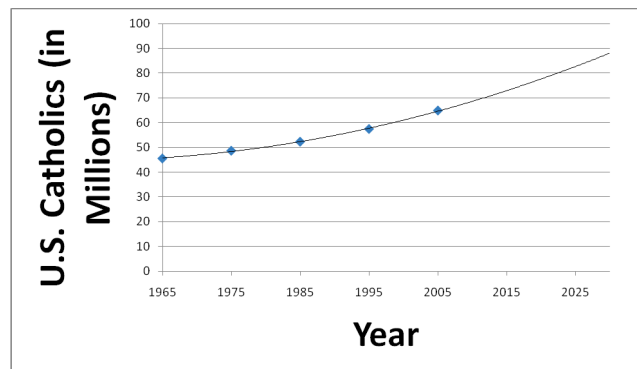
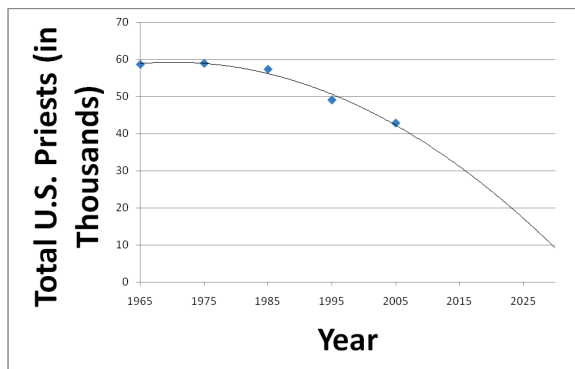


Talking points for discussing a married & celibate priesthood with bishops



Projected trends based on data from Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate- "Catholic Data, Catholic Statistics, Catholic Research," <http://cara.georgetown.edu/bulletin/index.htm> [accessed 1/ 10].

- **Salvation of souls is the highest law of the Church (canon 1752)**

- When there are not enough celibate priests to say Mass and provide Eucharist to the faithful, allowing both married and celibate priests to minister affirms that Mass and Eucharist are more important than mandatory celibacy.
- Sacraments are so important to our Catholic faith that canon law 1335 stipulates: "Prohibition [against married priests] is suspended whenever a member of the faithful requests a sacrament or sacramental or an act of governance; a person is permitted to request this for any just cause."
- The Christian faithful have the right to receive assistance from the pastors out of the spiritual goods of the church, especially the Word of God and sacraments" (c. 213).
- Pope John Paul II has assured us that celibacy "does not belong to the essence of priesthood" (7/18/93 New York Times).
- Pope Francis stated that mandatory celibacy "is not a church dogma and it can be discussed because it is a church tradition." (5/27/14 Huffington Post)

- **The worldwide shortage of priests is creating a crisis in the Church.**

- According to a 2008 Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate study, half of the 19,302 active diocesan priests in the US plan to retire by 2019. We are ordaining about 380 new diocesan priests each year. In just eight years, we will have only
- 13,500 active diocesan priests to serve our 18,000 parishes, presuming ordinations remain constant, as they have for over a decade.
- According to Vatican statistics, between 2000 and 2013 the US Catholic population increased by 11%, and the number of priests decreased 16% to 26,265.
- In 2014 Brazilian Bishop Erwin Krautler discussed the priest shortage crisis with Pope Francis and after the meeting stated that "Most likely a commission will be founded which will take up the ball and discuss, how can we help the pope? He called for proposals from us, this is his desire." (5/17/14 PrayTellBlog.com)

- **We see vibrant parishes closing, or being merged while our priests are exhausted from**

having too much to do with too little help.

- Since 2000 1,753 parishes have been closed, that is a loss of 9%, with many more closings planned in diocese across the US (2014 Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate [CARA])

• We don't understand why our church won't even discuss a married priesthood, let alone allowing priests to serve who left the active ministry to marry. We are concerned about access to sacraments for a growing Catholic population.

- The active priest population has decreased by 7,424 (16%) and the number of parishes without a resident priest increases to 3,496 (23% since 2000) (2014 CARA).
- The number of Catholics in the US has increased by 5 million since 2000 (11%) and the number of ordinations is "insufficient to maintain the population of priests." (7/8/14 CARA)

• Pope Francis has called on our Bishops to examine their own constituencies for solutions to this ministry crisis. We urge them to show that the Mass and the sacraments are more important than a tradition mandatory celibacy. We wonder why we are closing parishes rather than opening ordination.

• We ask you as our bishop and our brother in Christ, to begin a courageous dialogue called for by our Pope, with your fellow bishops and priests about the possibilities for new models of leadership and ministry in our Church including permitting both married and celibate priests and women deacons in our Church.

• We ask that you open this dialogue within the [your] diocese, add it to the agenda at the 2015 fall US Bishop Conference assembly, and encourage Conference representatives to present solutions in Rome.

• We join cardinals, bishops and laity around the world who are asking for open discussion of optional celibacy.

- In 2010, three Belgium Bishops, Patrick Hoogmarten (Hasselt,) Johan Bonny (Antwerp) and Jozef De Kesel (Bruges) questioned mandatory celibacy and said that married men should not automatically be excluded from the priesthood. (Reuters 9/22/10)
- Cardinal Mahony of Los Angeles, Scotland's Cardinal Keith O'Brien, the Indonesian Bishops Conference, the Brazilian Bishops Conference and the Canadian Bishops Conference are just some Church leaders who have called for discussion of optional celibacy over the last 15 years.

• Catholic laity support married priests and expanding women's roles.

- A 2005 Gallup Survey found that 68% of all U.S. Catholics registered at a parish have some definite opinions about solutions to the priest shortage. 81 % supported the return of priests who have married and 75% favored ordaining married men. 61% thought it would be good to ordain celibate women while 54% approved of ordaining married women. Only 20% thought it would be okay if no priest was available to

administer the last rites and just 40% thought it was okay to reduce Mass availability to less than once per week. (Study funded by National Catholic Reporter and published 9/30/2005.)

- Surveys during the past 20 years in Europe and the U.S. indicate that over 60 percent of Catholics are in favor of optional celibacy and women priests and deacons in the Church (1997 international study published by Andrew Greeley of the University of Chicago and Michael Hout of U.C. Berkeley. These findings have been replicated by Gallup, Newsweek and the National Catholic Reporter over the past ten years).

- **We need to return to the early Church custom of having both a celibate and a married priesthood and women deacons.**

- St. Peter was married. St. Paul was celibate and the early Church flourished. Since celibacy is a gift from the Holy Spirit, it will not disappear. It is a distortion of the charism of celibacy to demand it of priests who are not called to it. Both married and celibate priests were common until the 12th century when celibacy became mandatory.
- The apostle Paul describes Phoebe as “diakonos,” the same word he applied to himself. The ordination rites for women deacons in the early church were the same as those for men deacons and they were regarded as sacramental.