

INTAMS Seminar 2014

Married Catholic Priests: Perspectives on Priestly and Marital Spirituality

On 31 October 2014 the INTAMS Chair for the Study of Marriage and Spirituality and the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven, sponsored a one-day seminar on the topic, "Married Catholic Priests: Perspectives on Priestly and Marital Spirituality." Although it was modest in extent, consisting of only five speakers, it was broad in scope and included speakers from three continents: North America (Canada and the United States), Europe (Italy and the United Kingdom), and Asia (India). The issues addressed included the historical and theological foundations of a married clergy (Hunter and Petrà), the parity of married and celibate clerics in the Eastern Code of Canon Law (Nedungatt), and the experiences of living as a presvytera or wife of a priest in the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (Galadza) and as the wife of an Anglican bishop (Shaw).

After a welcome by Dean Mathijs Lamberigts and an introduction by Professor Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi, the lectures proceeded as follows:

Dr. David G. Hunter (Ancient Christianity, Cottrill-Rolfes Chair of Catholic Studies, University of Kentucky, Lexington, USA, and Visiting Scholar, KU Leuven), "Marriage and Priesthood: The Evidence of the Early Church," presented the evidence of married clergy from the first to the fifth centuries. He suggested that even after the adoption of a sexual continence requirement in the western church in the fourth century, the single marriages of clergy continued to symbolize the union of Christ and the Church.

Rev. Basilio Petrà (Moral Theology, Theological Faculty of Central Italy, Florence, Italy), "A Divine Call: The Theological and Historical Foundation of Married Priesthood in the Church," argued that advances in the Catholic theology of marriage, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, have made it possible to envision a genuine compatibility between married life and priestly ordination.

Rev. George Nedungatt (Eastern Canon Law, Prof. Emeritus Pontifical Athenaeum of Philosophy, Theology, and Canon Law, Bangalore, India), "Celibate and Married Clergy on a Par in the Eastern Code of Canon Law," offered personal reflections on the development of the new Eastern Code of Canon Law and demonstrated that the eastern code, following the teaching of Vatican II's *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, maintains a parity between the celibate and married priesthood. Like Petrà, Nedungatt sees celibacy and marriage as complementary values and, therefore complementary, not contradictory, forms of ministry.

Mrs. Elspeth Shaw (Wife of an Anglican priest; occupational therapist, with a background in Anglo-Catholic spirituality and Charismatic renewal, Exeter, UK), "The Joys and Challenges of Being Married to an Anglican Priest," offered a joyful and intimate view of her life as the wife of a priest (and later bishop) in the Church of England. She frankly addressed the difficulties involved in constant adjustments to new assignments, as well as the importance of faith, prayer, and ongoing marriage renewal.

Rev. Peter Galadza (Eastern Christian Studies, Acting Director and Kule Family Professor of Liturgy, Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, St. Paul University, Ottawa,

Canada), "The Priest's Wife: A Vocation in Her Own Right," drew on the written experiences of several wives of priests and on his own experience as a married priest to present the examples of holiness and ministry that are lived on a daily basis by presvyterae in the eastern Catholic churches.

The lectures were followed by a wide-ranging discussion.