

IV Lateran Council
1215 C.E.
Canon 14

Summary. Clerics, especially those in sacred order, shall live chastely and virtuously. Anyone suspended for incontinency who presumes to celebrate the divine mysteries, shall be forever deposed.

Text. That the morals and general conduct of clerics may be better reformed, let all strive to live chastely and virtuously, particularly those in sacred orders, guarding against every vice of desire, especially that on account of which the anger of God came from heaven upon the children of unbelief, so that in the sight of the Almighty God they may perform their duties with a pure heart and chaste body. But lest the facility to obtain pardon be an incentive to do wrong, we decree that whoever shall be found to indulge in the vice of incontinence, shall, in proportion to the gravity of his sin, be punished in accordance with the canonical statutes, which we command to be strictly and rigorously observed, so that he whom divine fear does not restrain from evil, may at least be withheld from sin by a temporal penalty. If therefore anyone suspended for this reason shall presume to celebrate the divine mysteries, let him not only be deprived of his ecclesiastical benefices but for this twofold offense let him be forever deposed. Prelates who dare support such in their iniquities, especially in view of money or other temporal advantages, shall be subject to a like punishment. But if those, who according to the practice of their country have not renounced the conjugal bond, fall by the vice of impurity, they are to be punished more severely, since they can use matrimony lawfully.¹⁴

¹⁴ The last sentence of the decree has referene to the clergy of the Eastern Church, who, while they were forbidden to marry after ordination, were permitted to continue in conjugal relations with the wife to whom they had been wedded before the reception of order. Together with the Latin Empire, a Latin patriarchate had been established