

"Real Men Don't Become Priests"

Could that be true? If so, Heaven help us! We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW have been hearing more and more that the priesthood is becoming a "gay profession" like hairdressing. We recently received a poignant letter from a seminarian, which we printed. Said he: "When I left my job as a teacher at a Catholic high school to enter our diocesan seminary, the typical reaction I received from my students was, 'You're going to be a priest? But you're *not* gay.' At the time I was shocked. It did not take me long, however, to realize that their notions were well founded. For many years we have heard about the shortage of priests, and there has been much talk on the subject of 'gay' seminarians and priests. It should be glaringly obvious that the latter has (at least in part) caused the former. Until the common seminary policy of not considering an applicant's sexual orientation (despite 10 hours of psychological testing, I was never even asked if I were 'gay') is rethought, our young men will continue to view the priesthood as an option that is not for normal males."

Then there are all the sex scandals. We don't have precise information, but our impression is that more often than not, a sex scandal involves same-sex transgressions. Clerical culture is all male. When that culture is attracting a highly disproportionate percentage of people who have same-sex attractions, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that there's going to be libidinal trouble in spades — that attraction will lead to temptation, then to giving in to temptation, and then to an entire subculture of homosexually-active priests who protect one another

from scrutiny and lawsuits.

Yes, homosexually-oriented *celibate* priests who are orthodox and obedient to Church norms, who are splendid priests, do exist. But when they must function in a priestly culture that's electric with same-sex attractions, the temptations and (let's face it) the solicitations they must contend with will be daunting. It's no favor to them to make them function in such an environment.

And let no one think that allowing priests to marry would solve the problem. It would have no effect on homosexuals. *The Times of London* recently indicated that priests in the (Anglican) Church of England are dying of AIDS at a rate roughly 2 to 3 times greater than Catholic priests in the U.S. — and the Church of England has *always* allowed priests to marry! No, the problem isn't the celibacy requirement. The problem is a hideous breakdown in basic Christian faith and morality.

Actually, we have plenty of real men in the priesthood. But when the priesthood gets characterized as a "gay profession" and sex scandals are a common occurrence, unwarranted suspicion is cast upon all our good, hard-working priests. We've got a big problem.

You may have noticed that many Catholic publications and leaders don't want to face the serious problems in the Church. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, an orthodox Catholic monthly magazine, don't sweep problems under the rug. We deal with them, and with *all the issues* of concern to loyal Catholics. Subscribe today and be part of the solution!

