock signifies purity and chastity. Reverend fathers are identify most times with their white cassock, 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council made it mandatory for all the Christian clergy to wear distinctive dress. Its purpose was not necessary to elevate the status of the Christian clerics; it was intended that they would catch the public eye if any member of the clergy is seen on the street.

3.5 Rules that Governs Celibacy in Roman Catholicism

Celibacy is a lifestyle choice characterized by abstaining from sexual activity and often married life. It holds significance across cultures, religious groups, and personal beliefs. In specific contexts,

such as within the Roman Catholic Church, there are established rules and guidelines that govern the practice of celibacy.

Celibacy is said to be the renunciation of marriage implicitly or explicitly made, for the more perfect observance of chastity, by all those who receive the Sacrament of Orders in any of the higher grades. An unmarried person without a sexual partner may be able to give more time to God's work. Hence it is one of the major steps taken by priests in Roman Catholicism. Rules that governs the law of celibacy among the Roman Catholics:

Unmarried: The primary law that guides the vow or oath of celibacy in Roman Catholicism is the state of being perpetually unmarried. Anyone who takes this oath of celibacy is henceforth unable to contract a valid marriage, and any serious transgression in the matter of this vow is not only a grievous sin in itself but incurs the additional guilt of sacrilege. Central to these rules is the understanding that celibacy is often associated with a higher calling, marked by spiritual devotion, self-discipline, and service. He/she will

be required to continue in the service of God, and with His assistance to observe chastity and to be bound for ever in the ministrations of the Altar. The unmarried nature of celibates is intended to free individuals from the demands and distractions of intimate relationships like families, allowing them to dedicate themselves fully to their spiritual pursuits.

Sexual Abstinence: anyone that takes the oath of celibacy is expected to abstain from any form of sexual practices. Celibacy generally means abstaining from sex (usually penetrative sex) voluntarily. Ideally, celibates must stay away from everything related to sex, such as kissing, cuddling, snuggling, or touching sexual parts. Homosexuality, masturbation, bestialism etc is considered as a grave sin, which can terminate the priestly duty of such person.

Vow of Chastity: celibates are expected to remain chaste in their dealings. During the priestly ordination, the bishop solemnly warns the candidates regarding the gravity of the obligation which they are incurring. He states thus:

You ought anxiously to consider again and again what sort of a burden this is which you are taking upon you of your own accord. Up to this you are free. You may still, if you choose, turn to the aims and desires of the world (*licet vobis pro arbitrio ad caecularia vota transire*). But if you receive this order (of the sub diaconate) it will no longer be lawful to turn back from your purpose. You will be required to continue in the service of God, and with His assistance to observe chastity and to be bound for ever in the ministrations of the Altar, to serve who is to reign (Catholic Encyclopedia).

By stepping forward despite this warning, when invited to do so, and by co-operating in the rest of the ordination service, the candidate is understood to bind himself equivalently by a vow of chastity. These rules surrounding celibacy are closely intertwined with broader concepts of chastity, self-control, and moral purity. Celibacy extends beyond physical abstinence, encompassing emotional and psychological aspects as well. Practitioners are expected to cultivate virtuous thoughts, words, and actions, avoiding anything that might compromise their commitment to their chosen path (Kraft, 1979). Celibacy encompasses a broader concept of chastity, which involves purity in thoughts, words, and actions. Clergy members are

expected to live lives of moral integrity and to avoid any behavior that would compromise their commitment to celibacy.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 IMPLICATIONS OF CELIBACY ON THE PRISTS

4.1 Challenges Catholic Celibates Encounter

The word ‘Celibacy’ does not enjoy a very good image with many people in the modern world. In their eyes, a celibate priest may appear to be less than a man. Due to contemporary issues associated with priests and religion people look at them with suspicion. Often celibacy is viewed as a law that forbids someone to marry or have sexual involvement with another. To some others, celibacy is seen as an archaic and outdated practice that has no relevance in the modern world. Some of the challenges encountered by catholic celibates includes:

- 1. Sexual gratification:** it is obvious that the doctrine and teaching of celibacy is against the order of nature. Naturally, man is created with sexual hormones which from time to time gets excited, and demands for satisfaction. It is a natural phenomenon for one to feel sexual urge and drive. However, celibacy have made man (celibate priests) to overlook or

bring to subjection these hormones, which is against the natural order of things. It is important to note however that this “self-discipline” or self-subjugation do not last for a long time. Hence many priest are found caught up in a severe fight with their body (hormones) and their priestly office. Sipe (1990) affirms that only 50% of the (Catholic) clergy are celibate. Now, most of them are having sex with other adults. But the fact remains that this creates a culture of secrecy that tolerates and even protects pedophiles.” He further said that:

Sooner or later it will become broadly obvious that there is a systemic connection between the sexual activity by, among and between clerics in positions of authority and control, and the abuse of children, When men in authority (cardinals, bishops, rectors, abbots, confessors, professors) are having or have had an unacknowledged-secret-active-sex life under the guise of celibacy, an atmosphere of tolerance of behaviors within the system is made operative.

