

CALL FOR THE ABOLITION OF CATHOLIC CELIBACY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The expectation in any society of the world is that when a child is of age, he or she is expected to get married to a wife or husband of choice as the case may be. However, the practice of celibacy in the Catholic Church negates this universal societal expectation and assumption. The possibility of a young man or woman remaining perpetually unmarried has been a subject of debate for centuries. This has necessitated the call from within and outside the Catholic Church for the abolition of celibacy for her ministers. The recent sex scandals have further fuelled this debate. The scandals bordering on sexual abuse and paedophilia are social issues which has generated intense debate in the recent times. This study examined the perceptions, values and challenges of celibacy as well as the sex scandals generally in the society with a view to ascertain whether the call for the abolition of celibacy is justifiable. The study was conducted on a sample size of 100 celibate respondents consisting of 70 male and 30 female. The respondents were randomly selected from the Catholic Dioceses of Osogbo and Ibadan. Questionnaire and In-depth Interview (IDI) were used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data from the respondents and the results were presented in tables and percentages. The theoretical framework used in this study is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Max Weber's Social Action Theories.

Key Words: Celibacy, Sex, Values, Scandals, Abolition

Introduction

The issue of celibacy as practiced by the Catholic Church has existed for centuries. It has been an obligation expected of the clergy in the Catholic Church. Over the years, it has generated controversies within and outside the Catholic Church. The practice has been a practice accepted by many and rejected by many. (Pazhayampallil, T. 1997) According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the word

"celibacy" can mean either the state of being unmarried or abstinence, especially because of religious vows, from sexual intercourse. The latter meaning corresponds to that of the word "continence" when used with regard to sexual activity. Celibacy implies a permanent state of chastity. (Austin, F. 1982) Celibacy is a way of life and means living the discipleship of Christ in a radical way. A celibate is one who lives a life of total dispossession. He lives for Christ and

for the people of God. To be celibate means to be empty for God, to be free, and open for his presence, to be available for his service. Hence, growth in the life of celibacy means growing in the capacity to love others without seeking exclusivity of marriage. (Ilesanmi, T. 2001)

The Catholic Church rests on Biblical support for the adoption of celibacy. This is evident in her reference to the Biblical pronouncements of Jesus Christ and St. Paul. In his recommendation of celibacy, St Paul declares "an unmarried man can devote himself to the Lord's affairs, all he needs worry about is pleasing the Lord; but a married man has to bother about the world's affairs and devote himself to pleasing his wife: He is torn in two ways. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband" (I Corinthians 7: 32-35). Jesus Christ first refers to celibacy when he said "it is not everyone who can accept what I have said, but only those to whom it is granted. There are eunuchs born that way from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs made so by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves that way for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can." (Matthew 19:10-12) It is believed that in the pursuit of the sublime goals of

the Church, celibates will be helped by cultivating those virtues which are rightly held in high esteem in human relations. Such qualities are goodness of heart, sincerity, strength and constancy of mind, careful attention to justice, courtesy among others. (Austin, F. 1982). Christian celibacy is as old as Christianity, yet it has continued to raise a lot controversy for centuries and it is not likely that the debate of it will ever end as long as man continues to live on the face of the earth. Because celibacy militates against the natural tendency of man, every era has dabbled into the examination of its usefulness, values, abuse and problems in human society. Even within the Catholic Church where it has worn the garment of diplomatic compulsion within the clerical and religious ranks, spasmodic voices are raised either to justify it or condemn its practice.

Challenges of Celibacy

Celibacy as a life of uncommon self-sacrifice carries along with it enormous challenges. Celibacy chosen for the kingdom of God is an extraordinary choice. "It is no secret that celibate life means continued painful continued renunciations." (Pazhamyampallil, T. 1997) Some of the challenges confronting celibacy are:

1. Loneliness: A celibate is someone who not only does not engage in sexual intercourse, but also

prohibited from marriage. As a result of this, he is confronted with a life without a wife and children, which translates into a life of solitude to some extent.

