The Scandal of the Catholic Priesthood
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
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Well thank you for coming tonight. I'm going to put on the hat of a sort of a professor and historian tonight. I'm so used to getting up and saying take out your Bible, but that wouldn't help since the Catholic priesthood isn't found anywhere in Scripture. So we can't start there.

I want to talk about the scandal of the priesthood because obviously we are all made very much aware of the tremendous tragedy that is playing out before us in the immorality of the Catholic priesthood. And what I would like to do is give you some historical perspective to that, some sense of the bigger picture of what's going on in the priesthood. In order to do that I have to talk a little bit about the scandal of the priesthood itself. So it's a bit of a play on words, it's a bit of a pun, if you will, when I talk about the scandal of the priesthood. I'm not just talking about the current scandal, I'm talking about the whole scandal of the priesthood itself as the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church.

Let me give you a little bit of background. There's a lot that could be said about Roman Catholic theology, we could expose its errors which are numerous. We could talk about its sources of revelation or divine truth that are outside the pages of Scripture. Or we could talk about the corruption of the Mass. We could talk about the idea that Mary is the co-redemptrix which, of course, is really a blasphemous concept. We could talk about the idea that God is a tough guy and if anybody wants grace out of God, it's only Jesus who could get it from Him, but you can't expect to go to Jesus because He's pretty tough Himself so you need to go to Mary because nobody can resist His mother and so she'll talk to Him and He'll talk to the Father and Mary will get you what you need...or some saint. We could talk about a lot of those things, concepts of purgatory, concepts of the sinlessness of Mary, a lot of things about Catholic theology that we would speak about, most notably their erroneous doctrine of justification which cuts people off from the Kingdom of God.

But what I want to talk about is the scandal of the priesthood and give you some sense of what the priesthood really is all about. We're all very familiar with Catholic priests. We've grown up seeing them in our society, along with nuns and we see them on the television all the time. We read about them in the newspaper before there were any scandals. We've been very much aware of them. Many of you in your youth were affected or impacted by the image of the priest and his black robe going through the machinations of ceremonies in the Catholic Church that you attended as a kid. So we all know that. There's this sort of idea that there's a holy aura about these men that somehow they're almost unearthly and transcendent. And we need to kind of put that in perspective.

So, let me start by just talking about the divine origin of the hierarchy. There is in Catholic dogma the confidence that the hierarchy of the Catholic Church is from Christ, that it is Jesus Christ Himself who granted to the Catholic Church its hierarchical structure. And essentially what that boils down to is an office of clergy, sort of across the board, that has three categories of power. Roman Catholics talk about teaching power. They talk about pastoral power. And they talk about sacerdotal power.

Teaching power is what you would think it is, they speak authoritatively for the Church, the Church being the only true interpreter of Scripture. They don't speak for the Scripture, they speak for the Church, that is their teaching power. They also possess pastoral power and the way they define that is quite interesting. In the Catholic dogma it is refined as legislative...defined as legislative, judicial and punitive. Their idea of pastoral work is not comfort and care and compassion, it is legislative, judicial and punitive. They make laws to which they hold people. They adjudicate as to whether people have violated those laws and they mete out punishment. And through the years that punishment has been everything from excommunication to execution. Thirdly, they possess sacerdotal power and what that simply means is the power to impart grace through the sacraments. They would say in their dogma that these three parallel the three-fold office of Christ as prophet, priest and king.

Now their dogmas have been crystallized very well thanks to the Reformation. It was the Reformation that caused them to pronounce anathemas, when...we're all familiar with the whole story of the Reformation to one degree or another, when Martin Luther, and Zwingli, and Calvin, and Melanchthon all came along and assaulted the system. The system had to respond and one way it responded was by, of course, digging its heals in the ground changing nothing and affirming what it had always held to be true, and then damning everybody who didn't believe it. But out of that came some very clear articulation of their unchanging dogma.

One of the primary things that they stood against with regard to the Reformers was the priesthood. The Reformers rejected completely the idea of a special priesthood and with it they rejected the Catholic hierarchy which essentially is the Pope, and then the Bishops from whom the Cardinals are chosen and then the priests and under them the deacons. The Reformers rejected that in favor of the general priesthood of all believers. The Council of Trent said that anybody who rejects the special priesthood, let him be anathema and pronounced the curse of damnation on that. They had to preserve their hierarchical structure, that was critical to them in order to preserve the power. Their view is that Christ, of course, is ultimately the divine head of the Church, but He mediates His real authority through one man who is the Pope who disseminates that down through the Bishops and the priests carry out the functions determined by that hierarchy.

The Pope is where you start in the hierarchy and the Pope is supposed to be the direct successor to the apostle Peter. Christ appointed the apostle Peter to be the visible head of the Church and then

determined that that succession would pass down through Peter to a line of apostles, if you will, who would bear that same authority. The Council of Trent said if anybody says the blessed apostle Peter was not constituted by Christ our Lord, prince of all apostles, and visible head of the Church, a primacy of honor and true jurisdiction, let him be anathema. So you're damned if you assault the priesthood and you're damned if you assault the papacy of Peter. According to Christ's law in their dogma, and I'm drawing most of this from a book by Ludwig Ott, it's called Catholic Dogma, it is one of their own systematic theology books which I've read through the years...but according to Christ's law, Peter is to have successors in his primacy over the whole Church for all time, and the Council of Trent says if anyone denies that, let him be anathema. If anyone says the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of blessed Peter in the primacy, let him be anathema.

So the Council of Trent pronounced a hundred or more damnations on anybody who questioned anything about the Catholic Church. They were particularly concerned about anybody questioning the hierarchy because if you questioned the hierarchy you can...you can literally bring down the system. The Pope, according to Catholic dogma, possesses full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole Church, not merely in matters of morals, and I'm reading, and faith, but also in matters of discipline and government. The Council of Trent says if anybody says he doesn't, let him be anathema. The Pope, I'll read it again, possesses full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole Church. They would even look at the Protestant as disenfranchised brethren who should be lining up in submission to the Pope. Supreme power is his, says Catholic dogma. There is no greater power than his, and there is no equal power. His power transcends both the power of each individual Bishop, or Cardinal and also of all Bishops put together. Collectively they are not equal to the Pope, singularly they are not equal to the Pope. The Pope can rule independently on any matter under the Church's jurisdiction. The Church rejects all attempts by the state to rule over the Pope and the Church. That's why they created their own state, the Vatican, so that the Pope would be the king of his own empire.

