



17 September 2013

European Federation of Catholic Married Priests.

www.marriedpriests.eu/

Press Release

A small phrase by Archbishop Pietro Parolin, the new Secretary of State for the Vatican, has provoked quite a stir and a quantity of commentaries which surprised us.... « No, priestly celibacy is not a church dogma and can be discussed because it is a church tradition ».

In every country many married priests have been immediately and frequently sought out for interviews by the media. On behalf of the married priests who form the European Federation we wish to express the following reactions.

1. Evidently we are happy with Archbishop Parolins declaration. We thank him for making official, in some fashion, the opening of a debate which has been going on for a long time at grass root level but which was systematically rejected at the level of the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church.
2. There is much to say with reference to the reopening of this debate : the management of ministries by the Roman Catholic Church clearly has shown numerous incoherencies for dozens of years, in matters relating to the demotion to the lay state of priests who married, also the unpunished sexual abuses by so many members of the clergy, and further the reception of refugee married priests, Anglican or Protestant, to whom was offered this free stimulus to conversion. It is a good time to table all of these questions, not forgetting that of the access of women to ordination.

3. We are thoroughly convinced that removing the obligation of celibacy for priests will not be *'the'* solution to the lack of ordained priests, but it will constitute a preliminary step towards posing a more fundamental question, that of the role of the priest in the community which he has the responsibility to inspire and lead and that of his personal status in relation to the community. We have worked on this question at meetings of the European Federation and have expressed our current convictions in a paper (in English, Spanish, French and Italian) which can be found at [www.pretresmaries.eu/pdf/en/450-What kind of priest do we want.en.pdf](http://www.pretresmaries.eu/pdf/en/450-What_kind_of_priest_do_we_want.en.pdf)
4. We have in general lived out our commitment to the service of the church as a grace received, joyfully and without ulterior motives of ambition or power. Many of us continue to live out real 'ministerial' commitments in local communities and in society, even if this is no longer accepted as a priestly ministry. We think that our experience deserves to be recognized and we find it hard to understand how a debate can be opened on this question without our being able to take part in an official manner.

We await then with interest and with a real confidence the reopening of this debate which our bishops were obliged to give up since an unforgettable synod in 1971...We rely on our bishops today to make the most of our invitation and our readiness to dialogue.

For the European Union of Married Priests

Pierre Collet, Belgium, president
Ramón Alario, Spain, secretary,
Claude Bertin, France, Ennio Bolognese, Austria, Paul Bourgeois, Belgium, Franco Brescia, Italy, Marcel Brilliant, France, Jean Combe, France, Bernard Corbineau, France, Philippe Duchesne, France, Wilhelm Gatzen, Germany, Yves Grelet, France, Mike Hyland, Great Britain, Lorenzo Maestri, Italy, Giovanni Monteasi, Italy, Joe Mulrooney, Great Britain, Donat Oberson, Switzerland, Julio Pinillos, Spain, Damian Sassin, Germany, Claus Schiffgen, Germany, Alex Walker, Great Britain, and their wives..