

# MODERN Medievalism

APPLYING OLD-WORLD SOLUTIONS TO NEW-WORLD PROBLEMS

MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2017

## THOUGHT EXPERIMENT: MARRIED "SIMPLEX" PRIESTS TO STRENGTHEN THE CELIBATE CLERGY

*What did Pope Francis say this time?*

I was particularly ruminating on this during the recently past feast of Saint Patrick: a bishop who was born to a clerical family, his father having been a deacon and his grandfather a priest (a fact which is curiously omitted from Patrick's biography in the 1913 *Catholic Encyclopedia*). The latest papal kerfluffle was over the Pope's answers to some questions in an interview in the German newspaper *Die Zeit*. To quote a CNS article:

He was also asked about the possibility of allowing married "viri probati" -- men of proven virtue -- to become priests.

"We have to study whether 'viri probati' are a possibility. We then also need to determine which tasks they could take on, such as in remote communities, for example," Pope Francis said.

The remarks caused enough waves that I even overheard the kind old ladies who come to my workplace to knit once a week talk about it! Of course, there was no discussion on what Pope Francis meant by the phrase *viri probati*. (That would be "proven men", presumably of advanced age and known piety such as older married deacons, who would be ordained as supply priests to help the established clergy.) In most people's imaginations, whether they're for or against it, any talk of opening the priesthood to married men is taken to mean that seminaries will soon be flooded with young newlywed guys. That may well be the fate of the old Latin discipline by the end of my natural lifetime, but in the spirit of my blog's tagline, "*Applying old-world solutions to new-world problems*", you dear readers will indulge me in the following thought experiment about a model of priesthood which has passed into obscurity but may find renewed usefulness in the not-too-distant future....

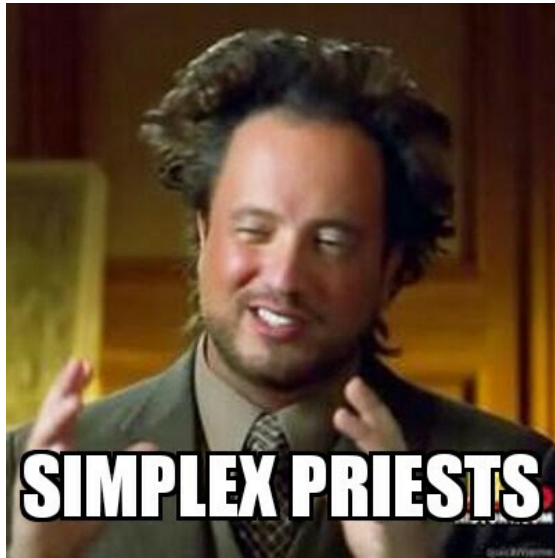
First, I tack on my disclaimer that, of course, as "there are those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake", the path of celibacy is a higher calling than that of marriage. Obligatory celibacy for priests has been a part of the Latin tradition for a thousand years. Even the so-called "Anglican" Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St Peter to which I belong, which uniquely relies on a mostly married presbyterate of former Anglican clerics, still affirms that the model of celibate priests formed in the traditional seminary system is preferred. The Ordinariate places high hopes on its four traditional seminarians (one of whom is a longtime friend of mine), and so do I.

Now with that out of the way....

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PREVIOUSLY ON MODERN MEDIEVALISM



There are two kinds of arguments against the use of married priests: spiritual and pragmatic. People in the first camp pride themselves on the idea that the priest, as an *alter Christus*, is "married" to the Church as our Lord and living more closely to the ideal of celibacy as proposed by St Paul. There is simply no room for the idea of married priests in this ecclesiology--indeed, many people in this camp have a visceral reaction against the idea of a married man, especially one who may still be sexually active, in celebrating Mass or administering the holy Eucharist. A few traditionalists might be so repulsed by the idea that they'd rather attend a diocesan Ordinary Form Mass or drive to a traditional Latin Mass in another state, rather than attend a Latin Mass celebrated by a married priest. For these folks, no argument suffices, and I don't bother convincing them otherwise.

The pragmatists are the sort who question the applicability of married priests, not the idea in principle. They ask, "how do we pay for them and their families? Will we need to renovate the rectories to accommodate family life? How can a priest be attentive to his wife, children, and needs of his flock all at once? What about the psychological affects of being raised as a PK [pastor's kid]?" concerns are alleviated easily enough by rediscovering what being ordained as a priest exactly entailed during the medieval centuries of the Church. In short: simplex priests.

A *sacerdos simplex* is a priest who is ordained for celebrating Mass, and little else (beyond the usual obligation of praying the Divine Office). No confessions, no preaching, no pastorships of parishes. To be "simplex" is to exercise only the core of the presbyteral ministry, which is offering the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The rest, while certainly *integral* to the priest's mission on earth, is not *essential* to it. Imagine if, in large parishes that stretch their priests thin, the bishop says to the pastor:

"I want you to approach your deacons and your three most devout, older laymen (no younger than 45) and ask them if they'd be willing to apprentice under you for three years and then be ordained priests. Their sole duties, other than praying the Office, would be celebrating Masses that you can't cover yourself, helping distribute Communion, and bringing Communion to the sick. Other things such as teaching catechism are up to them, but they can't hear confessions except in danger of death, and they won't perform baptisms or weddings unless you specifically delegate them. They can only preach if they were already formed as deacons beforehand. Finally, they do this service only for love of God, with no expectation of income."