- 2. Issue of generalization:** Another challenge catholic celibate battle with is societal stigmatization, especially from Pentecostals as a result of generalization of a particular

misbehavior. This stigmatization most times is caused as a result of news of sexual assault or abuse of minor by a particular priest. The misbehavior of a particular priest is most times used to generalize all the priests. Many catholic celibates (Priests) has lost their respect and dignity as a result of the misconduct of their predecessors in a particular area. The misconduct of many priest has pushed many people to say that Celibacy is not essential to Catholic priesthood, stating that it is not a perquisite for holiness.

- 3. Pressure from home:** many catholic celibates are the only son or even only child of the family, hence the vow of celibacy is not a favorable one for the family. Considering the significant position occupied by children in Africa, celibates in this situation are mounted with a lot of pressure from their families. They normally go extra miles in convincing their parents to accept their profession.
- 4. Self-doubt and questioning:** many catholic celibates have been caught in the web of self-doubt. Many of them due to the

clamouring in the contemporary world keep questioning the decision they took to become a catholic celibate. Accusations from every angle, biblical exegesis and interpretations, and some other pressures has made many catholic celibates to doubt the rightness of their decision. On the issue of marital counseling, many catholic celibates have seen themselves as unqualified to issue counsel to married couples. Being that they do not have an experiential knowledge of what marriage is all about, they sometimes doubt the effectiveness of the advice they give to couples. Self-doubt and questioning is a dangerous tool that is capable of bringing down any person with his profession no matter how genuine the profession might be. This self-doubt and questioning of profession has made many priest to live in lies and shadow of their real selves, hence making many to be unhappy even while smiling.

Keith Clark talked about the four main levels of celibacy, and according to him the inability to integrate these four levels of

celibacy is the major challenge of catholic celibates. The four levels of celibacy Keith (1982) includes:

Physical and emotional level: this is the ability to know oneself as sexual and experience some considerable comfort with that knowledge. It is the choice not to act out one's sexuality in a genital or romantic way.

Relationship level: celibacy is the ability to cherish and nurture other people' being and becoming without establishing bonds of mutual emotional dependence with them. It is the ability to establish warm and deep relationships with others by loving them and being loved by them in a non-exclusive and non-possessive way.

Practical level: it is a way of living which seriously challenges the hedonistic tendencies in all of us.

Faith level: celibacy is a life style taken up and lived in response to a call or invitation one has received from God to live as Jesus did. The call to celibate life is a gift from God.

A celibate priest should integrate all those levels. Emphasizing only on one or other aspect will severely distort the meaning of celibacy. Integration of all these levels is a challenge that has to be faced by the celibates.

4.2 Influence of Celibacy on Priestly Duties

Celibacy is one of the biggest acts of self-sacrifice a Catholic priest is called upon to make, forgoing spouse, progeny and sexual fulfilment for his relationship with parishioners and God. However, the influence of celibacy on the priestly duties of priest is of two compartments. It cannot be equivocally said that celibacy has influenced positively how the priests carry out their priestly duties, likewise it will be erroneous to say that celibacy has influenced the priestly duties negatively.

On the positive influence of celibacy on the priestly duties of priests, it enables the priest to discharge his duties without fear or favour. His undivided attention due to lack of external distractions like family (wife and children) makes him to prioritize his office

thereby increasing the efficacy of his service, and the church becomes his highest calling. Celibacy increases the sense of sacredness in priests, and ensures to a great extent total consecration and concentration to the profession. Celibacy limits the care of the priest to two things only; God and the church. Church being the highest calling of the priest, his primary assignment is to see for the growth of the church (both spiritual and physical).

It is important to note that the primary aim of priestly celibacy is to gain the total attention and focus of the priest towards God and his services. According to the Catholic Church code of canon law, celibacy is a special gift of God which allows practitioners to follow more closely the example of Christ, who was a chaste. However, this aim seems to have been defeated on several occasions, as many priests are accused of having secret sexual affairs, and even having secret families. Celibacy is seen as act of moving anti-clockwise to the natural order of human body. Little can be done when one fights the flowing current of a river, the same is applicable to the issue of celibacy. Many priests has

done little in their fight to tame and bring their body under subjection. Many tried to pay no attention sexual drives, even before entering the profession of priesthood. Hence many has failed in their office as priests.

Celibacy has made many priest to live a lie while performing their priestly duties. The vow of celibacy is the vow of chastity and purity, abstinence from every form of sexual conduct. Priests who could not maintain this vow and are not willing to leave their office tends to secretly satisfy their sexual urges. Now, most of them are having sex with other adults. This hidden life style among many priests makes them to carry out their services with guilty conscience. Hence they cannot boldly speak against sexual sins because they are victims of same sin. But the fact remains that this creates a culture of secrecy that tolerates and even protects pedophiles.

