

Editorial

Women Priests?

The ordination conference in Detroit over the Thanksgiving weekend served to formalize the question that has been openly discussed for some time now — can women be ordained priests of the Roman Catholic Church?

With the general increased attention being given women's rights over the past few years, it was inevitable that this issue be faced. The ordination of women to the Episcopal priesthood last year added momentum.

Of course, the answer will not be easy. There are important theological, traditional, historical facets. A spokesman for the United States Bishops has flatly said no way. This approach, rather than solving the problem, has only given it impetus. In a time of collegiality, consensus was missing. So was clarity.

More than a year ago, Bishop Joseph L. Hogan prophesied, "Certainly the day is coming soon when we Roman Catholics will have to face the question of official recognition of the ministry of women. . . . Many people have already begun to ask when these women will be ordained. Will it come in our lifetime? How will they be received?"

He referred to pastoral assistants already doing some of the work traditionally done by priests.

We all should be aware that there is nothing to fear in open discussion of this question. Care, however, must be taken to avoid factionalism, polarization, and extremism. Please, God, that this significant and delicate question be handled with compassion and rationality. Name-calling will only be divisive. We do not need that.

We have the feeling the issue will not go away; eventually there will have to be a ruling, probably from the Vatican itself. If it is no, let there not be bitterness; if the answer is yes, let us be supportive.

Regardless of finalities, however, we should realize that the question is a fair one. It is healthy that it is out in the open for frank and judicious discussion — always without rancor.

The ordination conference itself set a proper tone. "It was not militant feminism" was how one priest observer described it. We hope that supporters of women in priesthood maintain that graceful position and that those opposed speak without rancor.

Women in the priesthood, however, is only the specific part of the issue. Also a matter of contention is the overall position of women in the Church. Whether or not female priesthood is attained, we all must be aware that the Church cannot afford to refuse the many gifts women have to offer, among them leadership.

Need and Hope

Looking for some hope? Try the recent National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus at St. Joseph's Abbey in Covington, La. Black priests and Brothers as well as America's three black Catholic bishops were in attendance.

Brother Joseph Davis, executive director of the National Office for Black Catholics (NOBC), characterized the conference as "the most positive that has ever been held. . . . good to see so many of the black clergy present. . . . a very fine spirit of prayer."

The NOBC reported that the meeting was "permeated with an inspirational spirit throughout and the camaraderie of the assembled priests tended to inspire and rekindle their dedication to the Church and to helping their race play a more meaningful role in it."

Speaking for the Church, Archbishop Jean Jadot, the apostolic delegate to the United States, said it all when he told the black clergymen, "The Catholic Church in America needs your unique contributions and gifts of blackness if she is to reflect the universal character of the people of God."

Opinion

**Brazil Sisters
Send Love**

Editor:

Time for giving and receiving. In the rural areas of the interior of Brazil, bands of three mysterious men, dressed royally, roam from farmhouse to farmhouse for nine days, offering a gift of song to all. Everywhere, they are received warmly, with festive foods and music becoming symbols of the mutual exchange in love which is Christmas.

In this Christmas season, we in Brazil wish to exchange with you, our friends of the Rochester Diocese, that mutual embrace of love and union with Christ-among-us. If we can't do it with song or festa, as do the Brazilian Three Kings, then we send this greeting - Merry Christmas!

God bless all of you and know that you are specially remembered in our thoughts and prayer.

Sincerely,
The Sisters of
St. Joseph
in Brazil

**CARE Sends
Gratitude**

Editor:

As the holiday season nears, we wish to commend and thank the American press for continuing to inform their readers about CARE food, medical, self-help-development and disaster programs for the world's needy. Newspaper coverage of our aid to the poorest of the poor in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East is vital in rallying public support.

In our work of helping people become self-supporting, food remains central, especially now when the world hunger crisis still cruelly afflicts many countries. The current CARE Food Crusade seeks \$8,000,000 in individual contributions to help feed 27 million people this coming year, mostly children. Scheduled feedings for the young will prevent malnutrition and enable children to grow into productive adults.

