

ANDERSON Jane, *Priests In Love: Roman Catholic Clergy And Their Intimate Friendships*,
Publischer Continuum, 215 pages, \$26.95
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Editorial Reviews

From Publishers Weekly

As a parish secretary, Australian anthropologist Anderson observed firsthand the struggle of men who tried to reconcile their priesthood with the celibacy requirement imposed by the Catholic Church. In 1995, she set out to tell the story of those who have renegotiated their vows by engaging in sexually intimate friendships with women and other men, a venture that required her securing the priests' trust and overcoming their fears of being exposed. In this study, she weaves excerpts from interviews with 50 priests conducted over a 10-year period into support for her strongly held view that celibacy should be optional. Although this story is long overdue, Anderson's book is disappointing because her personal agenda distracts and detracts from the more powerful and human aspects of priests in such relationships. Anderson also is remiss in neglecting the experiences of the partners of "priests in love." Although she hints at the pain they suffer from being part of relationships that are condemned by the church, she rarely allows them to speak for themselves, even as she criticizes a patriarchal church for empowering only priests. Advocates of changing the celibacy requirement will sympathize with Anderson's work, but her method may alienate those who might have been won over by a less strident approach. (*Mar.*)

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Product Description

In the 1960s and '70s, thousands of Roman Catholic priests left the active ministry to get married. Nothing like this had been seen on this scale since the French Revolution, and before that since the Reformation. Now a different phenomenon seems to be at work: priests who have formed long-time, intimate sexual friendships. These men are not pedophiles or sexual abusers. They are adult, mature men who can no longer find a rationale for a life of obligatory celibacy and enter into responsible sexual relationships. Some of them are straight, some gay. Based on interviews, conducted over a nine-year period, with 50 Australian priests, *Priests in Love* tells the stories of these priests and their friends. It deals with the moral, psychological, and social challenges they face on the less traveled road of social change.

About the Author

Jane Anderson, mother of four teenage children, received her PhD in anthropology in 2004. She lives in Yakamia, Western Australia, and has been actively involved in Australian Catholic parish life for over twenty years