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Mandatory celibacy: the heart of what's wrong

by James Carroll

Examining the Crisis

Like all Catholics, I gratefully depend on the faithful ministry of the many good priests who serve the church. Yet I offer a broad critique of something central to their lives and identities -- the rule of celibacy. Many priests will recognize the truth of what I describe.

I write from inside the question, having lived as a celibate seminarian and priest for more than a decade when I was young. In the Bing Crosby glory days, celibacy was essential to the mystique that set priests apart from other clergy, the Roman collar an "Open sesame!" to respect and status.

From a secular perspective, the celibate man or, in the case of nuns, woman made an impression simply by sexual unavailability. But from a religious perspective, the impact came from celibacy's character as an all-or-nothing bet on the existence of God. The Catholic clergy lived in absolutism, which carried a magnetic pull.

Read Carroll's full commentary here: **[Mandatory celibacy at the heart of what's wrong](#)**

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