

countries, for instance, has come to recognise mutual property rights in 'de facto' relationships in the interests of justice between the partners.

Some couples, however, marry without any commitment to exclusive sexual rights and there are casual relationships that also lack that commitment. In those cases it could not be claimed that extramarital sex or sex with other partners was a breach of trust, but the moral force of the marriage could be questioned, and sex without commitment could hardly be considered virtuous. Some unions between same-sex couples do seem to entail commitment akin to that in a fully committed marriage.

When the practice of taking people into slavery was more common, the Church agreed to permit spouses to remarry who had been denied contact with their husbands or wives after the latter were taken into slavery. Consideration now seems overdue with respect to other conditions that effectively terminate a marriage and may warrant acceptance by the Church of the right to remarry for a husband or wife.

Sex, Gender and the Clergy

Related matters include sex, gender and the clergy. The experience of other religions and other Christian denominations reinforces the common-sense view that there is no special benefit in confining clerical status exclusively to those pledged to celibacy. Indeed, many advantages in rapport with the majority of church members and in appreciation by the clergy of the practical realities of their people's lives could follow from having some married clergy and not necessarily restricting them to the lower ranks of clerical office. It is not as though the requirement for celibacy has been an unqualified success. Furthermore, it is through meeting the obligations of parent-

hood that people generally attain a sound sense of responsibility for others and develop love that makes no demand for reciprocity. Good parents gain satisfaction in seeing their children develop and achieve for themselves. The clergy could also benefit from experiencing that sense of responsibility and developing that undemanding love.

Some Christian denominations continue to use for preaching and the conduct of services clergy who have left the full-time ministry, thereby gaining additional experienced priests or ministers and increasing the pastoral care available to their flocks. No doubt some priests would react against any suggestion of abolishing compulsory celibacy. Similarly, initiates in many other institutions commonly claim that, because they had to put up with a requirement or custom, others who come after them should put up with it also. That reaction, however, ignores the needs of the Church and particularly the needs of the people the clergy are ordained to serve. It also fails to consider the aspirations of those with a vocation for ministry but without a calling to celibacy. Nor does it take sufficient account of tradition in that the Church had not definitively established celibacy as universal practice among the clergy until around the fourteenth century. Furthermore, it would seem relevant that celibacy has not been and is not currently a requirement for all clergy in the eastern orthodox tradition.

A similar case could be made for having female clergy. Through most of my career I have been privileged to work with competent and well educated women, at times as their colleague, at others their subordinate and at other times their senior. Such women achieved their positions because of their capacity and drive, not because of any affirmative-action policy about the employment of women. Male colleagues were less chauvinistic working with them, and the women seemed better for working with men.

Democratic countries with full adult suffrage have benefited from