4.3 Priestly Concerns on the Issue of Celibacy

The issue of celibacy has been controversial even among priests. It is a topic they discuss and debate among themselves. While many of them tends to prioritize their office and calling, placing the church and their decision first, some other tends to be realistic and logical with the church doctrine of celibacy. They place side by side the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, all are priests, serving same God, however with different worldview in the issue of marriage. Admittedly, there's no hint in the New Testament of celibacy being mandatory either among the apostles or those they ordained. But there are ample warrant in the words of Christ and the writings of Paul that celibacy is a higher calling than marriage. Christ Himself was celibate,

Many priest sees celibacy as a gift of God to man, a process off becoming like Christ in his purity and chastity while on earth. Hence it is seen as a highest form of gift to priests. However, they do not under estimate the obvious power of sex in its various dimension, they also sees it as a gift of God which carries our wounded nature. A tool from God to humanity for continuity and

reproduction (Gen.1:28), hence they see sexual feelings as a natural phenomenon that ought not to be suppressed but integrated. Integration of one's sexuality is seen as a task for everyone, not for priest alone. The transformation and integration of sexuality represents a universal human task. It does, however, take on a specific shape in the instance of priests who commit themselves to celibate living.

Priesthood is a vocation for those who feel that they are called to live this type of life. The essence of this is for the priest to work freely (1 Cor. 7:32-35); to be more available for pastoral work, and free from family ties. Celibacy to many priests is not seen as compulsion, rather it is personal decision taken for the service of God; for there are eunuchs who were born so...and there are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let him accept it who can" (Mt 19:12).

In Rev. Fr. Andrew Adubali's words, "We looked at it not as a giving up, but a giving for. Being celibate means you are always

able to be open to one more relationship” (face to face interview).

However, many priests has wished that celibacy be made optional in the requirement of being a priest. The vow of celibacy is not by compulsion in the Roman Catholic Church, yet it is a primary requirement in joining the cadre of priest in the church. It is an obvious fact that the doctrine of celibacy has scared many away from their pursuit of priesthood, while many who insisted have made mess of their office. Given the challenges and obstacles for priests to live the celibate life well, it might seem better to change the current discipline of the Western church and make celibacy optional.

Many priests although secretly feels the church are not getting it right in their teaching of celibacy for priests. Tracing it back to the early centuries, there were married priests, starting with some of the apostles. We know that Peter was married, because we're told that Jesus cured his mother-in-law. The immediate successors

to the apostles were also allowed to marry. Paul writes to Timothy that a bishop should be "married but once." Clearly, by not permitting married clergy, the Church since the early middle Ages has departed from the more commodious practice of the early hierarchy. Celibacy is not essential to holiness. Many saints were married and had children. The Second Vatican Council said there is a universal call to holiness. If celibacy were essential to holiness, then most of the church could not be holy. Sex is an essential part of holiness in the sacrament of matrimony. We say that marriages are "consummated" by a sexual relationship.

In as much as these priests understand God's gift in sexuality and the dangers in suppressing them or denying it, and celibacy being a virtue of being available to all and a sign of not being obsessed with sex or sexual activity. However to expect absolute abstinence from all priest is almost impossible. In Reverend Fr. Martin's word, "*I would like celibacy to be an option.* To be celibate is to be potentially available to all. It is a sign that we do not have to be obsessed with sex or sexual activity. But to expect it of everybody

- especially those who do not have the gift - is quite unfair" (face to face interview, 6/6/2023).

4.4 Negative Effects of Celibacy to the Priestly Class

Celibacy as a perquisite to joining the cadre of priests in the Roman Catholic Church was birthed out of sincere passion for the service of God, and total consecration to his church. To ensure the undivided attention of the priest to god and his flocks. However, this sincere desire of undivided attention has been defeated, as the attention of the priest and his consecration is been shared by the church and some other foes. The teaching of compulsory celibacy among priests has become completely dysfunctional in these times and in Western countries. Surely this system has been very helpful and meaningful until recently; it has channelled the selfless and exclusive dedication of millions of men with inspired vocation and servicing spirit, and undoubtedly, it is associated with many sanctity expressions. However, in our days,

that model has stopped working as it did in the past. Some of the negative effects includes:

Sexual scandals and paedophilia: There have been allegations of sex orgies, prostitution and pornography against Catholic clerics. It has not only had a negative impact on Sunday Mass attendance, but it has also seriously damaged the image of priests. The scandals that have afflicted the Catholic clergy often have to do with the constrictions linked to celibate status, which is increasingly misunderstood and perceived with suspicion, and less with admiration. The widespread clerical sexual misconduct by Catholic priests was first made public after the Boston Globe's (2004) reports on the molestation of 130 boys by Boston Reverend John Geoghan of the Catholic Church from 1962 until 1993. The sexual misconduct among priest has been attributed to the vow of celibacy they took during their ordination, hence they do not have the freedom to indulge in sexual practice openly. However, many of them have been subdued by their human nature but due to their priestly office they tend to satisfy their sexual lust secretly.

