

*Why don't we have married priests?*

Priesthood is a sacrament. Holy Orders is not a political exercise. Parties who promote married priests or women priests do not really understand the mystery of a sacrament. Church and Sacraments originate in Jesus. They are His idea. They are the chief means by which the risen Christ is alive among His people today. Sacramental priesthood is essential for sacramental ministry. The wisdom of apostolic times as well as the Bible assures us of this truth. *When we see a Catholic priest exercising his priestly ministry we truly see Jesus in action.*

Some of the liturgy and customs that surround each sacrament have changed and developed throughout the history of our Church. This was and is done under the protection of the Holy Spirit through the authority given the apostles and their successors to bind and to loose. However, each core sacrament, as distinguished from the liturgy that surrounds it, is established by Jesus once and for all. This central matter cannot be changed. This consists of an essential outward sign that calls into being what it signifies. God speaks and it is created. Essential signs make the sacrament. Fuller signs make them easier to reach. *Unmarried priesthood is a fuller sign.*

Priesthood is a living sign of the real and active presence of Christ among us. This mystical Jesus is the Bridegroom of His Bride, the Church. The Church as the Bride of Christ is much more than a poetic expression. It is an essential mystical love affair on our pilgrimage to the great wedding feast in the Kingdom of God. Jesus has no rival bride. *A celibate priest is a better sign of Jesus, the Bridegroom.*

In the wisdom of our God, the Holy Catholic Church generally calls only celibate men to the sacrament of Holy Orders. Much like Baptism by immersion is a greater fullness of sign than our common custom of pouring water, yet both methods accomplish the full sacrament, so the sacrificial sign of an unmarried man with a healthy natural love for woman is a fuller sign of the Bridegroom, yet such celibate sacrifice, while most desirable, is not an absolute requirement. Legitimately ordained married men are truly priests. Even some of the apostles seem to have been married men and we do have some married priests today. The Eastern Church has always called some married men to priesthood but never officially allowed ordained priests to get married. An essential matter of Holy Orders is a husbandly, fatherly man chosen by God through the bishop. We should note that the call to priestly vocation comes from God primarily through a bishop. No individual has the right to ordination. No one calls himself.

There are also several other theological, symbolic and practical reasons for an unmarried priesthood that we don't have space here to discuss. Pray for good vocations.