Quoting from Catholic Dogma, "The Pope is judged by nobody." Now that gives you a pretty clear idea of the role that he plays. He is unilaterally responsible to have jurisdiction over all matters of Church life. The Dogmasays the Pope is infallible when he speaks ex cathedra. Have you ever heard that expression? It simply means "out of the chair." All that means is when he speaks, and it's not some kind of formal occasion, it means when he speaks in the discharge of his duties as pastor and doctor over all Christians, he defines doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church and is possessed of that divine infallibility and therefore definitions by the Roman Pontiff are irreformable. He never makes a mistake and nothing he says therefore can ever be altered. The source of his infallibility, says the Dogma, is the supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost who protects the supreme teacher of the Church from error. God in heaven will confirm the Pope's judgment, he is preserved from error, quote.

So you have this leader who has total power over the entire Church, not in their view, just those who are faithful Catholics, but anybody else who claims to be a Christian and has wandered astray, he has total power to judge over all matters of faith, that's doctrine, and morals, that's conduct, all matters of discipline, all adjudications in the life of the Church. And when he makes any such judgment at any point, he is infallible and God Himself in heaven confirms the Pope's judgment because he is preserved from error. Therefore, whatever he says stands permanently as the truth of God and cannot be reformed, or changed.

Under him are the bishops and they possess divine rite. But theirs is called an ordinary power of government over their dioceses, an ordinary power rather than an extraordinary power such as the Pope has of infallibility. They have an ordinary power, as their dogma says it, of government over their dioceses. Only Popes and Bishops possess this power by divine rite. All others possess it by the churches granting it. It is therefore that the Pope and the Bishops are like the apostles, appointed personally by Christ and the priests and deacons appointed by the Church.

Bishops are seen as successors of the apostles who receive their power not from Christ directly but from Christ mediated to them through the Pope who once was one of them. The Pope then acts for Christ infallibly in all matters of the Church, including appointing and empowering the Bishops. The clergy, as they're called, the priests come along to obey this hierarchical structure. The Bishops do not determine the dogma in the end it is the Pope and the collected council affirmed by the Pope that determine the doctrine.

So you get down to the priests. The dioceses are broken down into parishes and you're familiar with that, I think. And in the parishes are the priests. They have a responsibility to conduct seven sacraments. This is basically what they do. By law there are seven sacraments...and only seven; Baptism, Confirmation which is something that happens around the age of twelve when you're baptism into the Kingdom of God, your Baptism which is an expression of divine empowering grace, is confirmed. Then Eucharist which is the communion, the Mass. Then Penance, which is the process by which you atone for your sins by the payment of some price, or some act. Extreme Unction which is what you give somebody when they're dying and you see the priest rushing in. Holy Order and Holy Order, one of the seven sacraments, is that sacrament by which the priests and Bishops are set apart. The other one is Matrimony, or marriage. So the responsibility of the priest then fall into those seven sacraments.

I want to pull out of that the Holy Order because here we begin to see more into the priesthood. Priests are consecrated by this sacrament. It is a sacrament, that is that it is a sacred ceremony, sacramentum ordinisits called, the sacrament of ordination is what officially puts priests into their positions of ministry. Below them are deacons who also have their own sacrament of ordination, but we're talking about the priests. Ordination confers, this is quite interesting, sanctifying grace on a priest. You have to understand this because this is critical. You've got the infallible Pope, you've got

the nearly infallible Bishops. And coming down the food chain a little bit you've got the priests and the priests at the sacrament of sacramentum ordinisof ordination are literally spiritually invested with sanctifying grace and I'll quote from the Dogma. "By the sacrament of Order the priest receives a new and special grace and a particular help by means of which he can cope in a worthy fashion and with unfailing courage with the high obligations of the office he has assumed and fulfill the duties."

Now they believe a sacrament dispenses grace. We have baptism, we don't think it dispenses any grace, we think it's a commemoration, a public affirmation, public testimony. We have communion, the Lord's table, we don't think it dispenses any grace, any justifying grace or even sanctifying grace. We see it as a memorial, a remembrance of the death of Christ. But for them a sacrament dispenses grace and the sacrament of ordination dispenses a certain grace to the priest.

What is that? The Dogmasays, "The Sacrament of Order imprints a character on the recipient, a new character...and I'm quoting...the character of Order enables the possessor to take an active part in Christ's priesthood. It obliges him to dispense the saving treasures of Christ and...here's the key...and to lead a morally pure life." At the time of his ordination which can never be repeated, can never be reverted or rescinded, it is once for good. That's why they don't know what to do with priests who abuse people. Furthermore, the Sacrament itself is to infuse them with a sanctifying grace to enable them to lead a morally, pure life. One statement in the Dogmathat struck me was, "The Sacrament of Order confers a permanent spiritual power on the recipient." So the system teaches that this individual has received grace, permanent spiritual power in which he is literally entered into the priesthood of Jesus Christ, is then obliged to dispense the saving treasures of Christ. He mediates the treasures of Christ to people and he is empowered to lead a morally, pure life.

Now this priest then has taken on really almost an aura of holiness. When it comes down to his duties, let me just kind of read you something. John O'Brien has a popular work called The Faith of Millionsand in that he has written this, I think it's really fascinating. "When the priest announces the tremendous words of consecration at the Mass, he reaches up into the heavens," you've seen that image, "he brings Christ down from His throne and places Him upon our altar to be offered up again as the victim for the sins of man. It is...listen to this...a power greater than that of saints and angels, greater than that of seraphim and cherubim."

We're talking about a priest now. We're talking about somebody really who is considered supernatural. It has to be if he has a greater power than angels, including seraphim and cherubim. And why do they say that? Not only because of this grace and this empowerment for a moral life, and this engagement in the priesthood of Christ, but because the priest can reach into heaven, bring Christ down from His throne, place Him on our altar to be offered again as the victim for the sins of men. He literally brings Christ down for the sacrifice of the Mass.

He goes on writing about the priests and says, "Indeed it is greater even than the power of the Virgin Mary. While the Blessed Virgin was the human agency by which Christ became incarnate a single time, the priest brings Christ down from heaven and renders Him present on our altar as the eternal victim for the sins of man not once but a thousand times. The priest speaks and lo, Christ the eternal and omnipotent God bows His head in humble obedience to the priest's command." He has the power to go to heaven and pull Christ down and sacrifice Him again on the altar of the Church.

