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THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE CAUSATION, TREATMENT AND PREVENTION OF THE CRISIS IN THE PRIESTHOOD

by Conrad W. Baars, M.D.

Everyone agrees that there exists a crisis in the priesthood. Not everyone realizes that this crisis, as the title of this paper suggests, amounts to an illness, severe in some, moderate to slight in others.

It is the purpose of this paper to go beyond some of the recent excellent sociological and psychological studies by priest-researchers, and confirm their findings by exposing the root causes of this illness in the priesthood, and for that matter, also in our society. It will be shown that it is the Church herself,

hierarchy and priests alike, who must be the primary physician to heal the sick, prevent the illness, and check its contagion, assisted in various ways by medical experts in this particular area of pathology.

For reasons to be explained later the Church cannot permit herself to be tardy in this matter and allow the secular sciences to assume a role that is uniquely hers. If ever, it is now that the Church must lead and guide, not passively wait and trail behind the sciences who are just beginning to comprehend

Dr. Baars is in the private practice of psychiatry in Rochester, Minnesota. "Loving and Curing the Neurotic" by Dr. Baars and Dr. Anna Terruwe is to be published in March by Arlington House Publishers.

Concluding with ten practical recommendations, Dr. Baars' article offers to those interested in, and with responsibility for, formation of priests both a basis for a future program and extensive background into the nature of the "crisis in the priesthood."



what in truth has been the Church's most precious possession from the beginning.

Throughout the ages it has been not so much the Church as a whole, but rather a relatively few of her members, her most sainted, yet at the same time her most truly human members who, precisely because they were so human in the best sense of the word, were able to live the words of Christ, "I came to bring you life, that you may have it more abundantly." Francis of Assisi, Damien the Leper, John XXIII and Mother Teresa are some of those fully grown people capable of giving abundant life to others! But in our day the People of God, priests included, suffer so acutely in their need for identity, self-worth, self-love and being loved that the Church must learn the life-giving "secret" of a Francis, a Damien, a John and a Teresa, and share it with all. Now, not later!

In their study, "Some factors associated with voluntary withdrawal from the Catholic priesthood" Father Schallert and Miss Kelley state, "... the drop-out priest is not the only priest who feels strange or foreign in the Catholic Church today. Nor is his alienation qualitatively or quantitatively very much different from the 'stay-in' priest." They define the sense of alienation apparently experienced by a very large number of priests as "a sense of powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, self-estrangement and isolation." They conclude their study: "Far more research is needed before the phenomenon of the clerical drop-out is completely understood."

In the summary report of the NCCB Ad Hoc Committee for the Study on Priestly Life and Ministry, one reads, "The underdeveloped, emotionally im-

mature priests represent a large segment of American priests and . . . reflect the fact that a great many American males are also underdeveloped." The authors describe the manifestations of this incomplete personal development as, "distant, unrewarding relationships and uneasiness about intimacy with as result few close friends; difficulty with one's own personal identity; non-integrated psychosexual identity; and lack of self-confidence."

Both studies confirm what my colleague from the Netherlands, Dr. Anna Terruwe and I have observed in our clinical psychiatric practices of a combined total of forty years and approximately 15,000 patients — 10% of whom were priests and religious — and what we have been able to narrow down to one specific cause, namely, non-affirmation.

This is not to say that all priests with psychological problems are non-affirmed. Some priests are afflicted with another type of emotional illness, a repressive neurosis. In general, we estimate that 10-15% of all priests in western Europe and North America are mature; 20-25% have serious psychiatric difficulties, especially in the form of neuroses and chronic alcoholism, or a combination of both; and 60-70% suffer from a degree of emotional immaturity which does not prevent them from exercising their priestly function, but precludes their being happy men and effective priests whose fundamental role is to bring people the joy of Christ's love and to be the appointed affirmers of men.

We have been advised by Vatican observers of the crisis in the entire world Church that there is a remarkable agreement between their statistics and our percentages. The latter also seem to correspond to the findings reported by the above-mentioned Ad Hoc Committee:

"Developed men — small in number; developing men — sizable group; under-developed men — large segment; mal-developed men — very few in number."