2. In a Nigerian culture where having children is celebrated as a blessing, the celibate becomes rejected by some and grossly misunderstood. This is because as Africans, some find it extremely difficult to comprehend why a normal person will opt for a life of childlessness. This is why even family members of some celibates have been known to have vehemently refused to accept the choice of the celibate in their family. Some are known to have been disowned by the family.

3. Pornography and an increasingly sex culture of today is a challenge to celibacy. Today, semi-nudity, outright nudity and sex confront the sight of any Nigerian. In the print media, on television, in the various advertisements, sex is the appeal. Pornography has become real in dressing on the streets and on the internet. This without doubt is a challenge to living a life of committed celibacy.

4. The various recent instances of allegations of sex abuse against celibates have also constituted a great challenge against celibacy. The allegations have led to a crisis of confidence and trust in the minds of many against the authenticity of the practice of celibacy. The celibate is

now viewed with some measure of suspicion.

5. Another challenge that celibates face is the natural urge for sex. This is common to all human beings who are potent. Since the celibates remain fully human and potent individuals, they are, therefore, not immune from the natural urge for sex. And having renounced the engagement in sexual intercourse, this becomes a challenge.

Perceptions and Arguments Against Celibacy

A. Celibacy leads to Physical and Psychological Imbalance

It is the opinion of some people that celibates find themselves in a situation that is physically and psychologically detrimental to the development of a matured and well-balanced personality. Those who hold this view posit that celibates are excluded from sharing fully the life and destiny of the rest of humanity, they are obliged to live a life of solitude. Consequently they hold that since the celibate is alienated from the rest of humanity, he is likely to suffer psychological imbalance and a disordered personality.

B. Celibacy is not sustainable

Some have also claimed that celibacy is not possible or sustainable. The truth of the difficulty in sustaining chastity in celibacy is not hidden especially against the backdrop of reported cases

of unfaithfulness on the part of some celibates which has led to numerous sex scandals. Some have argued that due to the instances of waywardness and unfaithfulness on the part of some professed celibates. They concluded by proposing that a married priesthood would remove the occasions of infidelity. (Austin, F. 1982)

C. Celibacy is a deviant and anti-social practice

There are arguments that celibacy limits the social integration and adaptation of an individual. It is held by some that a celibate cannot be fully integrated into the society because he is excluded from the social obligation of conjugal relationship. Furthermore, it held that the relationship of the celibate with the womenfolk is restricted and consequently degenerates into his perception of women as evil. Simply put, the celibate is alienated from ideal human relationship.

D. Celibacy encourages homosexuality and paedophilia

The reported cases of sexual abuse of minors and homosexuality by some celibates have also led many to hold the view that celibacy encourages homosexuality and paedophilia as ways of fulfilling sexual activity. The various accusations and admittance of guilt of these acts by some of the accused celibates has presented some measure of justification for this angle of perception of celibacy.

However, plausible of credible this argument may appear, it is a fact of history that the very low percentage of unfaithful celibates compared to the faithful celibates negates this perception. Also, homosexuality and paedophilia have been found to a greater extent among the non-celibates both single and married. There are reported cases of homosexuality and paedophilia among the married people.

Sex Scandals Outside Celibacy

Studies have shown that sex scandals is a societal problem that is not limited to the celibate domain. Many married men and women have been found to engage in homosexuality, paedophilia, rape etc. For instance, as reported in the Nigerian Compass Newspaper of Monday, 4th April 2011, Pastor Albert Odulele was arraigned, pleaded guilty and jailed for having sex with two boys in the United Kingdom. He was married with children.

Also, Roy Clements was a prominent figure within British evangelical Christianity. In 1999, he revealed that he was in a homosexual relationship with another man. He resigned his pastorate, and separated from his wife. Again, Ted Haggard, in January 2009, admitted to a second homosexual relationship with a male church member on CNN-TV and other national media, and when asked, would not directly answer a question about his other possible homosexual relationships. Also, in September 2010

several civil complaints were filed against Eddie L. Long by men that stated Mr. Long used his position as the church leader to entice or coerce the men into consensual sexual relationships in exchange for money, travel and goods. He was married.

