

Ordain Women Priests?

BY FATHER PLACID JORDAN, O.S.B.

Zurich—(NC)—Should women be ordained priests?

This question has stirred up a vigorous debate in several European nations lately, and the affirmative answer to the question has found supporters among many serious Catholic theologians.

A memorandum has even been drawn up by two women theologians in Germany, and has been presented to many leaders of the Vatican Council, stating that women priests are not only permissible, but necessary.

THE REASONS given in favor of women in Holy Orders are many, but they can be summed up under four general headings:

• Those who point out that Jesus and His Disciples were all men are begging the question, because the social status of women at the time of Christ made it impossible for women to be accepted as serious teachers.

• The Messiah was a man, but He represented all of humanity, not men alone. Humanity would have been saved just the same had the Messiah been a woman.

• St. Paul has been incorrectly interpreted, by St. Thomas Aquinas, among others, as saying women cannot attain Holy Orders. There were female deacons in the early Church, and St. Paul was alive today. He would support the notion of women in Orders.

• Those who accuse some Protestant groups of hampering the ecumenical movement by ordaining women are themselves hampering the ecumenical movement by refusing to admit the possibility of women as priests.

THIS DEBATE on the position of women in the Church was opened two years ago by a Catholic woman attorney in Zurich, Gertrud Heintzelmann. She petitioned the Second Vatican Council to reexamine those provisions of canon law which she said were discriminatory against women, and which resulted in an inadequate understanding of the Epistles of St. Paul.

For a time the debate slumbered among the pages of theological journals, but the petition was drawing some impressive support. Father Henry van der Meer, S.J., studying at the University of Innsbruck under the Vatican Council expert, Father Karl Rahner, S.J., wrote a thesis entitled, "Theological Considerations on the Ordination of Women."

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Women Want Council Voice

London—(NC)—The Bishops of England and Wales have been asked by a Catholic women's association here to request the Vatican Council to invite competent women to its sessions as "advisors."

The resolution was passed at the annual meeting of St. Joan's Alliance. The group also asked the hierarchy to support resolutions concerning the fuller participation of women in Church services. Such resolutions were passed by a meeting of St. Joan's International Alliance in Fribourg, Switzerland.

The women said that the commission created by Pope John XXIII to revise canon law should give some consideration to those canons said to be discriminatory against women. The canons, among other things, bar women from Holy Orders.

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Prisoners Greet Pope

Rome—(RNS)—Inmates at the Regina Coeli (Queen of Heaven) prison in Rome, reach out to kiss the hands of Pope Paul VI during his visit to the jail where some 1,200 prisoners gave him a warm greeting. The pontiff celebrated Mass for the inmates and recited the Our Father and Hail Mary with them. He repeatedly blessed prisoners around him, distributed gifts, and told them he wished he could give them their freedom. Pope Paul was the second pontiff to visit the jail. The first was Pope John XXIII in 1958.

Pope Scolds Italy's Bishops on Council

Vatican City—(RNS)—Pope Paul VI, in delicate but pointed terms, called the Italian hierarchy to task for what he clearly intimated were attitudes hampering and delaying the work of the Second Vatican Council.

At the same time he admonished the hierarchy over what he implied was its lack of unity and failure to make more coordinated and determined efforts to cope with current moral and religious problems in Italy.

Pope Paul spoke in the Consistory Hall of the Vatican Palace before 300 cardinals, archbishops and bishops gathered in Rome for a three-day plenary session of the Italian Episcopal Conference. The 10-year-old conference is similar to other national episcopal bodies in some 50 countries.

The occasion was said by observers to mark the first time that a modern Pope had ever publicly criticized the Italian episcopate.

Pope Paul's references to the Vatican Council were seen as a veiled rebuke to some Italian bishops for trying to alter the course of the Council and even to sabotage its business — attempts which have been extensively reported by the European Catholic press ever since the Council opened in October, 1962.

In his reference to the Council, the Pope began by saying that he had "wish at this phase of its work to discuss the merits of the doctrines and decrees which would be discussed when the Council opened its third session in September."

"We have thus," he said, "wished to preserve, in the practical manner which we set out for ourselves, namely, that of entrusting to the Council Fathers and with them to the various episcopal confederations and Council commissions, the free and ample possibility to investigate and discuss."

