

Celibacy in Crisis: A Secret World Revisited by Richard Sipe Quotes

Pope John Paul II has taken this position repeatedly during his pontificate. He has gone so far as to declare that it is not within his power to change the church law that requires priests to be celibate. Theory aside, incontrovertible evidence demonstrates that many priests, bishops, and popes were married—legitimately—until 1139, when a papal decree rendered any marriage by a cleric invalid and required any candidate for major orders to be single. That 12th century legislation did not alter the legitimacy of a past married priesthood, nor did it ensure the practice of celibacy—perpetual and perfect chastity (cf. Sipe, Chap. 3,1990).¹

From the data I have I estimate that thirty percent (30%) of all clergy have a homosexual orientation. Other knowledgeable observers tend to register higher numbers (Cozzens, 1998).²

[RU.org notes – Encyclopedia of Social Deviance page 5: One of the most controversial aspects of scandals that involve Catholic clergy and child sexual abuse is the role and presence of homosexuality. Gay men are forbidden ordination into the Roman Catholic priesthood. Nonetheless, an estimated 30% to 50% of Catholic

¹ 20.

² 48 – Some have suggested that homosexuality among the American priesthood is declining.

seminarians and priests describe themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many seminaries and dioceses defer to a “don’t ask don’t tell” policy, or they do not enforce Church codes on sexuality and the priesthood. Essentially repudiated by Church doctrine, same-sex desire is viewed and experienced as a stigma that engenders what one psychologist describes as a quiet homosexual subculture in the priesthood.^{3]}

Striving to avoid “transgressing nature” leads some priests to elaborate ways of circumventing the law. Rationalizations abound: if he does not touch his genitals with his hands the masturbation doesn’t count; or if he goes only so far in his touching, and then the ejaculation happens “by accident,” he is not responsible. Therefore, behaviors such as anal manipulation or scratching, genital pressure on a pillow, encouraging a partial erection, or simply allowing the water pressure of a shower or whirlpool to do the arousing make the experience acceptable. In these instances, the pathology derives not from the masturbation, but from the anxiety that leads to such convoluted reasoning.⁴

There are individuals whose powers of imagination are sufficient to cause an emission. One celibate, 35 years old at the time of his interview with us, could sit in a library, his room, or even church, and without any physical movement at all could bring on an

³ Nash, S. T. (2014). In C. J. Forsyth & H. Copes (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Social Deviance* (Vol. 1, p. 5). SAGE Publications.

⁴ 57.

ejaculation. He struggled greatly with the morality of this ability and worried about his “normality.” He would not allow himself to “masturbate” and never consciously used his hand to stimulate himself. He had joined the seminary as a teenager and his first conscious memory of sexual excitement was awakening from a nocturnal emission. Over the years he developed an ingenious compromise by re-creating dreams in his imagination. Visual stimulation—especially movies—were invariably sexually arousing to him. He had no other sexual contact or activity.⁵

The claim that masturbation can be virtuous may seem revolutionary at first blush, but only the unreflective or inexperienced clinician or moralist can hold that it is intrinsically evil and inherently unhealthy. Sin was the unquestionable epithet attached to “self-abuse,” “pollution,” or simply “playing with oneself”—mortal sins all. The direst of punishments of Hell would befall one who succumbed to this temptation. A classic pamphlet commonly distributed at the spiritual retreats of teenage boys in the 1950s was entitled *The Greatest Sin*. One might think that such a title would be reserved for a booklet on genocide, or perhaps rape. Racial injustice or any number of sins against humanity might also come to mind. But no. This was a treatise on masturbation. Generations of young boys became alternately terrified and

⁵ 66.

disappointed that at 13 years of age they had already committed their greatest sin. One can almost admire those brave souls who defied such hyperbole, as well as those who used the book as a how-to manual. A few teenagers had the good sense to recognize the distortion—those who had already developed a firm direction in their sense of self-mastery.⁶

Buy the book: <https://www.amazon.com.au/Celibacy-Crisis-Secret-World-Revisited/dp/0415944732>

⁶ 67.