Furthermore, in December 2009 an open lesbian, Mary Douglas Glasspool, was elected as a suffragan bishop in the Diocese of Los Angeles. Her consecration took place on 15 May 2010. Also, in August 2003 the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire elected an openly gay priest, Gene Robinson, as a bishop. Rev. Gene Robinson is a practising homosexual who had divorced his wife and has, for the last 13 years, been living with a male partner. This came shortly after a similar controversy in England when a gay priest, Canon Jeffrey John, was appointed to become the Suffragan Bishop of Reading. In January of 2010, Anglican Reverend Mally Lloyd and the Anglican Reverend Katherine Ragsdale, two high-level male Episcopal priests, married in a ceremony at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston, Massachusetts. There are also cases of rape found among the married. For example, the Punch Newspaper of 28th March 2011, reported a case of rape against an Osun State monarch, Oba Adebukola Alli, the Alowa of Ilowa Ijesa. He has since been charged to court for raping a Youth Corp member. He is married to three wives.

Consequently, though there have been proven cases of homosexuality and pedophilia against some unfaithful celibates, it would be a wrong generalization and also inconsistent with the facts of history to hold the view that celibacy is a haven for homosexuals and pedophiles.

Theoretical Framework

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Psychologist Abraham Maslow first introduced his concept of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" and his subsequent book, *Motivation and Personality*. This hierarchy suggests that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is most often displayed as a pyramid. The lowest levels of the pyramid are made up of the most basic needs, while the more complex needs are located at the top of the pyramid. Needs at the bottom of the pyramid are basic physical requirements including the need for food, water, sleep and warmth (Physiological needs). Once these lower-level needs have been met, people can move on to the next level of needs, which are for safety and security (Security needs). As people progress up the pyramid, needs become increasingly psychological and social. Soon, the need for love and friendship become important (Social needs). Further up the pyramid, the

need for personal esteem and feelings of accomplishment take priority (Esteem needs). When all of the foregoing needs are satisfied, then and only then are the needs for self-actualization activated. Maslow describes self-actualization as a person's need to be and do that which the person was "born to do." The highest level of needs according to Maslow's hierarchy, is the Self-Actualization needs. Like Carl Rogers, Maslow emphasized the importance of self-actualization, which is a process of growing and developing as a person to achieve individual potential. Self-actualizing people are self-aware, concerned with personal growth, less concerned with the opinions of others and interested in fulfilling their potential. These needs make themselves felt in signs of restlessness. The person feels on edge, tense, lacking something, in short, restless.

For Maslow, an individual is self-actualized and motivated when he is able to meet the needs in the hierarchy. However, if he fails to meet the needs, there occurs a disturbing sense of dissatisfaction which leads to frustration. Consequently, whether a person is celibate or not, self-actualization is possible. For a celibate, the primary needs of food, clothing and shelter are met. So also are the security needs of living in a safe environment in the community. He also enjoys a veritable sense of belonging as he is involved in associations, relationships (not sexual),

education and other social needs. With his status in the community, he enjoys an esteemed status of a high level self-respect and respect from others. All these according to Maslow, culminate in the realization of self-actualization needs. It must however be noted, that it is possible that not all celibates could attain self-actualization. This probably explains why some celibates have been involved in scandalous acts. It can also be argued that not all those that married life have attained self-actualization in their choice as studies have shown.

Max Weber's Social Action Theory

According to Max Weber, an action is 'social' if the acting individual takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course. For Weber, sociology is the study of society and behaviour and must therefore look at the heart of interaction. The theory of social action, more than structural functionalist positions, accepts and assumes that humans vary their actions according to social contexts and how it will affect other people; when a potential reaction is not desirable, the action is modified accordingly.

Social action theory seeks to understand how individuals determine and negotiate between their personal desires and the social pressures that largely determine and orient their actions. It also tries to understand the relationship between social structures and the individuals whose behaviour

and actions produce them. Hence, Weber identifies a relationship between Agents and Agency, social structure and social actions. Agents are largely considered to negotiate between their own personal desires and the limitations imposed by their social context. Usually, traditions bind a group of individuals together by providing them with a common set of beliefs, values and practices, but they do not necessarily serve any further utilitarian purpose.