In the next paragraph he writes, "Of what sublime dignity is the office of the Christian priest who is thus privileged to act as the ambassador and vice regent of Christ on earth. He continues the essential ministry of Christ. He teaches the faithful with the authority of Christ. He pardons the penitent sinner with the power of Christ. He offers up again the same sacrifice of adoration and atonement which Christ offered on Calvary. No wonder that the name which spiritual writers are especially fond of applying to the priest is that name 'Alter Christos' for a priest is another Christ."

Does that bring a verse to mind? "If anybody comes and preaches another Christ," we have our own Council of Trent, "let him be anathema." They are viewed as another Christ...alter Christos. This bizarre Mass, this bizarre attempt to put power in the hands of men has absolutely nothing to do with the Scriptures and is a wicked twisting of spiritual responsibility in pastoral ministry. To Protestant ears, these are really disturbing assertions, they are to me.

What is he talking about when he says "Christ is offered as a sacrifice upon the Roman altar, our altar?" What does he mean that "Christ, the omnipotent God, bows His head in humble obedience to the priest's command and comes down from heaven to be offered again and again a thousand times in sacrifice?" No, isn't this guy going too far?

Well the Council of Trent in its thirteenth session in October of 1551 promulgated a decree concerning the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Mass. At the end of the decree was a list of canons providing anathemas for those who would reject the Council's teaching. Since these canons often provide short and...they do provide short and succinct definitions of Roman teaching, as I said earlier, I want to give you some of them, especially in the concept of transubstantiation. You know, when Christ comes down you know how He comes down, right? They take the bread and the wine and the priest literally turns that into the body and blood of Jesus. And that's Christ. So here are Council of Trent pronunciations.

Canon One: If anyone denies that in the Sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist are contained truly, really and substantially the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and consequently the whole Christ, but says that He is in it only as a sign, a figure, or force, let him be anathema. Pronounce a damnation on anybody who says it's not actually Jesus Christ in the whole that the priest has brought down.

Canon Two: If anyone says that in the sacred and holy Sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine remains conjointly with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and denies that wonderful and singular change of the whole substance of the bread into the body and the whole substance of the wine into the blood, the appearance is only of bread and wine remaining which changed the Catholic Church most aptly calls transubstantiation, let him be anathema.

Canon number Eight: If anyone says that Christ received in the Eucharist is received spiritually only and not also sacramentally and really, let him be anathema.

This is just perverse. Eleven years later in 1562, the twenty-second session of Trent was held. This time the decree promulgated was entitled "Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass." And the decree says this, "Inasmuch as in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass is contained and emulated in an unbloody manner, the same Christ who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, the holy Council then teaches that this is truly propitiatory and has this effect, that if we contrite and penitent with sincere heart and upright faith with fear and reverence draw nigh to God, we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid. That is to say there is salvation in the Mass for appeased by this sacrifice, the Mass, the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence and pardons even the gravest crimes and sins." So if you go into the Mass with the right attitude, you come out pardoned. "For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests who then offered Himself on the cross." There's no difference in what a priest does and what Jesus did on the cross. "Only the manner is different," it says. This is directly quoting out of the second chapter of the decree called "Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass." "The fruits of that bloody sacrifice, it is well understood, are received most abundantly through this unbloody one, so far is the latter from derogating in any way from the former. Wherefore, according to the tradition of the apostles, it is rightly offered not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those departed in Christ but not yet fully purified." So the Mass saves the people who are alive there and the people who are dead and not yet purified.

You want to debate that? Listen to what Trent said.

Canon number one: If anyone says that in the Mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God, or that to be offered is nothing else than that Christ is given to us to eat, let him be anathema. If anyone says by those words 'Do this for a remembrance of Me,' if you say that Christ did not institute the apostles' priests and did not ordain that they and other priests should offer His own body and blood, let him be anathema.

If you say that Christ did not institute the priesthood to offer the Mass, you're anathema.

Canon number three: If anyone says that the sacrifice of the Mass is one only of praise and thanksgiving, or that it is a mere commemoration of the sacrifice consecrated on the cross but not a propitiatory one. If you say there's no propitiation in the Mass, or that it profits him only who receives and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead for sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities, let him be anathema.

That is to say if you say the Mass isn't propitiatory for the sins of the living and if you say it's not propitiatory for the sins of the dead, you're cursed.

If anyone says...Canon number four...that by the sacrifice of the Mass a blasphemy is cast upon the most holy sacrifice of Christ, if you say the Mass is a blasphemy...which we would say...let him be anathema.

Canon Five: If anyone says that it is a deception to celebrate Masses in honor of the saints and in order to obtain their intercession with God as the Church intends, let him be anathema.

And as you read down these canons you can tell by their answer what the Reformers were saying.

Canon Six: If anyone says that the canon of the Mass contains errors, let him be anathema.

That just covers it all, doesn't it? Blanket provision.

So, if I could summarize the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church on the Mass from the Council of Trent which preserves the primary role of the priests, that summary would go like this:

One, Jesus Christ is truly, really substantially present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Two, Transubstantiation involves the change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ, change of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of the blood of Christ.

Three, since Christ is said to be really present in the Eucharist, the elements themselves follow in consecration are worthy of worship. They worship them.

Four, the sacrifice of the Mass is properly called propitiatory, in that it brings about pardon of sin.

Five, in the institution of the Mass, the Lord's Supper, Christ offered His own body and blood to the Father in the signs of the bread and wine and in so doing ordained the apostles as priests of the New Testament. They passed their priesthood on down.

Six, the sacrifice of the Mass is properly offered for sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities not only for the living but for the dead as well.

And finally, anyone who denies the truthfulness of any of those proclamations is cursed.

Now somebody is going to say, "Well, that's the Council of Trent, you know, that's 1500's, is that still the teaching of the Church?" Absolutely, how could it not be the teaching of the Church because the Church is infallible and irreformable. That is why in the history of the Catholic Church nothing ever changes. The Church absorbs its dissidence, it absorbs its immoral, it absorbs its heretics, it absorbs everybody and perpetuates the system. The one thing the Catholic Church cannot tolerate is any kind of schism and so it just keeps absorbing the dissidence in the perpetuation of the system and therefore it is full of all wretched kinds of beliefs, all levels of immorality and all different kinds of disregard for Catholic law down through the laity.

