

Book Reviews

IS CELIBACY OUTDATED? By Ida Friederike Gorres. Newman Press, 95 pages, \$0.95.

The question asked in the title of this essay is of current importance, when not a few seminarians, and young priests, newly aware of the holiness of Christian marriage, of the psychological importance of sex, and of the problems of full personal maturity, have begun to wonder whether priestly celibacy is not a historical aberration, originating in Manichaeism or superstition. Greater contact with the Protestant and Orthodox clergy has also made many of them aware that a dedicated ministry is quite possible for a married man.

The author, a laywoman of great culture, psychological insight, and worldly wisdom (in the best sense of the word) as well as theological erudition, has done a great service in publishing these very acute reflections. She shows exceptional skill in not oversimplifying the issues, as have too many partisans on both sides, and of recognizing the truth at the heart of many erroneous notions. She finds in priestly celibacy a precious theological development, which has made us more fully aware of the relation between Christ and the Church. Christ has only one bride, the Church. Christian marriage is a symbol of this perfect union. Priestly celibacy is more than a symbol, it is, as it were, the living presence of Christ the Bridegroom in the Church in its temporal condition. The priest, like Christ, has a bride, and his bride is the Church alone.

The book concludes with very sane, and very subtle, nuanced advice on the relations of the priest to women, and a defense of genuine friendship of priests with women, based on personal experience. Some may object that the author does not treat the questions whether priestly celibacy should be obligatory. She is content to show its importance as an ideal.

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SOURCE:

Cross and Crown 1966-03: Vol 18, Iss 1, 92

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