

In the spring of 1998, The Latin Mass published the article which follows. I am its author and it will replace my usual letter. I consider this appropriate given the topic and the recent events that have exposed scandals involving priests and minors, as well as the handling of these crimes by the hierarchy.

The present crisis has been long in the making because the priesthood has been undergoing a deliberate and systematic secularizing for almost forty years. The post-conciliar “reformers” have implemented policies driven by an ideology foreign to Catholicism, and have created an environment that threatens the character of the priesthood. We are reaping the fruit of what the social engineers within the Church have sown.

Catholics – priests and laity – who have become media pundits during the present crisis are often the instigators and promoters of the ecclesial deformation that they have characterized for forty years as a “New Pentecost.” They shamelessly demand more destabilization – specifically an end to celibacy – as the solution to the present debilitated state of the Church. Their agenda is transparent and may yet be executed due to the institutional chaos they have achieved through the Emasculation of the Priesthood.

F. James McLucas

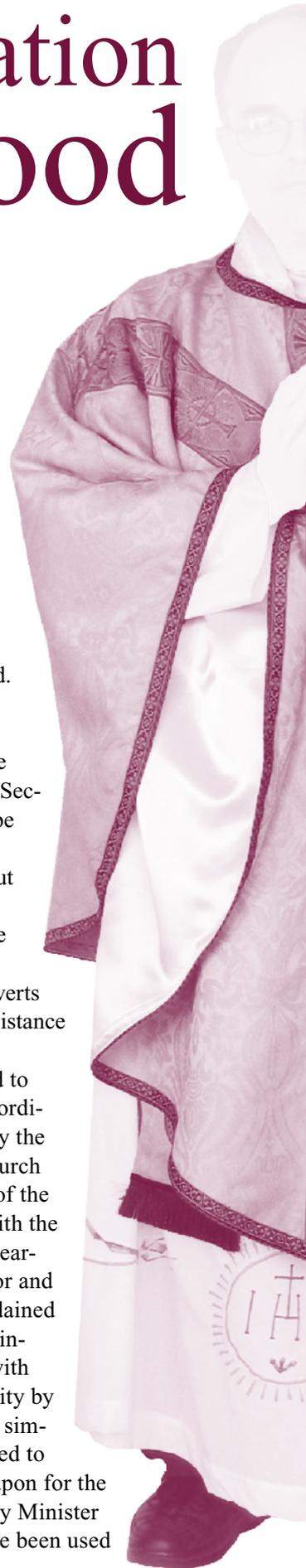
The Emasculation of the Priesthood

by Father James McLucas

The celibate priesthood has been seriously damaged from the expansive absorption of many sacred functions by the laity that were formerly reserved to the ordained. Endangering priestly celibacy because it is inherently hostile to a healthy masculinity, this structural revolution evokes an image of a square peg being pounded into a round hole. The post-conciliar Church is of a different shape from that which housed the traditional theology of the priesthood. The new form casts a silhouette incompatible with the character of a mandatory celibate priesthood.

The preparation for optional celibacy began with the introduction of the permanent diaconate following the Second Vatican Council. The Church was informed by Pope Paul VI that this was nothing more than the restoration of a classic practice. He remained silent, however, about the fact that there had *never* been a Holy “Order” that was non-celibate since the mandating of celibacy in the Western Church.¹ The creation of this married rung of Holy Order, followed by many Protestant minister converts being admitted to the priesthood,² has broken down resistance to mandatory celibacy.

The drift towards optional celibacy was not limited to incremental developments like the diaconate and the ordination of married Protestant converts. They are simply the more obvious. The catalyst that oriented the Latin Church towards the married priesthood was the introduction of the concept of “collaborative lay ministry.” This began with the elimination of “minor orders” by Pope Paul, and the tearing away of the substitutions, the “ministries” of lector and acolyte, from an exclusive orientation towards the ordained priesthood. Originally, the legislation limited these ministries to lay *men*. The bishops of the United States, with Rome’s approval, quickly capitalized on the opportunity by allowing lay *women* to perform these functions. They simply declared that, while only lay men could be admitted to these ministries,³ women could and would be called upon for the special liturgical services of Reader and Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist. Distinctions without differences have been used



most creatively by the post-conciliar apologists.