In a stroke, these simplex priests, some of whom are perhaps married, will have already resolved all the pragmatists' objections:

- They're mature in both age and faith, and if they're married, their children are older or out of the house
- They serve at no expense to the faithful; no salary, no housing, no retirement pension or other benefits needed because, like deacons, they're expected to maintain their own income and (if necessary) secular employment
- They have a shorter course of study under their pastor, as most priests did before the arrival of the seminary system after Trent--again, at no cost to the faithful

The periodical nature of blogs make it easy for past articles I've written to slip into obscurity.

**English liberty: the tradition of rebellion, America as it could have been, and America as it should be**  
Thoughts on America's birthday about our country's direction and what it means for America's founders to have fought for their rights as "Englishmen".

**Gotham's reckoning: Bane, Burke, and the French Revolution**  
What the Christopher Nolan *Dark Knight* trilogy has to tell about the decline of civilizations.

**Ending the winter of our discontent: Richard III Week**  
The beginning of my series on Richard III, the last, much-maligned Plantagenet king of England, in the days leading up to his reinterment in Leicester.

**Lay piety in the Middle Ages**  
My appearance on Radio Maria to gab on Christianity as it was held by the common classes in medieval England.

**Merry Ole England Reborn**  
The first in an ongoing series on the history of medieval revivalism in Victorian Britain. I've so far covered the age of Napoleon, the re-publication of *Le Morte d'Arthur*, and the Eglinton Tournament.

**Lessons on manliness: from a medieval knight's own words**  
Readings from the *Manual of Chivalry* by Sir Geoffroi de Charny, a handbook for knights written in the 14th century.

**The Divine Office as a Foundation of Culture: Why It Must Be Restored**  
A manifesto for the restoration of the Divine Hours as a publicly prayed devotion in the parish church, with a brief look at its importance in the piety of the medieval world.

#### THE PUGIN SERIES

This blog was largely inspired by the work of Augustus Welby Pugin, the father of the Gothic revival. The man deserves his own sub-section. Here's what I've written on him so far.

**Gems from Pugin's "Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament"**  
A marvelous selection of readings and illustrations from Pugin's *Glossary*, a

In exchange, we could reap the following benefits:

- Many more priests to celebrate Mass in "non-priority areas", especially in remote rural parishes or near-abandoned urban parishes, or in chaplaincies for the neglected like prisons and hospitals
- More priests to offer Sunday Mass at the parishes (especially early and late Masses) so that pastors only have to celebrate the principal Sunday Mass; thus keeping to the traditional rule whereby priests are only supposed to celebrate Mass once per day (there used to be an indult required for "binating" or "trinating", meaning offering Mass twice or three times a day)
- More priests around to distribute holy Communion, thereby reducing the need for lay extraordinary ministers
- More priests to deliver holy Communion to the sick, in place of lay ministers
- More priests to lead hours of the Divine Office
- More priests to offer personal instruction to catechumens, as was common prior to Vatican II
- On an as-needed basis, pastors can delegate baptisms and weddings to simplex priests to free time for themselves

With simplex priests helping out much the same way auxiliary bishops assist the diocesan bishop, the celibate, beneficed ("full time") pastors and curates would then have a lot more free time to hear confessions, make visits to parishioners' homes, get to know more of their flock one-on-one, and perhaps most importantly, devote themselves more fully to the Divine Office and regular prayer. Everyone wins.

If you think me crazy for saying for proposing such a wacky ecclesiology, just consider that even today, every priest is "simplex" at least on the first day of his ordination. Unlike bishops who are all inherently "the Bishop of So-and-so place", no priest is guaranteed a parish assignment; in the old days, most priests never even made it to "pastor". Priests still require faculties for confession--they can't just hear someone's confession at will, and if they hop over to the neighboring diocese, they still need that local bishop's permission in writing before hearing someone's confession there (as well as to celebrate Mass). Priests need permission from the pastor or rector of any church before officiating a baptism or wedding there. There's really little that a priest is allowed to do on his own except hear the confession of someone in grave danger of death (in that case alone, even an excommunicated priest is given faculties). Until the 1983 Code of Canon Law, priests even needed faculties to preach.

We also have a fairly recent example of a (religious, not married) simplex priest on the path to canonization: the Venerable [Solanus Casey, OFM Cap](#) (1870-1957). The Archbishop of Milwaukee ordained Casey as a simplex priest because of he found Latin and other academic disciplines of the seminary system too challenging.



The Ven. Solanus Casey above.

manual for church interior designers, vestment-makers, and liturgical artists.