If you did a poll in America, how many Roman Catholics believe in only using the Rhythm method to prevent birth or conception? You would find that it's a very small percentage. They don't abide by Catholic dogma or Catholic law. The priests don't live by Catholic law, or certainly biblical law. But those laws never change, they just keep absorbing the dissidence so there's never a fracture. That's why the Reformation was such an unbelievable assault on the Church because it was a true fracture. You couldn't even estimate the power that God unleased through the Reformers to deal a devastating blow to the system in the Reformation.

In the New Catechism, catechism of the Catholic Church, to show you were the emphasis lies, there are nine paragraphs dedicated to the subject of justification. There are 84 paragraphs dedicated to the Mass. That's what it's all about and that's what the priest does.

Now...now you understand the position of the priest. He operates in the area of the sacraments, primarily the Mass. As we think about that, let's go behind the priesthood and talk about the issue of celibacy because this has been debated. I think the latest statistics I've seen in America would be something like 80 percent, or 70-some percent of Roman Catholics think the priest should be able to marry. So they have a hard time swallowing the celibate issue in this country, where those statistics might not be the same in other parts of the world.

But let me talk about celibacy a little bit. Celibacy has become an obligatory law of the Roman Church imposed on all priests and they try to build that on Matthew 19 where Jesus said there are eunuchs for the Kingdom of God. Remember that? Some men are eunuchs from birth, some are made eunuchs, and some are eunuchs for the Kingdom of God.

There are people who are unable to procreate physiologically because of some malformation. There are people who are unable to procreate because they have been wounded, harmed through some

violence. And there are some people who choose not to marry. In fact, the apostle Paul says that in some ways being single is better, right?, 1 Corinthians 7 because you don't have to worry about the wife and a family and you can devote yourself to the Lord. But he also says in 1 Corinthians 7 it's better to marry than...what?...than to burn, better to marry than to burn with passion. And certainly 1 Corinthians 7 makes it very clear that singleness is not preferable to marriage.

To make celibacy mandatory is utterly unbiblical. They try to show that Paul taught celibacy. They try to twist the Scripture to make Peter into an unmarried man so that in 1 Corinthians 9 verse 5 where he says he has a right to lead about a wife, the Confraternity version of the Bible, the Catholic Bible, says he has a right to lead about a sister, but it's not the word adelphe, sister, it's the word gunaikeiwhich is wife.

Now what I've been saying is celibacy is not mandated by the Scripture whatsoever. In fact, there is a reference to celibacy in the Bible and I want to read it to you. First Timothy chapter 4, listen to what the apostle Paul wrote, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons by means of the hypocrisy of liars, seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, both of which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth, for everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude for it is sanctified by means of the Word of God and prayer."

Now what Paul wrote here is this, those who forbid marriage are advocating a doctrine of demons. They are listening to deceitful spirits. They are hypocritical liars whose consciences have literally been scarred so that they're passed feeling. So you can see that the Scripture associates celibacy, forbidding marriage, with Satan. And I really believe that's true. I believe Satan has managed to take control of the Catholic system in a number of ways this is manifest, but in clear terms one of the ways that he has demonstrated his presence in that system is through the forbidding of marriage which God has created, the Scripture says, to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. Even marriage like food is to be sanctified and received with gratitude because it comes from God.

As a footnote to that, it is also true in Catholicism that there is certain dietary restriction. Everybody who is in the Catholic system knows about not eating meat on Friday, this too is drawn out of paganism.

Celibacy kind of grew slowly in the Catholic world. It started in the second century. Prior to that it existed in Asia, it existed in Buddhism. It existed in some other pagan religions. That is to say not being married, being single for devotion to your deity, it didn't say anything about your sexual behavior, just said something about marriage, there were some who took a vow of utter abstinence from sexual relationships. Whether or not they fulfilled them, they took them. But in the second

century this issue of being unmarried came in and people followed that path, influenced by the third century by Gnosticism and what's called Manichaeanism, the idea that matter is evil and spirit is good and therefore the soul and the spirit of a person is good and the body is wicked and anything the body does is wicked.

And so in this perverted twisted sort of Gnostic concept, they felt that the highest levels of spirituality were obtained by those who literally denied their body all its desires, so they took vows of poverty, they took vows of chastity which would be different than a vow of celibacy, celibacy having to do with marriage, chastity having to do with sexual activity. They took vows of obedience. Some of them took vows of silence. They didn't want the body to do anything. They didn't want to worry about what it wore. They didn't want to pander to any of its desires. They wanted to eat only meager and austere diets. And some of them didn't even want to hear the body speak and so they took vows of silence. And then came the idea that this was an imitation of the Virgin Mary with utter disregard for the fact that after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph had a whole family full of children. But the lie of the system is that Mary was a perpetual virgin to her death.

And they also elevated this celibacy because they said Christ was celibate and this was the approximation and the imitation of Christ. And the idea began to develop that if people did this voluntarily, if lay people did this voluntarily and ascended to this high level of spiritual devotion, wouldn't it be imperative for their leaders to go to this high level? And again this was the influence of some of these philosophical ideas, shouldn't bishops and priests be the models of asceticism. So by the third century you started having celibate priests and it was for the first time in the third century the Council of Elvira in Spain put down the first law that we can find in history enforcing celibacy. Bishops and priests and deacons also were to be disposed if they lived with their wives and begot children after their ordination. They would allow the ones that were married to stay married, but if you were ordained that in itself said you would never marry.

A similar decree was enacted by a Roman Catholic council under Pope Zarrecheus(???) in 384 to 399. So there were a couple of definitive statements made in that century, fourth century. By the time of Leo the Great, the fifth century, the law of celibacy had become obligatory through the western Church, the eastern Church never really bought into it, the Orthodox Church. But the western Church did. The eastern Churches allowed married priests to stay married. They did prohibit some single ones from marrying but that has not been their history.

So you see it in the third, fourth, fifth century, but it still was not hard-and-fast law. That happened in 1079, eleventh century.

And I'm quoting, "This mandate for celibacy generated all kinds of immorality. The abodes of the priests were often dens of corruption. It was common to see priests frequenting taverns, gambling and having orgies with quarrels and blasphemy. Many priests kept mistresses and convents became

houses of ill fame. In many places the people were delighted at seeing a priest with a mistress because the married women would be safe from him," end quote.

This was done under a man named Hildebrand who is known in Catholic history as Pope Gregory VII, lived from 1023 to 1085. Why did he do this? Why did he decide that this was an absolute fixed law?