Once that hurdle was cleared, it was only a relatively small step to the erection of full-time lay “pastoral administrators” who currently “lead” anywhere between 10 to 15 percent of the priestless parishes in the United States. Curiously, in 1995 the Vatican declared that no lay person who administered a priestless parish could have the word “pastoral” attached to his title.⁴ Nevertheless, it wasn’t long before the introduction of the “priestless Communion service,” which was initiated, one would guess, to provide a degree of liturgical solemnity for those lay persons charged with the pastoral care of priestless parishes.

Thus far, what I have attempted to describe is the elimination of the relationship between function and ontology. Those ordained to the priesthood have not lost their traditional “roles.” The issue is, rather, that the non-ordained have assumed many of the functions that have been reserved to the priesthood since the Church emerged from the catacombs (and probably before).

Sacramental doctrine explicitly reserves to priests only the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the absolution of sin. However,

to state that this defines all that is unique about their ordination mandate is to sponsor a doctrinal minimalism in regard to the sacramental priesthood that parallels what is being done to the Sacrament

of the Eucharist. The promoters of a Eucharistic minimalism have been largely successful in their endeavor to confine the Eucharist to the act of consumption at Holy Communion. Any expansion of

Eucharistic devotion – such as Benediction, the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament within the sanctuary, or Corpus Christi processions – has been thwarted in large parts of the Western Church. The consequent loss of devotion to the Eucharist and a creeping heterodoxy among the faithful concerning Eucharistic doctrine has been well documented.

In a parallel manner (and given the innate relationship between Eucharist and priesthood, not surprisingly) the Vatican and the bishops are undermining the priest’s identity, primarily by altering his unique relationship with the Eucharist through the introduction of Communion in the hand, lay ministers of the Eucharist, and lay presiders of Communion services. Lay pastoral administrators and lay pastoral associates, as well as the lay administration of sacramentals (e.g., prayer and liturgical action at the blessing of throats and distribution of ashes), and lay presiding at funeral and wedding liturgies are examples of the further usurpation of tasks from within the sacred environment that was, until thirty years ago, the distinctive domain of ordained celibate priests in the Latin Rite.

The Second Vatican Council repeated the doctrine that the ministerial priesthood differs in essence and not merely in degree from the priesthood of the faithful. The reality of that doctrine had always been made incarnate through the unique sacramental and pastoral role of the priest. But it was never enough simply to proclaim this doctrine. The priest as *alter Christus* was made perceptible (to himself as well as to others) through a visible role that expressed a clear and unambiguous ecclesial “division of labor” that was essential to the personal appropriation of his supernatural identity.

I will argue that the assumption of sacred functions by

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the laity, reserved to the ordained for at least fifteen hundred years, is poisoning the priesthood. The contention proceeds from a simple premise: *if the priesthood is reserved to men, as has been taught by the Church, then whatever harms the masculine nature of*

the ordained weakens the priesthood itself.

Frank Sheed, the great apologist of the Catholic Evidence Guild, was always scornful of an entity he referred to as the “man-eating Thomist.” He was referring to those philosophers supposedly devoted to Saint Thomas Aquinas who narrowly focused on his insights into the Divine but were

seldom intrigued by the formidable psychological acumen of the Angelic Doctor. Saint Thomas' eloquence in regard to human emotions is extraordinary. He indicates that the emotions are often the first to know, in a non-conceptual form, that which is right and true. While Saint Thomas warns that the intellect must always confirm the intuitive insights of the emotions, he is equally concerned about the consequences of ignoring the input of the emotions.

Catholics resisting the post-conciliar revolution found their emotions screaming at every new break with tradition. They were reflexively obedient, however, to the decisions of Holy Mother Church. Yet for millions of Catholics, the pain has compounded; the emotions have not ceased to groan. While they have been told by those in authority that their pain is contrived, the conflict between their intellect and emotions is approaching critical mass. Not a few Catholics have begun to reexamine the raw data provided by their emotions through the filter of an intellectual reappraisal of the past forty years of Church history.

