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## Early Church Ordained Deaconesses, Study Says

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — A new Roman Catholic study of the ministerial activity of women in the early Church says that during the first 600 years of Christianity women were ordained to the diaconate, but not to the priesthood.

The study, commissioned by the U.S. Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Women in Society and the Church, found that "there was a real ordination of women to the diaconate at some periods" during those first centuries, and that the woman deacon's "mandate and ministry were identical in every way to those which applied to men in the diaconate."

They exercised ministries that

were catechetical, liturgical, sacramental, prophetic or administrative."

On the other hand the study concluded that there was no evidence to support any claim that women were admitted to the priesthood "in the sense in which priesthood is understood today."

"Women were never ordained to priestly ministry, that is, to function as president or principal celebrant at the Eucharistic liturgy," it stated.

The study, entitled "The Role of Women in Ecclesial Ministry: Biblical and Patristic Foundations," was made by Sister Agnes Cunningham, SSCM, associate professor of theology at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein, Ill.

In an introduction to the monograph, Bishop Michael F. McAuliffe of Jefferson City, Mo., chairman of the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee, said it was the hope that reflection on the vital contribution of women to the apostolic and patristic eras of the Church will help to open new approaches to ministry for women in the contemporary era.

Sister Agnes Cunningham's paper discusses some of the reasons for the "diminishment" of women's ecclesial role in later centuries, emphasizes the need for further scholarly research, and calls for a "new understanding" of women's role in society and in the Church.

The study by the vice-president

of the Catholic Theological Society of America rests on investigation of pertinent New Testament texts and relevant material in the writings of the Church "Fathers." These were Christian thinkers and teachers who wrote between the end of the 1st Century and the close of the 8th Century. This is the period commonly termed the "Patristic Age."

Beginning with the post-resurrectional New Testament times, and continuing through the Patristic Era, the study said there was ample historical evidence that "the ministry of women flourished during the first six hundred years of Christianity."

Nonetheless, it noted, it is not possible to determine from New

Testament texts "a clearly defined account" of the "specific ecclesial functions" of women.

Even in the patristic age, the study continued, "investigation points increasingly to the evidence that no uniform practice or policy prevailed and 'each particular church enjoyed a certain autonomy in its implementation of the principles underlying office and function within the hierarchical structure of the Church.'"

Moreover, "even during periods of women's fullest ministerial activity, certain limitations and specifications regarding her ecclesiastical role were operative," according to the study.

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Philadelphia Bound

Photo by Ben Susso

After a year of preparation, a group of young people gathered last Friday at Holy Trinity parish in Webster to board a bus headed for the 41st Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia. During the last three days of the congress, the students attended a youth Mass, saw "Godspell," participated in the closing Mass, and in between all this planned to sightsee the bicentennial city. The 29 teen-agers and 8 adults were the guests of parishioners of St. Andrew's in Drexel Hill. Numerous fund-raising events, and the help of the local business community brought this year-long dream to fruition.

## Mother Theresa, Dom Helder Draw 10,000 Cheers, Tears

Philadelphia [RNS] — By the third day of the 41st International Eucharistic Congress enough speeches had been given to jade the spirit of even the most fervent pilgrim.

Yet the 10,000 persons who filled this city's cavernous Civic Center that day may well remember that session devoted to freedom and justice as the emotional peak of a stirring assembly.

The audience rose as a body in tumultuous response when Brazil's Archbishop Helder Camara interrupted his impassioned plea for the poor to kiss the hand of Mother Teresa of India "in the name of the poor." Many wept openly.

The diminutive nun in the white sari trimmed in blue asked the people to "look for Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poor."

"He has made himself the hungry one, the naked one, the homeless one. Turn your back on the poor and you turn your back on Jesus," she said.

Dom Helder, punctuating his speech with sweeping gestures, declared that the power of multinational corporations and the advent of a "new Nazism" thwart needed social changes to help the poor in Latin America.