The Pope said "our only urgency is to arrange that the preparatory work of the commission and of the secretariat will proceed rapidly and in such a way that the schemata be completed in a fitting manner to be presented before the Council, in the hope that after some final discussions the Council Fathers could come to conclusive decisions, in one sense or another, without prejudicing the length of the Council, about which no forecast is given at this point."

He then told the Italian bishops that it had been his wish that the Council be given "efficiency and rapidity" with no limits or decisions imposed upon it.

The Pope then stressed "the great problems" facing the Italian episcopate, beginning with that posed by the "excessive number of dioceses" and including that of preserving the faith among the Italian people "threatened by the evolution of modern life itself and by secularism and by communism."

Another difficulty, he said, is that of "seeking to solve the problem of vocations and of the seminaries." In addition, he

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Slow Justice Is No Justice

Slow justice is no justice. That, said Bishop Kearney, is the reply to those white people who tell Negroes it will take yet more time and patience to end racial bias in this nation.

He said white American Christians, by their failure to find workable ways to attain racial justice, open the door to violence, communism and religious fanaticism.

HE RENEWED his blessing to the Rochester Catholic Interracial Council, currently under fire from many self-styled, outspoken "good" Catholics for its backing of a public school "open enrollment" program to end de facto segregation.

Full text of the Bishop's talk is on page two of this issue of the Courier.

He spoke following Mass Sunday morning at Immaculate Conception Church, Rochester.

He also led the congregation in a "prayer for brotherhood" which said, "Before we offer gifts to others let us be mindful of our debts to them... by our actions let us inspire others to break down the barriers history has cruelly built between brothers."

At his private breakfast at the Mayor Hotel after the Bishop's Mass, Franciscan Father Ray M. Gassick of St. Bonaventure University said the civil rights movement is entering its "most dangerous period" and that it threatens "to tear our country apart."

He said the movement "has already passed the point of no return."

While Americans—like those who voted for segregationist Governor George Wallace of Alabama in the Wisconsin primary—who are trying to stop the civil rights tide unwittingly set the stage for a blood bath of violence.

He particularly blamed current turmoil on "the great, solid, unthinking masses of the racial-crisis neutrals... who render lip service to the American creed of equality... but whose voices are silent and whose

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Japan TV Shows Pope Pius Life

Tokyo—(NC)—The life of Pope Pius XII was presented to Japanese television viewers in a 30-minute documentary series entitled "The Man of the Century."

Observers here report that coverage of the Catholic Church by Japan's mass media has increased markedly since the reign of Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council. Millions of Japanese viewers watched Pope Paul VI make the Stations of the Cross in Rome on Good Friday. The Catholic population of Japan is only 294,000—less than one-third of one per cent of the total.

Two Stations Broadcast Mass, Rosary Tonight

Mass and Rosary will be broadcast on the Family Rosary for Peace radio program on Rochester's WSAY and Auburn's WMBO-FM tonight, Thursday, at 7 p.m.

Rev. William Trott will celebrate the Mass while Rev. Joseph Cirincione, pastor, and parish Holy Name Society president Dominic DeGuarda recite the Rosary.

Bishop Kearney recently inaugurated the Mass-Rosary broadcast when he blessed a newly decorated Rosary Chapel at the St. Francis center where broadcasts originate.

Radio station WMBO-FM has also joined WSAY in broadcasting the Angelus three times daily at 7 a.m., noon and 6 p.m. Sunday Angelus schedule is 8 a.m., noon and 6:15 p.m.

'In Strongest Form' U.S. Churches Back Civil Rights

Washington—(RNS)—A demand that the United States Senate pass the pending civil rights bill "in the strongest possible form" was made here in a joint statement by leading representatives of a majority of American Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism.

Spokesmen for the bulk of the nation's religious community—described by many as having decisive power in the struggle to obtain equal justice for all citizens—said that the "moral and spiritual" implications of the proposed legislation make it impossible for churches and synagogues to watch the Senate debate "as uninvolved spectators."

The religious groups will make a mass expression of involvement in the issue, the interreligious representatives said at a press

conference, through a convocation of unprecedented scope on April 23.

