

CELIBATE AND SPOUSAL LOVE OF CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD

Paul Abhulimen

Introduction

There cannot be an authentic celibacy without chastity and the ultimate goal of chastity is charity. The goal of this essay is to remind us again of the laudable mission Christ has entrusted to us, that we may take his place, as his representatives and instruments, and to assume and act *in persona Christi capitis* in the celibate, chaste and spousal love towards his beloved bride and body, the Church. The celibate state that is practiced in chastity and charity has been upheld for ages by the Church through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as the ideal and practical way of guaranteeing the unfettered, unalloyed and unselfish love required of priests as Christ's assistants in the expression of love towards his beloved bride the Church.

The truth that must be acknowledged is that the essence

of priesthood is love. A priest is ordained to love and cherish the Church of Christ, in sickness and in health and to remain faithful to her until death makes him part. Ideally, a good priest should have the qualities of a good husband in relation to the bride of Christ the Church. A good priest is rightly called 'father' in his solicitousness towards the family of God, the Church, entrusted to him at ordination. Since Christ is the loving Bridegroom of the Church, a good priest who is known as *alter Christus* should effectively mirror him in the unselfish manifestation of love towards all souls, in order to foster and facilitate their salvation which contributes to God's greater glory.

Priesthood: A Gift from Christ

Theology of Christ's Priesthood

Priesthood in the Church is a gift from Christ made possible through his establishment of two distinct sacraments: Baptism and Holy Orders. In actual dogmatic parlance, there is one and only priesthood of Christ in which both the lay faithful and sacred ministers participate differently, not only in degree, but more so in essence.

¹ Priesthood exists for mediation between God and man. Thus, “the specificity of the ministerial priesthood lies in the need that the faithful have of mediation”.² The priest must be conscious of the fact that his life is a mystery grafted onto the mystery of Christ and his Church.

The common priesthood derives from the reception of Baptism through which all faithful are thus incorporated into Christ (canon 204) in a mystical way to form Head and Body, or the full Christ. The theology of the Church highlights this important fact that: “all the faithful form a holy and royal priesthood, offer spiritual sacrifices through Jesus Christ and

proclaim the greatness of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”.³ Like the chosen people of Israel of old, the members of the Church through their reception of baptism are constituted a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through their high priest, Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Pt 2:5,9). There is an important communion between the Head and his Body.

The ministerial priesthood on the other hand is instituted by Christ to perpetuate on earth his works of redemption as Head of the Church. The sacred minister as *alter Christus* (other Christ) helps in the mission of continuing Christ's actions as priest now that he is no longer physically present on earth. Indeed an ordained minister is “a sacramental representation of Christ, Head and Shepherd”.⁴ Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, “priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the Head”.⁵ The sacred order of priesthood came into existence at the same moment the holy sacrifice of the altar was instituted (*see* Jn 13; 1 Cor 11: 23ff). This gives it a similar pattern with the Old Testament priesthood that was instituted following the establishment of the ritual sacrifices of the covenant people of Israel. And like the Holy Eucharist which Christ offered once and for all but which is now being re-enacted in the daily sacrifice of Holy Mass, his priesthood is equally being perpetuated in the life and ministry of priests who stand at the altar of sacrifice as *ipse Christus* (Christ himself).⁶

The Spousal Nature of Christ's Priesthood

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter on the Dignity of Women *Mulieris dignitatem* highlighted greatly on the nuptial

character of Christ's priesthood which finds its highest expression in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. With the gift of his whole self to the Bride in the Sacrifice of the Cross, Christ gives

definitive prominence to the spousal meaning of God's love. As the Redeemer of the world, Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of our Redemption. It is the Sacrament of the Bridegroom and the Bride... It is the Eucharist above all that expresses the redemptive act of Christ the Bridegroom toward the Church the Bride. This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, in which the priest acts *in persona Christi*, is performed by a man.⁷

