

## CATHOLIC CELIBACY: A CHALLENGE TO TIV FAMILY AND CULTURE

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**ABSTRACT:** *We live in a world that is characterized by sex and sexual activities. Some of the secular songs that we listen to and the movies that we watch daily, incontrovertibly, substantiate this claim. Consequently, for some, particularly the youth, it is inconceivable, unthinkable, and absurd for a normal human being who is physically, emotionally, socially and psychologically balanced to think of celibacy, let alone to embrace it in perpetuity. However, the charism of celibacy was manifested clearly and fruitfully in the life of Jesus Christ who lived a perfect celibate life. Moreover, celibacy enables priests to emulate the perfect priesthood of Christ. Thus, celibacy is a necessary option despite its challenges to our global village and cultures.*

### INTRODUCTION

According to Daniel F. Hoye, "To live celibate love chastely in a secular world amid an alien value system is no small challenge. But neither is the living of conjugal chastity within the exalted vocation of Christian marriage. Hence Christian life, married or unmarried, requires the discipline of Christian chastity to be lived in a fully Christian way. When that discipline is self-imposed and chosen by the priest in the context of the charism of celibacy, it can flower in a unique kind of spiritual growth and a unique unfolding of the life of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> Thus, in this essay, I will present a theological reflection on the venerable tradition of Catholic celibacy in the Latin Church. I will identify the scriptural, ecclesiastical, and traditional basis of Catholic celibacy. I will also scrutinize some of the setbacks to Catholic celibacy and highlight its challenges to Tiv family and culture. I will argue in support of Catholic celibacy, despite its challenges to Tiv family and culture. I will conclude that Catholic celibacy is a necessary option among many choices, because it enables Catholic priests to imitate and share in the perfect priesthood of Jesus Christ who lived a celibate life.

The Tiv people are located in the middle belt of Nigeria, West Africa. The total population of this ethnic group is approximately six million. The issue

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel F. Hoye, *A Reflection Guide on Human Sexuality and the Ordained Priesthood* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1973), 11.

concerning the migration of Tiv people is not yet resolved, even by Tiv scholars. Some scholars say the Tiv people migrated northwards from the Bantu of the Southern Africa, through the Congo region of Central Africa, across the mountains of Cameroon to the Benue valley, during the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century. Some trace the origin of Tiv from *Swem*, a place (hill) located in Cameroon.<sup>2</sup> However, the issue of migration of the Tiv people is not the center of the discussion; it is a topic to be considered in the future.

## DEFINITIONS

Etymologically speaking, the word celibacy is derived from a Latin word "*Caelibatus*" which means a state of being unmarried from "*Caelebs*" which means unmarried. "It includes within its concept two distinct moments: first, canonical incapacity to receive the sacrament of marriage, and second, a prohibition of any sexual intercourse."<sup>3</sup> Thus, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* defines celibacy as "the canonical state of abstinence from marriage freely undertaken for the purpose of dedicating one's life totally to God's service in the clerical state."<sup>4</sup> This form of celibacy that emphasizes "renunciation" of marriage and sex describes Catholic celibacy. It is a non-marital state of life that excludes sexual relationship, taken up as "a non-negotiable condition" for being an ordained priest in the Western Catholic Church.<sup>5</sup>

## CATHOLIC CELIBACY IN THE LATIN RITES

The validity of clerical celibacy is anchored on the scripture, the teachings, and the traditions of the Catholic Church. In Matthew 19: 12, Jesus Christ sanctions celibacy embraced "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul explicitly endorses celibacy for the kingdom of God. He writes: "Actually I would prefer that all of you were as I am" (I Cor. 7:7). Recall that Paul was celibate for the sake of God's kingdom. Furthermore, Paul writes, "...an unmarried man concerns himself with the Lord's work, because he is trying to please the lord. But a married man concerns himself with worldly matters, because he wants to please his wife" (1 Cor. 7:32-33). These scriptural passages constitute strong biblical foundation for celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church, and they are replicated in the teachings of the Church.

