

Confraternity of Catholic Clergy
Office of the PRESIDENT
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Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 4th St. N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20017-1194

August 29, 2003

Your Excellency,

The Confraternity of Catholic Clergy denounces the petition of the 163 priests of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee seeking optional celibacy in the priesthood of the Latin Rite. We declare our unequivocal support for the ancient discipline of priestly celibacy in the Western Church. Furthermore, we do not believe that modifying or abandoning mandatory celibacy in the Western Church, normative since the Council of Elvira (306 AD) and obligatory since Pope Gregory VII (1074 AD), is the answer to the current problems facing the universal and local church.

Unlike the Byzantine Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches which have had a consistent tradition of optional celibacy, the Roman Church decided long ago to follow a different path. There is no evidence whatsoever, that ending mandatory celibacy would have prevented any acts of sexual misconduct, from pedophilia to ephebophilia. Studies show that the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of these heinous crimes are non-ordained, non-celibate family members.

The fact that some celibate clergy (bishops, priests and deacons) have sexually abused children and adolescents, however, warrants realistic remedies which conform to traditional discipline and defined doctrine. The Confraternity of Catholic Clergy, founded in 1975, is composed of over six hundred diocesan and religious priests and deacons from the United States and Canada, and is committed to the ongoing spiritual, theological, pastoral and fraternal formation of the clergy. Unlike some national associations of priests, the CCC has no desire to interfere with the authentic teaching authority of the Magisterium nor do we seek to usurp the legitimate jurisdiction of the national or local hierarchy.

Optional celibacy is not the answer, nor is it the panacea; it is a *placebo*. It will do nothing. The current crisis in the Catholic Church in America is three-fold. Bad theology, bad liturgy and bad morality have caused the damage and like a malignant tumor, needs to be excised. Heterodoxy as taught by dissident theologians in seminaries and Catholic colleges, supported by liturgical abuses and an iconoclastic crusade to remove reverence from public worship, will inevitably produce immoral behavior. *Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex agendi.*

We ask you and the entire Conference of Bishops to thoroughly, completely and systematically investigate and eliminate all vestiges of **heterodoxy, homosexuality and liturgical abuse** from all seminaries and to fully implement *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* in every Catholic college. We ask you and all the bishops as our chief shepherds to inaugurate a Catholic renaissance of reverent celebrations of the Sacraments, especially the Holy Mass, respecting the valid options allowed by the universal church; of conforming all teachers and their teachings to the Magisterium; and of fostering solid, manly vocations, obedient sons of the Church who will live chaste and prayerful lives. Only by restoring the sacred, by defending the revealed truths and by upholding the natural moral law can we achieve any victory over the current crisis of faith now affecting the Church.

You can count on our prayers and support in these endeavors. May Christ the High Priest and His Holy Apostles watch over, guide and direct all the deliberations and discussions held by the American Bishops.

Respectfully Yours,

Rev. John Trigilio, Jr., PhD, ThD
President