Likewise, many priests with whom I have conversed have expressed an innate sense that something is wrong with the Vatican-sponsored usurpation of their shepherding roles by the laity. Whenever attempts are made to articulate reasons for the discomfort, the conversation is arrested when someone inevitably drifts into the mantra, "Well, we're talking about discipline here; there is nothing in Church doctrine that would disallow this." So, the silent conclusion is equally certain: there must be something wrong with the priest's unease with the developing "collaborative" structure. "I must be too conservative," "I must be too rigid," "I must be too selfish in not wanting to share my pastoral role," are often the unspoken feelings and yet the negative visceral emotions remain and often intensify.

The mistake was the failure to take into account the obvious possibility that the unique sacramental / pastoral role of the priest is not a mere time-bound whim of the Church, but is intrinsic to the nature of the priesthood, particularly a celibate one. From the time that priestly celibacy came to be understood as the norm, the unique administration of the sacred and, in particular, the priest

as sole steward of the Eucharist, were supernatural responsibilities that grounded the celibate's commitment.⁵ The man who has sacrificed wife and family is discovering that the structure that guarded his self-identity as a spiritual spouse and father is in the process of being dismantled. The effects are simultaneously subtle and pronounced.

A constitutive part of masculinity is the desire for unique intimacy. The forfeiture of the sensually sexual does not mutate the human being into an asexual creature. The need for a unique physical intimacy with another is constitutive of permanent monogamous relationships ordained by the Creator. Yet it is precisely that type of intimacy with another human being that the celibate sacrifices. The celibate priest, however, was offered through his office an incomparable and unparalleled intimacy: *he alone could touch God.*

The liturgical legislation of the post-conciliar era has eliminated the Eucharistic exclusivity that marked the office of the priest. The celibate priest no longer possesses the unique corporeal relationship with God. He is not denied the relationship, but others have access to it. Consider a parallel situation: i.e., within the

Sacrament of Matrimony. The possession of an exclusive bodily prerogative with one's spouse is primary; in fact there exists no greater convergence between the Divine Law and the instincts even of fallen human nature than on this point. Violate this pact, and one risks murderous rage. If a celibate priest, however, reacts with even the slightest resentment towards the loss of what was his corporeal exclusivity within his Sacrament of Holy Orders, he is considered a candidate for psychological evaluation.⁶

The fact is that many priests *do* have an instinctive reaction against the presence of the non-consecrated hand touching the Body of God. A non-consecrated hand in the tabernacle, or reaching for the Sacrament at the reception of Holy Communion, violates an intimacy that was, before the engineering of liturgical "roles," exclusively the priest's.⁷ Internal conflict ensues among many priests because there exists a dynamic equivalent to what would



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fuel the emotions of a husband who realizes another has shared the exclusive intimacy with the one to whom he has permanently committed himself.⁸

The change in Church practice that was the gateway to all of the above was Communion in the hand. Paul VI, in the very document that permitted the radical departure from tradition, appealed to the faithful to keep the original practice of receiving the Eucharist on the tongue. His entreaty revolved around one main point: that it was an ancient and venerable practice; it was *tradition*. Whenever tradition, however, is made to be the major defense of any ecclesial practice, it becomes incumbent upon legitimate authority to articulate the reason for the tradition. A practice is of tradition because it may well be the best (and perhaps even the only) vehicle for conveying an aspect or aspects of the Faith in ways that may not be readily apparent.

The suggestion is being raised that within the priest there exists a sublime alignment of the supernatural masculine and the natural masculine that protects and articulates his gender integrity. Tradition safeguards these divine *and* human spheres. This concept never had to be analyzed because the traditions that shielded the priesthood from plagues of spiritual neurosis had never been subjected to tampering. Nor has there been a need to reflect upon those visible components required to integrate the supernatural vocation of celibacy with the masculine gender.

