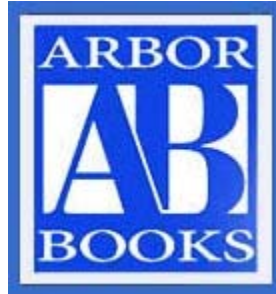


New Push To Promote Marriage For Catholic Priests



Released on: May 19, 2009, 6:57 am

Author: [Arbor Books](#)

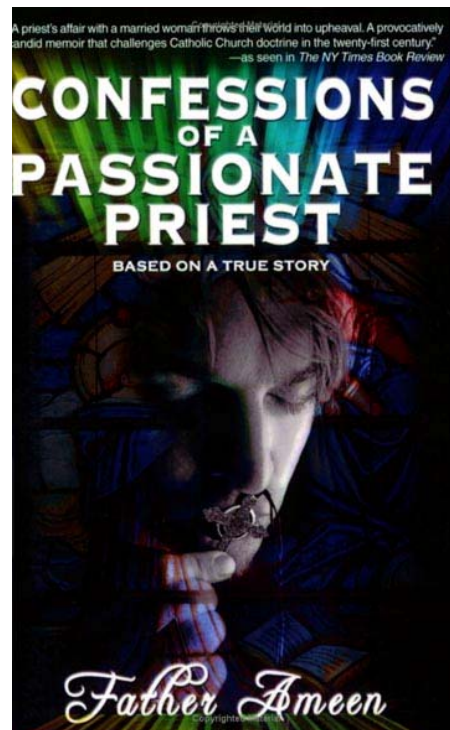
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Though the debate over celibacy in the Catholic Church has been ongoing, two recent efforts have thrust the discussion front and center.

An organization known as Celibacy Is the Issue Ministries (CITI) is making a renewed effort to prove that married priests can administer the sacrament under Canon Law #843, which states that "both pastors of souls and all other members of Christ's faithful have a duty to ensure that those who ask for the sacraments are prepared for their reception."

It's a practical look at marriage and the priesthood that may convince the Church to reconsider its stance on celibacy—a stance discussed in harrowing detail by a priest whose own battles with celibacy cost him dearly.

Father Ameen (not his real name), a Catholic priest and author of *Confessions of a Passionate Priest*, believes that fewer parishes would struggle to find priests if the Church were more pragmatic on the issue of celibacy.



"I had an affair with a married woman," says Father Ameen. "The reality of human nature is that we need intimacy. The Church is failing to address that."

In his book, Father Ameen discusses his own punishment at the hands of his bishop after his affair went public. He says he believes that allowing married

priests to remain as operating clerics would help to avoid situations like his, which got worse recently when his bishop found out that he had written a book about it. Father Ameen was barred from returning to his parish.

"The Church often looks the other way when priests are having intimate relationships," says Father Ameen. "They understand, as well as I and CITI do, that marriage does not distract from priestly duties."

Recent statistics may force the Church to admit as much:

- More than 25,000 priests have married in the United States since the 1970s.
- At present, more than 5,300 parishes are without priests.
- In the last thirty years, seminary enrollment has dropped from 45,000 to just 3,500.

"I love the Church, but it does have some rules that serve no one," says Father Ameen. "I'm proof, as are all 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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