It is my intention to present the results of our clinical observations in respect to the causes, treatment and prevention of emotional immaturity and illness in priests, by reproducing in somewhat revised form the paper, "Human Growth in the Priesthood," which Dr. Terruwe and I had the privilege of presenting in Rome at a meeting sponsored by members of the 1971 Synod of bishops. We also discussed this paper in person with members of the synod who could not attend this presentation, and had it distributed in English and French to every synod participant. Since our paper was addressed to all the bishops of the Church, through this present article we hope to bring it to the attention of all bishops, religious superiors, vocational directors, rectors of seminaries, moral theologians and all those concerned with the selection and formation of candidates for the priesthood and with the welfare of all priests now afflicted with mental and emotional problems.

At the end of this paper the reader will find an addendum of ten practical recommendations composed at the request of members of the Synod.

The Synod's discussion paper on "The Priestly Ministry" rightly objects to an uncritical acceptance of just any school of psychology. It is with this in mind that efforts to reconcile the data of faith and anthropology are to be made. Inasmuch as the *sensus fidei* according to Lumen Gentium No. 13, includes the testimony of laymen who through their experience have learned to give new interpretations of established facts, the discussion paper, in order to be an exhaustive study and inquiry,

should not have been composed only by theologians. After all, the discussion paper deals with the ministry of the priest who is a man, and therefore should concern itself with the entire human person of the priest. The *bonum naturale* in the past not always taken very seriously in ecclesiastical circles, deserves the fullest attention of the bishops who have the first and final word on the priestly ministry. "Secularization" should no longer be considered identical with "desacralization"! Moreover, it should be mentioned that His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, showed his deep personal interest in our scientific data by discussing them in person with Dr. Terruwe in the summer of 1969.

As psychiatrists sharing the bishops' concern with the happiness of the priests and all men, we shall present our views on the priest's loss of identity, his doubts about the value of the celibate state, his reasons for leaving the priesthood, and the advisability of the Church changing her approach and services to mankind, to modern man who phenomenologically has changed so much in the twentieth century, and whose emotional and spiritual growth to maturity have not kept pace with his physical and intellectual growth. We believe that this retarded and distorted emotional life is directly responsible for his spiritual aridity and indifference.

Repression and Frustration of Man's Emotional Life

Since Sigmund Freud's discovery that the repression of emotions leads to serious and disabling psychic illness, psychiatrists in Europe and North America, if not in other parts of the world, have reported a steady and alarming increase in the incidence of neuroses. A neurosis is an illness of man's emotional life which develops in a

young individual with an innately healthy and normal predisposition as the result of his early exposure to mistaken notions and shortcomings on the part of parents and educators. These causative factors are twofold. First, a faulty attitude toward the significance of the entire emotional life for the overall well-being of the child, adolescent and adult. Second, failure to affirm the growing child.

The first factor, a faulty attitude toward the role of the emotions, enhanced by the living example of parents and educators, leads the child to repress first the outward manifestations of his emotions, and sooner or later, also the very emotions themselves from the moment they are aroused. In time he develops the clinical signs of a repressive neurosis involving soma, mind and spiritual life. In a person with this kind of neurosis the emotions are not subordinate to direction by reason and will, but they are "controlled" instead by one or two emotions of the utility (irascible) appetite. This "control" is an unnatural process, a pathological misdirection, called repression which prevents the emotion involved from taking its natural course either toward the sense object as such, or toward the object insofar as it is reasonable (*prout substat rationi*). The repressed emotion is doomed to remain active in a state of abnormal tension in the subconscious until such a time — usually in psychotherapy — that the hypertrophied emotions of the utility appetite, fear or energy, or both, have been taught to concern themselves solely with their proper objects — obstacles or danger — which do not include other emotions.

It should be mentioned that this particular interpretation of the repressive neuroses was developed as early as 1935 by Professor Dr. William Duynstee of Nymegen, the Netherlands, who thus offered the Church the opportunity to

refute Freud's theory that the repressing action is exercised by the superego which encompasses the conscience and the moral norms!

The second factor responsible for an undeveloped or partially developed emotional life is the failure on the part of parents or educators to provide the child's emotional life with its proper nourishment, namely unselfish emotional love. They may give the child food for its body, academic and moral training for its intelligence and character, even expressions of volitional or spiritual love to tell the child it is loved, but unless they give the child also emotional love, it will not feel, literally sense, loved, and will develop what we have called a frustration neurosis. This illness differs essentially from the repressive neurosis, and therefore requires a different therapy, but because of a growing existential fear, it also predisposes to the development of a repressive neurosis. It is for this reason that both types of neuroses frequently co-exist in the same person.