The celibates live in the society and by their way of life influence

others. The celibates by their life of self-sacrifice influence the society. The social actions of the celibates as agents revolves around the institutions through which they share collective goals and take purposive action towards the attainment of those goals. The celibate dedicate himself totally to God in the service of humanity. In spite of the social pressure that expects a man or woman to get married when he or she is of age, the celibate chooses to sacrifice his desires and pleasures for others in the community.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics Distribution showing Sex, Age, Ethnic Group Respectively.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Sex:		
Male	70	70.0
Female	30	30.0
Total	100	100.0
Age:		
25-35	45	45.0
36-45	30	30.0
46-55	15	15.0
56-65	7	7.0
66-75	3	3.0
Total	100	100.0
Ethnic group:		
Yoruba	52	52.0
Ibo	19	19.0
Hausa	5	5.0
Other tribes	19	19.0
Non-Nigerians	5	5.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Adebayo, 2011

Table 1 above shows that 70% of the respondents sampled were male

while 30% were female. This indicates that the male celibates are more easily accessible than the females. The

females live in secluded and semi-secluded communities called convents and monasteries, whereas the male celibates live in the Mission houses among the people. The female celibates compulsorily live in communities of a minimum of two persons, whereas the male celibates though also live in communities of more than one person, they are however allowed to live alone depending on the circumstance. The male celibates serve as administrators of Catholic Churches, Schools and other Institutions, as a result of which the researcher found them more accessible than their female counterparts who though also serve as administrators of Catholic Schools but not as Church administrators. Majority of the respondent are between the ages of 25years and 35 years which constituted 45% of the respondents. The ages range between 36years to 45years constituted 30%, 46years to 55years constituted 15%, 56years to 65years constituted 7%, while 66years to 75years constituted 3%. The

implication of this is that we have more of the young population among the celibate than the old. This means a growing acceptance of the life of celibacy among the young. In comparison with the past where only a few Nigerians accept to be admitted into life of celibacy, there is a steady increase in the number of people getting into celibacy. Furthermore, many of the older celibates are white Europeans who have since retired to the home countries. The result also shows that the majority of the respondents sampled were Yoruba which constituted 52%, 19% were Ibo, 5% were Hausa, while those that belong to other ethnic groups were 19% and 5% were not non-Nigerians. This is an indication of the fact that majority of respondents were Yoruba since the research setting was in a Yoruba speaking area. It also indicates that celibates could be found among all ethnic groups. This research also found out that celibates serve in different communities irrespective of ethnic origin.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics Distribution showing Marital Status, Religious Denomination and Level of Education respectively.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Marital status:		
Single	100	100.0
Married	--	--
Divorced/separated	--	--
Total	100	100.0

Religious Denomination:		
Catholics	100	100.0
Protestants	--	--
Pentecostals	--	--
Total	100	100.0
Level of Education:		
Primary	--	--
WASCE	--	--
Tertiary	100	100.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Adebayo, 2011

Table 2 above shows the marital status of respondents. It shows that 100% of the respondents sampled were single. None was either married, divorced, separated nor widowed. The implication of this is that all the celibates by virtue of their choice of life are not married. Celibates both young and old remain single and live a life of perpetual unmarried state. In actual fact, for any professed celibate to get married, he loses his/ her leadership position in the Catholic Church and is therefore stripped of all rights and privileges due to the celibate state. Consequently, a celibate, no matter how old or young is expected to remain forever single. It shows that 100% of the respondents sampled were Catholics. It shows that in Christianity, the celibates are found only in the Catholic denomination. The Catholic laws as a norm stipulates that anyone

who wants to serve as Ministers and other forms of religious leaders male or female must accept the rule of celibacy. Whereas the Protestants and Pentecostal denominations have no celibates in their fold. This is because celibacy is not a rule for religious leadership. As a matter of fact, marriage is encouraged and compulsory for their ministers. It also shows that 100% of the respondents sampled have tertiary education. Candidates are admitted into training for celibacy only after secondary education. Consequently, all the celibates by virtue and as part of training acquire University education and other professional qualifications. It was also discovered that some chose to become celibates after their University education. The implication is that all the celibates are literates and well read.