Many left the natural order of affection for opposite sex, to satisfying themselves by themselves. Records of gays among priests, sexual assault, abuse and wanton behaviours among priest. The causative factor of all these ill-behaviours among priests has been linked to the law of celibacy. It is seriously damaging the efficiency of Church mission, all this results in a weakening that affects the whole structure of Christian body.

Loneliness is another negative effect of celibacy. The priest is not expected to be about clerical duties all the time, Priests also have leisure times. Loneliness might creep in when he is not in the company of people. Clergy can be depressed and emotionally exhausted in their ministry due to lack of social support networks and environments. Antonovsky (1979) observed that Individuals with strong support networks are assumed to have a longer life expectancy, fewer stress-related disorders, and better-coping skills than otherwise. Bible also confirms that “It is not good for man to be alone, hence God made him a helper (Genesis. 2:18).The help given to man by God in Gen.2:18 due to his nature is what

celibacy took away from priests. It is important to note that loneliness can make a man vulnerable and prone to sin. It is also pertinent to note that the support gotten from family is calmer and reassuring than the one coming from outside.

Shortage of Clergy

One of the most discussed causes for the priest shortage is the obligation of celibacy, a sacrifice not mandated by Christ or deemed absolutely necessary by the apostles. While celibacy is only one of a number of causes for the current decline in seminarians and priests, it has always been the major reason that there are more than four times as many Protestant ministers as there are Catholic priests caring for equal numbers of faithful. In 1985, Dean R. Hoge conducted a survey of Catholic college students and determined that celibacy was the most significant deterrent keeping men from entering the priesthood in the Latin Church. Hoge estimated that if celibacy were optional for diocesan priests, there would be four times the number of men entering the priesthood

(Hoge, 2002). Celibacy is a major reason that priests give for leaving the priesthood. Most Catholics personally know some very dedicated and inspiring priests who have left active ministry to marry. Given the fact that priestly celibacy is a church discipline that Jesus himself did not require, some people would like to see married priests offered the opportunity to return to active ministry.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 EVALUATION RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Evaluation

The vow of celibacy being one of the perquisites in joining the office of a priest in Roman Catholicism has caused a lot of uproar in the contemporary societies. This is due to the social vices that have been linked to celibate priests. It is important however to note that celibacy is not intrinsically evil. But its essence has been dragged to the mud by some priests who have failed to learn how to balance their priestly office with their human body. Celibacy only fights with the natural order of human body, hence sometimes there might be a bounce back. Intimacy, friendship and love are powerful human needs. Somewhere, in deep level of our beings, we all hunger for them. Though this hunger is built into us from the beginning, we will experience it more acutely in our priestly life. Intimacy means being fully at home with someone. It means letting oneself be fully known, without fear of rejection. This kind of intimacy is very important among priests.

Studies prove that the priests who left the seminary were lonely, isolated persons who had very little close relationship with other priests. Intimate relationship among priests is a great support in their vocational commitment.

Many religions are lacking in psychosexual maturity. Instead of integrating sexuality in their lives, many of them try to repress it, and Roman Catholic Church falls victim of this among their priestly class. They cannot accept the challenges of intimacy. The Roman Catholic should develop a psychic and emotional balance between their sexuality and other aspects of life. Above all celibate priests should learn to accept the fact that they are human beings, hence they can still be caught up in carnal sins. Furthermore, in retaining the doctrine of celibacy in Roman Catholicism, proper scrutiny needs to be employed to fish out the few that are abusing their priestly office.

5.2 Recommendation

This study makes the following recommendations:

- i. deepening personal awareness and good self-knowledge.
- ii. developing healthy and intimate relationship among brothers and priests.
- iii. being comfortable with one's own body and sexual feelings.
- iv. open communication of feelings.
- v. adequate knowledge of sexual anatomy and physiology, as well as current information on sexual issues and concerns.
- vi. a psychic and emotional balance between our sexuality and other aspects of life, neither being pre-occupied with sexuality nor denying its place in our lives.
- vii. develop integration between the human and the holy, between the sexual energy and our spirituality.

5.3 Conclusion

The doctrine of celibacy in Roman Catholic Church is not a biblical law, hence it is not being imposed on biblical basis. It is an oath of freewill, however it is a perquisite to becoming a priest in the church. Although it comes with some negative impacts

perpetrated by few, it still helps to focus the attention of the priest to God's work and the church.

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