For so many persons who view the ministerial priesthood of the Church as the direct opposite of marriage, it may sound altogether strange to hear that priesthood is essentially a spousal relationship. The sacred ministers derive their identity from the one they represent, Christ the Bridegroom of his Spouse the Church. St Paul, while exhorting husbands and wives in marriage, encouraged them to imitate their perfect replica Christ and his Church.⁸

In ecclesiological sense,

the priests, as collaborators of the Episcopal Order, form with their Bishop a sole presbyterate and participate, in a subordinate degree, in the only priesthood of Christ. Similar to the Bishop, they participate in that spousal dimension in relation to the Church which is well expressed in the Rite of the Episcopal ordination when the ring is entrusted to them.

The priest, who 'in the individual local communities of the faithful makes the Bishop present, so to speak, to whom they are united with a faithful and great spirit' must be faithful to the Bride and almost like living icons of Christ the Spouse render fruitful the multi-form donation of Christ to his Church.

By this communion with Christ the Spouse, the

ministerial priesthood is also founded as Christ, with Christ and in Christ in that mystery of transcendent supernatural love of which the marriage among Christians is an image and a participation.⁹

The ordained priests by their configuration *in persona Christi capitis* “should love the Church as Christ has loved her, consecrating to her all his energies and giving himself with pastoral charity in a continuous act of generosity”.¹⁰

Of all forms of genuine love, spousal love is seen to be the most exalted since it has the necessary elements of mutual self-giving, intimacy, conjugality, equality, totality, fecundity and of course, it is sacrificial. Parental love, be it maternal or paternal, though deeply affectionate of its off-springs, does not translate into a legitimate platform for the exercise of some of the marital rights aforementioned. Filial love is mainly expressed in obedience out of deep appreciation for the sacrifices made by parents. Fraternal love too is essentially manifested in some form of solidarity in consideration of one's origin and consanguinity. Varying degrees of friendship exist among persons who share some common or similar mindset, ideology or creed.

Christ chose the pattern of spousal relationship for his Bride the Church. Being the eternal Son of the Father, he wants all the baptized sons and daughters of the Church thereof, to become co-heirs with him of the kingdom.¹¹ Just like Eve was formed from the rib taken from the side of old Adam as he slumbered (Gen 2:21-24), the Church is formed from the pierced side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death on the tree of the Cross on Good Friday. From the flowing blood and water, fonts of sacramental graces, the sacraments of rebirth and nourishment: baptism for adoptive son-ship; and the Holy Eucharist, the

spiritual food of all the regenerated children of God are thus constituted. So the bride of Christ, the Church, is born from his bleeding side.

St. Paul's comparison of the love between husband and wife in marriage to that of Christ and his Church is well founded since there is consequently in each model, a solid oneness or unbreakable unity and permanent indissolubility, except by death in the previous case. When alluding to the foregoing situation Paul declares: "this is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church" (Eph 5:32). The full Christ is Head and Body. Christ as the eternal Bridegroom of his spouse the Church demonstrated his unalloyed love for his Bride the Church that he "gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (Eph 5:25-26).

Christ as the High Priest of the new covenant (Heb 9:11) loved his spouse the Church with an immeasurable sacrificial love. This is in consonance with his earlier teaching that "greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13). Christ, through his precious blood, mediates a superior and permanent covenant than that of old (Heb 9:15). It is through such shedding of blood for the remission of sin that the holy bride of Christ is purchased.¹² Christ paid the price in order to woo to himself the spotless bride the Church.

Christ's priesthood is an eternal one since he is an immortal God. The priesthood of the old covenant needed generation by blood to sustain it in existence, but the eternal priesthood of Christ does not cease, though requires Holy Orders of the Church in order to perpetuate it on earth. Christ calls as he wills, a select number of persons to embrace the sacred priesthood after his own mind. Those called to be priests cannot

be viewed from the myopic perspective of being functionaries but as representatives of Christ or *alter Christus* on earth at the holy service of his bride the Church and the entire humanity.