Both types of neuroses are extreme manifestations of an underdeveloped or distorted emotional life with clearly defined clinical symptoms. Although their incidence is enormous, even greater is the number of people with what may be called subclinical forms of a neurosis, with symptoms and complaints which do not reach the intensity and scope of the full-blown neuroses, yet cause much suffering through worry, tension, anxiety, restlessness, feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, loneliness and depression.

Excessive Irrational Fear and Striving

Before discussing the nature of the frustration neurosis — the most urgent subject of study for the Church of our

day — we must mention briefly the factors present in society as well as in the Church which tend to stimulate man's emotional fear and energy (our term for the emotions of hope and courage) to an unreasonable degree. They are:

1. a more extensive and varied intellectual schooling with greater factual knowledge at an earlier age tends to stimulate fear and energy much more than the emotions of love, desire and joy which are aroused more by the stimulation of the senses and imagination.
2. a reduced world dimension through faster transportation and instant communication tends to threaten man's sense of security and belonging which once were inherent in a relatively small and stable community.
3. a more unstable family life as the result of working parents, corporation-induced changes of location, and the rise in the divorce rate, have a similar effect and enhance anxiety.
4. the so-called hyperfunctionalism of the all-too-busy modern man tends to reduce all his contacts to business-like, matter-of-fact encounters which do little to stimulate lasting friendships and the joy of love.
5. unparalleled scientific progress without a concomitant growth of man's philosophical and religious sense tends to throw man back upon himself in his attempts to protect himself from danger, illness, misfortune and death. The idea of surrendering himself to an all loving God is not likely to occur in a "God is dead" society.
6. space does not permit us to dwell on more specific Catholic factors. We mention briefly: a suspicious and fearful attitude toward the

emotional life, indicated for example by the pejorative connotation of the words *concupiscible* and *irascible*, and the inclusion of anger among the seven capital sins; premature stimulation of the fear of sin rather than emphasis on the love of God; training the "motor" of the will without utilizing to the fullest the "motor" of the emotions; reliance on authoritarianism and blind obedience in the establishment of order; the overestimation of man's own efforts and accomplishments in the matter of his eternal salvation.

Suffice it to say that the Church is in dire need of a sound pastoral theology of the emotions of fear and energy, and of a keen awareness that the emotions of the pleasure appetite are not the only ones that have suffered the consequences of original sin. Fear and energy, too, must remain at all times under the direction of reason and will, and can never be allowed to grow to exaggerated proportions, not even for the purpose of avoiding sin, being virtuous, or attaining one's salvation. Not only must the Church teach a sound asceticism of the utility appetite as she has done of old regarding the pleasure appetite, but she must also permit the latter to mature to its fullest extent, if man is to experience the joy of love and happiness as ordained by his Creator.

Both appetites are to be directed by man's will, informed by reason, not "mortified" if that means "to be brought to death" by each other. A man with an undeveloped, atrophied or repressed emotional life has little or nothing to be directed by his reason and will. Such a man is forced to rely solely on the motor of his spiritual will, which indeed can attain much, but not the full joy for which he was made. He is like the ex-

pert rider whose horse is weak, half-starved and crippled; he will get where he wants and will endure the hardships of the journey through sheer willpower, but he is too exhausted to enjoy the beauty along the trail and the goodness of his goal.

Frustration Neurosis

We must spend even more time in discussing the frustration neurosis and its sub-clinical form of the non-affirmed man as they have an even greater bearing on the future of the Church. Whereas a thorough understanding on the part of the Church of the repressive neurosis, as we understand and successfully treat it, is important primarily for its prevention rather than treatment through a correct teaching of the asceticism of the utility appetite, the Church's understanding of the frustration neurosis is important both for its prevention and treatment, save for the most severe and chronic cases which require expert psychotherapy. People who have not been affirmed benefit greatly when significant others understand their condition and are themselves mature enough to come to their assistance, and refrain from criticizing and denying them. Priests especially are called to play an important role in this regard, as we shall explain later on. But first it is necessary to describe the symptoms of this neurosis.

