Opinion
Spirituality



by NCR Staff

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Just a month ago, in what now seems like a different time, NCR published a commentary from Gabe Moran calling to revisit Andrew Greeley's idea of a "Priest Corps." His proposal was to ordain priests for 10 years, making the celibacy question immediately irrelevant. Letters to the editor are edited for length and clarity. To join the conversation, follow the rules listed below.

Thank you for Gabe Moran's article on spreading the priesthood.

The religious authorities of Jesus time were his enemies. He was appalled by their hypocrisy and the burdens they imposed on people. Would he have wanted such an arrangement for his followers? He never ordained anyone.



With the exception of Henry VIII, every church disaster has been caused by the clergy. The present structure of the church is inherently unfair and corrupt.

Contemporary Judaism and the B'hai Faith do very well without clergy. Only the clergy need the clergy.

While it will not happen during our lifetimes, a future Catholic Christianity will be one without clergy. Their days are numbered.

JOHN BARBIERI

Delray Beach, Florida

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We could all be studying the Bible together, in small groups. That way people could get to know one another, and therefore love one another.

At Mass, when you turn to your neighbor and say "peace," it strikes me that you might as well be saying "shut up."

MADELINE BRUCE

Nanaimo, British Columbia

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Recently, proliferations of ideas how to "run" the church have sprouted like mushrooms. The church is beginning to sound like a political body, not the body of Christ. Her actions are becoming in line with the current initiatives of the world and out of sync with the mission of Christ, that of doing the will of the father.

Christ did not intend for the church to "operate" by human wisdom but by the spirit of God.

RUFINO TY

Brampton, Ontario

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There has been a lingering confusion about the role of the ministerial priesthood which has persisted, aided by poor catechesis, for almost as long as Andrew Greeley's "solution" to priest shortages in the western world.

The priesthood was never meant to be the best of us, because there you birth elitism. Nor was it for the "holiest" or "righteous" amongst us, because out of such thinking you recreate the pharisees of the New Testament world, the kind of clericalism that the author of this article rails against. Just as Pope Francis said, it is a service. It is meant to be for those willing to pour themselves out for others. To come with a full cup of water and to give it all away for the thirsty, leaving nothing for yourself. This is acting in persona Christi.

Sadly, the laity, who have badly formed by secular ideas and ideologies, look to the sanctuary on Sunday (if they even attend at all) and expect to see a mirror. "Why can't I see myself?" "Why can't priests be married?" "What can't women be priests?" When they look at the sanctuary, they see an elderly man, beaten down by the expectations of a world that blames him for every ill to befall the church. He's just a "cleric," right? And we charge him with fixing everything. He shoulders all the responsibility but we scoff at the idea of his authority and following him. After all,

he's a single man! What would he know about being (insert other demographic)?

But the priesthood isn't meant to be a mirror to reflect our own likeness but, in some respects, it currently does. All the ways it is broken, that's us. People want priests to be parent, friend, confidant, spiritual doctor, sacramental dispenser and representative leader. A priest can't be that nor was he meant to be. In his trembling hands, aware of the responsibility, he holds a mirror pointed to heaven and says, "please, don't look to me, look to Jesus." At least he's meant to and nothing about that needs changing.

PETER GILMORE

East Corrimal, Australia

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This "peace corps" idea of service, doing unto others, to the people, the church, has been in clinical trial mode for about 2,020 years. Maybe that is part of its essence: trial.

And even Gabe Moran's sense of how language works is eons old. Good thing the stars are set in the sky; maybe they are immune to trial.

EILEEN McMAHON

Hastings-on-Hudson, New York

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I share all the content of the article, in part similar to the positions supported by Jesuit Fr. Karl Rahner and Fr. Hans Küng.

But the meaning of the conclusion is not clear to me, that is, "the Catholic Church needs immediate change of language and the first clear steps to reform." What does the author mean by "the Catholic Church"? Does he intend a change of language and directives by the central authority or does he intend experiments at a local level, within the limits of the autonomy that belongs to the local churches and is

increasingly being recognized or at least tolerated?

If the author wants this last alternative, it is immediately available, but must be requested at the level of the local churches.

GIUSEPPE BADINI

Sheffield, England

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During my time in the seminary (1973-76), my sacraments professor proposed a priesthood that would be a limited commitment.

The discernment of the Amazon synod raised my hopes that the institution would right a wrong, elevating the vocational ministry of priesthood over the core sacrament of our faith, Jesus' life-giving gift of the Eucharist. Did someone say righting a heresy?

(Fr.) SCOTT HILL, OMI

Oakland, California

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