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<sup>2</sup> J .S. Ggenga ,*Eschatology in Tiv Traditional Religious Culture: An Interpretative Enquiry* (Nsukka: Chuka Educational Publishers, 2005), V-V11

<sup>3</sup>George H. Frein, *Celibacy: The Necessary Option* (New York: Herder and Herder Inc., 1968), 66.

<sup>4</sup>*New Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. 3. Celibacy, Canon Law of. San Francisco*(McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), 366.

<sup>5</sup> Marc Oraison, *The Celibate Condition and Sex. Trans. Leonard Mayhew*(New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 121.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that both professed virginity and consecrated celibacy “enable [clerics] to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner.”<sup>6</sup> In addition, it asserts that ordained ministers in the Latin Church, except permanent deacons, are chosen from celibate men who choose celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God.<sup>7</sup>

The age-long traditions of the Latin Church further support the contemporary practice of celibacy among the clerics. Stanley Jaki refers to Pope Gregory VII’s assertion of the traditional legacy of the ecclesiastical celibacy. He observes: “Gregory insisted that he did not invent those orders. He was proclaiming them as decrees of the ancient fathers taught to them by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>8</sup>

Unquestionably, the first generations of priests were married clergies. Examples of St. Peter, the first pope, who was married (Mk. 1:30) and a chain of married priests who lived between the first and third century AD,<sup>9</sup> substantiate this claim. However, the practice of clerical celibacy manifested itself all the way through the early years of the Church. This followed from the values posited on celibacy even during the early centuries. Wilhelm Bertrams observes that, “the obligation of clerics to celibacy was formed by the custom of the early church giving priority to unmarried candidates for orders.”<sup>10</sup> The early fathers of the Church showed great respect for celibacy of the clerics because, “from the earliest period, the Church was personified and conceived of by her disciples as the Virgin Bride and as the pure body of Christ [...] and it was plainly fitting this virgin Church should be served by a virgin priesthood.”<sup>11</sup>

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECCLESIASTICAL LAW OF CELIBACY

Historically, the Council of Elvira initiated the first move for an ecclesiastical law of celibacy in 306 AD. It decreed that: “The bishops, priests and the deacons [...] abstain from conjugal relations and not to procreate children.”<sup>12</sup> It placed a penalty of expulsion from clerical order on those who defy the rule. Similarly, the Council of Carthage in 419 reinforced the decree of the Council of Elvira. It ordered bishops,

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<sup>6</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Citta del Vaticano( LiberiaEditriceVaticana, 1997), 2349.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*,1579.

<sup>8</sup> Stanley, L. Jakk, *Theology of Priestly Celibacy*(Front Royal: Christendom Press, 1997), 14.

<sup>9</sup> Michael, H. Crosby, *Celibacy: Means of Control or Mandate of the Heart?*(Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1996), 42.

<sup>10</sup>Bertrams, Wilhelm *The Celibacy of the Priest: Meaning and Basis*. Trans. P Byrne. (Westminister: The Newman Press, 1962), 46.

<sup>11</sup>*New Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. 3. Celibacy, Canon Law of.*(San Francisco: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), 369.

<sup>12</sup>Michael,H. Crosby *Celibacy: Means of Control or Mandate of the Heart?* (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1996), 42.

priests, and deacons to abstain from sexual intercourse in accordance with the apostolic traditions.<sup>13</sup>

It is essential to note that during these epochs, priests were still getting married. Thus, the Council of Nicaea 325 A D attempted banning priests from marrying but a dissenting voice from Pahpnutius, one of the bishops in the council, stopped the move. He warned that such a law might serve as an occasion for incontinence, because “we are not angels but men.”<sup>14</sup>

The Second Lateral Council that Gregory VII led in 1139 placed a perpetual ban on married clergy. This followed from Gregory’s attempt to reform the Church, given the prevalence of moral laxity in the twelfth-century Church. In the same line, the Council of Trent (1563) reinforced the decrees of the preceding councils by invalidating marriage contracted by priests. It further placed *anathema* “curse” on any one who argues in favor of married clergy.<sup>15</sup>

The latest council of the Church, Vatican II, reiterates the law of clerical celibacy. In its *Decree on the Training of Priests*, the council declares that priests “renounce marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven [...] and hold fast to their Lord with that undivided love which is profoundly in harmony with the New Covenant.”<sup>16</sup> However, the Council allowed the ordination of married men as deacons, who would not to be ordained priests or bishops. Thus, the contemporary Church continues to embrace the discipline of clerical celibacy derived from the scripture, the teachings of the Church along with its long-standing traditions.

