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Women's Role in Early Church Is Discussed

BY MARTIN TOOMBS

Women were an important part of the Early Christian Church, and were involved actively in ministry during the first century, Michele Daviau told 30 women who attended an Ecumenical Women's Clergy Conference last Thursday.

It wasn't until the second century that the evolution of church structures created an all male priesthood, she said.

Ms. Daviau, a former theology professor at Nazareth College and a recent graduate of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, spoke to the group on "The Christian Community and Ordained People in a Biblical Perspective." Also featured at the conference was a panel presentation by four women involved in ministry, three of them ordained in Protestant denominations.

The conference was sponsored by the Episcopal Committee for the Whole Ministry of the Church, the Monroe Baptist Association, the Presbytery of Genesee Valley, and the Rochester Regional Task Force on Women in the Church, a Catholic group.

Examining the life of Jesus and His relationship with women, Ms. Daviau noted that He had women among his disciples and they participated much as the men did. She pointed out Christ's response to Martha when she asked that her sister be told to help her prepare the day's meal. Mary was listening to Christ speak. He told Martha that "Mary has chosen the best part, and it will not be taken from her."

Ms. Daviau also noted the wedding at Cana, when Christ complied with his mother's request even after telling her that he was not ready to begin his public ministry.



Michele Daviau speaks to the Women's Clergy Conference at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School. Photo by Ben Susso

Discussing the admonitions to women in the letters of St. Paul to the Corinthians, that women should keep their heads covered and be

silent in church, Ms. Daviau noted that it is important to take the instructions in the context they were given. Paul's letters to the

Corinthians include specific instructions, Ms. Daviau said, that could have been necessary for the

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Archbishop Bernardin Slated Here

Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, will celebrate Mass and deliver the homily at the national convention of the Catholic Kolping Society of America, to be held here in September.

Archbishop Bernardin is also the national episcopal moderator of the organization. He will join with spiritual directors and guest priests from the various Kolping groups around the country to celebrate Mass at St. Mary's Church, Sunday, Sept. 5, at 10 a.m.

The local Kolping is also this year celebrating the 50th anniversary of its foundation.

According to Leo P. Saeum, local president, the convention will headquarter its more than 400 delegates in the Downtown Holiday Inn.



ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN

Catholic Official Assails Death Penalty OK

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — An official of the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC) has deplored the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding the death penalty as a "further erosion of the value of human life."

The court ruled, 7-2, that capital punishment, in and of itself, is not constitutionally forbidden as a form of cruel and unusual punishment. In 1972, the court ruled that the death penalty was being imposed arbitrarily, under various state laws and was unconstitutional.

Dr. Francis J. Butler, USCC associate secretary for Domestic Social Development, said the USCC was "saddened" by the latest Supreme Court ruling on capital punishment.

"This decision can only mean a further erosion of the value of human life and an increased brutalization of our society," he said.

The USCC statement noted that "In November of 1974 the bishops of the United States expressed their opposition to the use of capital punishment."

"In this day when the value and dignity of human life needs to be clearly affirmed it is not difficult to surmise the reasons which underlie the position of the Church leadership in this matter," the statement continued.

"It is evident that the bishops seek first to advance the respect for life that must be promoted in every situation, a position that is consistent with their stance against abortion and euthanasia. The inner coherence of the respect for life and the Gospel message of healing has perhaps led them to defend life in this matter as well."

Abortion Ruling Assailed

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The executive secretary of the State Catholic Conference has

joined other critics of the Supreme Court's July 1 ruling that neither the consent of parents nor of the husband is required in an abortion.

Charles J. Tobin said the decision "compounds the tragic error of the 1973 abortion decision and strikes another serious blow at the rights of parents and the family."

The decision, Tobin stated, "makes clear, once and for all, that we can expect no redress through the courts. The only way to overturn the tragic abortion mentality is to seek constitutional amendment."

Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York City earlier had expressed similar views stating that a constitutional amendment to protect unborn life is necessary "now more than ever."

Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati, president of the U.S. Catholic bishops conference, declared that the rulings made abortion "more constitutionally significant than the rights of parents to rear their children" and the rights of husbands "to participate fully in all decisions affecting their marriages."

On the other side of the issue, pro-abortion forces were elated. Ise, Darling of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights said the decision was "monumental."

She said she hoped that the ruling would "de-escalate the abortion controversy and allow abortion rights supporters to turn their attention to alleviating the conditions which force so many women to seek abortions as a solution to their problems."

In another abortion-related controversy, Father George L. Frappier, pro-life coordinator of Providence, R.I., has urged all to write to Jimmy Carter expressing opposition to the Democratic party platform plank which opposes any constitutional amendment that would bar abortion.

No U.S. Trip For Pope

Vatican City [RNS] — The Vatican has denied that Pope Paul intends to make any visits to the Western Hemisphere.

"Paul VI will not go to Philadelphia in the United States for the 41st International Eucharistic Congress, nor will he visit any of the other American countries to which he has been invited," said Father Romeo Panciroli, acting Vatican press officer, in response to reporters' questions.



Ready to Begin

Lonetta Carey, 66, and Charles Jock, 83, read through missalettes as they wait for Mass to begin at Marine House Domiciliary Care Facility in Rochester. The Mass was celebrated by Father Ronald Enderick, one of the nine priests of the region who take turns providing Mass once a month.

Photo by Susan McKinney