

Homily based on the readings from May 26, 2026 (1 Peter 1.10-16;
Mark 10.28-31)

As some of you may be aware, I did not have the good fortune of growing up in a Catholic household. Although I am grateful to have been raised as a Christian, I was subjected to the *multitude* of misconceptions that afflict our Protestant brothers and sisters. Perhaps the most insidious was the *obstinate* misunderstanding of priestly celibacy. While we should avoid unnecessary generalizations, it is fair to say that most non-Catholics – and, to be honest, an alarming number of self-professed Catholics – willfully misstate the reason that married men are not typically allowed to become priests.

Most of the explanations I heard as a child revolved around the bizarre assertion that Catholics view marriage as being somehow *defective* – that somebody wanting to be a priest must not “contaminate” himself with a wife and children. This notion, of course, is completely backwards. As we all know, marriage is not just a gift from God, but

actually a form of ministry in itself. As the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council reminded us:

Christian spouses have a special sacrament by which they are fortified and receive a kind of consecration in the duties and dignity of their state. By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfill their conjugal and family obligation, they are penetrated with the spirit of Christ, which suffuses their whole lives with faith, hope, and charity. (*GS* 48)

Anyone who embraces the priesthood is essentially giving up one type of sanctifying, self-giving ministry for the sake of another. As the Catechism puts it:

Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to “the affairs of the Lord,” [priests] give themselves entirely to God and to men. Celibacy is a sign of this new life to the service of which the Church’s minister is consecrated; accepted

with a joyous heart celibacy radiantly proclaims the Reign of God.

(1579)

In other words, priestly celibacy – like many other acts of self-denial – is a concrete example of Christ’s teaching from today’s Gospel:

[T]here is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters
or mother or father or children or lands
for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel
who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age
... and eternal life in the age to come.

Every single Christian, regardless of his vocation or state of life, is expected – by virtue of his baptismal covenant – to sacrifice the *good* for the sake of the *better* and the *better* for the sake of the *best*. Although our individual circumstances are all unique, we must always remember that the only objective that truly matters – in this world or the next – is our invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb.