

- Green and Co., 1906), 327–28 (part 2, chapter 20).
- 4 For these figures see Reginald Bibby, *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Novalis, 2004), 20, and “The Catholic Situation in North America: Magnificent Opportunities, Breathtaking Responsibility,” *Journal of Mission Studies* 14 (2007): 69–84.
 - 5 These statistics are reported on the CARA website (the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) at Georgetown University, <http://cara.georgetown.edu>, accessed on 27 May 2011.
 - 6 Discussed in Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, 62–67.
 - 7 CCC, 1030; citing SC, #23.
 - 8 On this see Ratzinger’s *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 171–77, and *Sacramentum Caritatis* 52.
 - 9 See J. Jungmann, S.J., quoted by Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, 53.
 - 10 Cf. *Institutiones liturgiques* 1:408–14.
 - 11 Reid, *Organic Development of the Liturgy*, 58–9.
 - 12 MD, #64.
 - 13 MD, #63.
 - 14 MD, #59.
 - 15 MD, #55.
 - 16 SC, #21.
 - 17 SC, #16.
 - 18 SC, #24.
 - 19 SC, #23.
 - 20 CCC, 1125.
 - 21 Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 154.
 - 22 Louis Bouyer, *Decomposition of Catholicism*, trans. C. U. Quinn (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1969), 105.
 - 23 John Carmel Cardinal Heenan, “Letter to Evelyn Waugh, August 28, 1964,” in *A Bitter Trial: Evelyn Waugh and Cardinal Heenan on the Liturgical Changes*, ed. S.M.P. Reid (Curdrige: St. Austin Press, 1996), 48; cited in Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith*, 138.
 - 24 Quoted in Fr. Jonathan Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity: Walking to Heaven Backward* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 31.
 - 25 See Ratzinger’s preface to Reid’s *Organic Development*, 11.
 - 26 The improvements exhibited within the new translation are, chiefly, threefold: a preference for a more elevated over a colloquial style (e.g. *Et cum spiritu tuo*, from “And also with you” is now, “And with your spirit”); a more accurate rendering of the text itself (e.g. the three-fold repetition *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa* is preserved, as opposed to, formerly, the single line, “through my own fault”); the new translation is more faithful to the theological nuances present in the original (e.g. *Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi*, is now “...you take away the sins [peccata] of the world” as opposed to, in the old version, merely *sin*—in the singular—which presumably intended to minimize the individual character of sin in favor of its collective nature. See the early comment on IECL’s revision given by Michael Gilchrist, “New Improved English Mass Translation Nears Completion” in *AD2000* 17, no. 6 (July 2004): 3.
 - 27 As in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, his Post Synodal Exhortation on the Eucharist: “Speaking more generally, I ask that future priests, from their time in seminary, receive the preparation needed to understand and to celebrate Mass in Latin, and also to use Latin texts and execute Gregorian chant.” (62).
 - 28 *Summorum Pontificum*, art. 1.
 - 29 Nichols, *Christendom Awake*, 21.
 - 30 “Liturgy” in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 3rd ed., eds. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (OUP 1996).
 - 31 CCC, 1069.
 - 32 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 173.
 - 33 *Sacramentum Caritatis*, #52.
 - 34 CCC 1070, 1072.
 - 35 CCC, 1070; quoting SC, #7.2–3 (emphasis mine).

A Note on Some Misapplications of *Presbyterorum ordinis* 16

by Edward N. Peters, JD, JCD, Ref. Sig. Ap.
Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit MI

In discussing the Western clerical obligation of perfect and perpetual continence (1983 CIC 277), some critics of continence for married clergy assert that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council held for the “equality” of the sacraments of matrimony and holy orders among married priests and, based on this alleged conciliar recognition of sacramental “equality,” go on to argue that continence cannot be required of clerics who were married at the time of their ordination. These critics point to (among other texts) Article 16 of the conciliar decree “On the

Life and Ministry of Priests,” which states in part: “This holy synod . . . exhorts all those who have received the priesthood and marriage to persevere in their holy vocation.”¹ Article 16 of *Presbyterorum ordinis* is cited as a source for Canon 277 §1 and therefore warrants proper appreciation when interpreting the law; it does, I think, seem to lend some support to the claim that marriage and holy orders are “equally” important for married priests.

Several objections militate, however, against one’s accepting the claim that the Second Vatican Council was holding in *Presbyterorum ordinis* 16 for the equality of marriage and holy orders among Western married clerics and, based on this alleged equality, did away with

the obligation of continence for married clerics. I will discuss these objections below, but I think it important to recognize that the basic possibility of the Council's having mitigated the continence obligation for married clerics is reasonably put forward.