In contrast to the anxiety, fears, restlessness, tension, phobias, scrupulosity, obsessive thinking and compulsive acts of the repressive neurotic, the chief characteristics of the frustration neurosis are: feelings of inferiority and inadequacy; inability to establish normal rapport with one's peers and form lasting friendships; feelings of loneliness and insecurity; doubts about one's self-worth and identity; fear of the adult

world, and often deep depressions. Although the more energetic among them are able to succeed in business or profession, they fail in their personal lives. If married, they find it impossible to relate in a spontaneous and emotionally satisfying way with spouse and children. In matters of faith, dullness prevails as their feelings cannot participate in their spiritual life. Their religious experience is neither "a burden that is light," nor "a yoke that is sweet." Their psychosexual immaturity may express itself in various ways; for instance, in masturbation, homosexuality, sexual impotence or frigidity.

The syndrome of the frustration neurosis, discovered approximately fifteen years ago by Dr. Terruwe, has put into focus the significance of emotional love for man's growth as a unique person as well as for his spiritual life. This is a decidedly different focus from that of the ascetical teachings of the Church which in the past seemed to leave little or no room for the emotion of love as something worth cultivating for the sake of the spiritual life. The only love valued by the Church was volitional love, the love of the spiritual will prompting to acts of love. Emotional love and affection, simple human cordiality, if not considered evil, were looked upon with suspicion and thought potentially harmful to one's life in and with Christ. Spiritual books left one with the impression that intercourse with the Lord presupposed a breaking of all the natural ties one can have with men, and that the mortification of human affections was ascetically laudable in the noble pursuit of solitude and withdrawal from one's fellowmen.

What we have learned in years of psychotherapeutic practice, namely, that emotional love is absolutely necessary for man's own good and that of his fellowman, does not in any way infer

and we mention this explicitly — an accusation of a culpable shortcoming or neglect on the part of the doctors of the Church. These clinical discoveries are typically the proper object of the *scientiae humanae* which we are obliged and willing to submit to the Church. Their exploration and interpretation is fully in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II, which encourages men to clarify to an ever greater degree the inter-relatedness of the natural and the supernatural.

At the root of the frustration neurosis lies an absent or inadequate feeling of self-worth. The source of this feeling of self-worth is always another person — the “significant other” — who can either give or withhold it. The process whereby a person receives his feeling of self-worth from the “significant other” is for every human being a *bonum fundamentale*. In a very special relationship with the “significant other” he is seen and experienced by him as good, and perceives the pleasure of the approving and loving other in such a manner that he literally feels this within his entire being.

This emotionally felt experience of being good and lovable gives him the inner sense of goodness and worth, together with a deep feeling of peace and tranquility, and is the *conditio sine qua non* for his future self-love and self-esteem. It is the fundamental prerequisite for the child who enters life isolated and enclosed within himself, to open and grow toward what he is supposed to become, uniquely himself. What opens him to the significant other is the fact that he experiences the other as good, and that he may be what he is in the growing joy of the other's — and later their mutual — love and affection. It is

only when a human being has been opened to a “significant other” that he can also be open to the good of all creation and to the Creator Himself. Only then can he experience the world and the Creator with love and joy.

Affirmation and Self-Restraining Love

The process by which the “significant other” reveals me to myself as good, and thereby himself to me as good, is a unique manifestation of the fruitfulness of human love, inasmuch as both of us receive fulfillment, inner expansion and joy in giving being to the other. Its ultimate fruitfulness is in truth man's PSYCHIC INCARNATION. One cannot fully understand this unless one has experienced oneself this process which Dr. Terruwe has called affirmation, the essence and core of all mature, unselfish love. In this love, giving and receiving are only formally distinguishable because in essence they are both affirmation.

At times it happens that a person whom I would like to affirm cannot, or cannot as yet, for some reason or other receive the expression of my love. It is then the noblest and purest form of love not to express my love outwardly, even when it has grown already into desire. Frequently this is the most tender and delicate form of affirmation, for the other person is allowed by me to be as he is — with his immaturity and shortcomings. I allow him to be as he is *in facto* in order that he may become the person he is *in potentia*. Contrary to the neurotic person who represses his love from fear, I restrain myself in certain expressions of my love for the sake of the other.

