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## FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD (3)



For the fourth year in a row I have wanted the people of our Church to express themselves, to share with us their vocation stories. Here, then, are a few testimonies on the vocation to celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom.

### A WORK OF CHARITY

The advice I received at home from my parents on the Catholic religion, as well as the love and respect of neighbour, have helped me build my life. I have spent my life serving the public, and this gave me the opportunity to do volunteer work in various fields. If I have remained single, it was because of life's events. At my retirement, a person who had a home for the elderly asked me to help, and I did. The situation obliged us to do much volunteer work because the home was a not-for-profit organisation. Besides, I believe that Divine Providence helps us in this charitable task. I am still involved at this residence. – Charles

### HAPPY WITH THIS LIFESTYLE

I believe that celibacy is a call of God, a service to society and to our Church. Just looking at all the celibate saints, these past two thousand years, it is certain that this vocation is not meant for everyone; each person is unique and therefore, each one lives it in his or her own way. Are there particular nationalities and temperaments who will have problems, here? Why do Orthodox priests marry? Why is there bigamy and polygamy, in some countries? Why am I celibate? Life's circumstances, my character and my family education have made it so. Out of nine girls in my family, three are single, but each one has a different reason for living this vocation – if we can call it a “vocation.” Pondering the question and looking at married couples, I realise that they are as involved as I who am single, without children to care for, and with no husband. It seems to me that I would never have been able to look after my family and be involved in other things at the same time. It seems that celibacy is not a “normal” vocation. I am celibate, neither married nor a nun. I thank God that I am not because I would have divorced or defrocked. Is it better to be an “old maid?” I myself am happy in this lifestyle. I have different commitments. There are needs in the family, the Church, and my milieu. I have not chosen them, it just seems that they find me, and I accept them as they are. It is in this way that I try to live my life as a baptised Christian. – Lynda

### HAVE YOU LOVED?

Celibacy: a word that meets with a lot of prejudice in our society where everything focuses on sexuality, in the printed and mass media, etc. “A lifestyle that runs counter to the decadence of our contemporary world.” We have problems understanding why a person would choose this lifestyle. I am certain that I could have chosen another path in life, but I freely chose not to do so. I felt a call to give myself to others. As a young person I wanted to dedicate myself totally to education. I realised that this was the path which the Lord had chosen for me, because of my happiness and self-fulfilment. Happiness has nothing to do with social status. The person alone is responsible for her happiness or sadness, whether it be in matrimony, the religious life, or celibacy. Many people think that we accomplish nothing if we remain in the world without getting married. Through celibacy, one can generate life in another way, a spiritual way. My celibate lifestyle has never seemed meaningless or lonely. The gift of self is an effective medicine to life. I have considered celibacy as a normal lifestyle. I had the chance to live in a family where I was considered equal to the others, and never was I negatively stereotyped. I have also felt myself a complete person in the eyes of God. He gave me talents which I think I have been able to use throughout my life. In my profession, with the children, I have always tried to give the best of myself. These children were “my children”, and I loved them as my own. They were my reason for living, and all my energy was directed to them. In return, they gave me much. Their loving hearts,

their lack of prejudice, their capacity for forgiveness, these qualities have helped me be a better human and grow spiritually. Being more free, I was able to give more time to acquiring religious knowledge and working at my personal growth. These periods of reflection made me realise once again that time given to others is a guarantee of great consolations. The hours dedicated to my parents and my brothers and sisters, in times of illness, of old age have also given meaning to my life. Also, I have not counted the time given to my parish community. I believe that there will always be people who will choose celibacy and who will discover, there, a call to dedicate themselves fully to others. I can state quite firmly that in my profession I have met several unmarried teachers who never spared any effort and who enriched our society, by their quality work. Several of them have also offered their talents to the Church, as catechists or as participants in other parish projects. I am confident that when I am taken into the arms of Him whom I have loved and tried to serve as best I could, He will not ask me, "What was your social status?" but rather, "Have you loved?" – Hélène

May the power of these testimonies help us discern the true vocation to celibacy. Many of these persons remain single for the sake of the Kingdom, as they spread love, hope, and solidarity around them.

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« From A Bishop's Journal » (602) (20 July 2005)