NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

What can we learn from scripture?

Pat Perriello | Oct. 1, 2012 NCR Today

I want to respond to some of the comments I received concerning my last blog [1] as to whether Jesus was married. First, I want to make absolutely clear that I am not a scripture scholar in any sense of the word. Just the fact that I have no biblical language skills would eliminate me from that possibility. I have, however, developed a deep love for the scriptures. In fact, I was hooked on the study of scripture from the moment I walked into my first scripture class at St. Mary's Seminary in 1965. In all these years, I have never stopped reading the latest works and ideas of reputable scripture scholars.

I studied for three years at St. Mary's under Raymond E. Brown, who was unquestionably the best scripture scholar Catholicism has ever produced. I have read just about everything he ever wrote. I would also add that I believe some of today's scholars tend to interpret their findings in something of a sensationalist manner that might get them a hearing on TV or in venues like Time magazine.

My contention was that the possibility of Jesus being married was idle speculation because I don't think the evidence supports that notion. Is it possible that Jesus was married? Of course -- just about anything is possible. Am I afraid of the possibility that Jesus might have been married? I don't think so. I am interested in seeing just how far the evidence will carry the idea. There is no suggestion of this possibility anywhere in the tradition, even in our oldest traditions. Why would it not have been mentioned? Certainly there was no concern about mentioning the married status of the apostles. One comment on a scrap of papyrus simply does not warrant jumping to a conclusion supported by no other evidence. Hopefully, I am open enough to consider meaningful evidence if it is found at some point. I'm just saying this is not it.

I said the fact that Peter as well as other apostles were married offers the best argument for married priests. One writer suggested the best argument is a dearth of priests and the unhealthy behavior of too many of our priests. I couldn't agree more. I was simply pointing to a biblical argument that would likely be necessary to get the institutional church to consider ordaining married men.

One reader seemed concerned that the lack of direct quotes in the scriptures might shake the foundations of our faith. Remember that our religion is based on faith. There is very little that we can prove. What we do have as believers are four canonical Gospels that tell us about Jesus. As believers, we accept the picture they give us of Jesus as true and accurate. This is the kind of person Jesus was. These are the kinds of things he did. As John says, these things were written that you might believe in Jesus. The Gospels do not, however, tell us what Jesus said and did on Feb. 18 in the year 30. They are not historical accounts of the life of Jesus. Rather, they are accounts put together by believers in Jesus on the basis of available traditional materials. These preachers are telling us why they believe in Jesus and what believing in Jesus will mean for us.

Finally, in response to one comment, I have to say that I loved The Da Vinci Code. It was a great story. I've read all of Dan Brown's books, but I was kind of disappointed with his most recent novel. Hopefully he will come up with something better soon. Thanks to all of you for your comments and your interest.

Source URL (retrieved on *02/06/2016 - 07:53*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/what-can-we-learn-scripture

Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/node/32373