Let us look at a specific development that intrinsically violates the cohesiveness of the masculine within the celibate priest. A “presider” at a priestless Communion service sits in the priest’s chair, proclaims the Gospel, preaches a homily (supposedly composed by a priest or deacon, though seldom is this the case), goes to the tabernacle, prays at the altar of sacrifice and distributes the Eucharist. This non-sacerdotal anomaly talks like a priest, acts like a priest, appropriates the sanctuary which for at least a millennium and a half had been the sacred domain of the priest and clothes him or herself in priestly vesture.⁹ All of this is incompatible with the celibate priest’s identification with fatherhood (in his case, a spiritual one). It represents a radical departure from century upon century of Church history and experience, and offers liturgical approbation to the concept of a “Fatherless” parish society.



I use the phrase “Fatherless” society deliberately because of the direct parallels within the present secular order. The fatherless family is a late twentieth-century invention, as is the Fatherless parish. There have always been parishes that have had to go weeks suffering the absence of a priest as he makes his appointed circuit among his far-flung flock. Yet the idea that someone could replace him in almost all of his pastoral tasks has no pedigree.

Social scientific data do not deny that in the secular sphere other adult substitutes *can* do what a father does, but there are increasing questions as to whether they *should*. The analysis points to adverse effects upon both father and family. Anthropological research suggests that the key to responsible fatherhood lies in a condition known as “the desire for paternal certainty.”¹⁰ In the secular culture, this means that a key motivation for the male to accept the responsibilities of fatherhood is the sure knowledge that the child is his own.¹¹ Similarly, what will animate the celibate male to accept and embrace his commitment to be a spiritual father is the sure knowledge that there are no rivals to his spiritual paternity. Manufacturing positions that substitute for his pastoral care contradict the very notion of paternal certainty.

The protection of priestly identity through a structure that visibly reinforces key components of his masculine nature is a necessity, not an option. That means, besides respecting his unique “sacred space” within the sanctuary, there must be the reservation of all sacramental and liturgical functions (Eucharistic stewardship in particular) to his hands and his hands *alone*. These external functions provide and manifest the constant and conscious self-reference point of the priest as *alter Christus* and spiritual father. These external responsibilities, reserved singularly to the priest, interiorly assist his masculine nature to integrate the purpose of his celibate commitment and motivate him to acquire the single-heartedness that is the priest’s only path to holiness.

The post-conciliar priest of the contemporary Church (continuing a trend that began long before Vatican II in the United States) has become a resident CEO and CFO of a parish plant. He oversees countless committees that add layers of bureaucracy which erects a barrier between the priest and his people.

Enjoying the perquisites of the CEO that have nothing to do with his spiritual identity, he begins to delegate the more burdensome and distasteful pastoral duties in hospitals, nursing homes and the houses of shut-ins; he avoids being available for the distribution of Holy Communion outside of his own Masses; baptisms and weddings are merrily passed off to deacons, as well as marriage preparations; convert instruction is transferred to the RCIA committee. He'll appropriate the vocabulary of those who hold legitimate authority in the Church: "This is collaborative ministry!" No, it is not. This is masculine pathology, the abdication of fatherhood.

At the same time, this behavior is understandable within the context of the role-reversal paradigm that infects all of Western culture. Social science analysis indicates that the propensity described in the above paragraph is typical of men. Psychological and social patterns confirm that the role of "nurturer" often is not a comfortable fit for the male. Anthropological evidence indicates that fatherhood is very much a *learned* experience. In her work *Male and Female:*

The Study of the Sexes in a Changing World, Margaret Mead writes (all emphases are mine), "The human family depends upon *social inventions* that will make

each generation of males want to nurture women and children" (206). Indeed, "every known human society rests firmly on the *learned* nurturing behavior of men" (195). Mead observes that in every known society, each new generation of young *males learn the appropriate nurturing behavior* and superimpose upon their biologically given maleness this learned parental role" (198). In other words, the male must learn fatherhood and that learning must be buttressed by distinct proprietary functions protected throughout the social fabric.

