

The Women of Two Cities

Baltimore

(From Courier-Journal Services)

Disregarding official hierarchical discouragement, some 2000 advocates of women priests in the Church voted in Baltimore to dispatch delegations to seek dialogue on the issue of a female clergy with the pope, the Vatican and the American bishops.

Attending the Women's Ordination Conference from the Diocese of Rochester were 38 diocesan, headed by Sister Mary Wintish, episcopal director of urban ministry, who acted as Bishop Joseph L. Hogan's representative.

According to Sister Gratia L'Esperance, who also attended from here, the conference drew participants from Mexico, Paraguay, Belgium, India and Uganda as well as the U.S. She also observed that the national headquarters for the organization is at 34 Monica St. in Rochester.

"The main issue is not simply the ordination of women," Sister Gratia reported last week. She said the movement is to be seen in the context of the renewal of the Church.

"If the Church is understood as a community of Christians in mission to the world, then there is great need for the ministry of all women and men, ordained and unordained, so that the Word may be proclaimed, the poor served and an alternative community of sharing and support may be formed as a sign of hope in an oppressed and oppressing world."

Washington

By JOHN DASH

A few miles down the road from the Women's Ordination Conference, some 500 women religious, two cardinals, several bishops and a number of priests gathered in Washington, D.C., for the 15th General Assembly of the Consortium Perfectae Caritatis.

A participant in that assembly was Sister Dorothy Marie Schantz, SSJ, a diocesan sister who has taught here for more than 40 years and now heads the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse altar breads enterprise.

The theme of the assembly was "Faith and the Religious Life."

Sister Dorothy Marie, in an interview last week, noted that the assembly heard greetings from both Pope John Paul II and from Archbishop Augustine Mayer, OSB, secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, a department of the Roman Curia.

She said that in the course of the assembly "Sisters were reminded that a religious vocation is not a human creation but a call from God to follow Jesus through the profession of the evangelical counsels."

"Sisters," she said, "have a two fold obligation — that of the Two Great Commandments, which is common to all Christians, and that of the Counsels."

The speakers, she noted, taught that the finality of the religious state is holiness and

everything must be subordinated to this goal. "Adjustment to the times will be useless, or worse, unless animated by a renewal of interior spirit which seeks first to reform things within the heart of man and only then things outside of him, like works in the active ministry," she said.

One speaker, she said, observed that "Abuse of the free will of man accounts for the crisis in Religious Life at this time." She also said that a speaker observed that the "Consortium will save Religious Life in America," and another that the consortium is "God's gift to the Catholic Church."

She cited a statement from Msgr. John P. Foley, editor of Philadelphia's Catholic paper, the Catholic Standard and Times, who said to the assembly that religious dress is a "public witness to the Gospel."

She said he observed that "More channels of evangelization are open to the Religious because of public identification with the Catholic Church. Actually this witness without words gives the greatest impact to our witness with words."

Sister explained that the consortium is open to all women religious. The aim of the organization is to promote the teachings of the Magisterium and of the Holy Father, especially as they relate to religious life.

The cardinals in attendance at the assembly were Cardinal William Baum, Archbishop of Washington, and Cardinal Mario Ciampi, theologian of the papal household.

The Church 1978

By Father Andrew Greeley

The Issue Of Women's Ordination

The theologian Richard McBrien, something of a prophet for American



Catholic liberals of fashion, has recently announced that women should not accept ordination unless the church also agrees to the ordination of married men and permission for single priests to marry. McBrien's rigid ideology and intellectual arrogance demonstrates a fatal flaw in the liberal character and also indicates what some of those who know him had suspected for a long time. For all his pretense at intellectual liberalism, Dick McBrien is the quintessential male chauvinist when it comes to dealing with women.

Who is Richard McBrien to tell women anything about the conditions under which they should accept ordination? What business is it of his? What right does he have to pontificate, much less to write rules for women? And how does he think that he or anyone else can control the free response of individual Christians to whatever opportunities the church

may offer them? Like all ideologues, McBrien propounds a liberal doctrine but attempts to impose a rigid authoritarianism on the behavior of other human beings.

Besides, I have not heard that the church is about to offer women ordination to the priesthood. It is ridiculous to suggest that people should lay down conditions for something they are not likely to be offered in the first place.

While I think the refusal to ordain women is unjust, I know of no reform cause which has ever won simply because it is morally right when its supporters only hold conferences, take stands and issue resolutions. While support for the ordination of women has increased in the United States rather dramatically, it is apparently much less strong in most other Catholic countries.

I think a vigorous campaign ought to be launched for the ordination of women deacons. There can be absolutely no theological objection to this, because it is clear beyond any doubt historically that women deacons were considered to be in sacred orders in the past. There is no way ecclesiastical authority can deny such status to contemporary women on either doctrinal or historical grounds.

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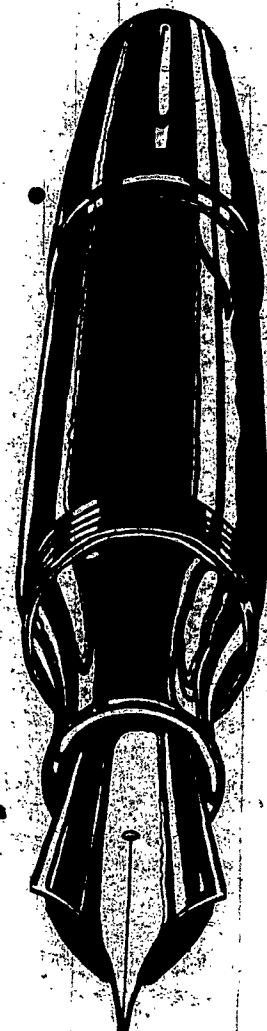
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