## CHALLENGES OF ECCLESIASTICAL LAW OF CLERICAL CELIBACY

In recent times, clerical celibacy has met strong attacks. Critics level numerous arguments against it, recommending married clergy instead. I will examine a few of those criticisms. Firstly, critics argue that ecclesiastical law of celibacy contradicts natural law. According to this criticism, “it is unnatural for men to be celibates,” as men are created with sexual natures which need to be gratified.<sup>17</sup> Michael Crosby supports this line of reasoning when he writes that ecclesiastical celibacy is “an imposition of superhuman demands on priests.”<sup>18</sup> These critics attribute sex scandals among Catholic priests to the Church’s law of clerical celibacy. They draw connection between pedophilic and homosexual priests with clerical celibacy, arguing that repression of natural mode of sexuality leads to its

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid. 45.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. 44.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. 49.

<sup>16</sup>Vatican Council II: *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Dublin: Pillar Books, 1975), 715.

<sup>17</sup>Benedict XVI. “5 Arguments against Priestly Celibacy.” <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/facts/fm0014.html>

<sup>18</sup>Michael, Crosby *Celibacy: Means of Control or Mandate of the Heart?* (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1996), 10.

expression through abnormal or unconventional means.<sup>19</sup> The critics “are convinced that a married priesthood would remove the occasions for infidelity, waywardness and distressing defections which hurt and sadden the whole Church. These also maintain that a married priesthood would enable Christ's ministers to witness more fully to Christian living by including the witness of married life, from which they are excluded by their state of life.”<sup>20</sup>

This kind of criticism seems to reduce human beings to mere sexually gratifying creatures, which is a limited understanding of human beings. For human beings possess innate freedom and moral power to make decisions on which desires to gratify or not. Schillebeeckx supports this line of thought with the following words, “We choose something and the result is that we leave marriage aside, either for mainly practical reasons or because psychologically we are no longer vitally interested in marriage.”<sup>21</sup> In fact, it is possible that priests are able to channel their sexual energies into executing productive projects. Moreover, one may be mistaken in drawing a parallel between clerical sex abuses or sexual maladjustment with clerical celibacy. Such casual connection lacks logical validity and soundness since unconventional sexual behavior is not particular to the clergy. Married persons also exhibit such conduct.

Secondly, critics contend that the Church's celibate law contain internal contradictions. The reason is that, while, on the one hand, it requires celibacy from priests, on the other hand, the Church admits married Anglican and Lutherans priest converts into the Catholic Church.<sup>22</sup> Hence, they question why celibate laws should not be removed so that all priests could marry.

The discipline of celibacy is one of the unique traits of the Latin rite of the Catholic Church. The Anglicans and Lutherans have their distinctive traditions, and so it may be unreasonable and unconventional to require celibacy of Anglican or Lutheran priests who convert to Catholicism. However, those admitted are required to remain chaste and not to remarry in the event of their wives' death.<sup>23</sup>

Critics further allege that the celibate conditions for priesthood is responsible for rapid decline in the number of priests in the Church. They state emphatically as follows: “the maintaining of priestly celibacy in the Church does great harm in those regions where [there is] shortage of the clergy—a fact recognized with sadness and deplored by the Council [...] Thus the disquieting decline in the ranks

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<sup>19</sup> Marc Oraison *The Celibate Condition and Sex*. Trans. Leonard Mayhew. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 142.