Issuing the joint statement and announcing plans for the convocation were Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, chief executive officer of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and chairman of the National Council of Churches—Commission on Religion and Race; Father John F. Cronin, S.S., assistant director of the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and Rabbi Uri Miller, president of the Synagogue Council of America.

It was expected that the convocation, to be held in McDonough Auditorium at Georgetown University, would be the "largest gathering of ministers, priests and rabbis ever before assembled in a witness to racial justice."

The planned meeting was seen as an effort by the nation's religious community in behalf of civil rights which would parallel a surge in impact in a Protestant-Catholic-Jewish participation in last summer's March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Like the Lincoln Memorial program during the March on Washington, the forthcoming convocation will have a special section of reserved seats for each of the 535 U.S. Senators and Representatives.

Main speakers will be Dr. Blake, Catholic Archbishop Lawrence J. Shehan of Baltimore, Md., and Rabbi Miller. Special music will be presented by an interracial, interreligious choir of 200 voices.

And to broaden the outreach of the event, it was announced, simultaneous church and synagogue-sponsored meetings are planned in cities elsewhere in the country.

Also, the convocation will be a prelude to continuing worship services and expressions in support of the civil rights bill in each of the religious groups.

The National Council of Churches' Commission on Religion and Race has scheduled Monday-through-Saturday worship services, called "continuous" inasmuch as no benediction will be given until a strong civil rights bill is passed, at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation on Capitol Hill.

More than 125 of the nation's most prominent Protestant and Orthodox ministers, priests and laymen have been invited to the Protestant services. It was announced by Dr. Robert W. Spike, executive director of the NCC race commission.

Initial speakers will include Dr. Spike; Bishop B. Julian Smith of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and a vice chairman of the NCC commission; Dr. John C. Bennett, president of Union Theological Seminary in New York; and Dr. Benjamin Spock, internationally-known pediatrician.

Wilkie Cathelcum, Father Cronin said, follow-up messages to the convocation will stress that justice and respect for human dignity call for equal voting privileges, equal access to public accommodations—whether publicly or privately owned—and equal educational and employment opportunities for all citizens.

Rabbi Miller said the convocation would be followed in synagogues by prayers and sermons in behalf of equal rights.

Credit for spearheading plans for the convocation and other religious moves for civil rights was given at the press conference by Dr. Blake to Catholic Archbishop Patrick A. O'Boyle of Washington.

He said the archbishop has "given leadership which all America should appreciate." Spokesmen for the various religious groups have been in "almost daily contact" in mapping plans for the convocation and the follow-up program, Dr. Blake said.

In addition to the organized features of the interreligious civil rights campaign, the press conference principals said that spokesmen of religious groups would call on legislators to urge passage of the impending measure.

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Washington—(RNS)—Nuns were among well-wishers reaching out to greet President Johnson at White House News Photographers dinner meeting. LBJ has asked U.S. churches to back pending civil rights law now bogged in Senate debate.

Vatican Names UN Observer

United Nations—(NC)—United Nations Secretary General U Thant announced that the Holy See has decided to appoint a permanent observer to the U.N.

Thant revealed that the Papal Secretary of State, Achille Cardinal Cicognani, told him of the Holy See's decision in a letter dated March 21. The Secretary General voiced his agreement.

Mgr. Alberto Giovannetti, veteran officer of the Papal Secretariat of State, has been named the first Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations.

The Italian-born prelate is now in Geneva as head of the five-man delegation representing the Holy See at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which opened on March 23.

Mgr. Giovannetti is the author of a number of works on international affairs including a book entitled "The Vatican and the War," which was published in 1960.

While the Holy See has not previously had a permanent observer at the United Nations, it was represented at various kinds of meetings in the past by Auxiliary Bishop James H. Griffin of New York, who died in February.

The Holy See has for years maintained permanent observers at headquarters of UNESCO in Paris and the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, both specialized agencies of the U.N. It maintains delegates to various other international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Commission and the Executive Committee of the Program of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Speaking to a pilgrimage of French teachers of plain chant, the Pope said:

"Are any of you perhaps alarmed at the future applications of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy which was adopted by the council Fathers and promulgated by us last Dec. 4? Let them read that admirable text's passages concerning liturgical chant, and particularly the following: 'The treasures of sacred music to be preserved and fostered with great care...' (Liturgy Constitution, Paragraph 114).

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