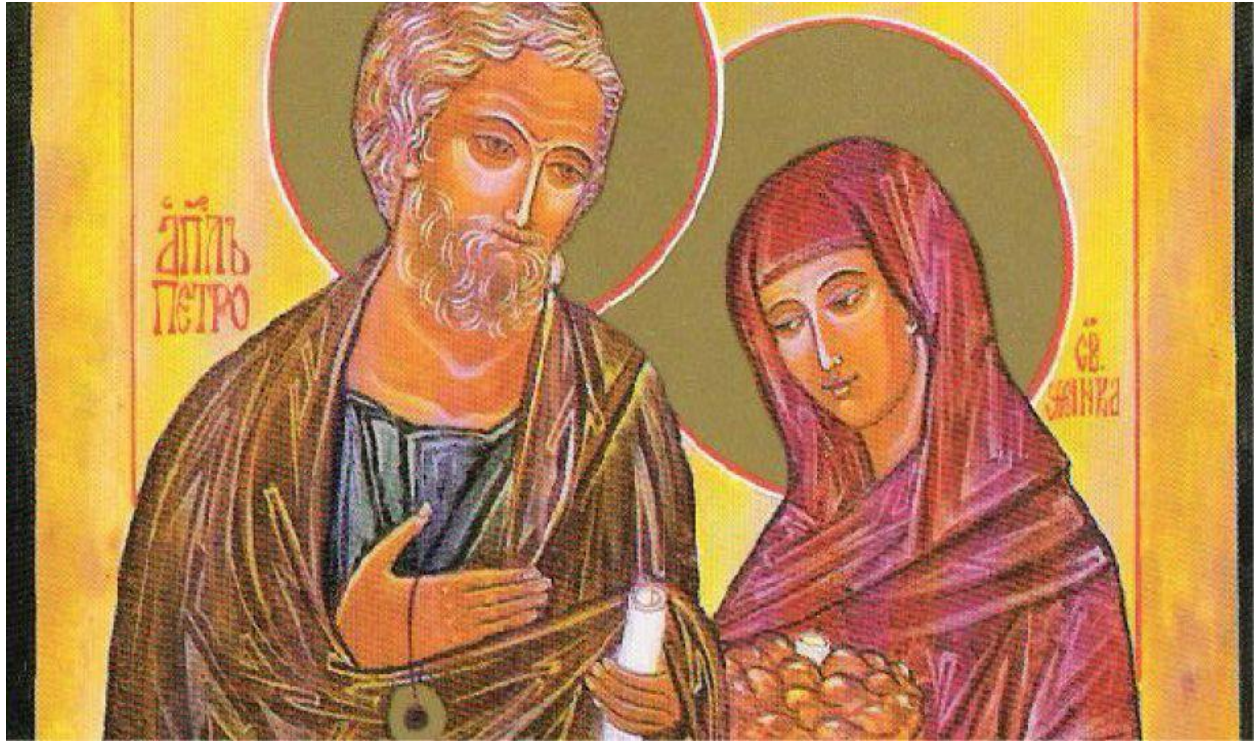


A Brief History of Celibacy in the Catholic Church ¹



First Century

Peter, the first pope, and the apostles that Jesus chose were, for the most part, married men. The New Testament implies that women presided at Eucharistic meals in the early church.

Second and Third Century

Age of Gnosticism: light and spirit are good, darkness and material things are evil. A person cannot be married and be perfect. However, most priests were married.

Fourth Century

¹ Cf. Originally developed by Corpus Canada, revised jointly sponsored by Call To Action and FutureChurch. Future Church: <https://futurechurch.org/brief-history-of-celibacy-in-catholic-church> March-23-2023 (Date of Access).

306-Council of Elvira, Spain, decree #43: a priest who sleeps with his wife the night before Mass will lose his job.

325-Council of Nicea: decreed that after ordination a priest could not marry. Proclaimed the Nicene Creed.

352-Council of Laodicea: women are not to be ordained. This suggests that before this time there was ordination of women.

385-Pope Siricius left his wife in order to become pope. Decreed that priests may no longer sleep with their wives.

Fifth Century

401-St. Augustine wrote, nothing is so powerful in drawing the spirit of a man downwards as the caresses of a woman.