Public donations are basic to make all this possible. But, with overseas governments sharing operating costs and the U.S. government supplying Food-for-Peace farm commodities, CARE is able to deliver over five dollars worth of aid for each donor dollar.

Frank L. Goffio
Executive Director
CARE
660 First Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10016

COURIER-JOURNAL

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan
President

Anthony J. Costello
General Manager

Carmen J. Viglucci
Editor

Rev. Louis J. Hohman
Episcopal Advisor

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"FACE IT, WALDO—TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION MUST HAVE SOMETHING!"

**Come Back
To Church**

Editor:

I direct this letter to C. N. in Father Hohman's Open Window of 11/19.

Speaking as a member of the Church, Yes, I care and have deep concern for every person in this body of Christ. If we did not care we could not love Christ or take part in the miraculous, Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Every day Our Lord calls us to His supper to give us spiritual food and make us strong enough to persevere in faith. He is our Shepherd in every situation, guiding us along the difficult way, lighting our path, filling us with hope as He constantly renews us in His Spirit.

Father Hohman is right about the unchanging fundamental form of the Mass. For centuries back and time to come we can not alter the Holy Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ or change its meaning.

God has been good to us — His love is everlasting, encircling all of us, forgiving our faults for the asking, strengthening us spiritually and physically in the Eucharist and ever calling us to participate in His Sacrifice of love.

Please come back, C. N., and find His warmth in the people around you who reach out to touch your hand in the sign of peace. Give us another chance to allow you to discover Christ in us.

Barbara A. Fischer
77 Harwick Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14609

**New Liturgy
Criticized**

Editor:

Father Hohman's reply to C.N. (The Open Window, Nov. 19) was very disappointing. C.N. asks, "Does the Church care and is it concerned about the traditional Catholic who in clear conscience cannot accept the new liturgy and the changes?"

In reply, Father Hohman asks, "Has the Eucharistic Liturgy, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass changed in any substantial or integral way?" and in another question he asks, "How it can be a matter of conscience if not one single essential element has been omitted or substantially changed?"

God forbid that we are asked to offer Him only essentials in return for His Sacrifice on the Cross. As one who is well beyond middle age; I, too, am inflexible (and thank God that I am) about the new liturgy and many of the changes. Where is the beauty, the splendor, the dignity and awe of the traditional Mass? Why does

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not the priest along with the people face our Redeemer on the cross and the tabernacle which contains His Real Presence instead of showing his back? Yes, the essentials remain; but I ask who would choose a finger painting to a Raphael, though the essentials of canvas, paint and labor are in both. And if the essentials are to suffice, why not a five-minute liturgy?

If C.N. seeks an answer to the question "Does the Church care?" it will not be found in the words of Father Hohman's reply but in the way he framed it, which I interpret to be "NO". But God cares and that is the essential reality that matters.

John E. Gartland
5829 27th Ave. N.
St. Petersburg, Fla. 33710

**Police State
Looms**

Editor:

Not having witnessed the alleged knife attack on a police officer by a mother, and the alleged shooting of the mother by the officer, the writer has no comment on this most unfortunate incident. However, a related ethic taxes the tolerance of a growing number of law abiding citizens:

When an officer of the law is slain by a thug or hophead (again no reference to the case at hand), the incident is all too often shrugged off; and, with the exception of his loved ones and fellow officers, is soon forgotten. In some circles his demise is even greeted with delight. Heaven help us for we are all guilty in one way or another.

With our galloping crime rate supported by a deteriorating moral atmosphere — where an inflated dollar has replaced God Almighty — a police state will very soon become a necessity. If history is any criterion, we will then indeed be dominated by pigs. We'd better believe it; because if we allow it, we deserve it.

Edward A. Veith
2952 Atlantic Avenue
Penfield, N.Y. 14526

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They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced, with names and addresses. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.