#### [Selections from Ferrey's "Recollections of A.N.W. Pugin"](#)

Humorous anecdotes and enlightening readings from Pugin's memoirs or friends' accounts. Includes a no-holds-barred letter of why Pugin hated the architecture of the city of Rome.

#### [The marvelous creations of Pugin, and other photos](#)

A three-part photo series of Pugin's many creations, from book bindings, wedding dresses, and Gothic doorknobs, to altarpieces, baldachins, and the Houses of Parliament.

#### [An Earnest Appeal for the Revival of the Ancient Plain Song](#)

Pugin's tract on Gregorian chant, choir stalls, and congregational singing is online for the first time ever, right here on Modern Medievalism.

#### THE SARUM SERIES

An ongoing series about the liturgy Pugin designed his churches for: the Use of Sarum, the predominant form of the Roman Rite in England before the Reformation.

#### [The Use of Sarum: A Brief history and Why It Matters](#)

#### [The Sarum Low Mass: Mass of the Catechumens](#)

#### [The Sarum Low Mass: Mass of the Faithful](#)

#### [The Sarum High Mass: Mass of the Catechumens](#)

#### [The Sarum High Mass: Mass of the Faithful](#)

#### FRIENDS AND ALLIES

[Anglicanorum Coetibus Society Blog](#)

[As the Sun in Its Orb](#)

[Benedicamus Domino](#)

[Clearing the Haze](#)

[Fr Hunwicke's Mutual Enrichment](#)

[Medievalists.net](#)

[Royal World](#)

[The Lion and the Cardinal](#)

As vocations in the mainstream Church continue to hemorrhage, the existing body of diocesan priests will be stretched further and further. Some priests are already pastors of three or four parishes, all which formerly had three or four assisting curates each. In such conditions, they have little time to really see to the needs of the faithful in their care, or even, critically, their own souls through prayer and private reflection. The whole Church then suffers from poor ministry.

And before someone points to the large number of men applying to places like the FSSP's Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary (a fine institution which two friends of mine attend).... while it's certainly true that vocations to certain traditional seminaries such as those of the FSSP or Institute of Christ the King are faring much better, these are still single institutions that must serve the needs of entire continents. The fruits of their labor remain out of reach in most places, even in most major metropolitan centers. There are still many communities that haven't yielded a single priest despite celebrating the old rites exclusively for five or ten years at a time. By contrast, your average pre-conciliar parish yielded one or two seminarians per year. Considering that some saints have written that God calls as many a third of the general Catholic population to clerical or religious life, I'd say even "traddies" have a shortage of vocations.

To close, I'm certainly not suggesting that my suggestion for ordaining simplex priests be rolled out during this tumultuous pontificate (not that anyone from the Vatican is reading my blog, anyway). I believe we'll have to wait for the vocational winter to truly hit us over the course of the next 15 or 20 years as the last remnants of the big vocation boom of the 1950's and early '60s retire and die out. Once the diocesan structures enter a total freefall and the existing diocesan clergy begin to burn out in record numbers, I'll dust off this old blog entry and see if anyone bites. That said, if my dismal forecast of the future state of vocations is completely off-base and there's a renaissance with four or five unmarried, full-time priests staffing each parish once again, I'll very gladly accept being wrong.

(For the record, I would not seek to become a simplex priest, even if asked. That's definitely not my calling.)

Posted by [The Modern Medievalist](#) at [1:17 PM](#)

Labels: [married priests](#), [Pope Francis](#), [priesthood](#), [simplex priests](#)

## 43 COMMENTS:

 [skladach](#) March 20, 2017 at 4:28 PM

You make a very good case for Latin-rite simplex priests. The comparison with auxiliary bishops (*mutatis mutandi*) is a keen observation. Simplex priests would have no "jurisdiction" over a parish or in the internal forum in the Sacrament of Penance. Yet they would be a tremendous help to the priests with full faculties. (P.S. I'm grateful to the intercession of Ven. Solanus Casey for helping me to get back to work one year when I had a debilitating illness.)

[Reply](#)

 [A Sinner](#) March 20, 2017 at 6:29 PM

I proposed this on my old blog a long time ago.

I'm not sure why the requirements would be any different than for married permanent deacons, though? Why must a man wait ten extra years to be a priest simplex than to be a deacon? And I'm not sure why the training model would have to be all that different from that of permanent deacons (apprenticeship versus night-and-weekend classes for a few years; why invent a whole new parallel program?)

The baptism and marriage thing seems already similar to permanent deacons.

I agree that preaching and confessions are not things we want people doing willy-nilly; even most priests and deacons today are not good at them.

Still, I've always thought you could make a rule like "no separate advice, just assign these set penances out of a book" to priests simplex, and for preaching at Masses that require it, you could always have them read a canned patristic sermon, or simply relay a sermon prepared by the pastor or bishop.