Table 3: Distribution Of Respondents By Reasons For Choosing Celibacy

Reasons for choosing celibacy	Frequency	Percentage
Religious reasons	--	100
Health reasons	--	--
Economic reasons	--	--
TOTAL	100	100%

Source: Adebayo, 2011

Table 3 shows that 100% of the respondents sampled chose life of celibacy for religious reasons. None chose celibacy for health or economic reasons. The respondents chose the life of celibacy for the service of the Lord and the people. The implication of this that celibates choose to live celibate life not because of avoiding family expenses, and not because of health challenges like impotence and sterility. Some critics celibacy holds that some

choose celibacy in order to avoid family responsibilities such as expenses. In order words, celibacy is chosen for economic reasons. In the course of this research, it was discovered that every intending celibate is tested by competent Catholic or government hospital to ascertain his or sexual virility before being admitted. This is to ensure that impotents are not admitted into celibacy.

Table 4: Distribution Of Respondents By Families Agreeing With Their Choice Of Celibacy

Family agree with choice of celibacy	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	95	95%
No	4	4%
Indifferent	1	1%
Total	100	100%

Source: Adebayo, 2011

Table 4 above shows that 95% of the families of the respondents sampled

agree with their choice of celibacy, 4% disagreed with their children choosing to be celibate while 1% was indifferent

to the choice. The implication of this is that the majority of the respondents claim that their families agree with their choice of life of celibacy. It means that more families allow their children to choose celibate life than those opposed to it. The increasing number of young celibates is a testimony to the acceptance of celibacy in families. It was however discovered in the course of the research, that though the families being Africans, hold childbearing in high esteem, many allow their children to take into celibacy as they hold that no sacrifice is too much to make for God and the service of humanity. Some families hold that a man or woman who chooses not to raise a family and have

children is a waste and so, they cannot allow their grown up children to opt for such a life that celibacy stipulates. The resort to doing everything possible to discourage their children from celibacy even to the point of disowning such children. Some celibates have been known to have been treated as outcasts by their biological parents and families. However, it was discovered that some families do not bother if their wards choose to live a life of celibacy or not. They hold that the choice of career of the child is left for the child to decide and he accepts responsibility for it. Therefore, if the child decide to go into celibacy, they hold no objection to it.

Table 5: Distribution Of Respondents By Number Of Years Lived As Celibates

Number of years	Frequency	Percentage
1 -10 years	48	48%
11 – 20years	30	30%
21 - 30years	12	12%
31 – 40years	7	7%
41 – 50years	3	3%
Total	100	100%

Source: Adebayo, 2011

Table 5 above shows the number of years lived as celibates by the respondents. The majority of the respondents sampled have lived as celibate for between 1 to 10years

which constitute 48% of the population. 30% of the respondents have been celibates for 11 – 20years, 21-30years constituted 12%, 31 – 40years constituted 7% while 41 – 50years constituted 3%. The

implication of this is that the majority of the respondents are those who have spent less than 10 years as celibates while the older ones are fewer. This is due to the fact that majority of the celibates are younger in age and moreso, the admittance into training for celibacy is largely age-bound. The minimum age for admittance into training in the Seminaries and

Postulancies for celibacy is 18 years. The older generations did not accept celibacy with open hands as the newer generations which has accounted for the steady increase in the number of enrolment into celibacy. This is why the number of those who have spent lesser years as celibates is greater than the number of those who have spent more than 20 years.

