

We are blessed to have our Faith Formation students enjoy reading the various questions and responses in the "Dear Deacon" insert of the bulletin. Their enthusiasm for spiritual growth in their faith journey is a testament to themselves and their parents and teachers as well. Not only are they attentive but have also posed a few interesting questions.

❖ **Dear Deacon Jim,**

- Why do we cover the Crucifix during the Lenten season? Also, why do we remove holy water during Lent?
- Why is it that priests cannot get married and why is it that only women can become nuns and not priests?

❖ **Response**

These are all great questions and are very timely.

Let me first address the questions submitted about the Lenten season. We cover the Crucifix using a purple veil (the liturgical color of Lent) which is meant to heighten and become more aware of what is missing (the Risen Lord) during this liturgical Season. This is also a reminder, that we live in a veiled world. The veiled cross builds within us a longing for Easter Sunday. Remember, Christ lifts that veil through His Resurrection on Easter.

Concerning holy water (a sacramental), the practice of the Church has been to remove the water from the receptacles and font after the Holy Thursday celebration, keep them empty during Good Friday and Holy Saturday (Paschal Triduum), and fill them with new water blessed at the Easter Vigil. One option you may see is that they are covered with purple fabric. In this way, the Lenten color signifies the season while the water in the font, **if present**, is still accessible as a reminder of baptism for the faithful.

Regarding the question of *why priests cannot get married* this is a "hot" topic in our Church today. In the Latin (Roman) Catholic Church priests vow to remain celibate. This celibacy allows priests time and energy to focus completely on their flock and to be more like Jesus, who was unmarried, more faithfully. The roots of celibacy requirements go back to Jesus who was an unmarried virgin. Jesus is likened to a bridegroom whose bride is the Church. So, a Roman Catholic priest is indeed married but in a different way than what we think of. The priest, through the sacrament of Holy Orders (an outward sign that gives grace), ministers in the person of Christ.

As to the question of why only women are nuns and not priests, it must be noted that the Religious Life (such as a nun) is not a sacrament instituted by Christ as is Holy Orders. So, the priesthood is not comparable to the religious life of a nun. You may hear of nuns being called the "*Bride Of Christ*". Religious life and the vows taken are a way of living based on the teachings that Jesus preached in our daily living. Religious life is open to women (nuns) and men (such as monks, etc.) alike.

Deacon Jim