<sup>20</sup>[http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_24061967\\_sacerdotalis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_24061967_sacerdotalis.html)

<sup>21</sup>George H. Frein *Celibacy: The Necessary Option*. (New York: Herder and Herder Inc., 1968), 75.

<sup>22</sup>Michael, H. Crosby *Celibacy: Means of Control or Mandate of the Heart?* (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1996), 74.

<sup>23</sup>Benedict XVI. “5 Arguments against Priestly Celibacy.” <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/facts/fm0014.html>

of the clergy is attributed by some to the heavy burden of the obligation of celibacy."<sup>24</sup> Crosby also alludes to the sharp drop in the figure of priests in America. He blames the celibate law for such decrease. He affirms "...a change in the celibacy laws would bring in more candidates for the priesthood."<sup>25</sup>

It is contestable that the decrease in priestly vocation in the West results from celibacy laws. The experience in African societies, Nigeria in particular, where marriage receives immense values, yet priestly vocation is on the increase despite celibacy laws counters the above criticism. The dwindling priestly vocation in Western Europe and North America possibly results from the extreme secularization of these societies rather than celibacy law. Thus, evangelization of these societies may see the reversal of shortage of priestly vocation in the West.

Notwithstanding the comments in support of Catholic celibacy, one could argue that Catholic celibacy remains a great challenge to Tiv family and culture.

### **CATHOLIC CELIBACY, A CHALLENGE TO TIV FAMILY AND CULTURE**

Akighirga Sai notes that in Tiv culture, the institution of marriage is held in high esteem because of its nature of procreation and the continuation of family name. "If it were not for the family, many men would not marry; their relationships with women would be entirely promiscuous. But because of it, every Tiv when he reaches manhood sets his heart on taking a wife and producing a son to carry on his line, that his heritage may not pass to another."<sup>26</sup>

Akighirga argues that "The Tiv practice of [getting married] may be due to a variety of causes, but there is one main reason, namely the desire to found a family. However successful in life a man may be, if he has no heir to his house, to the Tiv, he is a useless person and a standing butt for their scorn."<sup>27</sup> The Tiv people could easily say, "What sort of a man is so-and-so without children? Who is there to carry on his line when he dies?"<sup>28</sup> David Mailu confirms the Tiv notion on this matter, stating: "In Africa, a child is not merely a child but a great event. Childlessness is not merely an unfavorable incident, but a calamity. And, as one anthropologist puts it, to an African, marriage is not an event, but a process that, if normal and blessed,

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<sup>24</sup>[http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_24061967\\_sacerdotalis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_24061967_sacerdotalis.html)

<sup>25</sup>Michael, H. Crosby *Celibacy: Means of Control or Mandate of the Heart?* (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1996), 60.

<sup>26</sup>Akighirga Sai, *The Tiv Tribe as Seen by One of its Members*. Trans. Rupert East ( London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 312.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. 312.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. 312.

culminates in the birth of a child.<sup>29</sup>Janis Simpkins reinforces Mailu's view when he writes: "In African society, marriage was seen as a process and the birth of a child as an event. Childlessness was not just unfortunate, but a 'calamity' [...] To have no child was like having only one hand. Children were kind of an 'insurance policy' for old age."<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, as the Luo community in Kenya puts it, "to have a child is to have a mirror for looking at your back."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, a person's worth in Tiv culture depends on the number of children he or she has. The children will succeed him or her and continue with the family name. A typical Tiv man or woman would say, "I have children therefore, I exist" which is similar to Descartes popular axiom "I think, therefore, I am." Consequently, for a Tiv person, "your child is a reflection of yourself in whom you see, study, understand and realize yourself."<sup>32</sup> The birth of a child is the "first stamp of fulfillment of the requirements and expectations of maturity."<sup>33</sup>

In addition, Akighirga states emphatically:"With regard to sexual intercourse, it is impossible for a Tiv to remain continent for a month or so, unless he is prevented by some serious illness or other unavoidable cause."<sup>34</sup> Consequently, Catholic celibacy remains unacceptable to many Tiv people. In fact, to a conservative Tiv person, Catholic celibacy is unthinkable, inconceivable, and absurd. A Tiv man who embraces clerical celibacy is as good as dead, because he has no children to bear his name when such a person joins his ancestors. Catholic celibacy might be acceptable in the West based on the popular notion that many Westerners do not value family life compared to Africans, and the Tiv people in particular.

