

The Open Window

By FATHER HOHMAN

Why Can't Women Be Deacons?

Dear Father Hohman,

I have no idea why I am writing. I hope the Holy Spirit does. I certainly have no expertise in the area of the Diaconate, but I do have very strong feelings about it.

When I was sent a questionnaire of sorts at the beginning of all this, I realized I knew very little about the subject. If I threw the four pages into the basket without answering, I realized I'd have no right to complain about the outcome. I read and read and read some more.

As near as I could figure out, the first deacons were not authority figures, but men with firm beliefs, and capable of spreading the Good News. Immediately under them in rank were women that had lost their husbands, and single women. At least they were recognized as being of importance. Then the diaconate seemed to work into a step to becoming a priest.

I don't remember that it said, "no, no" to women becoming deacons. Back in the early Church, it seemed to me, the use of the words "man, men" engulfed all humanity, not a particular sex.

When your letter writer said "the Church as an institution and the Church as people" she or he could not have said it better. The

gap is becoming ever wider. There are areas in which a woman deacon could function far better than a man.

The title deacon doesn't mean a thing to me, but I'm sure to some it means a standing in the Church "Institution." I will use my God-given talents as the Holy Spirit sees fit, whether I have a title or not.

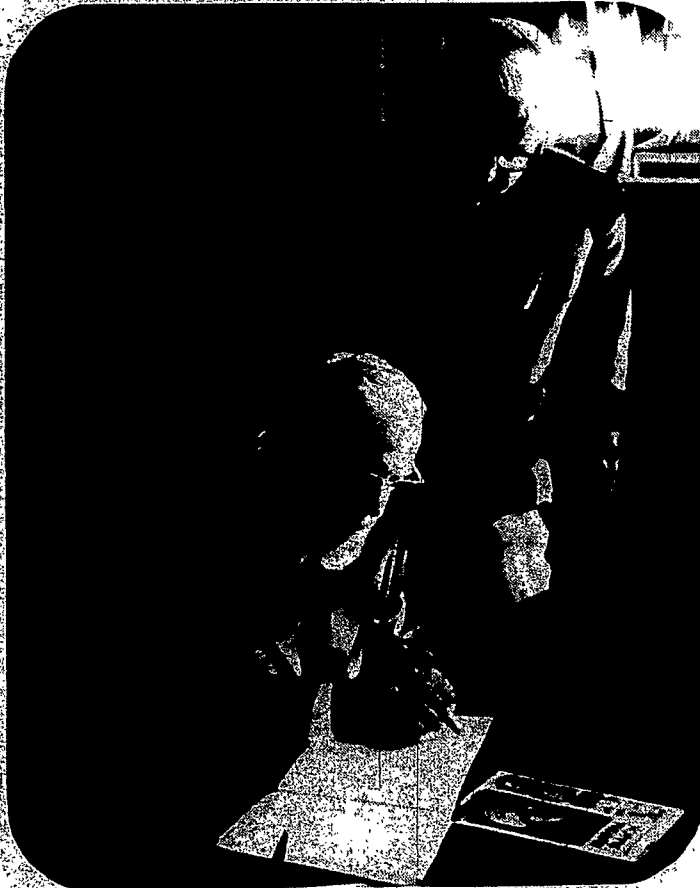
I never did find out whether the answers to my questionnaire got tossed in the basket, but that's "Church as institution" for you!

(Signed) A.D.

Dear A.D.,

I agree with much of what you said in your letter and would like to make just a couple of comments. First of all, the office of deacon is from a Greek word, diakonia, which means service. Therefore, the fundamental role of a deacon is service. In the early Church, it was noted in the Acts of the Apostles that the Apostles themselves were taking time from their duty of preaching and spending it waiting on table. Seven men were chosen to take over this particular task of serving the Christian community.

There is no reason at all why women cannot be ordained at least to the permanent diaconate and therefore I would recommend that you and people like you keep pushing for it and eventually the message may get through. This is not a question of rebelling against the authorities of the Church, but rather of expressing a legitimate opinion. Those same authorities have indicated that this is not at all a closed question.



Distinguished Visitor

Archbishop Joseph Tawil, Apostolic Eparch for the Melkite Rite of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, signs the guest book at St. John Fisher College at the invitation of Father Charles J. Lavery, CSB, college president. During a visit from Newton, Mass., the prelate was the guest of Father Salem Fadoul, pastor of St. Nicholas Church, and he lectured in Prof. Joseph V. Versage's sociology class at Fisher on social conditions, morality and family life in the Middle East.

Matrimony Class Set

A course on matrimony, Jesus Invited Us to Love, is being planned at St. Augustine parish under the auspices of Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

Described as a positive approach, rather than a

theoretical one, the course will be conducted by Denis and Charlene Ledel and will begin Nov. 21, continuing each Tuesday thereafter for 16 weeks. It is intended for persons 17 to 25 and further information or registration is available by calling 328-2442.

Thursday Deadline

In order to handle copy and photographs properly, all news releases must be received by the Courier-Journal by noon Thursday for the following week's edition.

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