Donald Keefe puts this more succinctly when he says:

The priesthood is then not a function, any more than the baptismal character of the baptized is a function. As one cannot take a sabbatical from the consequences of one's baptismal character, so also one cannot have a vacation from the responsibilities of one's ordination, i.e., of one's priestly character. Even formal laicisation does not remove the priestly character, the priestly authority and responsibility to act *in persona Christi*.¹³

The great source of marvel for those in priesthood is that they are chosen from the midst of mortal and frail human beings to assume the person of Christ in the celebration of the divine mysteries of the word and sacraments. By ontological configuration through the power of the Holy Spirit at ordination they are rendered so. By such singular act of ordination, the person of the priest is substantially transformed in a characteristic way to become what he was not in the manner that the physical bread and wine are transubstantiated during the consecration of the Holy Mass to become the Body and Blood of Christ. The physical and psychological dispositions may remain as the taste and chemical qualities of the sacred host remain even after consecration. Nevertheless, he has become another Christ (*alter Christus*) capable of acting in his person in the spousal relationship with his bride the Church at the celebrations of the altar. This is true in every sense that when he baptizes it is Christ who baptizes, same is the case when he absolves at the confessional, when he anoints the sick, and even when he celebrates the Holy Mass he says in Christ's name: 'this is my Body which shall be given up for you'.

By receiving the Holy Orders, the priest is no longer his own. The Blessed Pope John Paul II in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the formation of priests in the circumstances of the present day *Pastores dabo vobis*, affirms:

by virtue of their consecration, priests are configured to Jesus the Good Shepherd and are called to imitate and to live out his own pastoral charity...in virtue of his configuration to Christ, the Head and Shepherd, the priest stands in this spousal relationship with regard to the community.... In this spiritual life, therefore, he is called to live out Christ's spousal love toward the Church, his bride. Therefore, the priest's life ought to radiate this spousal character, which demands that he be a witness to Christ's spousal love and thus be capable of loving people with a heart which is new, generous and pure with genuine self-detachment, with full, constant and faithful dedication and at the same time with a kind of 'divine jealousy' (2 Cor 11:2) and even with a kind of maternal tenderness, capable of bearing 'the pangs of birth' until 'Christ be formed' in the faithful (Gal 4:19).¹⁴

Living out Christ's Spousal Love in Celibate Chastity

Celibacy has come under serious attacks in recent times and some have even called for it to be jettisoned from priesthood. The number one reason given is that celibacy alleged not to be an integral aspect of Christ's priesthood. In line with such position is the view that since a great number of apostles and their successors, the early Church, were married men, celibacy originated historically from disciplinary considerations or worse still, an imposition. They also argue wrongly that celibacy is only a utopian principle that is often difficult to practice with coherence and consistency. Moreover, celibacy is being fingered as the culprit for the shortage of priests in some parts of the

world.

It is worth noting, however, that Christ himself was a celibate and this fact is not negated by biblical writings as well as other credible historical traditions. Christ lived his entire earthly life fulfilling the will of the Father and for the sake of the kingdom. He declared plainly “my food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his works” (Jn 4:34). In conformity with the life he himself lived, Christ also eulogised all those who, for the sake of the kingdom and work of God, have embraced the celibate state.¹⁵

St Paul in like manner invites as many that can to be imitators of him as he was of Christ and to remain unmarried just like himself in order to be fully available for the affairs of the Lord (1 Cor 7:32). Celibacy, therefore, is a venerable way of living out Christ's priesthood in order to have an undivided attention for the sake of the bride of Christ the Church.