## MY CONTRIBUTION

Despite the setbacks to celibacy of the clerics and its challenges to my Tiv family and culture, I still think that celibacy is momentous in the Church today. As a gift from God, celibacy frees the priest to devote himself with undivided heart to God and the Church. This is exemplified in the laudable works Catholic priests do in difficult circumstances. A priest is habitually ready to move from one rural community, city, state, and nation to another—thanks to his celibate status. He is ever disposed to attend to the needy, the sick, the oppressed, and the hungry in society, at any hour of the day and night. This might be impracticable if priests were married, because the well-being of his family is the primary responsibility of a married man. Having said that, it is also tempting to ask, what about Anglican and Lutheran priests who are married? Are they not responding to the afore-mentioned

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<sup>29</sup>David G. Mailu ,*Our Kind of Polygamy* . (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd, 1988),3.

<sup>30</sup> Simpkins Janis , *A Theological Reflection on the Kingdom of God and Polygamy in Kenya*. (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 1999), 67.

<sup>31</sup> David G. Mailu , *Our Kind of Polygamy* . (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd, 1988),5.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. 5.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. 6.

<sup>34</sup>Akighirga Sai , *The Tiv Tribe as Seen by One of its Members*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 314.

needs? The answer is: yes, they are! In fact, one may argue further that they respond better than Catholic priests do. However, the challenges that confront some Anglican and Lutheran priests are enormous compared to Catholic priests who are unmarried.

In July 2014 during my Pastoral Fieldwork at a Girls' Secondary School in Kenya, the daughter of an Anglican priest shared with me some of the distasteful experiences that her family had with the Anglican Communion. I would have loved to share some of her lamentable and repugnant experiences in order to authenticate my claim. Unfortunately, for the sake of confidentiality, I would not be able to do so. Regrettably, her family remains in perpetual desolation. I tried to persuade her to forgive the Anglican Church and move on, but she said, "It is very difficult to let go of the hurt." I empathized with her and family and promised my prayers and moral support for her and family.

At the end of her disheartening story and conversation, I then mentioned to her that many people suggest that Catholic priests should get married like the Anglican priests to avoid scandals and accusations that critics level against some Catholic priests. She responded retorted: "Catholic priests are better off compared to the Anglican priests who are married." She emphatically said, "Even if the Catholic Church allows priests to marry, I would advise you to remain unmarried because the troubles those Anglican priests who are married experience are greater." She continued, "In fact, some youths in the parish do everything possible to make sure that they impregnate a daughter of an Anglican priest to bring shame to the family." Thus, she concluded that it is better for Catholic priests to remain unmarried. I was moved by her story and advice. However, I was careful not to take her advice seriously, given the fact that she is a young girl. Then, a married Anglican priest reinforced her advice about celibacy. He said, "I want to make it clear that although a married man myself, I have a profound respect and regard for celibacy and that I think it would be a sad thing indeed if, to all intents and purposes, celibacy were to disappear from the life of the Church."<sup>35</sup> These profound words of a well-experienced Anglican priest reaffirmed my former student's advice. Consequently, celibacy remains for me a necessarily option. Because "In human life there are many possibilities and many vocations; marriage is only one of them, although it is very important and very vital; but it is not necessary. It is possible to remain unmarried and yet to come to real human fulfillment and to lead a fully human life."<sup>36</sup> Actually, "From among the many human possibilities we can make a choice which pushes the possibility of marriage to the background"<sup>37</sup> despite the vital role that marriage plays in the continuation of family name, tribe, and culture as Akighirga rightly noted.

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<sup>35</sup>George H. Frein, *Celibacy: The Necessary Option*. (New York: Herder and Herder Inc., 1968), 97.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. 75.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. 75.

