**Tablet Letters June-July 2021**

**17 June 2021**

Is it coincidence that the Eastern Orthodox Churches, which have a more nuanced attitude to marriage break-up, also have a married clergy well versed in the complexity and reality of the married state?  
  
**Joanna Pallister**  
Durham

**01 July 2021**

**Women’s vocations**  
With so many letters and articles appearing regarding women’s ordination I wonder how many women who, if it were allowed, would put themselves forward as candidates for the priesthood are nuns. I suspect few.   
Why, then, don’t the majority who feel the call to the religious life first apply to become nuns? There are so many orders active in various fields, such as education, healthcare, pastoral duties and parish work crying out for new vocations. Women’s ordination is unlikely to happen in the near future but if it did, surely professed sisters desirous of such a move would be shortlisted.  
  
**Antony Sisley**  
Beckenham, Kent   
  
It is painful to see the Church tying itself in knots over a simple matter. Women are just human beings, like men. And men are wholly human, like women. I suppose men have held power in the Church for so long they don’t even know how frightened they are to lose it. Or how liberating it will be when they realise there is nothing to fear.  
  
**Liz Watson**  
St Ives, Cornwall

**15 July 2021**

**Called to serve**  
Your photograph on page three (Contents, 3 July) showed four priests ordained at Westminster Cathedral. In contrast, the Anglican Bishop of Leeds ordained 23 priests at Ripon Cathedral and the Anglican Bishop of St Asaph, a small diocese in North Wales, ordained nine priests. Thirty-two priests in just two dioceses comprising married men and, hold your breath, women!   
  
The Anglican Church recognises that many outside the celibate ranks are called to serve. Our hierarchy, buried in an out-of-date world of absolute power, refuse to acknowledge that there is a problem. Their solution is to close churches rather than face the obvious. Will they even consider married priests and women priests? No, and they are so locked into retaining power that the thought of recruiting the laity to Services of Word and Holy Communion and thereby saving churches sends them into panic. In Wrexham diocese alone there are 22 churches under threat of closure.   
  
When are the hierarchy going to wake up to the obvious and involve the laity, married men and women, in all aspects of church life? We need priests, and we need them now.   
  
**John Lewis**  
Deganwy, Conwy

**29 July 2021**

**Called to serve**  
John Lewis (Letters, 17 July) draws our attention to an evident fact: other Christian communities have nowhere near the dearth of ordinations that afflicts the Roman Catholic Church. It gives the lie to the canard constantly repeated by those defending the status quo that the former, despite not requiring male celibacy, also face a “similar problem of shortage”.   
  
Using the latest figures available for direct comparison (2018), while the total of ordinations to the permanent diaconate or priesthood for the Roman Catholic dioceses of England and Wales was only 67, the total for the Anglican Church in England alone was 500. And this to serve similar practising populations. When will our bishops wake up?  
  
**Mike Kerrigan**  
Chair, Movement for Married Clergy, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear

Many Catholics wonder why our Church persists with the expensive and questionable training of priests in male-only seminaries. Why not replace this seven-year isolation (which does not always prepare men for the real world of parish life today) with, say, three years full-time in a college or university theology department followed by part-time courses containing reduced academic content.  Such an approach might even attract more candidates who might then engage in part-time ministry alongside a paid job, instead of the traditional commitment for life to a full-time, clericalised ministry.   
  
I understand that the Anglican Church is thinking outside the box in this way, so why can’t we do so?   
  
**Sue Oakley**  
Chandler’s Ford, Hampshire