1. or *amor sese retinens*, *amour qui se retient*. *Retinere* means “to hold back” as in *retinere lacrimas*, *retinere mercedem*;

it also means “to protect” as in *retinere amicos*, *retinere aliquem in fide*.

Affirmation as self-restraining love¹ is precisely what adults must give to those still in the process of maturing; parents and educators to children and pupils; educated and wise men to the uneducated; those in authority to their subjects.

Authentic affirmation is much more than speaking a word of encouragement or the giving of a compliment. It focuses on the very being of the other, on his goodness as a unique human being. It presupposes openness, confident expectation and uninterrupted attention to everything that happens in the other, to all he is not able to express, and to all the anticipated good within him even though the other himself is still unsuspecting of that future good.

Denial, The Opposite of Affirmation

The very opposite of affirmation is denial. One denies the other by unnecessarily reminding him of what is not yet good in him, by thoughtless criticism, or the giving of premature advice without first having really listened to him. One denies the other by not forgiving him for being other, as a Chinese sage wrote long ago. One denies a woman by counselling abortion when she does not want her child to be born because she is too immature to love and affirm it. One denies people in undeveloped countries by imposing one's own cultural and spiritual values on them. One denies the other by counselling him to ignore a norm or law on the grounds that it is too difficult for him.

Whereas authentic affirmation is truly life-giving, denial kills. Was it not Goethe's Mephistopheles who described

himself so aptly with the words, "Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint!" — "I am the spirit who always denies!"

It is not for nothing that Don Quixote's characterizations of human realities have received wide acclaim for centuries. His love for Aldonza, a woman of easy morals, made him see her in her veiled beauty, and he called her Noble Lady Dulcinea. And it was because of the affirming love of Don Quixote that Aldonza could indeed become the Noble Lady he thought her to be. And Don Quixote, like Aldonza, was amazed when he beheld the fruit of his love!

Neither words nor silence will be used lightly by the one who knows,

that a word can kill if spoken untimely or inappropriately;

that a word can be life-giving — it is the spoken word of affirmation.

that silence can kill — it is the unspoken word of the one who is called to give affirmation;

that silence can be life-giving — it is the discerning silence of a leader of men.

And is it not indeed affirmation of an entire people when bishops speak out against their country's occupation by a hostile, godless power, and openly defy its threats in the name of God?² And is it not denial of a people when a government allows a war to be endlessly protracted for fear of world opinion or threats by the enemy's sympathizers?

It seems to us that much of what afflicts modern man and society can be understood in greater depth in the light of what we have said so far about non-affirmation. One thinks of the increasing

2 One of the Cardinals of such a country told us that his clergy possessed a much greater degree of maturity than our

percentages indicated for the clergy on this side of the Iron Curtain!

complaints of loneliness and abandonment, and the mounting rate of suicide among children and young people. According to the World Medical Association's report on causes of death in forty-eight countries, suicide rates second among children between the ages of 5 to 13, both in urban and rural communities.

Other priests who had married after leaving the priesthood sought help because of sexual impotence, depressive states and psychological conflicts and difficulties with their spouses. At times both of them would have been only too happy if their marriage could have been dissolved. This is not surprising because in a non-affirmed priest, the search for affirmation is likely to express itself in an intense and virtually irresistible desire for tactile contacts, the very first expression of affirmation meaningful to his undeveloped emotional life. In choosing a partner he is therefore bound to make a serious mistake both he will enter marriage devoid of the emotional capacity to establish a mutually meaningful and satisfying relationship.

Not unrelated is the fact that many former priests seem to have found their partner among women either much older or younger than they, suggesting the possibility that either they enter into a relationship with an older woman in the hope that their need for affirmation will be gratified, or they prefer a younger woman with whom they can relate more comfortably on an equal level of relative emotional immaturity.

Our clinical observations over many years have convinced us that priests in general and some to an extreme degree — possess an insufficiently developed or distorted emotional life, while at the same time they must be considered to belong to a group of men whom nature

has endowed with superior intelligence and sensitivity. In some, the causes for their emotional underdevelopment go back to childhood and remained unrecognized during the seminary years. Others enjoyed a fairly normal childhood, but became emotionally disturbed through misguided ascetical practices in the seminary. But whatever the causes, it is a fact that the majority of today's priests with psychic trouble suffer from some degree of non-affirmation. A smaller, but not insignificant number of priests is seriously incapacitated by an obsessive-compulsive neurosis. Many show the symptoms of both types of neurosis, often combined, at least in North America, with chronic alcoholism.