Given this information, it is not surprising that the man ordained to the priesthood, finding that the traditional pastoral tasks of spiritual fatherhood are being diverted to others for a variety of ideological and so-called

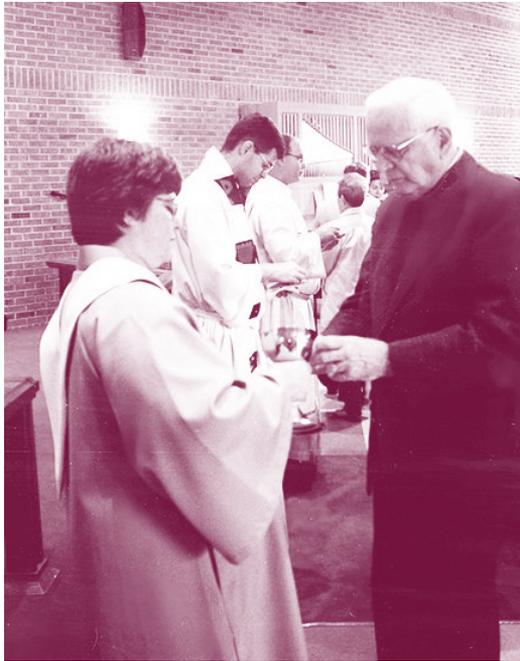
"practical" reasons, begins to substitute the nurturing role of a spiritual father with one more conducive to the boardroom atmosphere of a company officer, permitting more secular instincts to emerge.¹² In fact, he will search for excuses to promote this exchange of roles, especially when Church authority is encouraging him to do it.

Again, to understand fully this pathology one needs to review developments that are taking place within the secular culture. There is an increasing amount of information suggesting that men are being marginalized by the emerging social structure in contemporary Western society.¹³ Women, due to their physical ability to bear children and the concomitant endowment and desire to nurture them, have a significant and irreplaceable role through the design of nature. Men, on the other hand, are not as comfortable with themselves. Unlike women, who possess clarity of role due to their inherent maternal qualities, men do not have a "built-in" social niche that is effected through biology. The man possesses a subtle, intuitive sense that once a child has been conceived his presence

is not strictly required. Modern society encourages this thinking and rewards it. The abandonment of the family by thousands of fathers has,

in fact, provided verification that women, when forced by circumstances, can do it all. The psychological and emotional cost is, of course, enormous upon both mother and child. Yet, mothers and children in countless cases are surviving, even if not thriving, without benefit of the masculine presence.

Therefore, the man's instinct concerning the strict necessity of his role is not incorrect. From primitive history men have had to appropriate a role that parallels the indispensability of women: that of provider and protector. With the increasing economic independence of women, the necessity of this role is being challenged and men are generally responding in two ways: they either (1) promote the diminution of their necessity because it



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allows them to engage in the selfish side of their masculinity (all play and no work in regard to relationships with women) and/or (2) experience a distinct diminution of self-confidence that manifests itself in behavior that further alienates: promiscuity, impotence, homosexuality or other sexual aberrations, the abandonment of children, etc. As pastoral and sacramental care are increasingly becoming independent of the priest, this secular pathology is finding all too familiar parallels among Catholic priests. The post-conciliar ecclesial structure has fostered priestly dysfunction, resulting in a destructive pattern of behavior that is becoming too evident.¹⁴

The loss of the priest's unique intimacy with the sacred has subtly, but mightily, contributed to this development. While insisting that nothing has essentially been changed for the priest because he is still the one who consecrates, the liturgical engineers have made his presence optional at the most intimate moment of Holy Communion between the flock under his care and Our Lord.

The majority of Catholics receive the Eucharist from the hands of a lay person. The act of shared intimacy

that is at the heart of shepherding ("Feed my lambs, feed my sheep") is absent. Church authority, echoing an increasingly feminized society, is telling priests: "Once you have consecrated, you are no longer needed." The act of the priest "feeding" the faithful with the Bread of Life incarnates his role as Its sole provider and, far more than the eye can see, forms his and his people's perception of his spiritual fatherhood. The priest's role was never confined to the sanctuary, but what made him unique to his people was his unique relationship to the Eucharist that he brought forth from within the sanctuary. The commitment to celibacy in the Latin Rite was the tangible sign of the Eucharistic "Christ-man."