Well, when he did this immediately what happened was the priest, if he was going to continue to be a priest, was separated from his wife totally and his children, permanently and for good. More than that, all his property was confiscated...all of it. And the reasons, political and material. Priests up to that time were very influential people. They were very powerful people. People gave them things. They became wealthy. They had families. They passed the wealth on and the family wealth accumulated. And so you had powerful families that were wealthy, they owned land, they had far-reaching influence.

Pope Gregory VII determined that priests controlled too much wealth and the Church should take it. And they would pass their wealth on to their progeny and those families would get more and more powerful. And if the Church was going to take over the state, if the Church was going to rule the world, it had to start by ruling the country and if it was going to rule the country it had to take the property and the wealth away from the people in power. Philip Schaff(??) the legendary historian, said, "The motive for opposing the marriage of priests was to prevent the danger of a hereditary line which might appropriate ecclesiastical property to private use and impoverish the Church." So the priests had to give everything they had to the Church and then they could never have a family so they couldn't pass on anything.

Another Council in 1123 forbade all marriage of priests and declared all existing marriages invalid. And the Council of Trent reiterated that in no uncertain terms. Women were cut loose with no means of support. Some really amazing stories about many of them died of hunger, wives of priests. Some were suicides. Some turned in to street walkers. And one of the really bizarre twists is that priests are called "fathers." Who are they kidding?

In those years when the Church was taking its power. And by the way, the number one land owner on the planet is the Roman Catholic Church. They continue to accumulate massive wealth beyond description. It's always kind of a curiosity to stand in St. Peter's Square in Rome and look at the Banko de Spiritu Sanctos, the Bank of the Holy Spirit. It's all couched in religious terms.

Throughout history during this time, priests who didn't obey were exposed to scorn and contempt by the people. They were even attacked by the people. So there was tremendous pressure for them to comply with the Church. They then became reduced to extreme poverty. There are stories being mutilated by the people if they wouldn't give in. The people would literally attack them and mutilate them and some were tortured and some were run out of town and put in exile. If they wouldn't give

up their property willingly, then the Church would take them, exile them and confiscate their property. Their children then were designated as illegitimate. It was a horrible tragedy and many of the women, according to the historians, who were wives of priests were buried in unconsecrated earth.

So it was about power and it was about property. So you've got this ugly scenario. There's the scandal of an aberrant, unbiblical bizarre pagan theology of the priesthood and the Mass. There's the scandal of the power and the grasping materialism of a satanic religious system that wants to engulf the earth. The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation, Hans Hildebrand, editor, Oxford University Press, 1996, "Those priests who were not married often lived in long-term relationships of concubinage, receiving special dispensations from their clerical supervisors to have their children legitimated. This practice began to change in the twelfth century when at the Lateran Councils the Church declared all clerical marriages invalid and prohibited clerical concubinage." So you could have a sex mistress for a while and then they prohibited it. "Many lessor clergy responded by rioting and demonstrating but gradually celibacy became the norm, especially among the higher clergy and women from honorable families no longer entered into relationships with priests knowing that these could never be declared valid marriages. The prohibition of concubinage and other types of non-marital sexual activity among the clergy was hard to enforce, however, and by the fourteenth century Church officials simply advocated discretion." Just be discrete in your sexual misconduct.

So what happened was this mandate tempted all kinds of immorality. Now remember, these people aren't converted, right? They can't be because they have an aberrant theology. So they have no power to restrain the flesh, right? The abodes of priests then at this period of time and throughout the Middle Ages became dens of corruption. It was common to see the worst and grossest kinds of sin carried on by priests. There were some who took a vow of chastity and made an effort to be pure. But a vow of celibacy was not a vow of chastity. And by the way, according to Canon Law, this is Roman Church Law, a vow of celibacy is broken if the priest marries, but it's not broken if he engages in sexual relationships. You don't break the vow of celibacy, says Canon Law, by sexual relationships. You have to marry to break the law of celibacy. So a celibate priesthood is nothing...has nothing to say about the conduct. And further, and I'm reading from Dogma, "Pardoned for sexual relations comes by confession to a fellow priest." That's all you have to do. You tell me yours, I'll tell you mine, right? That's all you have to do to get it expunged.

You know, this is just as a side, but that whole confessional thing, you take men with normal sexual passions, you put them in a situation where that is restrained and they have to restrain it without any divine power which is impossible to do, driven by lust, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, that's what makes people tick. You put them like that, put them in monasteries, put them in seminaries, put them in enclaves with other men with the same kind of pent-up sexual frustrations and then all day every day stick them in a confessional booth in anonymity where they sit and listen to everybody parade all their iniquities by and you tell me that's a healthy environment and that an unconverted man is going to sit in that environment and think holy thoughts? That's a

compounding of the curse, produces a level of hypocrisy that's staggering.

By the way, you get absolution from sexual sin by confession to a fellow priest. Absolution for any priest who marries, you only get one way, from the Pope...from the Pope. You've got to go all the way to the Pope to get absolution and then it comes with severe penalty. Why? Because they care more about the priest who marries and the impact that will have on the power of the system then they do about a priest who commits sexual sin. Marriage is far worse to them than sexual sin because it threatens the Church's power and property. And yet, isn't it bizarre that the Roman Catholic Church holds that marriage is a Sacrament, the Sacrament of Matrimony? And yet it's a Sacrament of Matrimony that the "most holy" quote people, priests and nuns, are denied. And by the way, the Council of Trent pronounced anathema against all who teach that the marriage state is preferable to celibacy. So they damned anybody who thinks that marriage is preferable.

You know, Jesus even said not all men can bear that. Paul said it's better to marry than to burn. Let me tell you, that's true even for non-priests single people who prolong their singleness. You know, just give you a little advice. Find somebody, don't wait for the Messiah, just find somebody...string yourself out, compound your temptation.

In the eyes of the priesthood there is an inherent uncleanness in marriage and it's a hangover from that sort of Manichaean/Gnostic idea of the evil of the flesh. There's an uncleanness in romantic desire. There's an uncleanness in normal love. There's something shameful in that. And the desire for procreation is somehow the enemy of spiritual devotion. You know, I really...my heart goes out to priests. They are...they are literally, I think they are literally in many cases sexual time bombs, it's only a question of when it's going to go. That group of people in themselves has such a warped view of marriage because they're so fixated on the sexual aspect of it. They think marriage is all about sex and procreating little Catholics. And that's all it is. I was fascinated to read in Lorraine Betner's (??) book on Roman Catholicism this quote, "The largest collection of books in the world on the subject of sex is in the Vatican Library." Who checks them out? What are they, in there doing some scholastic work? These poor people. This is a horrific sentence, better they should go to prison and have some time limit when they're going to get out and live a normal life.