Indeed, as clearly affirmed by Gonzalo Miranda, “Christ's celibacy did not arise from his inability to love, nor was it due to the fact that he had a hard or cold heart. It certainly was not due to the fact that he despised women or marriage, which he even elevated to the level of sacrament. Rather, it arose from a sublime and universal love, which cannot bind anyone in conjugal unity and totality”.¹⁶ Celibacy properly viewed from a positive angle enables one to be free to befriend all without exception and according to the legitimate needs of each without thus permitting a restrictive special bond for any that may occasion conjugal or procreative commitment. Pope Paul VI asserts in this light that “celibacy is a love without reservations”.¹⁷ Furthermore, Paul Kehinde Oredipe affirms that
to be a vowed celibate means to be empty for God,
to be free and open for his presence in many people

and to be available for his service. The project of a vow of celibacy is to love and yet remain honest, free, mobile, able to carry the Lord's love where it is needed next and most. It is not a loveless abstinence from sexual activity but a form of loving and of loving service. The life of a celibate involves concentration on forms of loving other than genital. It can express itself in love of service and giving, in friendship, in richness of human relationships, in intellectual and artistic work, and so forth. It is a vow to love, a way, a style of loving, of witnessing to God's love.¹⁸

Celibacy from its Latin roots *caeleb* simply means to be 'single' or 'unmarried'. This is not all that is understood from the ecclesiastical perspective of 'vowed' or 'consecrated' celibacy. Ecclesiastical celibacy in priesthood transcends the narrow conception of 'aloneness' to mean availability for others in order to propagate the Gospel and the kingdom. It goes beyond the negative definition of being unmarried to mean universal disposition to act as a loving spouse of souls in representation of Christ the true Bridegroom of his bride the Church. It is not 'lovelessness' but an unlimited openness to love and chaste love for the ultimate goal of the evangelization and the salvation of souls.

The doctrinal disposition on celibacy is that it should be practised in chastity and charity. Thus it eschews impurity, conjugality or exclusivity, procreation or generation of offspring; and it encourages purity, universality and sacrifice. Celibate priesthood makes him readily available to share his life of faith-experience with those most in need and to do so everywhere but knowing truly, deep down, that his heart is solely for God, the reason and object of his vocation. He is rightly referred to as 'father' due to his status of spiritual availability for the children of God, and for the sons and daughters of the

Church. Thus, the consecrated celibate is Christ's assistant in his spousal relationships towards souls.¹⁹ He is the friend of the bridegroom who joyfully announces and celebrates the mysteries of the presence of the Lord to the bride. Renouncing his right to having an earthly family he can call his own, he embraces, as a spiritual father, the fold of Christ. Mother Teresa depicts this reality so lucidly when she expounds that “by freely choosing priestly celibacy, the priest renounces earthly fatherhood and gains a share in the Fatherhood of God. Instead of becoming father to one or more children on earth, he is now able to love everybody in Christ.... For this reason people call him 'Father'.²⁰

Not minding the aforementioned facts, “living out a celibate vocation today means swimming against the tide of public opinion and practice, and one is bound to feel the pressure. The exaggerated emphasis on sex and romantic love undoubtedly exacerbates the pain of celibate loving”.²¹ Despite the challenges and crises arising from keeping celibate commitments, the dignity of this act in mirroring the mind of Christ for the salvation of souls should not be undermined. This disciplinary adjunct to catholic priesthood has contributed immensely in the past in the evangelization of humanity. While the Church waits on the Holy Spirit for the way forward in resolving some crises situations in the scarcity of priests, especially in old Christendom, we should never cease to pray for priests that they may be faithful and dedicated to Christ their Lord. Above all, that they may not be carried away by trends, ideas and lifestyles of modernism which constitute great and hidden pitfalls of priesthood in our day.

Hidden Traps

As it were, “the priest is not an Angel sent from heaven. He is a man chosen from among men, a member of the Church, a Christian”.²² The saying seems to hold true that if there are good Christians or seminarians, then there would be good priests; similarly too, if there are good citizens, then there would be good leaders. Priests or leaders are always drawn from the people they serve.²³ However, priests are expected to live above the moral standards of their world, age and environment. They should always have their minds renewed and transformed after the image of their unique model, Jesus Christ the High Priest of the new covenant and the Bridegroom of the Church. An adequate, thorough and frequent renewal of mind helps the priest to surmount the common enemies of priesthood such as ambition, lust, avarice and gluttony which militate against the celibate and chaste love undertaken therein. These enemies or traps are vices when indulged in. They were present during the temptations of Jesus Christ (Mt 4) where the malicious enemy offered Christ three short-cuts to glory or crown without the cross.