The entire panoply described above is far more damaging to the celibate priest than it is to the married priest. Unlike the married priest, he does not have the benefit of the entire natural side of the psychosexual dynamic enjoyed by a husband and father of children. The traditional role of the celibate priest as the sole administrator of the sacred assisted him in sublimating his natural desire for exclusivity with another in marriage, and preserved his orientation toward his spiritual espousal to the Church and his spiritual fatherhood. In the present situation, celibacy for many priests has begun to feel like something that one puts on like a costume. It's not needed for the role in the play; it just lends a bit of color to the set.

Interestingly, in the Eastern Church, where there has

been a tradition of a married priesthood, there is little or no toleration of any transference of the spiritual tasks of the priest to the laity. It would seem that matrimonial espousal and fatherhood enhance the understanding of the requirements needed to maintain the relationship between authentic maleness and spiritual fatherhood.¹⁵

This may not be as odd as it first sounds. After Vatican II, the revolution was not led by those priests who were actually exercising the tasks of spiritual fatherhood on the parish level (in fact, many initially resisted it). The priests whose natural habitat is the world of academia, who have indicated a propensity to value their professorships at least as highly as their priesthood, have been the agents promoting the dismantling of the traditional structures that had protected the celibate priesthood. Weak bishops unwilling to contradict their entrenched bureaucracies have hidden behind these "experts."

Careerism and ambition rooted in pride have often served (always to the detriment of spiritual vitality) as

the "acceptable" substitutions for marital intimacy for those called to celibacy and vows of chastity.

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One must worry that those priests and bishops who have promoted role revision, although they possess the office of spiritual fatherhood, are without a natural disposition for it (perhaps, more disturbing, because they never had a disposition for biological fatherhood). The desire for power and status in the form of careerism may easily eclipse the intensity of male concupiscence. Never having identified primarily with the role of spiritual fatherhood, role revision caused them no sense of loss. This mindset has filtered down, and the icon of priest as spiritual father degenerates into the image of the "professional man," and celibates for the kingdom are reduced to mere bachelors. The priest is increasingly perceived as an ecclesiastical technician, and often lives down to that role.

Some will think it odd that little in the way of theological reasoning has been offered in this discussion of the most sacred of subjects. As I have attempted to suggest, however, the present situation is a historical novelty. Not only that, but in all candor I must confess that I do not believe that arguing from historical precedent by itself will cause many to pause today. So much of what has occurred in the past forty years has been contrary to organic development that there is no reason to be confident that such arguments in themselves will produce any serious reflection.

However, a theological response that will be argued against the premise of this article, especially the plea for

the reservation of Eucharistic stewardship to the priest alone, is that, due to the shortage of priests, lay ministers and permanent deacons are necessary: "After all, the Eucharist is meant for people; their ability to receive the sacrament, especially in mission lands and in places experiencing severe priest shortages, far outweighs any possible detrimental effect upon the celibate priesthood." My initial response is that permanent deacons since the Council have not been widely used in mission lands *precisely* because of the confusion that the disconnect between Holy Orders and celibacy frequently engenders. Second, any practice that does harm to the natural connective tissue that makes visible and apparent the unique bond between the Eucharist and priesthood (expressed by the term *ordinary minister*),¹⁶ will not leave undiminished the supernatural effects of the sacrament.

Grace builds on nature and transforms it. However, if there exists an ecclesial structure that disrupts the equilibrium between the natural and supernatural, grace may lie fallow until that rupture is repaired. The reception of the Eucharist, after all, is meant to benefit the entire Church, not just the communicant.

Therefore, if a part of the Church (the priesthood) is damaged by the structural disorder encompassing the administration and reception of the Sacrament, then the entire Church is weakened.

Many aspects of the Church's visible life cannot be changed without assaulting the human element's participation in the sacred. One branch of the Manichaean heresy thought so little of the material world that it believed it mattered not at all what kind of sins were committed with the body as long as there remained a spiritual orientation towards Christ. We risk institutional Manichaeism if we continue to act as if we can do whatever we like with the visible life of the Mystical Body without fear of spiritual consequences. I have argued that because grace builds on nature, if there is instituted a wholesale ecclesial role revision without

regard to the question of nature, the grace necessary to integrate maleness, celibacy and office may well lie dormant. There will be a disconnect among the emotions, intellect and will.