These findings also explain why the Church as a whole finds herself in a crisis. Because of the priest's special position as mediator between God and men, the effects of his non-affirmation on other people will be far more radical and widespread than in the case of the non-affirmed single or married layman. A priest without identity, without a firm sense of self-worth, cannot reveal to others their personal worth. Because he cannot affirm, he cannot love others in a way which strengthens both them and the Church.

Moreover, as a non-affirmed priest depends for his sense of personal worth on the people around him, he lives in constant anticipation of what they expect from him, is fearful of displeasing them, afraid to assert himself or to defend the truths of his faith except on a purely intellectual level. Desirous of being loved by all, he may remain silent when it is his duty to point out the errors contained in other faiths, new schools of thought, popular movements or modern systems of education. Instead of being a source of strength and joy to the people he chose to serve, the

non-affirmed priest may be said to be at the mercy — whether for good or evil — of all with whom he comes in contact.

Mature Priests and Bishops

Priests who remain happy in their work possess an innate sensitive appreciation of the sense goods of this world under the ready direction of intellect and will, and likewise, an emotional appreciation of spiritual goods. In other words, they are able to direct themselves quite easily at the *objectum prout substat rationi*. This necessary capacity to deny themselves certain sense goods without becoming unhappy does not seem to have been given sufficient consideration in the selection of candidates for the priesthood. In priests so disposed, the need for concrete goods will give way increasingly to a growing delight in the spiritual, with an ensuing greater expansion of mind and spirit and an ever growing happiness.

There exists, we believe, a very special need in the Church of today for fully emotionally mature bishops who in self-restraining love can affirm the large number of priests and faithful dependent on them, especially the non-affirmed among them. A bishop must be familiar with the special needs of these persons, and realize, for instance, that a non-affirmed individual when frustrated in his search for affirmation will attempt to affirm himself through the acquisition of material goods, sexual exploits, power, fame or notoriety. He must not be surprised either, when that subject responds to the inevitable failure of his attempts at self-affirmation with angry words and hostile acts, or even with claims that he does not value certain traditions or ties with his Church; whereas, in fact he would love nothing more than to feel secure in those very same ties and traditions.

It will be no easy matter for a bishop to endure and have compassionate understanding for such behavior — in fact, he will often suffer deeply — unless he can affirm that subject in self-restraining love, ever mindful that "God's word of love never returns to Him without having born fruit." This does not mean, of course, that he should not set norms or provide direction, or that he should not help to correct a person's faults and defects. Not to do so would amount to pedagogical neglect, the non-affirmation of a person's need for guidance, self-control and independence, precisely as the non-affirmation of a person's need for emotional maturity constitutes emotional neglect.

Observations on Celibacy

Marital life has a profound effect on man's emotional life. For this reason the ecclesiastical law of celibacy which represents essentially a theological view of the task of the priest and obliges him to chastity as a single man, cannot be considered lightly. The obligation this law imposes is responsible for the priest's emotional life acquiring a structure entirely its own. Whereas it is the task of the Church to decide whether the advantages of this law outweigh its possible difficulties or problems for the priest, it is the duty of the *scientiae humanae* to study the psychological effects of the celibate life.

Strictly speaking, celibacy demands nothing more than the renouncement of sexual intercourse and thus of all manifestations of love which lead, directly or indirectly, to sexual intercourse. It cannot demand the renouncement of love itself, as the Lord commands everyone of us to love all men without regard to gender. Admittedly this refers specifically, as all commandments concerning love do, to man's volitional love, but

certainly not to the exclusion of emotional love. Like every man, the priest who chooses the celibate life for the Lord's sake, is required to direct his feelings of love by his volitional love informed by reason. Of all men, the priest must do this in the most perfect way by a deep love of restraint. For the wealth of the joy of love is never determined by an abundance of expression, but only by the measure of unselfish openness to the other. In this manner the emotionally mature priest's freely chosen celibate state makes his love of men and women more beautiful and intense, and immeasurably enriches the fruits of his ministry. Our clinical observations have demonstrated this beyond doubt.