If there were ever a time in Western Church history favorable to relaxing the expectation of continence among married clerics, it was in the mid 1960s, that is, just when the Second Vatican Council was in session and when *Presbyterorum ordinis* (1965) was being drafted. The great Funk–Bickell debate of the 1870s seemed long settled with Funk, innocent of connivance with, but nevertheless taken in by, the Paphnuntius myth,² claiming victory against proponents of the apostolic origins of clerical continence, and leaving them, or so it seemed, with little more than medieval positive law, suspect cultic-rigorisms, and pious sentiments on their side for the next eighty or ninety years.³ As the conciliar Fathers began their formal considerations of clerical celibacy, *none* of the major historical and canonical studies demonstrating the ancient origins of clerical continence—save for a single article on diaconal continence by then Monsignor Alfons Stickler (1964)—was yet available, including Liotta (1971), Cochini (1981), Cholij (1989), Cardinal Stickler (1995), and Heid (2000). How the Council managed, then, to resist the strong and persistent calls, both from within the Church and from without, for reconsideration of the whole question of clerical celibacy, is difficult to explain in purely human terms.

Now, for those objections. They are three.

First, as a general comment, parsing conciliar statements too finely risks isolating from their proper contexts and saddling them with eisegetical conclusions. Here, to take but one example, one might, by reading PO 16 too literally, understand the conciliar Fathers to be assuming that all married men in holy orders must be in *sacramental* marriages, in which “holy” vocation they should persevere. As a basic question of fact, however, a conclusion for the sacramentality of all married clergy's marriages would have been outside the ken of the Council; as an assertion of canon law or pastoral practice, it is simply not required of Catholic men that they enter only marriages that are *sacramental* (as opposed to being *valid*), nor is it necessary that married men approaching holy orders be in a *sacramental* marriage.

Scholion One, *sacramental* marriage versus *valid* marriage. Canon law (1983 CIC 1055 § 2, *olim* 1917 CIC 1012 § 2) regards all, but only, those marriages between

two baptized persons as *sacramental*. The Church discourages (at least formally) marriages between Catholics and non-baptized persons, but insofar as marriage is a natural institution, she recognizes the effects of natural marriage (such as intrinsic indissolubility, discussed below) when one of her sons or daughters enters such a marriage *validly*, and demurs only in regard to those effects of marriage directly dependent on its *sacramentality* (such as extrinsic indissolubility, discussed below).

If one hesitates, and one should hesitate, to ascribe to the conciliar Fathers the assumption that all married men in holy orders were necessarily in *sacramental* marriages, then one should also hesitate to ascribe to the Fathers the claim that they regarded matrimony and holy orders as “equally” operative in a married cleric's ministry.

Second, and related to the importance of reading conciliar texts in their proper context, the passage from PO 16 cited above was written while the Pio-Benedictine Code was in force. Canon 132 §1 of 1917 Code imposed on married clerics (and by implication their wives) the obligation of “chastity” or what today would be called “perfect and perpetual continence.”⁴ This grave obligation was unanimously recognized by canonical commentators at the time,⁵ and it faithfully reflected the ancient and unbroken tradition in the Western Church.⁶ Unless one wants to defend, then, the position that the conciliar Fathers did not know what the 1917 Code said, or how it was understood by all commentators thereon, or what the Western tradition had long held in regard to married men admitted to holy orders, one should be reluctant to construe conciliar *silence* here in regard to the specific clerical obligation of perfect and perpetual continence other than as *agreement* to it. Qui tacit consentire videtur. *Regula Iuris* XLIII, in VI°.

Scholion Two, the *legal* effects of continence in marriage. Marriage comes into effect upon the legitimately manifested exchange of consent by persons capable in law (1983 CIC 1057 § 1, *olim* 1917 CIC 1081 §1). Such marriage is *intrinsically* indissoluble and remains so until the death of a party thereto. Upon consummation between baptized spouses, marriage becomes *extrinsically* indissoluble. (1983 CIC 1056, *olim* 1917 CIC 1013 § 2; 1983 CIC 1061, *olim* 1917 CIC 1015). Continence is, in short, irrelevant to the establishment of a true, *intrinsically* indissoluble marriage (witness Our Lady and St. Joseph); after consummation between baptized spouses, continence is irrelevant to the *extrinsic* indissolubility of a Christian marriage.

Third, and here we underscore the importance of having resort to what the Council *said* when attempting to understand what the Council *meant*, the English translation of *Presbyterorum ordinis* 16 cited above is incorrect. What is rendered in English as “This holy synod . . . exhorts all those who have received the priesthood and marriage to persevere in their holy vocation” reads in the official Latin: “Sacrosancta haec Synodus . . . omnesque illos . . . hortatur, qui in matrimonio presbyteratum receperunt, ut, in sancta vocatione perseverantes.”⁷ Plainly, the English translation proposes *two* grammatically equivalent direct objects of the verb “received,” namely, “priesthood and marriage,” while the Latin original proposes only *one* direct object for the verb “recepunt,” namely, “presbyteratum,” while referring to marriage in a prepositional phrase “in matrimonio”. A correct English translation of the Latin original should read something like “This holy synod . . . exhorts all those who have received the priesthood in marriage [or ‘while married’ or ‘in the married state’ or ‘after marriage’] to persevere in their holy vocation.”⁸