Table 6: distribution of respondents by celibacy should be eradicated in the catholic church

Should celibacy be eradicated?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	2	2%
No	94	94%
Indifferent	4	4%
Total	100	%

Source: Adebayo, 2011

Table 6 above shows the response of the respondents sampled to the question of the eradication of celibacy in the Catholic Church. 2% of the respondents holds that celibacy should be eradicated. But the majority of the respondents which makes up 94% hold that celibacy should not be eradicated, while 4% of the respondents are indifferent to the eradication of celibacy. The quest for the eradication of celibacy has occupied the front burner of discourse for a long time from within and outside the Catholic Church. Many believe that celibacy is an imposition that is not necessary for

leadership positions in the Catholic Church. For many critics of celibacy, it deprives the celibate of the opportunity of living a Norman human life which the society offers. The consequence of the finding of this research on the possibility of eradicating celibacy is that an overwhelming majority of the celibates are of the opinion that celibacy is a better option and should continue. The research also shows that there are some celibates, though in the minority, who want celibacy eradicated and would rather prefer to get married, while some are indifferent. There are also a few

celibates, who in their response during in-depth interview would rather want celibacy to be optional. They held that

it should be left to the discretion, choice and interest of the individual and not a law for everybody.

Table 7: distribution of respondents by sexual urge

Desire for sex	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	--	--
No	--	--
Occasionally	100	100
Total	100	100%

Source: Adebayo, 2011

Table 7 shows that all the respondents sampled agree that they occasionally crave for sex with the opposite sex. It is agreed that sex is a natural phenomenon which every normal human being craves for, and since the celibates are normal human being, the urge for sex remains because impotents are not admitted into celibacy. All the celibates affirmed that they are human beings with normal sex drives which they have offered as sacrifice to God and

humanity. This does not however eradicate the tendencies or urges for sex which every human being is expected to have. The sex drive according to them is a challenge which every celibate must face but which the Church has prepared them for by virtue of their training. It is affirmed that prayer, self discipline, engaging the mind in order things productive as well as the support of others have been helpful in coping with the challenge of sex.

Table 8: distribution of respondents by loneliness

Always lonely	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	--	--
No	--	--
Occasionally	100	100
Total	100	100%

Source: Adebayo, 2011

Table 8 shows that all the respondents hold that they feel lonely occasionally. This is due to the state of life as a celibate though working in the midst of people. It was however agreed that they are not always lonely as they still relate and have a functional social life in the community.

A 74 year-old male celibate through an in-depth interview said;

I am a 74 years old Catholic celibate priest. I have been a celibate for 48 years and has been single ever since and till now and definitely till death. I understand celibacy to be a life long commitment which I have freely chosen in order to dedicate myself to the service of God and humanity. Celibacy is possible because that has been my life for the past 48 years and I have no regrets whatsoever inspite of occasional loneliness. The natural urge for sex comes and goes but by virtue of my training I have been prepared to handle it till it goes away because it is not a permanent feeling. I don't feel deprived in any way rather I feel fulfilled. The society, especially the leaders should accept to be selfless and work for the good of the society instead of themselves. The sex scandals about the celibates in the media is a normal thing where you have human beings. Not everybody will be faithful just as it is in marriage. The percentage is very low compared to those celibates that are faithful. Among the married men and women, there are

also sex scandals. Shall we then request for the eradication of the marriage institution because of the numerous scandals? Hence, the reported scandals do not make celibacy to be bad or impossible and cannot justify the call for its eradication.

A 72 year-old celibate, who retired as a University Professor, had this to say;

I am a 72 years old celibate priest and also a retired University professor. I have been a Catholic celibate priest for 40 years and I have no regrets. Rather I am fulfilled and I believe the society has a lot of values to learn from the selfless nature of celibates. Celibacy is a life of self-sacrifice for the good of the ordained to serve. I chose feely to be a celibate. I don't have problem coping with the natural urge for sex as I have an active prayer and working life which diverts my attention when it comes. In every society we have people who are not faithful, so reports of some unfaithful celibates is not enough to hold the view that celibacy is not possible. Faithfulness is possible in marriage irrespective of the fact that some are not faithful to their partners in marriage. Celibacy allows for simplicity of life. As u can see, I am occupying just a room and parlour here even as a retired University Proffessor and I am happy. This is because I am celibate. This is the simplicity of life which celibacy epitomizes. I am not lonely as such because I

have people around me always and I work among the people though there are occasional moments of loneliness.