They have also refuted the claim so often heard in today's attempts at renewal, that one's feelings of love must be freely expressed and experienced if one is to find one's fulfillment and identity. We can have sympathetic understanding for this claim if it is founded in the desire to be done forever with neurotic repression and its consequences. But this does not change the fact that there is a world of difference between the pathological repression of emotions and the rational direction of feelings, whether for example, in the periodic continence required in marriage, or in the permanent continence in the celibate priesthood. Here, too, the Church has a most important task in teaching that all emotions are good and have an innate need to be directed by the will, informed by reason, and thus to run their proper course without psychic harm, enlarging man's capacity for joy and happiness. Failure by the Church to do so would condemn the emotionally immature priest to a life of continued repression or tempt him to seek fulfillment — and vainly so — in emotional abandon, and force the mature priest to carry an unnecessarily heavy burden, instead of a yoke that is sweet.

In our experience, priests who find the celibate life burdensome are either emotionally underdeveloped or they chose the priesthood less for spiritual and altruistic motives than for self-seeking ones, such as for instance, the desire to get a college education or make a career, the fear of alienating parents who want a priest in the family at all cost, or the need to make amends for past sexual sins, or the promise of affirmation not found at home.

Not only are there no valid psychological objections to the celibate life, it even may be said to constitute a positive good for the priest himself as well as for the Church: for the mature priest, because it enhances his openness to others and God, and therefore his spiritual joy in which his feeling of joy will fully participate; for the Church because it promotes the priest's service — ability, both in depth and in time spent, to the people of God. So long as God's love has not been brought to the hearts of all people, the Church, it seems to us, cannot relax her efforts to fulfill this mission through her celibate priests, just as in an analogous sense it could be said that the sufferings of the world's emotionally ill cannot be relieved without a similarly dedicated group of celibate psychotherapists!

In conclusion we want to express our sincere hope that the Church will lose no time in recognizing the importance of the entire emotional life for man's full growth to maturity and the enrichment of his spiritual life, in comprehending the significance of emotional love in bringing man's volitional love to its most fruitful expression, and in teaching the proper asceticism of man's utility appetite. We hope this for the sake of the countless millions whose fears, restless striving and lack of identity keep them from finding themselves and God in the love of Christ.

We hope that the Church, by using those scientific data which supplement and confirm — not contradict — the authentic writings of Aquinas concerning the nature of man, will give candidates for the priesthood their personal identity through affirmation by their superiors, and their priestly identity through the Lord's affirmation in ordination.

A brief note of warning must be sounded. In view of the countless writings on the subject of love during the past decade or so, one may be inclined to believe that the subject has been exhausted, just as one is generally inclined to think that all emotions must be expressed if one is to be fulfilled as a person and to escape the fate of an emotional illness. Neither belief is correct. The manner in which each and every emotion, including hate, anger and despair, is to be utilized, as well as the subjects of affirmation and self-restraining love deserve more than a passing glance by the Church of Love.

Finally, we respectfully submit the results of our professional observations in the form of ten practical recommendations for the purpose of lending our support to the Church's task of fulfilling the words of our Lord, "Abide in my love. . . that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." (John 15, 11)

Summary and Practical Recommendations

1. Rectors of seminaries are advised to admit only young men who have been affirmed by their parents. A priest with average intelligence coupled with a mature emotional life is a far greater asset to the Church than one with superior intelligence and a retarded or neurotically disturbed emotional life.

Investigation of the candidate's background by a knowledgeable rector is superior to psychological testing. Some unfavorable home factors: working mothers of young children; "absent" fathers; passive, submissive fathers and domineering mothers; cold, unaffectionate parents; utilitarian attitudes toward life and family, etc.

2. Home and seminary must avoid attitudes and teachings which unduly stimulate the emotions of the utility (irascible) appetite and the inevitable consequence of a retarded, underdeveloped pleasure (concupiscible) appetite. Fearful or excessively-driven priests who are not capable of finding joy in the sensory and spiritual goods of this life, are obstacles to the Church's mission to bring Christ's love and joy to men and to help them to love God in freedom and without fear.