[The New Liturgical Movement](#)

[The St Bede Studio](#)

[Tom's Digest](#)

[Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Liturgy and Architecture](#)

### ABOUT ME

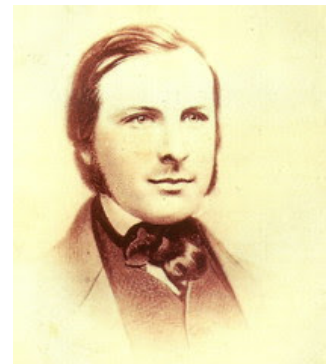


#### The Modern Medievalist

The Modern Medievalist established this blog as a sounding board to share his fascination for ideas from the medieval world; and especially how they can be applied in the 21st century; with you!

[View my complete profile](#)

### THE MODERN MEDIEVALISTS



[Augustus Welby Pugin](#) (1812-1852)  
Father of the Gothic Revival



[Eugène Viollet-le-Duc](#) (1814-1879)  
Restorer of the Sainte-Chapelle

## Reply

## Replies



**The Modern Medievalist** March 21, 2017 at 12:54 AM

Long time no see, "A Sinner". Where've you been!? I'm at least glad to know you're still out there, reading my stuff. I'm sorry if I missed your post about simplex priests before.

*"Why must a man wait ten extra years to be a priest simplex than to be a deacon?"*

I suggest that merely as a safeguard to ensure young men put first consideration toward a celibate vocation. Some say that if married priests become a "thing", young men will purposefully put off vocational discernment until they get married. But, if the minimum age is 45, you're not going to have many guys wait around until they're that old just to become simplex priests. It's the same principle as mandating 35 for the diaconate. Is it logical when transitional deacons can be only 25? Of course not, but the rule is there to encourage men to consider priesthood first. (And to discourage men with small children from applying.)

*"And I'm not sure why the training model would have to be all that different from that of permanent deacons (apprenticeship versus night-and-weekend classes for a few years; why invent a whole new parallel program?)"*

Haven't thought this part out too much. I suppose it could be largely the same. On the other hand, I actually envision a deacon's formation being more rigorous than a simplex priest's. The difference is because the deacon isn't ordained to be a "simplex deacon". His existence is to be a normative part of church life. Simplex priests are more of an emergency measure.

*"The baptism and marriage thing seems already similar to permanent deacons."*

Right. Ideally, not just any priest, but the pastor himself performs both of these. However, a pastor can delegate to a simplex priest. And of course, deacons can do them, too, but I also respect the Eastern idea that a deacon should only be serving, not officiating those sacraments. So in my imagination, deacons are at the bottom of the ladder for asking to do baptisms and weddings, after simplex priests. (Deacons may be preferred over priests to do other things, though, like serve Mass.)

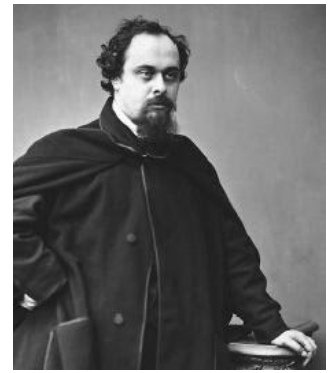
And yes, I forgot to mention the penitentials and homilies which were often consulted by medieval priests of little formal education. Good thinking there.

## Reply

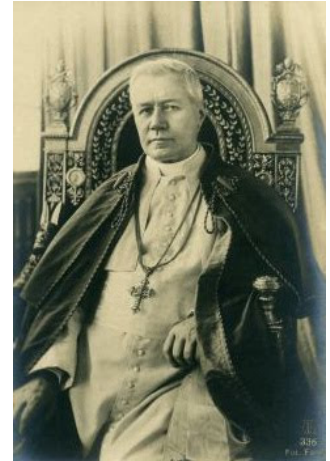
**Jeff** March 20, 2017 at 11:01 PM

It would be hard to open the door a crack and not have it swing wide open. Many bishops would be tempted to use the viri probati to not only say Mass but give them faculties to hear confessions, marry, baptize, bury and preach. After all, it's a lot easier to ordain someone with a shorter training period than the current seven years it takes to train and ordain a priest. What happened in the late medieval period was there were hordes of simplex priests who could say Mass but lacked a basic understanding of Catholic theology. When the Protestant wave swept over Christendom they were ill prepared to resist it. Trent was right to recognize that one of the reasons the Protestants gained so many converts was the ignorance of the Catholic clergy, and the remedy was the seminary that turned out well-educated priests who could educate their flocks.

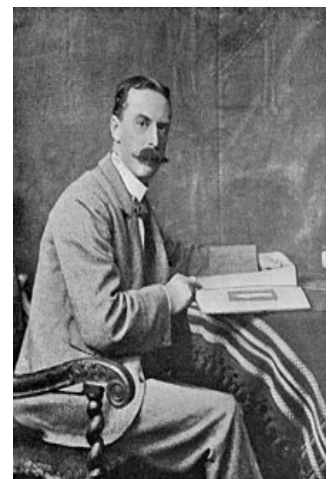
It's a well-intentioned idea to use viri probati to combat the vocations crisis. However, as the Modern Medievalist pointed out, there was no shortage of priests in the pre-Vatican II days. The number of vocations nosedived after Vatican II and the changes that made the Mass into Cranmer's Lord's Supper, desacralized and demystified. Interestingly, the same thing happened during the so-called Reformation period in England. In the 15 years before Henry VIII broke with Rome, in the one diocese of Exeter, Bishop Vesey ordained an average of 48 men a year. From 1535-1543 only 60 men in total became priests. When the traditionalist Vesey was replaced by Coverdale, a radical Protestant, only five men



**Dante Gabriel Rossetti** (1828-1882)  
Founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood



**Saint Pius X, Pope** (1835-1914)  
Restorer of Gregorian Chant



**Edmund Blair Leighton** (1852-1922)  
Romantic Painter

were ordained in his three years as bishop. (Source, Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath*, pp. 148-149).