Moreover, from my experience of growing up as a Tiv boy up to the age of twenty-four when I left Tiv land to join the Jesuits, I can categorically and emphatically state that some Tiv men were not married, yet they were not Catholic priests; neither were they intended to become one. In fact, some traditional healers or “witch doctors” as some people mistakenly call them were often celibate in Tiv culture. I cannot dispute the fact that some traditional healers were or are still married. However, there are some rituals or medicine that require sexual abstinence to authenticate the medicine or render it more potent. Moreover, the Tiv men who were involved in tribal battle with other tribes because of land disputes or taking away their wives and daughters forcefully in marriage were warned strongly not to have any sexual intercourse during the fight. Those who defied the orders were not allowed to participate in the battle, or were killed in the cause of the battle by the opponents. Those who heeded their advice were able to avoid bullets and machetes. They always survived the battle and returned home safely. This practice of abstinence from conjugal activities was to enable men to be physically and spiritually strong to win the battle. Do these findings imply that legitimate sex in marriage or sexual activities have negative impact on married men? Theologically speaking, the answer is no. However, culturally speaking, like the Tiv people, the answer might be yes. This could be another topic for future research. Thus, these claims are contestable and might sound irrational to some; however, they hold some elements of truths in them for some traditional Tiv people. Little wonder, some of these practices are carried out till date in some parts of Tiv land. Therefore, it is tenable to maintain that the practices of celibacy for some traditional healers in Tiv culture and their abstinence from sexual activities during important events in Tiv tradition demonstrate that there is a virtue in celibacy.

It is of little surprise that Jesus Christ was a celibate. Actually, celibacy enables priests not only to share in the perfect priesthood of Christ but also to acquire spiritual “Capital” to use the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Celibacy enables priests to be focused on the mission, and to continue from where the High Priest Jesus Christ had stopped. Christ performed so many miracles during his lifetime on earth. The dead came back to life (Jn. 11:43-44). The blind were able to see (Mk. 8:25). The lame were able to walk (Jn. 5:8). The lepers were cleansed (Mk. 1:40-42). By touching of his garments, the twelve years of haemorrhages ceased (Mt. 9:20-22). The hungry were fed (Lk. 9:16-17). Christ was always connected with the Father without any distraction or undivided attention, thanks to his celibate life. Thus, celibacy helps priests to be focused, ready to serve at all times as mediators between God and humanity with undivided attention as their master, Christ, did during His ministry here on earth.

Evidently, and very crucial, “Christ, the only Son of the Father, by the power of the Incarnation itself was made Mediator between heaven and earth, between the Father and the human race. Wholly in accord with this mission, Christ remained throughout His whole life in the state of celibacy, which signified His total

dedication to the service of God and [humanity].”<sup>38</sup> In addition, “This deep concern between celibacy and the priesthood of Christ is reflected in those whose fortune it is to share in the dignity and mission of the Mediator and eternal Priest; this sharing will be more perfect the freer the sacred minister is from the bonds of flesh and blood.”<sup>39</sup>

Finally, celibacy expresses the unique role of the priest as a representative of Christ. As Christ offered himself to the world, the priest is called to offer his entire self to the Church and to emulate Christ, who lived a perfect celibate life.

## CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted a theological reflection on clerical celibacy. I demonstrated that the renunciation of marriage for the sake of the kingdom of God, among Catholic clerics, derives from the sacred scripture, the ecclesiastical teachings, and the long-standing traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. Although, a number of objections are raised against clerical celibacy, in challenges from Tiv culture, I support this practice because celibacy frees priests to devote their entire lives to the service of God and the Church. Therefore, I hope the position that clerical celibacy is the necessary option, and preferable among many choices, because of the vital roles that Catholic priests play in the life of the Church. Moreover, celibacy enables priests to share in the priesthood of Christ who lived a perfect celibate life.

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<sup>38</sup>[http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_24061967\\_sacerdotalis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_24061967_sacerdotalis.html)

<sup>39</sup> Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Letter, Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* (On The Celibacy Of The Priest), June 24, 1967, N.21.

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