**Letters to The Tablet, June & July 2019**

**06 June 2019**

**Heroic celibacy**
In discussing clerical celibacy (Letters, 1 June), one should salute those innumerable priests who exercise continual self-discipline to ensure that they keep their vows. Nor is it unknown for a priest who senses danger, sometimes at great personal cost, to ask his bishop to move him to another parish.

Nor should one forget that a loving God, seeing a priest’s private struggles, can in myriad ways encourage and assist his efforts to follow his vocation. Heroically they put God first.

**John Kentleton**
Meols, Wirral

**13 June 2019**

The scourge of the Church is clericalism, which is enhanced by mandatory celibacy. Stopping addressing our priests as “Father” would encourage us, the laity, to grow up and become responsible adults and Christians. Might it also lessen the “power” of priests and reduce the incidence of abuse? Jesus said: “Call no one father but God alone.”
**Margaret Foster**
Devizes, Wiltshire

**20 June 2019**

**Heroic celibacy**
I heartily agree with John Kentleton’s letter (8 June) about the “heroic celibacy” maintained by innumerable priests. A priest told my  father that in giving up women “priests crucify themselves”.

Your Letters headline of 18 May – “When a priest falls in love” – suggests that he could not help it. Of course he can help it. Not many people fall in love at first sight and, as John Kentleton points out, the priest  can ask to be moved to another parish. Or better still, if the woman in question had perceived his interest in her, she could go to another church. If she has genuinely come to love this priest surely that is what she would do, rather than deny him his priesthood.

This may sound harsh but there must be many Catholic women, who in their youth have wished that they were boys, in order to become priests. But no, this priceless privilege is reserved for men. It seems incredible that it could be sacrificed because one has “fallen in love”.

Married lay people have to keep their marriage vows even if they meet someone else to whom they are attracted. Leaving a job where they might have met this other person could present more difficulties than being transferred to another parish, or going to a different church.

**Therese Layton**
Harrow, Middlesex

**18 July 2019**

**Forest ministers**
It has been reported that Pope Francis may suggest, at the Synod of the Amazon in October, that married men be ordained presbyters to attend the people of remote places in the Amazon. It has been one of my great joys to train rural catechists in the highlands and rainforests of Peru.

We nominated some of our catechists as Eucharistic ministers. They carried  the Blessed Sacrament to their remote villages and gave communion at the liturgies they presided over. We never had any problems or abuses.

At one of our study days a catechist asked what he should do if a dying Catholic was worried that he or she was not married by the Church and far from a priest. Another man said that he had had one such case. He told us that he had got the couple to express their vows. Knowing that there would always have been people present as witnesses in the hut of the dying, I congratulated the man and told him that he had witnessed a valid, sacramental marriage.

There are wonderful men and women out there in remote places; we must trust them.

**(Fr) Gerard Hanlon**
Otley, West Yorkshire