Reply

Replies



**The Modern Medievalist** March 21, 2017 at 1:04 AM

*"It would be hard to open the door a crack and not have it swing wide open."*

I freely admit this could be the case if not tightly controlled. Say what you will about Vatican II, but I doubt the majority of bishops who signed *Sacrosanctum Concilium* imagined it would lead to the effective abolition of liturgical Latin, the Roman Canon, Gregorian chant. In 1962, that was probably unthinkable. By 1969, though...

*"and the remedy was the seminary that turned out well-educated priests who could educate their flocks."*

Forgive my anti-clericalist moment here, but it's astounding how many priests today could have gone through seven years of seminary and still be so.... ignorant. I support a reform of the seminary system in tandem with my suggestion about simplex priests, not its abolition. I do see your point about the Reformation-era clergy.

You can never go wrong with an Eamon Duffy citation, either!

Reply



**Albrecht von Brandenburg** March 21, 2017 at 12:49 AM

Have a look at the recent insulting and irrational stuff on clerical marriage over at The Remnant, whether their homepage or facebook. Then do yourself a favour and purchase H-J Vogels' "Celibacy: Gift or Law?" and you'll never take certain of our fellow trads (you know the kind I mean) - or Christian Cochini SJ - seriously on this topic ever again.

Reply

Replies



**The Modern Medievalist** March 21, 2017 at 1:20 AM

I can only take so many headaches in one day. I do wonder how the Society of St Pius X can hope to be fully regularized when they hold on a semi-official basis that married deacons are automatically excommunicated. Are they just going to sweep that position under the rug in the name of unity? By contrast, while a lot of ardent FSSP attendees may not be particularly fond of married deacons, some of their parishes will still allow deacons to serve in their intended roles at solemn high Mass, if they present themselves. Massive difference.

As for Vogels... well, this description from his book's page on Amazon doesn't inspire much confidence: "In 1979 he married Renate Schwarz and was suspended from his priestly duties." Marriage *after* ordination has always been frowned upon, east and west.

Reply



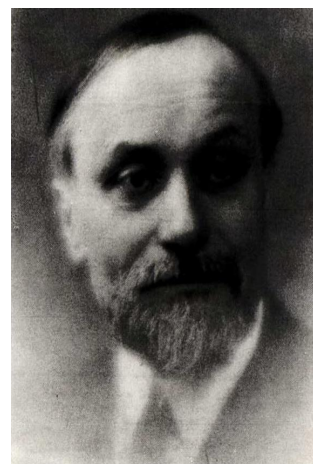
**Albrecht von Brandenburg** March 21, 2017 at 5:33 AM

Well regarding Vogels, the whole point is that St Paul, already a bishop, invokes his right, resting on divine law, to marry in I Cor 9:5. It is unthinkable that the apostles of all mem would have legislated contrary to divine law on this (or any other) matter. Have a look at the book.

Reply



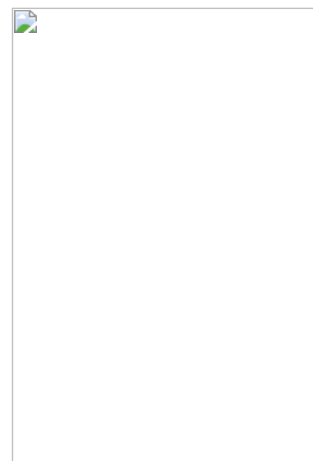
**Albrecht von Brandenburg** March 21, 2017 at 5:34 AM



**Charles Tournemire** (1870-1939)  
Organist of Sainte-Clotilde, Paris



**Gilbert Keith Chesterton** (1874-1936)  
Author, Poet, Philosopher



**John Ronald Reuel Tolkien** (1892-1973)  
Father of High Fantasy

ARCHITECTS AND DEFENDERS OF  
MEDIEVAL CIVILIZATION

Well regarding Vogels, the whole point is that St Paul, already a bishop, invokes his right, resting on divine law, to marry in I Cor 9:5. It is unthinkable that the apostles of all mem would have legislated contrary to divine law on this (or any other) matter. Have a look at the book.