Nothing in the official text of *Presbyterorum ordinis* 16 disparages marriage, of course, but neither does anything therein support treating the two sacraments as “equally” operative in a married cleric’s ministry. Indeed, knowing that the priesthood is, by definition, a “holy” vocation (as opposed to “marriage,” which might or might not be a “holy” vocation for certain married persons), and knowing of the grave obligation of continence obliging all men in holy orders, the passage from PO 16 cited above could just as easily—and indeed more consistently with tradition—have been the offering of a loving exhortation to married priests to preserve in their “holy vocation” of priesthood,⁹ in *all* of its demands, including that of surrendering a cherished right within marriage.

Arguments about the alleged sacramental “equality” of marriage and holy orders in the ministry of married clergy, and subsequent assertions against clerical continence based on that alleged “equality,” to the extent they rely on a flawed English translation of *Presbyterorum ordinis* 16, must be abandoned. ✕

ENDNOTES

- 1 This translation is offered at the Vatican website: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decre_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html.
- 2 Paphnuntius was alleged to have been an Egyptian hermit and/or bishop

and/or confessor and/or close friend of the Emperor who, so the story goes, spoke to great effect at the Council of Nicaea in dissuading the Council Fathers from legislating more expressly for clerical continence. To Paphnuntius, some Western writers in the Middle Ages (though not, curiously, Eastern authors, who have avoided the story) began to look for an explanation of the Eastern practice of temporary (as opposed to perfect) continence. The episode, though unknown to historians for more than one hundred years after Nicaea and openly questioned by Pope Gregory VII in 1077, provided Funk much fodder for his arguments against Bickell. Since the mid-1960s, however, following Winkelmann, most scholars have concluded that the entire Paphnuntius story was “a progressive hagiographical confabulation.” See Christian Cochini, *The Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy*, trans. N. Marans (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 197. See also, e.g., Alfons Maria Stickler, *The Case for Clerical Celibacy*, trans. B. Ferme (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 62–65.

- 3 Thomas McGovern, *Priestly Celibacy Today* (Scepter/Four Courts, 1998), 34–35.
- 4 1917 CIC 132. § 1. Clerics constituted in major orders are prohibited from marriage and are bound by the obligation of observing chastity, so that those sinning against this are sacrilegious, with due regard for the prescription of can. 214 §1. My translation.
- 5 On the uncontested nature of the Pio-Benedictine obligation of continence for married clerics, see Edward Peters, “Canonical considerations on diaconal continence,” *Studia Canonica* 39 (2005): 147–180, available online at http://www.canonlaw.info/a_deacons.htm, esp. 156–162.
- 6 On the continuity between the 1917 Code and Western tradition here, see generally Alfons Maria Stickler (Austrian prelate, 1910–2007), *The Case for Clerical Celibacy*, trans. B. Ferme (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), from Stickler’s *Seine Entwicklungsgeschichte und seine theologischen Grundlagen* (1993).
- 7 Sacrosanctum Oecumenicum Concilium Vaticanum II, Decretum de Presbyterorum Ministerio et Vita *Presbyterorum ordinis* (7 decembris 1965), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966): 991–1024, at 1015, or id., *Constitutiones, Decreta, Declarationes* (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1966), 619–678, at 662–663.
- 8 The Vatican website is almost alone in using this flawed English translation. I find it elsewhere only in the collection of conciliar documents published by the Daughters of St. Paul in 1999 (though not in their 1967 edition). English translations offered in the well-known collections of conciliar documents assembled by Austin Flannery, O.P., and Walter Abbott, S.J., are more faithful to the Latin. The French, Spanish, Italian, and German translations of PO 16 as posted on the Vatican’s website (http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm) also seem more reflective of the Latin text than is the English translation posted there.

That there are serious mistranslations of important ecclesiastical texts, even on the Vatican website, provokes no crisis of faith, of course, nor even especial concerns for administrative competence. Mistranslations happen, and flawed texts will circulate. Indeed, the specific error outlined above is not the only significant mistranslation in this rendering of PO 16. Consider, for the Latin “Sacrosancta haec Synodus . . . omnesque illos peramanter hortatur, qui . . .,” the Vatican English translation reads, “This holy synod . . . permanently exhorts all those who . . .” The impression of a council, which takes place within a specific time period, trying “permanently” to exhort others to do something, is jarring. It is also unnecessary: the Latin adverb *peramanter* does not mean “permanently,” but rather “most lovingly” or “very kindly.” Thus, the English translation should read something like “This holy synod most lovingly exhorts all those who . . .”

- 9 That priesthood was, in fact, the vocation the Council Fathers had in mind in this phrase is taken as certain by Friedrich Wulf, in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 5 vols. (Herder and Herder, 1967–69), 4:183–297, at 285.