Another celibate, who is 54 years old, said;

I am 54 years old and a celibate. I have been a celibate for 24 years. I chose freely to be a celibate after a period of nine years in training. I have no regrets. I do not feel deprived of anything and I see the life of celibacy as desirable even as difficult as it is. As a matter of fact, my elder brother is also a celibate priest and I have a cousin who is also celibate. The desire for sex comes naturally and goes away as I do not allow my attention to dwell on it. It is always like a necessary flash in the pan that will always go away. Our society today needs selfless leaders who will be ready to sacrifice their own pleasures for the betterment of the society. Celibacy should not be eradicated because it is a heroic sign of selflessness in the society.

The above in-depth interview shows that celibacy is a free choice which the celibates willingly chose. It is a way of life chosen while fully aware of its implications. The level of education of the celibates also reveals that they are capable of making rational choices. The respondents interviewed have been celibates for 48 years, 40 years and 24 years respectively. It shows that they have lived as fulfilled individuals in their

choice of life as celibates in spite of the challenges of occasional loneliness, African values of marriage and procreation and a prevalent culture of sex in the modern society. Abraham Maslow in his Hierarchy of Needs Theory posits that the highest need in the life of an individual is self-actualization which is tantamount to fulfillment having fulfilled the lower needs. The celibates claim to be fulfilled in their chosen way of life. Though it was agreed that the challenges are real, it is believed that celibacy should continue as a practice because of its values, which consists in self-sacrifice, selflessness and availability for others and the pursuit of the common good over and above self interest. The political leaders should therefore, imbibe the virtues of selflessness and serve the community that elected them into office. The simplicity of life which celibacy epitomizes, such as a retired University contented with a room and parlour should also be a lesson for all that the craze for the excessive acquisition of property does no society any good and this has been the bane of development in Nigeria and indeed, in Africa where our leaders stash millions of dollars away abroad through criminal money laundering. Contentment is essential for happiness and peace of mind. It is argued that marriage is also faced with a lot of challenges, such as infidelity etc, but this does not mean that the marriage institution should be eradicated. Therefore, celibacy should also not be

eradicated because of the unfaithfulness of some celibates.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The choice of the celibate life is no doubt a difficult one. The challenges are numerous but surmountable as this study has shown. Married life also has its challenges and difficulties. Though the recent scandals and litigations even convictions in some cases in the Western world has lend credence to the call for the abolition of celibacy, the percentage of faithful celibates over the years as this study has shown, negates the voice of the protagonists of celibacy abolition. It is a fact of history that marriage institution in the recent years has been going through turbulent times as attested to by the increasing rates of divorce across the globe. This study has equally shown that many married people are not faithful to their partners in marriage. Some are even professed or hidden homosexuals in the heterosexual married state. Can we then logically argue, that in view of the myriad of problems confronting marriage as an institution, that it should be abolished? In the same vein, therefore, will it be logical to argue, that in view of the challenges of

celibacy, that celibacy should be abolished?

It is often said that the baby should not be thrown away with the dirty water. Whatever challenges an enterprise is facing, the call to quit is not the answer or solution. Celibacy should be allowed to stay as a heroic choice of life. However, there should be greater emphasis on faithfulness on the part of those who may decide to be celibates. Furthermore there is need for sex to be demystified in our society of today. One of the major problems of our society today is the glorification of sex. Sexual activity among the young and the old has reached alarming levels. Sexual promiscuity is the order of the day and even married men and women are not left out. Anyone who makes an attempt at leaving decently is regarded as "old school or uncivilized." It is now believed that sex is a vital means of socialization. This is why it is inconceivable for many to believe that anyone could choose to be celibate. The society today must de-emphasize sex like the days of old when people get married as virgins and yet possessed the same sex organs as we have today! There is need for the reformation of the mind of individuals because "what individuals allow pre-occupying them dominates their human desires." (Ilesanmi, 2009)

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