Reply



**A Sinner** March 21, 2017 at 8:15 AM

Ah, I think that whether someone is willing to consider a celibate vocation or not is not something someone should be (or can be) blackmailed into that way. I doubt many men's consideration is "I want to be ordained so badly, I'm not going to wait a decade (or two)... I'll just give up sex and marriage forever so I can have it NOW! Or, at least, after six or seven years of the adult-boarding-school they're gonna make me go through..." who wouldn't be doing that anyway.

For me, the biggest and most essential factor of this proposal is actually the part-time/volunteer/non-salaried aspect; and \*that\* you hear discussed even less than marriage.

Yet THAT really should already be sufficient enough to separate the "lifers" from the "volunteers." There are always going to be those guys who want this to be their career, their full-time lifestyle and source of income...and they're going to have to be celibate and go through seminary, etc.

I think it's an odd thought process that guys might be so eager just to be ordained now (or, taking seminary into account, 6 years from now...) that if we let them they'll choose the volunteer-married-part-time model over the career-celibate-lifestyle model. I don't think anyone is so itching for ordination in the abstract that they're willing to massively switch their whole life-model and plans just to get it \*earlier.\* I feel like the vocation to "totalizing" institutional/career priesthood, and the vocation to "volunteer/supply" ministry is already so massive that very few called to one are going to be tempted to the other, certainly not by just a waiting period. You either want that "job" or you don't. I think the fact that most of the simplex would have to have another career or source of income...would already discourage those who you fear might be "siphoned off" by the option.

I'm, again, also not sure why we'd have to worry about small children in men who are part-time volunteers. New parents find time for other stuff. I doubt a mass on Sunday or running the daily Office once or two days a month is all that burdensome.

Reply

Replies



**The Modern Medievalist** March 21, 2017 at 8:59 AM

I actually agree with most of what you say above and have personally had to deal with it, given my delays to entering diaconal formation on account of age. The restrictions I've proposed are partly to reassure the many people who would be suspicious of the idea of simplex priests in general. Of course, these are all hypotheticals, anyway...

To your last paragraph about small children: many modern Catholics are, frankly, a bit weird about this. They act like they don't have time for anything more than work and treat their spouses like their best and only friends. As a result, they don't attend Vespers even if offered, don't maintain after-Mass coffee hours or potlucks, don't join the schola, don't join any fraternities or social clubs (Catholic or secular), etc, etc. It's almost as though they have no interest in rebuilding civilization. And yet, pre-conciliar Catholic men had more children and still made time (even in their 20's and 30's) for things like the Knights of Columbus, building new churches with fundraising or even their own hands, and on and on.



**Marissa** March 23, 2017 at 2:50 PM

Have you read "Bowling Alone" by Robert Putnam? It's an examination of the disintegration of social life in America, which started in the 1950s-1960s. He goes through all of the assumed reasons: greater mobility/uprooting, longer commutes, women working, etc. What he finds is most responsible is television. Add to that internet usage for this day and age. To steal the title of Neil Postman's book, we are indeed amusing ourselves to the death of our civilization.



**Saint Benedict of Nursia, Abbot**  
(c.480-543)

Founder of Western monasticism



**Saint Gregory the Great, Pope** (c.540-604)

Father of the Roman Liturgy



**Charlemagne, King and Emperor**  
(c.742-814)

Father of Europe





**The Modern Medievalist** March 23, 2017 at 3:48 PM

Thanks for that, Marissa. I have not read it, no.

I agree that for the general population, television and the Internet have done quite a number on social gathering. It doesn't quite explain why the sorts of Catholic parents who regulate or even totally abstain from television, etc. still don't do much in the outside world, though. I mean, I can still have kids, play video games, AND participate in social organizations all at once. But then, perhaps I'm not a normal person....

**Reply**



**Robert** March 21, 2017 at 12:07 PM

"I believe we'll have to wait for the vocational winter to truly hit us over the course of the next 15 or 20 years as the last remnants of the big vocation boom of the 1950's and early '60s retire and die out. Once the diocesan structures enter a total freefall and the existing diocesan clergy begin to burn out in record numbers, I'll dust off this old blog entry and see if anyone bites."

Whether advocating for married priests, simplex priests, or more prayer with a sudden windfall of vocations, I really appreciated that everyone in the Catholic blog-o-sphere whether conservative or liberal seems united in the forecast that the institutional Church will not take proactive action-- only reactive, and that only after we've long entered the death spiral of major metropolitan dioceses attempting to minister with 1 bishop and 3 full time priests.

**Reply**



**A Sinner** March 21, 2017 at 3:39 PM

Yes, I suspected it was about the need to "reassure" the change-averse as opposed to any real necessary logic...I'm just frustrated by humans who have this fear of change (for no particular reason) but who then can also be fooled into feeling soothed by the imposing of arbitrary limits. To me that approach of persuasion (though I don't doubt it can work) almost feels like saying "Okay, we know Self-driving cars scare people, so we'll allow them on the roads...but only Monday Thursday and Friday."

