

Pope's right hand man says priests may be allowed to marry and celibacy is 'tradition, rather than law'

- Archbishop Pietro Parolin says there should be a 'discussion' on issue
- Statement carries weight as he is Pope Francis' second-in-command
- He says celibacy for priests is 'not dogma'

By [Ben Haugh](#)

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The Pope's new right-hand man has called for 'discussion' on the issue of celibacy within the Catholic Church.

Archbishop Pietro Parolin, the new secretary of state of the Vatican, told Venezuelan newspaper El Universal that celibacy is tradition rather than law, and should be open to discussion.

He said the Church must 'reflect the democratic spirit of the times' and take the opinions of its members into account.



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Archbishop Pietro Parolin, Pope Francis' (pictured) right hand man, has called for a discussion on celibacy for priests

He said: 'Celibacy is not an institution but look, it is also true that you can discuss (it) because as you say this is not a dogma, a dogma of the church.'

Archbishop Parolin is considered to be the most powerful official in the Vatican and his comments carry considerable weight.



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Archbishop Parolin is considered to be the most powerful official in the Vatican and his comments carry considerable weight. File picture

Pope Francis has been making waves in the Church with his forward-thinking approach and has made a series of comments to suggest that he is in favour of shaking up some age-old traditions.

Soon after being becoming Pope he called for a 'poor Church for the poor'.

He also said he wanted to boost the role of women in the Church and proposed a more tolerant stance on homosexuality, stating: 'Who am I to judge?'

And before he took office he gave an interview in which he said: 'For the moment, I am in favour of maintaining celibacy; with all its pros and cons...It is a matter of discipline, not of faith. It can change.

'Personally, it never crossed my mind to marry.'

It is not the first time the issue has arisen.

In 1970, nine German theologians, including Joseph Ratzinger (the future Pope Benedict XVI), signed a letter calling for a new discussion of the law of celibacy.

In 2011, hundreds of German, Austrian and Swiss theologians signed a letter calling for married priests, as well as women in Church ministry.