Ambition is the identical-twin-sister of vainglory begotten of the same mother called pride. It acts out in this manner “for instead of seeking the glory of God and the salvation of souls, the priest seeks himself and spreads his own kingdom of glory, honour and praise”.²⁴ In the inspired reflection of Bishop Fulton Sheen,

Pride manifests itself in many forms: 'atheism', which is a denial of our dependence on God, our Creator and our final end; 'intellectual vanity', which makes minds unteachable because they think they know all there is to know; 'superficiality', which judges others by their clothes, their accent, and their bank account; 'snobbery', which sneers at inferiors as the earmark of its own superiority, “they

are not of our own social status"; 'vainglory', which prompts some Catholic parents to refuse to send their boys and girls to Catholic colleges, because they would there associate only with children of carpenters; 'presumptuousness', which inclines a man to seek honours and positions quite beyond his capacity; and 'exaggerated sensitiveness' which makes one incapable of moral improvement because so unwilling to hear one's own faults.²⁵

St Thomas Aquinas in application of Aristotelian thought speaks of priestly envy as a more apparent vice than the often carefully concealed pride. Thus, harmful envy happens, for instance, when "a man may regard another's good as his own evil when it diminishes his renown or excellence. Then envy is discontent over another's good. Consequently, men are especially envious of 'those goods where glory is found, goods which bring honour and esteem....' He is envious only of those whom he wants to rival or surpass in reputation".²⁶ Priestly envy has been a dangerous element that sometimes brings clashes of interests, character defamation of fellow priests and the assassination of the good reputation of others. Envy is a contagion that could breed hatred, the act of rejoicing over a neighbour's adversity and sorrowing over his success or prosperity.

According to ideal Christian disposition, "the ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to others, first of all to his family"²⁷ but as opposed to the foregoing spirit of liberality, avarice obtains in "every practice that reduces persons to nothing more than a means of profit enslaves them, leads to idolizing money, and contributes to the spread of atheism".²⁸ Indeed, no one can serve God and mammon (Mt 6:24) and the love therein of money is the root of all evil (I Tim

6:10) since it shows a basic rejection of God through an unhealthy habits of falsehood, fraud and sometimes dubious dealings in order to acquire what is false and transient.

Moreover, priests, in order to remain in the sanctifying state of grace, in representation of the Divine Spouse towards his bride the Church, should work assiduously to check all harmful uses of passions in lust, gluttony, anger and spiritual sloth. Regarding such, the holy scriptures encourage that one should be angry without sinning, that is, as long as it is quickly followed by forgiveness and there is no room therein giving way to malice (*cf.* Eph 4:26). In essence,

it is not anger that is wrong, it is being angry at the wrong thing that is wrong. Tell me your enemy and I will tell you what you are. Tell me your hatred and I will tell you your character. Do you hate religion? Then your conscience bothers you. Do you hate capitalists? Then you are avaricious and you want to be a capitalist. Do you hate the labourer? Then you are selfish and a snob. Do you hate sin? Then you love God. Do you hate your hate, your selfishness, your quick temper, your wickedness? Then you are a good soul, for if anyone comes to me... and does not hate his own life, he cannot be my disciple.²⁹

Conclusion

Priests, in order that they may truly mirror the celibate and spousal love of their unique model and Lord Jesus Christ towards the Church, need to uproot all vices that hinder progress. The contemplation on the word of the Saviour which helps one to form a mentality and disposition of Christ is of immense benefits. Blessed Pope John Paul II, while re-echoing the theme of the 1971 Synod of Bishop on “contemplation of the word of God”, insisted that