The truth is I think there are simply two different pools for these vocations with little overlap. There's the "hard identity" seminarians who have been dreaming of priesthood-as-lifestyle since they were teens, who want to escape into the symbols of the ecclesiastical world and never come out again because it a) provides an acceptable resolution for their ambivalent sexuality, b) answers the question of how they are going to be provided for materially with a cushy guaranteed position it's incredibly hard to get sacked from, and c) comes with an automatic pre-made social script and position to fall into after they get out of their luxurious coddling seminary incubator (where they will spend more time studying for a worthless Masters than it takes most people to get a PhD or complete medical school AND residency!)

I doubt that, without the clericalist "career/lifestyle" aspect, these men are going to be interested in helping out a few times a month if it meant they have to train for and find some other occupation/income, had to face awkward questions about why they weren't married, and didn't get to swoop around in capes and funny hats getting automatic deference and respect from fawning parishioners.

Celibacy and priesthood are two different vocations. It might make sense to only draw from the celibates for the salaried priesthood, just for material/practical reasons (who \*wouldnt\* want a job so cushy if there was no barrier to entry?) but trying to inflate the number of celibates in the Church by bootstrapping the ability to follow another calling to it...seems a strange sort of "spiritual macroeconomics" to me, and I'm really not sure why it's even considered desirable.

**Reply**

**Replies**



**The Modern Medievalist** March 22, 2017 at 1:19 PM

I've met a few types like you describe, but let's not generalize. While most priests I'm well-acquainted with are married Latin Rite priests (Pastoral Provision, Ordinariate, etc.), I'm

**Saint Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (c.1118-1170)**  
Defender of the Church



**Suger, Abbot of Saint-Denis (c.1081-1151)**  
Father of Gothic architecture



**Saint Louis IX, King of France (1214-1270)**  
Lawgiver and Crusader



**Saint Jeanne d'Arc (c.1412-1431)**  
The Maid of Orleans



also blessed to know plenty of great celibate priests and seminarians who do what they do for the love of God.

### Reply

**B** **Albrecht von Brandenburg** March 21, 2017 at 3:57 PM

Married clergy in the west should be full time and salaried, as in e.g., the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

### Reply

#### Replies



**A Sinner** March 21, 2017 at 4:15 PM

Just wouldn't work. There'd still be a shortage, either of money or of men.



**The Modern Medievalist** March 22, 2017 at 1:29 PM

While I don't think a married full-time clergy would work for the general Latin Rite culture (as opposed to, say, Eastern Rite or Ordinariate culture).... the whole "we can't afford them" line puts me in an awkward place. My primary employment is for a Catholic institution. While I'm married with children, I still make about the same or even less than a celibate priest in income. However, unlike the diocesan priest, I don't have free medical insurance, housing, utilities, gas card, retirement pension, travel budget, or as many paid vacation days. Nor does the Church pay for me to get graduate degrees or take pilgrimages to holy sites. From a strictly material point of view, my family would be better off if I were a priest. I would have nothing to lose, financially, from being ordained such. Now, you may very well say, "then it sounds like you need to get a better paying job", and I wouldn't disagree, but it's a work in progress. Such is the reality of things for many in the millennial generation.



**A Sinner** March 22, 2017 at 5:48 PM

My point about affordability is not that families couldn't live off a priest's income.

We can certainly afford an income for the current number of priests that a family would be able to live off of.

But if the point of married priest proposals is to INCREASE the \*total number\* of priests (ideally doubling or tripling or more the number we currently have)...then \*that's\* where the affordability question comes in.

Truth is, we need more priests, but can only really afford the "shortage" number we have (at least until the Church starts drumming up enthusiasm again, getting more donations, and making better investments with them; but then, it's a feedback loop because fewer priests probably mean less engagement and thus less money).

This is why affordability is a question. Not because families cost more, but because more priests total costs more.



**Matt** March 22, 2017 at 6:32 PM

I remember looking at the total number of clergy in my diocese over the past 40-50 years. The total number of clergy has, in fact, stayed fairly even. The biggest changes are that their average age is now higher and the deacons are the majority of the clerics. Numerically speaking, if the "permanent" deacons were ordained priests where I live, the priest shortage would be, for now, over. Most parishes could have at least 2 priests, may even 3 or 4. Is that a good idea? I won't say yes, but it's an interesting thought experiment.

Regarding money, wouldn't you say that the lack of it to support the clergy is a symptom of deeper issues? After all, in the 60s and 70s, there were still a good number of priests and things started sliding downhill with increasing rapidity.



**Saint Thomas More**, Chancellor of England (1478-1535)  
The Last Great Medieval Man



**A Sinner** March 22, 2017 at 7:23 PM

I'm under the impression that most permanent deacons are not salaried employees. You might be able to solve the shortage by ordaining them all, but if you had to pay them all...forget about it. This is my point about affordability.

The Mormons run their whole organization on a volunteer basis. Meanwhile we Catholics get tired of hearing that we need to pay more and more to support some lazy alcoholics who do things that we ourselves know we could do ourselves better (and would be willing to do on a volunteer basis!) if only the system allowed us to.

Basically, we're getting tired of them holding the sacraments hostage to get us to open our wallets and pay for their awfully cushy and safe lifestyle.