In order to understand the Roman Catholic position regarding the grouping of men and women in monasteries, you need to understand the basic viewpoint that underlies that system. During the Middle Ages the idea developed in Roman theology that man's work was to be divided. And this is really important in their system. In the Middle Ages man's work was divided into the natural, the secular and the spiritual, and those two things are totally separated. Only the spiritual was pleasing to God. And again, this was more of that same old dualistic philosophy. Consequently while the natural man might be satisfied with the common virtues of daily life, the ideal was that of the mystic who just disdained all the issues of daily life and all he wanted to do was develop his spiritual side and he wanted to go somewhere in deep contemplation and reach out for the spiritual. The natural

was viewed as a hindrance...to have a job, a wife, kids, a house, etc. So the life of the monk and the life of the nun withdrawing from society, withdrawing from work, withdrawing from culture, withdrawing from the world, retiring into this cloister, losing themselves in mystic contemplation was thought to really be the higher life. And you know, they started wearing all these black things, the same stuff they've been wearing since the Middle Ages. Every time you see these guys parading around in these silly things, they're wearing Middle Aged garb mostly to impress us with the fact that they have...they have literally risen above the hoi-polloi who are all caught up in the natural. They really believe that in seclusion from the world the image of God lost in the Fall could be restored. Celibacy was the holier state.

Some of them even emasculated themselves thinking that that would remove temptation ultimately. The Ascetic viewed the natural world as sinful, a sphere to be avoided as much as possible, developed a contempt for things of the world and went off into these places. You can read the stories about these people. They went into these kinds of places and sat there and were just tormented by the fires of temptation. Read an Eloise and Avolard(??) story, horrific to try to live like that. And that's where the priests and the nuns, you know, as these celibate Ascetics came from. But for Protestants the Reformation came along and just demolished all of that and did it with, first of all, one very important theological fact and that was this, in God's eyes there's no difference between the sacred and spiritual and the secular because in whatever you do whether you eat or drink you do it...what?...to the glory of God. God can be glorified in the way you eat your dinner. The Protestant understood that the Reformation understood you serve God not by withdrawing from the world, Jesus even prayed, "Father, I'm not asking You to take them out of the world, but to keep them while they're in the world from the evil one."

We believe the world has fallen but it's our Father's world, isn't it? And I can look at everything in this world except the sin and I can see a way to glorify God. The Reformation spread a sacredness over everything. You could see that when they understood this, everything in the Catholic system that was related to the priesthood, convents, asceticism, from the hermits to the monks they saw as a wicked thing because they had developed this idea that anything that's material is in itself wicked and thus they had forfeited the reality of spiritual life, and that is that we live here in this world and everything in this world gives us opportunity to glorify God.

You know the inmates, I call them inmates, of monasteries are unmarried men. It's just bizarre and abnormal. They say in the United States now, I read today a statistic, fifty percent of them are homosexual when they get there. The rest have no chance. These people are predators. Convents too promote an abnormal type of life, doing terrible things to these women who are there who many are good intentioned, as some priests are. There are orders of priests, Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits who don't like each other, you know that. There's a place for voluntary celibacy, it's a blessing if you have the gift, as Paul put it. But to deny someone normal family life, to deny someone normal relationships is a cruel, cruel thing for the sake of the power of the system.

You know, the thing that's so sad about a priest, he's absolutely a blip on the screen. He has no past because when he came into the priesthood, or when she came into the convent, they gave up all their possessions and all their relationships. They quote to them that if a man is not willing to leave father and mother and hate father and mother for My sake, he's not worthy to be My disciple. And so there's a strong urge to hate everything that your parents stand for. So you cut yourself off from the past. You have no present because you share life with nobody. And for sure, you have no future. Sad. And these kinds of unnecessary restrictions are no help to personal sanctity, let me tell you, they are a hindrance, a severe hindrance to it.

Charles Hodge, the theologian, has written this and I think it's good to remember this in his systematic theology, "It is only in a married state that some of the purest, most disinterested and most elevated principles of our nature are called into exercise. All that concerns filiopiety and parental and especially maternal affection depends on marriage for its very existence. It is in the bosom of the family that there is a constant call for acts of kindness, of self-denial, of forbearance and of love. The family therefore is the sphere, the best adapted for the development of all the social virtues. And it may be safely said that there is far more of moral excellence and of true religion to be found in Christian households than in the desolate homes of priests or in the gloomy cells of monks and nuns," end quote.

Priests are broken, shattered, tragic, sad, disconnected people. No past, no present, no future. They belittle the sanctity of the marriage relationship. They are denied normal relationships, the friendship of marriage. They're victims of a terrible system with no biblical basis whatsoever. It is a soul-destroying process that leaves them in a situation of rampant temptation, exposure to the worst. And the only way to fulfill these drives is sinfully. And they do not have the restraint of a transformed or sanctified life.

Emmet McLaughlin(??) writes, "The life of a priest," he's an ex-priest, "is an extremely lonely one. He lives in a large rectory, he is still lonely. Other priests are not interested in him or in his doubts and scruples. If he is the only priest in a solitary parish or desert mission, he's still more alone. As his years slip by and the memories of seminary and its rigidity fade away, the realization may dawn that his life is not supernatural but a complete mental and spiritual and physical frustration. He sees in his parish and his community the normal life to which he has been cut off. He sees the spontaneous childhood which he was denied. He sees the innocent, normal companionship of adolescence for which...which for him never existed. He performs the rites of matrimony as starry-eyed young men and women pledge to each other the most natural rights and pleasures. He stands alone and lonely at the altar as they turn from him and confidently, recklessly, happily step into their future home, family, work and troubles and the successes of a normal life. More than anything else he seeks companionship, the companionship of normal people, not frustrated, disillusioned victims like himself. He wants the company of men and women young and old through whom he may at least vicariously

take part in a relationship with others that he has been denied and for which at least subconsciously the depth of his nature craves. No priest who has heard priest's confessions and has any respect for the truth will deny that sexual affairs are extremely common among the clergy. The principle concern of the hierarchy is that the priests keep such cases quiet."