One should not be frightened by the word “contemplation” and the spiritual commitment it entails. It could be said that, independently of forms and lifestyles among those of the contemplative life, it nonetheless remains most splendid jewel of Christ's Bride; the word of God in a contemplative spirit is valid for everyone, so that hearts and minds may be nourished on it. This helps the priest to develop a way of thinking and looking at the world with wisdom, in the perspective of the supreme purpose: God and his plan of salvation. The Synod says: “To examine the events of life in the light of the Gospel”.³⁰

Prayer and contemplation with the aid of the word of God are strong tools in helping the preservation of the celibate and chaste love of priests against the secular dangers which besiege it. Ideal prayer method should follow the style of the pattern of all prayers the 'Our Father' given us by Jesus himself (Mt 6:9-13). This is also the way of the Holy Mass. Our prayer should begin with blessing and adoring God, and also the plea for forgiveness: all is done in recognition of the fact that we are creatures and that we need to duly give glory to God the only Holy One.³¹ We give praise to God because he is God, and not just for what he has done since he is worthy of all.³² Recourse to the word of God as a guide is good since Guigo the Carthusian enjoins all to “seek in reading and you will find in meditating; knock in mental prayer and it will be opened to you by contemplation”.³³

Fr Robert J. Fox solicits that priests should follow Christ's way in resolving the problem of loneliness or dryness in the practice of celibacy which sometimes could mislead into chasing shadows. He counsels that “there are so many opportunities for priests to reach out to others if only they would make Christ Jesus Himself their Model and not consider the

priesthood a mere job for their bread and butter. Priests should use every opportunity to teach, lead and direct others to the 'Living Bread Come Down from Heaven' (John 6)".³⁴ In the final analysis, the Church tasks her priests to cherish the vow of celibate chastity and thereby "ask her priests and nuns to surrender even the lawful pleasures of the flesh, not because she does not want them to love, but because she wants them to love better".³⁵ Thus in celibate love towards the bride of Christ the Church, the priest is able to love all souls for the sake of the kingdom and eternal life.

Finally, to say that the law of celibacy takes away freedom is to deny the obvious because anyone who commits himself to the priestly ministry does so by an act of free will. In keeping with the gift of vocation, the charism of celibacy is included in the charism of the priestly life. It is also important to recall that, in keeping with the evangelical saying, "It is desirable not to marry", the Council of Trent have proclaimed that the state of virginity or celibacy is "better and more blessed"³⁶ the appropriateness of celibacy may be grasped more precisely by grounding it on the priestly character. Character here means consecration and conformity to Christ the Shepherd. When consecration reaches the depth of personal being, it calls for an expression of itself in the way the person lives, or at least in the general orientation of one's life. True, consecration does not include absolute determinations in this respect nor does it, as such, impose precise and detailed obligations, but it does seek to concretize itself by letting God exercise an ever more total dominance over the self.³⁷ Celibacy is the best form of this concretization. It should therefore be cherished and lived out properly.

ENDNOTES

¹See Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*, no. 10.

² Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, (London Catholic Truth Society, 1994), no. 6.

³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests: *Presbyteriorum Ordinis*, 7 December 1965, no. 2.

⁴ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the formation of priests in the circumstances of the present day: *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 25 March 1992, no. 15.

⁵ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree: *Presbyteriorum Ordinis*, op. cit., no. 2.

⁶ See Paul Kehinde Oredipe, *Being in Love Celibacy in Principle and Practice*, (Iperu-Remo, Nigeria: Ambassador Publications, 2003), p. 40: Fr Oredipe explains this Christological dimension of priesthood when he describes it as “a participation and extension of the incarnation. Christ becomes flesh and makes the priest an extension of himself in the world. This is an ontological and sacramental configuration of the priest to Christ expressed in the traditional formula... *agere in persona Christi capitis* to act in the person of Christ the Head and consequently of the Church. The priest, at the core of his being, is configured to Jesus in his passionate love for his Spouse, the Church”.

