

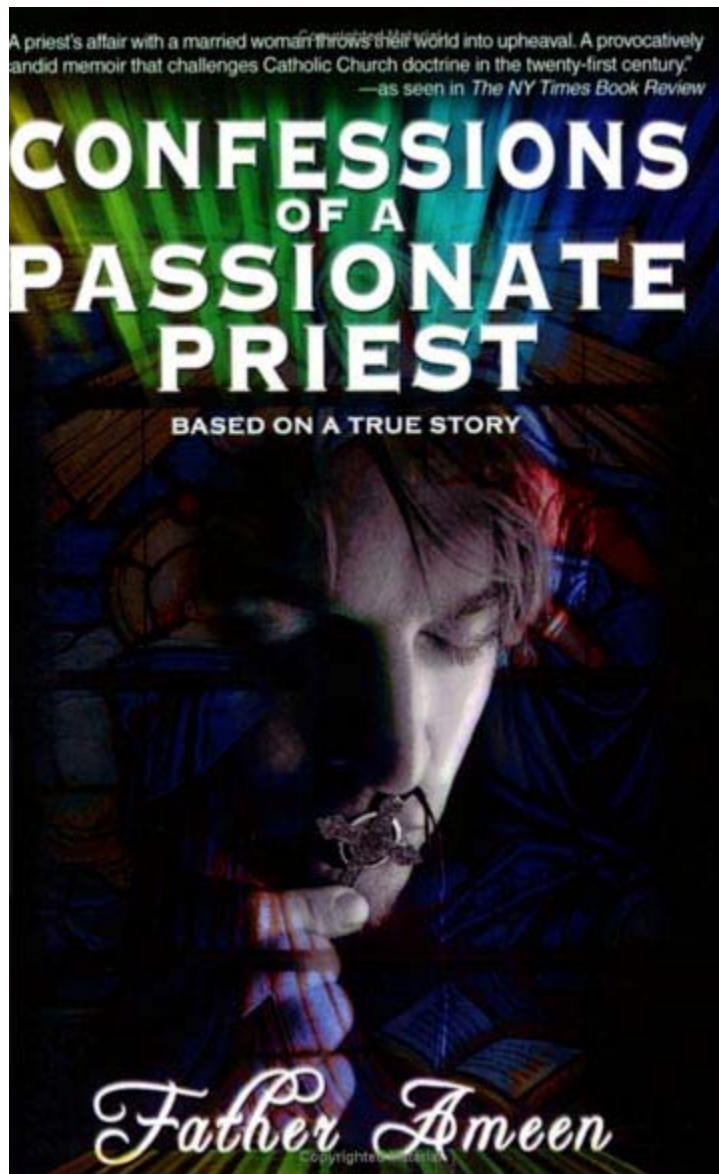
Shortage Of Priests Renews Catholic Celibacy Debate

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(Marion, MA)—Catholic priests are in short supply in recent years, a reality that has renewed the debate over celibacy. According to a recent study, many current priests are already ignoring the order altogether.



A poll of 800 Polish priests revealed that many are ignoring the Church's ban on intimate relationships. More than fifty percent said they wanted to live with a woman and a third admitted to having sex. It's a dark secret one priest working in America kept for years—before writing about it in his new book.

Father Ameen (not his real name), an Eastern Rite Catholic priest for the last eighteen years and author of *Confessions of a Passionate Priest*, had an affair with a married woman. When the relationship was exposed to his bishop, Father Ameen was punished harshly because it brought the threat of a lawsuit from the woman's husband, a scandal the Church didn't want.

"Is consensual sex a sin?"

Father Ameen asks. "Or has Church doctrine failed to address not only our contemporary lives but the reality of human need?"

Father Ameen reveals in his book that his affair was only exceptional in that it brought the threat of a lawsuit. Among the numerous scandals the Pope has had to deal with, the increasing number of non-celibate priests has been largely overlooked.

"The Church would have looked the other way, as it often does," says Father Ameen, "except that her husband threatened to file a lawsuit."

During his affair, Father Ameen spearheaded the building of a noted assisted-living facility at no cost to the Church and ministered to his flock with enthusiasm and dedication. "The idea that a secular life distracts us from our priestly duties is nonsense," he says. "I was never more productive as a priest than when I was also happy in my personal life."

In recent years, some revealing statistics have surfaced about Catholic priests:

- In the last fifty years, 20,000 priests have left the priesthood in the United States, the majority to marry.
- More than 160 priests in the Milwaukee Roman Catholic Archdiocese have signed a petition urging that celibacy be optional in the priesthood and sent it to the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- Journalist and Church scholar Adam Szostkiewicz has said he believes "It is an absurd idea to continue with the celibate for the Catholic Church. I'm not expecting any changes under the current Pope, Benedict XVI, but something will have to change after him."
- At any one time, twenty percent of priests are involved in sexual relationships and eight percent are experimenting sexually.

"I love the Church, but it does have some rules that serve no one," says Father Ameen. "I'm proof, as are all the married Eastern Rite priests, that one can live in the secular world and still serve God."

Father Ameen remains dedicated to the priesthood, despite his contradiction of specific Church rules. He currently lives in an undisclosed location in the United States, preferring to remain anonymous to avoid recrimination.

(Confessions of a Passionate Priest by Father Ameen; ISBN: 0-9816892-0-5; \$14.95; 224 pages; 5½" x 8½"; softcover; East Mountain Books)

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