That's the sad reality...that's the scandal. And in that environment all kinds of sin abounds. In many countries of the world it is predominantly heterosexual sin. Priests have relationships with women in the parish, prostitutes or even nuns. But in this modern time and certainly back fifty years, we're finding out now as homosexuality has always been a part of this life, we're finding now that it's even more and more a part of it. In fact, I read an interesting article, it was an editorial op ed piece in the...I think it was the L.A. Times, in which a man was writing and saying, "The whole problem with this, the whole problem is the Church's problem. The Church has forced this. The Church has forced this to happen, this abuse of boys, this pedophilia because the Church says homosexuality is a sin." This is the bizarre character of this op ed piece, it says, "Homosexuality is a sin and therefore for homosexuals who are Roman Catholics to be accepted by the Church, the only thing they can do is become priests. And so the Church by identifying homosexuality as a sin forced homosexuals who wanted to be good Catholics to be in the priesthood."

I read another piece today from, I think it was the New York Times, in which they were concerned that there would now become a homosexual witch hunt in the United States Catholic Church, there are 46...45,000 priests, that there would be a witch hunt trying to sort out the homosexuals and all the homosexual lobby groups are concerned that that's going to happen. They're there. I mean, that's like the place you'd want to be if you were a homosexual, and that's the sad reality of what's happened.

And just a word about that, I don't need to say a lot about that. Pedophilia isn't the beginning of anything, it's the end of a long, long pornographic conduct trail. You don't start there, you end there. That's how it goes. You know, you take what's there at first, and then the deviation demands more and more aberrant behavior and it moves down younger and younger and younger. In fact, one of the people in law enforcement said to me, "Pedophilia is the caboose on a long train."

So it's easy to see why this happens in this terrible, terrible system. And yet they can't change it...can't change it because there's an inerrancy and infallibility in the Church. And one of the elements of that is if you're a priest, you're a priest and it can't be reverted or rescinded. And as long as you don't get married, all you have to do is confess to another priest then that perpetuates the power of the system. That's why you can see the Cardinals all go over to Italy and come back and what happened? Nothing, absolutely nothing happened cause nothing can happen. The Pope, what did he say? Nothing-- there's nothing to say.

One of the things that we, you know, just kind of has to be talked about, it's not just the immorality of the monasteries and the convents which is legendary, it's legendary everywhere... I was reading an article that talked about how many kids in the small towns in Italy and so forth are the children of the priests whom they call "uncle." Calling them "father" wouldn't reveal anything. Forced celibacy is conducive to sexual perversion.

You know, John Calvin dealt with it. He said this in The Institutes. "In one instance they are too rigorous and inflexible, that is in not permitting priests to marry. With what impurity fornication rages among them." John Calvin. He went on to say, "Emboldened by their polluted celibacy, they have become hardened to every crime. This prohibition has not only deprived the Church of upright and able pastors, but has formed a horrible gulf of enormities and precipitated many souls into the abyss of despair."

Henry VIII of England in 1535 appointed commissioners to inspect all monasteries and nunneries and so terrible were the cruelties and corruptions uncovered, writes Betner(?), so terrible were the cruelties and corruptions uncovered that a cry went up from the nation that all such houses without exception to be destroyed. Henry VIII...Henry VIII was no paragon of virtue. He destroyed these places. "And the fall of the monasteries," quote, "was attributed to the monstrous lives of the monks, the friars and nuns."

Henry Banford Parks has written a history of Mexico. In that history he writes, quote, "Clerical concubinage is the rule rather than the exception and friars openly roamed the streets of cities with women on their arms. Many of the priests were ignorant and tyrannical whose chief interest in their parishioners was the exaction of marriage, baptism and funeral fees and who were apt to abuse the confessional." I mean, it's a terrible thing.

There is a lot of interesting things about the nuns. I used to wonder, "Why would anybody do that? Right? Why would anybody do that?" And in my reading I have discovered that the confessional is the recruiting booth for the convents. When a woman goes into a convent she renounces family, she's basically told that she has to hate her parents and her family. It's a hard disconnect for a woman, harder than a man. She has to slaughter all maternal instincts, which are God-given. She has to put to death the idea of being cared for by a man, which is God-given, to enter this stoic environment. She is given a wedding ring because she's marrying...whom? Jesus. She has to wear this bizarre medieval garb consisting of a long black dress, the symbol of grief. That's what it is, the symbol of death. And then some grotesque headpiece which is no good in the summer or the winter or the wind. So...

But, you know, they recruit them in the confessional. They take advantage of particularly the women who are coming off of a shattered relationship and they're deeply wounded. And they get to know them because in a parish church the same people keep coming back and they look for a sensitive

soul who comes often to confession, comes often to Mass, whose gone through some difficulty and at that point it's really a matter of preying on that person in a time of weakness, a time of pain and suffering to make this bizarre commitment. Emmet McLaughlin writes, "The nun is one of the most remarkable products of the Roman Catholic Church. She's an absolute slave, one whose willingness to offer her life should fill communist leaders with jealousy, one from whom the hierarchy conceals her slavery by the wedding ring on her finger, one who believes that in shining the bishop's shoes, waiting on his table or scrubbing the floor she is gathering treasure in heaven. She is the one who makes possible the Church's hundreds of hospitals, the one who teaches in parochial schools and orphanages, and so forth. She is also a woman with all the desires, instincts, loyalties and hatreds of which a woman is capable, subservient to her man through her indoctrination of her wedding to Christ, often catty and gossipy toward sister nuns and hospital nurses, maternal in her hoverings over priests and children, matriarchal in her petty policies for the control of her hospital and convent." It goes on and on. "Self-annihilating all normal desires..."

And the position of the cloistered nuns, there is really a strange group. Do you know there are nuns who take a vow of silence and spend their entire life and never speak? Never say a word and they think that somehow they're going to get salvation from that. Bender(?) says, "In the setup of the Roman Catholic Church it is the confessional box that feeds the nunneries. The ground work is done on the Catholic girl in the parochial school where the nun is made an object of holy glamour, a replica of the Virgin Mary. The institution of the confessional makes it easy for the priests to find the girls they want and naturally try to select the choice ones. Ordinarily confessions begin at the age of seven. Through this means the priests comes to know the very heart and soul of those who confess, which of them would be desirable in the service of the Church and which could be persuaded and which cannot. It's easy for a trained priest to seize a passing fancy and blow it into a full-scale vocation. Once the victim has been chosen, pressure is applied directly and indirectly until the battle is won. Appeals are made to the girl's Christian sense of duty. The girl's natural reluctance to enter into such a life is pictured as the evil influence of the world and the devil."