Those who disagree with what has been argued thus far will frequently counter that the present discussion has been about mere "accidentals," unimportant in comparison to all the other problems in the Church. Our Lord, however, began the Church with the priesthood and the Eucharist. If what has been done in the past thirty years is harmful to either, we are perilously close to the foundations of the Church herself. The notion that the Church can offer the work of the priest to others without doing harm to both his masculinity and his personality is a gross presumption. It will affect the way he views his life and commitment, as well as his beliefs and prayer.

One more observation about so-called "accidentals": the greatest mystery in the world, the Eucharist, must be communicated through "accidents." These accidents must be specific material substances that unambiguously signify the Sacrament. What have heretofore been considered "accidents" in



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regard to the functions that form and integrate priestly identity may well be as intrinsic to the communication of the reality of the priesthood—to the priest himself as well as to the faithful—as is the appearance of bread and wine to the Eucharist.

The role revision of priest and laity has led to declining numbers of vocations, despite the embarrassing efforts to "sell" the priesthood through various Madison Avenue marketing techniques. Even when there is a temporary spike in seminary registration following a papal visit, there is no evidence that this initial fervor persists. It is amazing to observe the contortions required by the public relations departments of various episcopal conferences assuring us that all is well with the local church, and at the same time gravely issuing study papers concerning the projected short-

age of priests and the inevitable remedy of preparing the faithful for lay-administered priestless parishes. The bishops of England (mimicking similar rumblings among members of the American episcopate) are asking the Pope to reinstate into full pastoral status men who have left the active priesthood in order to marry.¹⁷ The vocations crisis, created by the anti-masculine policies of the ecclesiological revolution, is now blamed by the bishops on celibacy. Celibacy *is* a problem, but only because the present structural environment of the Church has removed those elements which traditionally

have supported its compatibility with a healthy masculine nature.

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Church authority will discover that, regardless of the traditional language that masks the altered structure, the scriptural admonition against pouring old wine into new wineskins will burst the self-deception required to accomplish it.

Either traditional mandatory celibacy for priests *or* the present structure that ignores its natural underpinnings: these are the mutually exclusive options facing the Church. There is no middle way. ✠