3. Parents, educators, Church authorities must possess a fully integrated emotional and volitional love capable of affirming individuals entrusted to their care. As volitional love and good deeds alone are insufficient to lead people to true maturity, the Church must teach the significance of the entire emotional life and of emotional love in particular, always integrated with and assimilated by the life of the intellect, will and spirit. Without this, priests cannot become adequate affirmers of men as the Lord intended them to be.

4. A sound home and seminary life can be founded only on an intelligent grasp of a proper philosophy of life and of a correct psychology of man. The authentic writings of Thomas Aquinas, complemented by established facts in clinical psychiatry provide, in our opinion, the best sources of knowledge about normal and emotionally disturbed man. The Church should also be particularly cognizant of the negative

aspects of the voluntaristic philosophy which has affected our centuries; of the largely untenable psychoanalytic views which have affected our culture to a considerable extent; and of the psychological reasons why the present-day over-reactions against decades of neurotic repression — e.g., situation ethics, sensitivity training, mind-expanding drugs, sexual abandon, contraceptive mentality, anti-life movements — are detrimental to a healthy personality development.

5. Bishops, religious superiors, priests, rectors of seminaries, vocational directors, moral theologians should be fully instructed in the psychology of normal man, and also have an adequate working knowledge of neurotic psychopathology. The Church is advised that as the result of the many diverse, if not opposing views in psychology and psychiatry, it cannot be safely assumed that every psychologist or psychiatrist is properly qualified to teach these important subjects. Too many widely-read psychiatrists and psychologists consider it the highest degree of maturity to have no need of God and to reject His love in favor of complete self-reliance.

6. Already existing neuroses — with or without chronic alcoholism — in priests should be speedily diagnosed and treated in the shortest and most effective manner. Neither the frustration neurosis and the less-severe non-affirmed states, nor the obsessive-compulsive neuroses lend themselves to cure by psychoanalysis. The former respond favorably to affirmation and self-restraining love as lastingly to a psychotherapy based on the view that not Freud's superego, which encompasses the conscience, but rather an emotion of the utility appetite is the repressing factor in these neuroses. For the purpose of preventing these neuroses and scrupulosity the Church must teach the

proper mortification of the emotions of man's utility appetite, just as she teaches this regarding the emotions of the pleasure appetite.

7. Moral theologians are advised to make a special study of this particular therapy of the obsessive-compulsive neuroses, as their fully informed assurance of the intelligent priest-patient concerning the moral propriety of this therapy is of great significance in speeding his recovery. Moral theologians or confessors who approve, directly or indirectly, of certain immoral psychiatric treatment methods aimed at the freeing of the patient's emotional life, should be warned about the extremely harmful psychological consequences of their expressed or implied assent.

8. The formation of priests should be in the hands of men who not only are experts in the proper psychology of human nature and its aberrations and a Thomistically sound philosophy of life, but also possess an emotionally mature, open, warmly affectionate personality to whom the candidates will be drawn spontaneously. These same qualifications should also be the primary consideration in the appointment of pastors, religious superiors and bishops, who in their respective positions must deal paternally and fraternally with large numbers of individuals. Their ready ability to affirm and practice the love of restraint should be the deciding factor in their appointments.

9. If abnormal tensions develop in celibate priests, this cannot be considered evidence that the celibate state is at fault. However, they do indicate that the priest either failed to achieve a complete integration between his emotional life and the life of intellect and will, or he chose the priesthood less for spiritual than self-seeking motives, or he possesses a normally developed emotional

life, but his innate need to experience concrete sense goods is too strong for him to be happy in renouncing them when necessary. Such a man can be a good priest, but not a happy priest. In considering the pros and cons of laicization, one should remember that in no way the married state can be considered an effective form of therapy for the emotionally immature priest.

10. All young people, candidates for the priesthood included, require direction and help in the process of

becoming independent and responsible adults. It is the task of the Church to provide this guidance and thus to affirm them also in the intellectual and volitional order. Not to do so, to encourage intellectual floundering through abandonment of fundamental curricular requirements, and to allow them to behave as they please, amounts to pedagogical neglect, which presents virtually the same clinical picture as that of the emotionally neglected or frustrated person, namely fear, anxiety, insecurity, and feelings of inferiority and being abandoned.

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***Compiled by Associate Editor
Vitale Paganelli, M.D.***
