

# Contents

---

List of Illustrations .....	viii
Foreword by John L. Allen Jr. ....	xiii
Acknowledgments .....	xvii
Introduction.....	1
1. Summary of Findings .....	5
2. Two Statistical Surveys: The Sample and the Method.....	21
3. Physical Health and Self-Care .....	29
4. The Psychological Wellness of Priests.....	37
5. Burnout and the Priesthood .....	69
6. Happiness and the Priesthood .....	85
7. Factors Contributing to Priestly Happiness .....	99
8. Those Thinking of Leaving the Priesthood.....	135
9. The Spiritual Lives of Priests.....	143
10. Priests and Prayer .....	167
11. Young Priests, Old Priests, and Those in the Middle .....	177
12. Recommendations.....	195
Conclusion: The Secret of Their Joy.....	202
Appendix 1: The 2004 Survey of Priests.....	205
Appendix 2: The 2009 Priest Wellness Survey.....	210
Appendix 3: 2009 Survey Composite Variables .....	219
Appendix 4: Correlations among Variables Predicting “Happiness and Morale” .....	225
Notes .....	228

# Illustrations

---

## Figures

---

3.1	“I pray privately each day . . .” and body mass index.....	34
4.1	Years ordained and “I was sexually abused before the age of eighteen” .....	48
4.2	Years ordained and “Growing up, I had difficulty coming to grips with my sexuality” .....	49
4.3	Years ordained and BSI-18 anxiety.....	53
4.4	Years ordained and BSI-18 depression.....	54
4.5	Years ordained and Dysfunctional Childhood .....	55
4.6	Years ordained and Childhood Mental Health Problems.....	56
5.1	Years ordained and Burnout-Emotional exhaustion.....	73
5.2	Years ordained and Depersonalization .....	74
5.3	Years ordained and Personal accomplishment.....	75
5.4	2004 survey: Years ordained and “I feel overwhelmed with the amount of work I have to do” .....	77
6.1	Years ordained and “Overall, I am happy as a priest” .....	95
7.1	“Despite its challenges, celibacy has been a grace for me personally” .....	106
7.2	“I believe God has called me to live a celibate life” .....	107
7.3	Years ordained and “Growing up, I had a good relationship with my father” .....	115
7.4	Years ordained and “Growing up, I had a good relationship with my mother” .....	116
7.5	Years ordained and “I share my problems and feelings with close friends” .....	124
8.1	Years ordained and “I am thinking of leaving the priesthood” .....	137
10.1	“I pray privately each day . . .” .....	168
10.2	Years ordained and “I pray privately each day . . .” .....	169

10.3	“I pray privately each day . . .” and “Overall, I am happy as a priest” .....	171
10.4	“I pray privately each day . . .” and Relationship to God.....	173
10.5	“I pray privately each day . . .” and Burnout-Emotional Exhaustion .....	174
10.6	“I pray privately each day . . .” and “I suffer from loneliness” .....	175
11.1	Years ordained and “Overall, I am happy as a priest” .....	179
11.2	Years ordained and Prayer and the Sacrament of Penance.....	180
11.3	Years ordained and Devotion to Mary.....	181
11.4	Years ordained and Relationship to Bishop.....	182
11.5	Years ordained and “Obedience to religious authority is an important value for me” .....	183
11.6	2004 survey: Years ordained and “I feel proud to be a priest today” .....	184
11.7	2004 survey: Years ordained and “I actively encourage men to become priests” .....	185
11.8	2004 survey: Years ordained and “I see a positive future for priesthood in the United States” .....	186
11.9	2004 survey: Years ordained and “I support the requirement that priests live a celibate life” .....	190
11.10	Years ordained and View of Celibacy.....	192

## Tables

---

2.1	2004 sample by years ordained.....	22
2.2	2009 sample by years ordained.....	24
3.1	Weekly day off and annual vacation .....	29
3.2	Regular exercise.....	31
3.3	Body mass index .....	32
4.1	BSI-18 pathology results .....	41
4.2	Correlations of BSI scales with emotional support and friendships.....	43
4.3	Years ordained and “I was sexually abused before the age of eighteen” .....	47
4.4	Years ordained and Divorced Parents.....	57

4.5	Correlations of Dysfunctional Childhood, Childhood Mental Health Problems, and BSI-18 scales.....	58
4.6	Number of priests with “caseness” on the BSI-18.....	59
5.1	Maslach burnout inventory scores.....	70
5.2	Priests scoring in the upper one-third of the Maslach norm sample .....	71
5.3	Correlations of Dysfunctional Childhood, Childhood Mental Health Problems, Time Off, and the three Maslach burnout scales .....	76
5.4	2004 survey results: “I feel overwhelmed with the amount of work I have to do” .....	79
6.1	“Overall, I am happy as a priest” .....	86
6.2	“My morale is good” (2004 survey); “My morale as a priest is good” (2009 survey) .....	87
6.3	Percentage reporting happiness: comparing priests to laity of all adult age cohorts .....	88
6.4	2004 survey results: “Morale in the priesthood today is good” .....	90
6.5	Satisfaction with life scale.....	93
7.1	Pearson’s <i>r</i> correlations with Happiness and Morale .....	100
7.2	Summary of multiple regression for variables predicting Happiness and Morale.....	101
7.3	“I have a good relationship with my bishop” .....	111
7.4	“Priests are supportive of one another in my diocese” (2004 survey); “Priests in my diocese/religious order are supportive of each other” (2009 survey) .....	120
7.5	Close priest friends and good lay friends.....	122
7.6	“I share my problems and feelings with close friends” .....	123
7.7	Devotion to Mary .....	125
8.1	2004 and 2009 survey results: “I am thinking of leaving the priesthood” .....	136
8.2	Numerical count for years ordained and “I am thinking of leaving the priesthood” .....	138
8.3	Pearson’s <i>r</i> correlations with “I am thinking of leaving the priesthood” .....	139

8.4	Pearson's <i>r</i> correlations of burnout scales with "I am thinking of leaving the priesthood" .....	140
9.1	Relationship to God.....	144
9.2	Pearson's <i>r</i> correlations of Relationship to God to mental health and well-being .....	145
9.3	Pearson's <i>r</i> correlations with Relationship to God.....	146
9.4	Summary of multiple regression for variables predicting Relationship to God.....	147
9.5	2009 survey results: Reception of the Sacrament of Penance .....	158
9.6	2004 survey results: Reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation .....	159
9.7	"I pray privately each day . . ." .....	160
9.8	"I pray most or all of the Liturgy of Hours daily" .....	161
9.9	Pearson's <i>r</i> correlations of Prayer and the Sacrament of Penance.....	163
10.1	Years ordained and those who do not pray privately.....	170
11.1	2004 survey: "Overall, celibacy has been a positive experience for me" .....	187
11.2	2009 survey: "Despite its challenges, celibacy has been a grace for me personally" .....	188
11.3	2004 survey: "If priests were allowed to marry, I would get married" .....	189
11.4	2004 survey: "I support the requirement that priests live a celibate life" .....	191
N.1	"Growing up had difficulty with sexuality" for ordination cohorts.....	230
N.2	Years ordained and BSI-18 anxiety; and BSI-18 depression .....	231
N.3	Burnout scales and ordination cohorts .....	233