**Matt** March 22, 2017 at 7:38 PM

It really would depend on the individual parish's finances. Still, point taken.

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[Reply](#)



**Albrecht von Brandenburg** March 21, 2017 at 6:20 PM

It would work - there are only people who don't want it to, and don't have their priorities right. And here, I'm not thinking of gigantic US-type parishes with 10,000 or more parishioners, but the smaller European type.

And besides, after the consecration of Russia, with the destruction of the post-catholic usury-based economy, all sorts of things will become more affordable.

Re usury: [http://www.superflumina.org/contents\\_economic\\_problems.html](http://www.superflumina.org/contents_economic_problems.html)

[Reply](#)



**A Sinner** March 22, 2017 at 5:42 PM

But the celibacy itself? If they're doing it for love of a God, surely we don't have to worry about them not doing it just because it's no longer bootstrapped, or switching away to a non-full-time model.

[Reply](#)



**Albrecht von Brandenburg** March 23, 2017 at 12:57 AM

The average heterosexual priest is not doing it for love of God, but because it's the only way to get certain people with entitlement mentalities to keep their mouths shut. They think the clergy should constantly suffer for their benefit.

[Reply](#)



**Albrecht von Brandenburg** March 23, 2017 at 12:57 AM

The average heterosexual priest is not doing it for love of God, but because it's the only way to get certain people with entitlement mentalities to keep their mouths shut. They think the clergy should constantly suffer for their benefit.

[Reply](#)



**Matt** March 23, 2017 at 11:43 AM

This comment has been removed by the author.

[Reply](#)



**AJ** April 1, 2017 at 4:50 PM

As a heterosexual seminarian, I'll bite. I'm not so moronic as to give up wife and children which I ardently desire to appease a few people who can't imagine having a married priest. I am doing it because it sets the priesthood apart from the world, and therefore the sacraments too even for those who simply do not understand them. People intuitively understand that celibacy means giving your life for something, and recognise that vocation as sacred. And did not Christ suffer for our benefit?

I have no problem with married clergy, simplex or otherwise, but think that continence should be made the norm for them, even if temporary. I believe a recognition that marriages can be fruitful in continence (see Josephite marriages) and an acceptance of candidates offering this would be of great benefit to the church.

[Reply](#)

 **Albrecht von Brandenburg** April 2, 2017 at 5:53 PM

Ah but that's the problem - the secular clergy are NOT set apart from the world. One of the problems of the counter-reformation was the destruction in many devout minds of the distinction between the priesthood and monasticism.

[Reply](#)

 **Albrecht von Brandenburg** April 19, 2017 at 9:21 PM

Make clerical marriage great again.

[Reply](#)

**John** April 25, 2017 at 1:59 AM

But offering Mass is the one part of the priesthood where celibacy is most important.

[Reply](#)

 **Albrecht von Brandenburg** April 28, 2017 at 11:20 PM

Ritual purity has been abrogated.

[Reply](#)

 **Albrecht von Brandenburg** April 28, 2017 at 11:21 PM

Ritual purity has been abrogated.

[Reply](#)

[Replies](#)

**John** May 5, 2017 at 11:05 AM

That's a shame.

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[Reply](#)

 **Albrecht von Brandenburg** May 5, 2017 at 8:39 PM

It's not a shame, it's Divine Law.

[Reply](#)

 **Albrecht von Brandenburg** May 5, 2017 at 8:39 PM

It's not a shame, it's Divine Law.

[Reply](#)

**AGBAZARA TEMPLE** May 31, 2017 at 7:28 AM

Hello my name is Nico from London i know a renowned spell caster who helped me when i had problems in my marriage with my Husband. if you need a right place to solve your relationship problems contact DR.AGBAZARA TEMPLE on: ( agbazara@gmail.com ) OR WHATSAPP +2348104102662 he is the right choice. he is a great man that has been

[Reply](#)**Anonymous** June 3, 2017 at 6:51 AM

Wait until that handsome educated erudite "simplex priest" is counseling "wives" or is doing various intensive parish work with young engaged women or attractive "bored" or "ignored" middle aged women on a routine basis.

In this day & age the "simplex married priest" is a literal violent disaster waiting to happen. Start teaching parishes and chapels fasting after midnight for Holy Communion and see what happens for vocations in 5 years.

I hope & pray this doesn't happen.

[Reply](#)**Albrecht von Brandenburg** June 4, 2017 at 2:24 AM

How about celibacy acting as a stalking horse for the homosexualisation of the Latin-rite priesthood?? Not going to happen- oops!!

[Reply](#)**Albrecht von Brandenburg** June 4, 2017 at 2:24 AM

How about celibacy acting as a stalking horse for the homosexualisation of the Latin-rite priesthood?? Not going to happen- oops!!

[Reply](#)[Replies](#)**Anonymous** June 4, 2017 at 9:44 PM

Say again?

[Reply](#)**Anonymous** July 30, 2017 at 8:14 PM

Great content indeed.  
Very Useful post.  
Thanks for providing it

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