Sixth Century

567-2nd Council of Tours: any cleric found in bed with his wife would be excommunicated for a year and reduced to the lay state.

580-Pope Pelagius II: his policy was not to bother married priests as long as they did not hand over church property to wives or children.

590-604-Pope Gregory the Great said that all sexual desire is sinful in itself (meaning that sexual desire is intrinsically evil? [sic]).

Seventh Century

France: documents show that the majority of priests were married.

Eighth Century

St. Boniface reported to the pope that in Germany almost no bishop or priest was celibate.

Ninth Century

836-Council of Aix-la-Chapelle openly admitted that abortions and infanticide took place in convents and monasteries to cover up

activities of uncelibate clerics.

St. Ulrich, a holy bishop, argued from scripture and common sense that the only way to purify the church from the worst excesses of celibacy was to permit priests to marry.

Eleventh Century

1045-Benedict IX dispensed himself from celibacy and resigned in order to marry.

1074-Pope Gregory VII said anyone to be ordained must first pledge celibacy: priests [must] first escape from the clutches of their wives.

1095-Pope Urban II had priests' wives sold into slavery, children were abandoned.

Twelfth Century

1123-Pope Calistus II: First Lateran Council decreed that clerical marriages were invalid.

1139-Pope Innocent II: Second Lateran Council confirmed the previous council's decree.

Fourteenth Century

Bishop Pelagio complains that women are still ordained and hearing confessions.

Fifteenth Century

Transition: 50% of priests are married and accepted by the people.

Sixteenth Century

1545-63-Council of Trent states that celibacy and virginity are superior to marriage.

1517-Martin Luther.

1530-Henry VIII.

Seventeenth Century

Inquisition. Galileo. Newton.

Eighteenth Century

1776-American Declaration of Independence.

1789-French Revolution.

Nineteenth Century

1804-Napoleon.

1882-Darwin.

1847-Marx, Communist Manifesto.

1858-Freud.

1869-First Vatican Council; infallibility of pope.

Twentieth Century

1930-Pope Pius XI: sex can be good and holy.

1951-Pope Pius XII: married Lutheran pastor ordained catholic priest in Germany.

1962-Pope John XXIII: Vatican Council II; vernacular; marriage is equal to virginity.

1966-Pope Paul VI: celibacy dispensations.

1978-Pope John Paul II: puts a freeze on dispensations.

1983-New Canon Law.

1980-Married Anglican/Episcopal pastors are ordained as catholic priests in the U.S.

Popes who were married

St. Peter, Apostle

St. Felix III 483-492 (2 children)

St. Hormidas 514-523 (1 son)

St. Silverus (Antonia) 536-537
 Hadrian II 867-872 (1 daughter)
 Clement IV 1265-1268 (2 daughters)
 Felix V 1439-1449 (1 son)

Popes who were the sons of other popes, other clergy

Name of Pope	Papacy	Son of
St. Damascus I	366-348	St. Lorenzo, priest
St. Innocent I	401-417	Anastasius I
Boniface	418-422	son of a priest
St. Felix	483-492	son of a priest
Anastasius II	496-498	son of a priest
St. Agapitus I	535-536	Gordiaous, priest
St. Silverus	536-537	St. Homidas, pope
Deusdedit	882-884	son of a priest
Boniface VI	896-896	Hadrian, bishop
John XI	931-935	Pope Sergius III
John XV	989-996	Leo, priest

Popes who had illegitimate children after 1139

Innocent VIII	1484-1492	several children
Alexander VI	1492-1503	several children
Julius 1	503-1513	3 daughters
Paul III 1	534-1549	3 sons, 1 daughter
Pius IV	1559-1565	3 sons
Gregory XIII	1572-1585	1 son

History sources:

Oxford Dictionary of Popes; H.C. Lea History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church 1957; E. Schillebeeckx The Church with a Human Face 1985; J. McSorley Outline History of the Church by Centuries 1957; F.A.Foy (Ed.) 1990 Catholic Almanac 1989; D.L. Carmody The Double Cross - Ordination, Abortion and Catholic Feminism 1986; P.K. Jewtt The Ordination of Women 1980; A.F. Ide God's Girls - Ordination of Women in the Early Christian & Gnostic Churches 1986; E. Schüssler Fiorenza In Memory of Her 1984; P. DeRosa Vicars of Christ 1988.