The "new Nazism" springs from "internal colonists" who subjugate their poverty-stricken countrymen and justify it by preaching anti-Communism, Archbishop Helder said.

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## Pope to Anglicans:

## Women's Ordination Poses 'Grave Difficulty'

[From Courier-Journal Sources]

York, England — Letters between himself and Pope Paul VI, released here by Archbishop Donald Coggan, reveal a warning to the Anglican Church that the ordination of women would inject "an element of grave difficulty" into relations between the Catholic and Anglican churches.

Archbishop Coggan, archbishop of Canterbury and the spiritual head of the Anglican Church, recently released the Pope's letter, dated Nov. 30, 1975, in which the Pope said that the Catholic Church "holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood."

Those reasons, according to the letter, are "the example recorded in Sacred Scripture of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men; and her living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God's plan."

The letters indicate possible difficulties for the group conducting an Anglican-Catholic dialogue, and also contain one of the strongest statements against the

## Pope via Television Joins with 200,000 In Philadelphia

Philadelphia — More than 200,000 pilgrims from every corner of the world gathered beneath a rain bejeweled sky for the closing ceremonies of the 41st International Eucharistic Congress here.

Present by satellite television was Pope Paul VI who told the worshippers "All of us in this moment are in Philadelphia, in America, where the International Eucharistic Congress is in the fervor of its conclusion. It is not only a televised link, which, through the magic of science and technology, transfers the sights and sounds of this ceremony to that distant

continent and to that great assembly. It is a spiritual link, in its own way even more real, which makes us participate in unity of faith, of cult and of love in this extraordinary celebration."

The pontiff spoke from Bolsena in Italy. Bolsena is the site where popular devotions to the Eucharistic Presence are generally acknowledged to have begun.

Present at the Philadelphia ceremonies was President Gerald Ford who told the assembly he shares the Church's concern over "increased irreverence for life."

## Congress Quotes

Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York . . . Speaking to 20,000 at an outdoor family life celebration: "Because we so often hear of the problems, we sometimes fail to take note of the strengths of family life . . . (you should) strengthen those relationships not only in our own families but also in God's one human family throughout the world . . . In a society where anti-life attitudes are prevailing . . . our family has a special responsibility and mission to sustain and protect human life at every stage of its existence."

Prince Rainier of Monaco . . . Speaking at family life conference: "A family is a place where a child feels secure . . . discipline is the cement that keeps the family together."

Princess Grace of Monaco . . . At the family life conference: "We have a firm hope in the Christian family. We share this belief. And sharing is the foundation of the family . . . (I married) 'a head of state with a different culture, different tradition, it would have been extremely difficult without the strong bond of religion.'"

Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, speaking at an evening benediction: "Realize that the Eucharist is and must be at the center of your lives as followers of Christ; realize that it is through the Eucharist that you will be able to satisfy the hungers of the human family . . . the theme 'Hungers of the Human Family' carries the message not only that Jesus, the

Bread of Life, satisfies the spiritual hunger of the human family, but that we, the followers of Christ, must extend the compassion of Jesus to all who are troubled and lonely; the love of Jesus to all who are poor and needy; the message to all who are searching for life's meaning."

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, speaking at an ecumenical conference: "Spend an hour before the Eucharistic Lord in the tabernacle. Just try it! If there be radiation of nuclear matter, there is greater radiation from the Eucharistic Presence."

Bishop Francisco Claver, SJ, of Malaybalay, Mindanao, speaking at a liturgy: "Too often man's hunger for bread — and the terrible suffering that goes with it — has been made the plaything of politics, local and international . . . Too often, development only meant underdevelopment, more suffering and more hunger . . . and all too often foreign aid has meant dehumanization."

Mrs. Patricia Crowley of Chicago, co-founder of Christian Family Movement, speaking during a workshop on contemporary society: "A family is not a unity existing just for itself. It must exist for the common good (Families) must search out the hungry and lonely in their own city. I believe the best way to feed the hungry of the human family is action by families. We must develop a global consciousness . . . the family must hunger and work for peace in today's world."