Notes

1. The Vatican signaled early on its growing indifference towards celibacy within Holy Orders by permitting widowed permanent deacons to remarry. This contradicted an ancient practice that even the Eastern Church, which permits a married clergy, does not allow.
2. John M. Haas, a convert and former member of the Episcopal clergy, in a pamphlet entitled *Marriage and the Priesthood* (New Rochelle, NY: Scepter Press, 1987), voiced caution in regard to what had become an institutionalized policy by the Vatican's "Pastoral Provision" of 1982: "I knew full well that there were occasions when the Holy See permitted the ordination of married men to the priesthood. It was allowed...out of pastoral considerations for Protestant clergymen who later came to the Faith. But through my reflections I came to see why this was historically the exception rather than the norm."
3. During the late 1980s, the Holy See requested the Commission on the Authentic Interpretation of the Code of Canon Law to review the possibility of formally admitting women to these ministries. At one point, some months after their deliberations began, I asked a member of the Commission about the pending decision. He replied that the Commission's response had been on the desk of the Secretary of State for some time. Though unable to reveal the decision of the Commission, he seemed to indicate his own position (and possibly that of others in the group) when, after my pressing him for an opinion on the matter, he replied that women could not be admitted to these ministries because they were preparatory steps toward the priesthood. I expressed my surprise and asked about *Ministeria Quaedam* (Pope Paul's 1972 decree that separated the ministries from their intrinsic connection to the priesthood and opened them up to laymen). He gave no reply. The implication was that there were some in Rome who considered that decree very problematical. The outcome has followed a well-worn Vatican path of recent times. The findings were shrouded in silence, the same treatment rendered to the decision of a Vatican commission that had determined the traditional Mass had never been abrogated. Present speculation has it that the Vatican plans to admit women to these ministries. What seems more likely (and calamitous) is that Rome will create a non-sacramental but formal order of Deaconess that would incorporate the roles of pastoral administrator and assistant, lector and acolyte.
4. This is not an unimportant development, though it drew little notice. It is difficult to understand why the Vatican would see a problem with terminology without seeing the more important one of concept. This pattern, however, has governed post-conciliar Vatican policy: endorse a substantial change in traditional practice, but avoid the use of any term that would indicate a deviation from traditional language.
5. Deacons in the Latin Rite who distributed the Eucharist prior to the decree *Ministeria Quaedam* were always celibate and in a transition period awaiting priestly ordination.
6. Interestingly, the question of why priests are not displaying greater discontent over the assumption of their duties has been raised by a layman. See Joseph H. Foegen, "Questions for Pastors," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* (November 1995).
7. Even during those periods in the history of the Church that witnessed an active diaconal office, the deacon was celibate and was utilized mainly as a direct assistant to the bishop. He was not an ordinary minister of the Eucharist. The creation of the married permanent diaconate eliminated the entwined and inseparable relationship among priesthood, celibacy and exclusive Eucharistic stewardship that had been the norm in the Western Church.
8. Even though there are many priests, the usage of the phrase "exclusive intimacy" for that which existed between the priest and the Eucharist is appropriate. Each priest was aware that every brother priest received the commission to be the guardian of Him Whose priesthood they all shared. It was precisely this unique relationship with the Eucharist that was a key link in the bond among priests. The acquisition of this privilege by lay ministers has seriously contributed to the decline in priestly camaraderie.
9. This liturgical mutation was captured vividly in a videocassette, *Leading the Community in Prayer: The Art of Presiding for Deacons and Lay Persons*, produced by Liturgical Press in 1989. It displayed on the jacket a picture of a woman "presiding" at a Communion service, dressed in an alb, with a male server holding the book, as she extends her hands in prayer.
10. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex, Culture, and Myth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962).
11. It is not being suggested that literal biological fatherhood is a prerequisite for "paternal certainty." What is being conveyed is that for a man to assume the role of a father, there must be no question that, in all things other than genetics, the one with whom he enters into a paternal relationship is unambiguously "his" child. This would have application to the spiritual fatherhood of the priest who is "Father" in the order of grace rather than nature.
12. This phenomenon is not confined to the managerial model. Often, other secular identifications are adopted, i.e., "priest-therapist," "priest-educator," etc. These new roles may explain why priests are encouraging women to appropriate roles heretofore reserved to their office. Many women, being nurturers by nature, are more than willing to cooperate. The result for the heterosexual celibate, however, is the exchange of his sense of spiritual fatherhood for that of a "professional bachelor."
13. David Blankenthorn, *Fatherless America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995).
14. This is hardly to suggest that every case of aberrant sexual behavior is caused by the present ecclesial environment. The ecclesial structure, for a variety of reasons that would require an entirely separate discussion, is also *attracting* the walking wounded.
15. It does not follow that a married priesthood, *in se*, protects the sacred prerogatives of a priest more effectively than a celibate one. When celibacy and bachelorhood become ecclesial synonyms, however, there is a corresponding occlusion of paternal sensibilities that would have developed and matured had the mutation not occurred. Grace builds on nature (thus it can preserve the authentic masculine and paternal sensibilities of the married priest through the natural environment of family life), but it also transforms nature, and preserves the masculine and paternal in the priest who properly orders celibacy towards the Kingdom (as opposed to allowing it to degenerate into nothing more than the single "alternative lifestyle").
16. It should be noted that the Council of Trent posits that, "It has always been the custom in the Church of God that lay persons receive Communion from priests." Council of Trent, sess. XIII. cap. VIII. *De usu admirabilis hujus sacramenti*. "Semper in ecclesia Dei mos fuit, ut laici a sacerdotibus communionem acciperent."
17. *Catholic World Report* Vol. 7 (October 1997).