And then he writes, "Usually the most important...the most opportune time for persuading a girl to enter a convent comes just after she's been disappointed in love. Blighted romance often affords the priest his most valuable opportunity."

Helen Conroy has written this, "A jilted girl in the first rush of shame and agony of the shattering of her romance is an easy victim of any priest. Knowing that such intense grief cannot last long, the girl is urged to go into a convent at once. The poor girl sees a chance to get away from an embarrassing situation. This is coupled with the fact that she is assured she can leave any time she wishes has led thousands to rush headlong into the convent. They give up everything they possess, of course, at that particular time which becomes immediately the Church's possession."

And it's quite an interesting thing. They have sixty-day period, I think this is still true, they have a sixty-day period in which to dispense of everything. And it's in the euphoria of that sixty days when they're processing into the convent that they're so caught up with the convent that they're basically urged to give it all there. And then Conroy writes, "The girl's mind is poisoned against the mother who bore her and the father and sisters and brothers who make up her family of all the crimes committed in the name of religion..." This is from a book, by the way, Forgotten Women in Convents. "...In the name of religion and this forcing of hatred of parents is the blackest is dehumanizing. This doctrine of hatred of parents by nuns and sisters fully explains why a girl is not allowed to dispose of her property until 60 days before she is to take the veil," that's what it is, "and the vows. The Church fully expects by that time the girl would have learned that her convent is her real home." And so it goes.

Well I could say more but time is gone. This...just one thing. Estimates, I don't know how they vary but there's been estimated there are a hundred thousand women in cloisters. Have you ever heard of the Carmelite sisters? Some of you have. The Carmelite sisters neither teach nor nurse, nor care for the old, the orphans or the infants. They take a vow of complete silence. At 5:30 they rise from their pallets, wooden boards across saw horses, they've taken a vow of poverty. At 8:30 they eat a slice of bread, drink one cup of black coffee. The table is set with plain wooden utensils and a covered water pitcher. In the middle of the table is the mask of death, a skull to symbolize thoughts of death that we are mortal beings, soon to pass into the unknown. Their main meal of the day is fish and vegetables. Their evening meal is soup and bread. Their day ends at 11 P.M. when they silently return to their cells. That's their life.

I mean, that...I'm surprised Amnesty International doesn't raid those places. How are these pitiful souls to be reached?

You know, what is all this to say? Look, how do you get to somebody in a convent? You don't. How's that for a ploy for Satan? Lock them up in a false religion so that absolutely nobody can get near them and then take a vow of silence. Boy, there's a damnation sentence, right?, if you came and asked a question, or have a conversation. This is wicked stuff.

How do you reach these people? How do you reach priests? You know, we think somehow...you know, we've got all these evangelicals that think we ought to just embrace arms with this system. Is that bizarre? What we need to do is rescue these people and the only way they'll ever be rescued is through the gospel. But I think we have to say what has to be said. The New York Times says, this is April 19, article by Laurie Goodstein(?) that now the count is at about a thousand priests that are being charged with abuse. And the number of women abused to one degree or another by priests is going to far exceed men. What do we do with these poor, poor people who are trapped in these terrible, sinful things?

Well there's only one thing and that's to somehow, if you know somebody, you've got to give them the gospel. One other little note I wrote down, a homosexual offender, according to the latest data, this is from World Net, April 29, about two days ago, three days ago, the average male homosexual offender will abuse 150 boys. The average heterosexual violator, 20 girls. And the pedophilia is the basic part of the homosexual movement.

So, you know, this is a scandal of massive, massive proportions. But more than just a scandal, this is a horrible, horrible satanic system that has captured the souls of these people. There's no way we can strike any kind of alliance with this.

Richard John Neuhaus, do you know that name? Wasn't he the author of that document, the ECT document that Colson and all those guys signed? Richard John Neuhaus said he is not in favor of banning gay men from the priesthood, quote, "I think we would probably discover we would be retroactively excluding a good many canonized saints over two thousand years," end quote. Richard John Neuhaus says that if we ban gays from the priesthood, we'd be banning canonized saints over the last two thousand years. Is that a long-term problem? He doesn't have to say that. If I was him I wouldn't have said that. Why would he say that? Because it really doesn't matter in the system.

You know, I just keep going back. "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free...what?...indeed." These dear people need to be delivered and liberated.

Well, you say, how do we do that? Well, if you meet one, you need to treat him with compassion but you need to recognize that they're probably in some pretty profound turmoil and you can talk about freedom and deliverance in Christ.

You know, let's just pray that God will start giving us opportunities to witness to priests and nuns. Wouldn't that be great? So while the whole system is crumbling, these lives can be picked up and no homosexual, 1 Corinthians 6, no sodomite is going to enter the Kingdom of God, right? But Paul then followed up by saying this, "Such were some of you but you have been...what?...washed." Wouldn't it be great? Let's just pray God will give us opportunity to see some of these terrible imprisoned people in a satanic system washed and sanctified.

You shouldn't even be a pastor if you're not the husband of one wife, right? Shouldn't be a pastor if you haven't ruled your own household well. Shouldn't be a pastor if you don't have faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. These people shouldn't be pastors. Furthermore, they're not Christians. Listen to this, "If you say you have fellowship with Him but you walk in darkness, you lie and do not the truth." They say they have this elevated fellowship with God, that's a lie. And you want to know? I think in many cases they know it. They know there's no victory over their terrible blight.

Now there are probably some exceptions to that, men and women who do good and feel good about it. There might even be some people who actually confess Jesus Christ as Lord and been redeemed and they're still stuck somewhere in that system. God could do that. That must be another kind of torture. We don't need any priests. Revelation 1, "You are a kingdom of priests." We only need one High Priest and it's not the Pope. We have one mediator, the man Christ Jesus. The veil is torn, we go right in to the Holy of Holies, you are a priest and I am a priest unto God.

Father, we thank You tonight for a wonderful time together and just kind of sorting through some of these things our hearts are indeed gripped and grieved. How terrible is this system and how...you know, in the evangelical world, Lord, how can people look at this and think somehow that this is all fine and they're just, you know, another denomination and leave these poor and dark and benighted, beleaguered, tragically bound, fettered, eternal souls in that system. Lord God, in the midst of all of this, draw some of these people to Your Son, may they awaken to the true gospel and may they not be so buried deep under the perversions and lies of the Roman system they can't rise from the dead. Would You be gracious in that way and if You can use us along the way to accomplish it, we would be pleased, for Your eternal glory, Lord, we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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