⁷ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter on the Dignity of Women: *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 26,

⁸ Eph 5:23-25,32-33: “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his Body, and is himself its Saviour. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her... This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband”.

⁹ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, op. cit., no. 13; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution

on the Church: *Lumen Gentium*, *op. cit.*, no. 28; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council Decree *Ad Gentes*, no. 19; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council Decree *Presbyteriorum Ordinis*, no. 7; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council Decree *Christus Dominus*, no. 28.

¹⁰ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, *op. cit.*, no. 13.

¹¹ St Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 46, 11-12 *On the Shepherd*: “The apostle declares that we are all called to adoption. We have received the adoption of sons, so as to be co-heirs with the only Son, and be also his inheritance”.

¹² Heb 9:22: “under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins”.

¹³ Donald Keefe, “Reflections upon the 'functional' priesthood”, in *Faith*, vol. 32, no. 2, March-April 2000.

¹⁴ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo vobis*, *op. cit.*, no. 22.

¹⁵ See Mt 19:12: “and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven”.

¹⁶ Gonzalo Miranda, “A Heart for the Gospel A Meditation on Priestly Celibacy” in *Sacerdos*, year 6, no. 24 (Nov. Dec. 1999), p. 31.

¹⁷ Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on Priestly Celibacy: *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, 24 June 1967, no. 24.

¹⁸ Paul Kehinde Oredipe, *Being in Love Celibacy in Principle and Practice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

¹⁹ See Basil Cole, *The Hidden Enemies of the Priesthood the Contributions of St Thomas Aquinas*, St Paul, Mumbai (India), 2007, p. 50: “if the presbyter is a representation of Christ as priest, prophet and king and acts *in persona Christi capitis* [CCC, no. 1548], does it not follow as a further penetration into the mystery of Holy Orders that his sacramental consecration enables him likewise, according to the Roman document, *Inter Insigniores*, to share in Christ's own spousal relationship with the Church? The priests acts *in persona Christi* not only when he celebrates the sacraments, but also when he works to preach, teach and sanctify the people, and when he is ill or retired. Even if imprisoned or in solitary confinement, the priest is continues to sanctify the

Church by his suffering and prayer. He is permanently and constantly bound to the Church as the representation of her Head since he has been given a character which goes to the root of his being, and should therefore permeate everything he does, except for sin”.

²⁰ Mother Teresa of Calcutta, “Priestly celibacy: Sign of charity of Christ”, in *For Love Alone Reflections on Priestly Celibacy*, p. 212.

²¹ Iperu Formation Community, *A Handbook on Formation*, (Iperu-Remo: The Ambassador Publications, 1992), p. 349.

²² Karl Rahner, *Servants of the Lord*, trans. Richard Strachen, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968)

²³ See St. Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon 46:29-30*: “Surely if there are good sheep, there are good shepherds too, for good shepherds are made from good sheep”.

²⁴ Basil Cole, *The Hidden Enemies of the Priesthood the Contributions of St Thomas Aquinas*, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

²⁵ Fulton J. Sheen, *The Seven Capital Sins*, (Mumbai, India: St Pauls, 2003), p. 39-40.

²⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II 36, 1.

²⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, St Paul Publications, Bangalore, India, 1994, no. 2403.

²⁸ *Ibid*, no. 2405.

²⁹ Fulton J. Sheen, *The Seven Capital Sins*, p. 15-16.

³⁰ Pope John Paul II, “Priests must be devoted to prayer”, in *L' Osservatore Romano*, 9 June 1993, p. 1, §4.

³¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2631, 2648.

³² *Ibid*, no. 2639.

³³ *Ibid*, no. 2654.

³⁴ Robert J. Fox, *The Priest: A Man for Others*, (Franklin: Christian Family Outreach), p. 9.

³⁵ Fulton J. Sheen, *The Seven Capital Sins*, p. 35.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 245.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 244.