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Foregoing the Flesh

By Dennis Scott-Bush



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through the years. For some, trying to get laid was more bother than they thought it was worth. Other men, for one reason or another, just got out of the habit of making time for sex in their schedules or found substitutes that met some of the same emotional and physical needs.

My clearest understanding of celibacy came from a priest who, later, left the church (though not because of me). I met Matthew at a party. He was charming and flirtatious.

He joked about comparing inseams, since we were both tall and thin and had talked about the difficulties of finding pants with small waists and long legs. I had no clue he was a cleric. I wasn't raised Catholic and he wasn't wearing the uniform. He didn't mention his vocation until I'd already agreed to go out to dinner with him. I confess that I felt more than a tad reprobate meeting a priest for a date outside the church where

at the other end of the spectrum. He compared celibacy to fasting. Either can be beneficial, for a brief period. But anything more is deprivation of a basic human need.

The perspective I gained from Matthew proved to be very helpful when, about six months later, I started dating a gymnast named Brett. He had a body that could stop traffic and a commitment to celibacy that stopped our sex life cold.

Brett believed that his mind and muscles would be more pure and powerful if he abstained from any kind of genital contact. So, we'd spend hours at his apartment making out like the hyper-hormonal young men that we were. Then, when things got to what is usually the point of no return, Brett would push me away.

No amount of cajoling could get him to dissolve his firm resolve, so I moved on. I could have stuck it out, so to speak, and turned to masturbation to meet my own needs. But I'd still have been missing the sexual contact with another man. And that contact was what I wanted and continue to want.

Whether by choice or default, living a celibate life may work for some people. But, at what price? Going without, doing without and just plain missing out.

Count me out.

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tail," he's fond of saying.

"I tell people I'm celibate," Irv admits. "But it's not like I've picked some sort of monastic life. I think about having sex a lot but I end up watching TV or reading a book or whatever. It's easier that way.

Do we lose it, if we don't use it? Is sexual laziness simply celibacy by default?

Irv is like many guys I've known

he'd just led a mass. At Matthew's insistence, I got over my concerns about facilitating his failure to forgo the flesh. His priestly vows were his business and he had, long ago, made his peace with getting an occasional piece.

Matthew believed that completely eliminating sexual intimacy from an adult's life wasn't any healthier than sex addiction,

he'd just led a mass.

Angelo is ambitious. As long as I've known him, he's always put his career before everything else. He doesn't take vacations and he works late nearly every day. All work and no play.

Literally.

Angelo is celibate. He hasn't had sex with anyone for at least three years and has even stopped masturbating. All this, so he can focus entirely on his job.

"It's the new celibacy movement," he explains. "It's an active choice to be sexually inactive."

Is it possible to be so fixated on one's career that sex becomes irrelevant? Or does celibacy merely eliminate a few items on the to-do list of folks who are too busy to try to get laid or play with themselves?

"I have three friends who are celibate, too," Angelo brags. "One of them has gone without for almost 10 years."

Isn't that difficult to do? Don't they miss the carnal bliss?

"It's not as hard as you'd think," Angelo assures me.

Apparently, these guys simply prefer to park their penises in their pants and get on with the business of not getting off.

But what of the men for whom sexual inactivity is less about choice and more a matter of other circumstances?

My friend, Irv, hasn't experienced the mingled melodies of coupled copulation in more years than he has fingers. "To tell you the truth, I'd rather have dinner and good bowel movement than worry about chasing

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