

Locals at Ordination Conference

Woman Priesthood Now on the Table

At the beginning of advent, 1975, some 300 women stood up in a Detroit conference hall to acknowledge that they hoped to be ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood. One after another, slowly at first, the women arose, and those about them signified their assent to this declared aspiration.

This incident occurred during a liturgy Saturday evening, Nov. 29, at America's first large-scale conference on the ordination of women.

At the final session Sunday, Sister Marjorie Tuite, OP, a

teacher at the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago, summarized the convocation's immediate result. "What we have achieved," she said, "is to give visibility to the movement for the ordination of Roman Catholic women."

The assembly asked the organizing task force to remain in liaison with groups seeking to advance the movement.

Sister Barbara Moore of Rochester confessed afterward to a feeling of privilege "for being part of this historic event." The atmosphere throughout was

"prayerful," she said, and there was "a sense of sisterhood—that's sisterhood with a small 's'."

Nearly all of the speakers were women from university graduate school faculties or theological centers, and the respondents were professionals at a similar level.

The weekend meetings drew 1,200 participants. Of these, about 900 were women from religious orders, Religious News Service reported, and another 100 were priests, Brothers and laymen.

The 26 who went from Rochester will get together again this Sunday, Dec. 14, at the University of Rochester Interfaith Chapel.

Sister Barbara, RSM, a pastoral assistant at St. Monica's, and Sister Kathleen Kircher, SSJ, a guidance counselor at Nazareth Academy, were sent by the Diocesan Sisters Council and their respective communities. Both are DSC officers. They will report to the council at its next meeting, Dec. 13, "but to communicate well what we experienced will take time," Sister Kathleen said.

"To share well the content of the talks, the discussions and proposals will take organization and time," she continued, "and sincere commitment on the part of people who want to learn about it."

She said she was having 40 slides prepared, and Sister Anne Mary Dooley had made tapes. These will be available to interested organizations, because "we want to be of service to

people of the diocese." Her pictures, she said, "relate the sisterhood, the personhood that came through."

Both delegates, interviewed separately, spoke of what Sister Barbara called "the high intellectual level of the major papers and the prepared responses." These papers soon will be published in a Paulist Press paperback, Sister Kathleen said.

The conference called for "new models;" for a priesthood, several speakers suggested, concerned more with pastoral needs than with power.

According to Sister Barbara, the Church was seen as a patriarchal society, "but we don't want to move into a matriarchal society."

She referred to one commentator's perception of the convocation's "fidelity to the

traditions of the Church," and quoted another as saying, "We are not here to confront the Church, because we are the Church."



Esther Wilken, left, and her sister, Eloise, autograph copies of their new book at Sibley's Dec. 3.

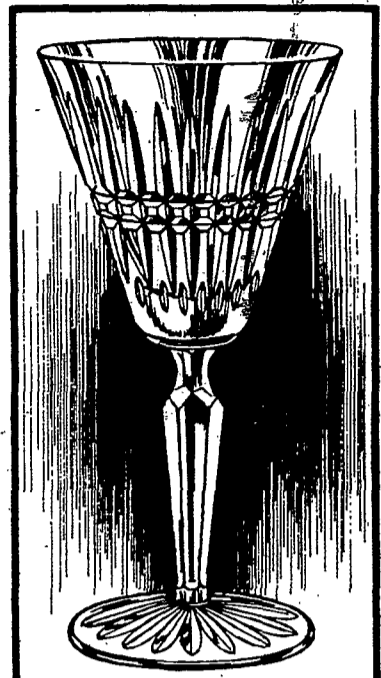
2 for the Book

In the Cathedral bulletin of Nov. 30, Bishop John E. McCafferty wished the Wilken sisters "Two good cases of writers' cramp" from autographing their latest book, *The Golden Treasury of Prayers for Boys and Girls*.

Writers' cramp would be an occupational hazard for them, anyway. Esther has written 22 books since their first collaboration in 1938, and Eloise has decorated 81, defining her wash drawings with "the finest pen that can be found." How long she has been at it, "I'd hate to tell you," Eloise said.

The Wilken sisters are that by marriage — they married brothers. By birth, they are the Burns sisters, nieces of the late Msgr. George V. Burns, a founder and first pastor of Sacred Heart parish, and builder of the cathedral.

Their new book contains some verses discreetly signed "E.W." but chiefly is Esther's selection of simple prayers from various cultures, with Eloise's pictures of the world's children. On the face of it, the *Treasury of Prayers* would seem to be a far cry from the Wilkens' first book — Mrs. Peregrine and the Yak.



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