

# Karl Rahner: No Theological Reason For No Female Altar Servers But Issue Is Secondary

By Edythe Westenhaver  
Religious News Service

New York — Karl Rahner says he sees no theological reason why girls can't be servers at Mass, but he thinks the question, like that of the ordination of women, is of secondary importance for the Catholic Church today.

"I'm surprised," he said of the restated prohibition of altar girls in the Vatican's new "no nonsense" decree on the liturgy. "If it was a question of servers being future deacons and priests, it might be different. But the servers represent all of the people of God and this includes females."

The famed German theologian, who was here to receive an honorary doctorate from Fordham University, described the liturgy decree as "a dictionary of norms that has nothing opposed to" the reforms previously approved by the Vatican.

Father Rahner also repeated previous statements that he sees no theological reasons against the ordination of women but that he does not think it could happen for another 20 or 30 years.

"The status of women in the church is always conditioned by the role of women in contemporary society. In Germany, women have not yet begun to play a major role in politics or other public spheres," he said.

Since the Vatican only permits major changes to be made on a world basis, the question will wait until the status of women has improved throughout the world, Father Rahner predicted. However, he thinks greater diversity among Catholics in different countries should be allowed, and expressed disappointment that the bishops, for example, those in Germany, are not more forceful in demanding greater pluralism from the Vatican.

Father Rahner said he had written "a very polite article" two years ago disagreeing with doctrinal congregation's statement that ordination of women was impossible. He also said he believes the Vatican fears women priests would lead to women bishops and even a woman pope.

"Practically speaking, that's impossible," the Jesuit said, "but in principle, a church which pays so much honor to Mary, the Mother of God, should be able to accept women bishops."

A bishop's chief function, he said, is to proclaim the gospel, adding, "I find it difficult to understand how women can now be named doctors of the church (as Pope Paul VI did with St. Catherine of Siena and St. Teresa of Avila) and then be denied the office which is primarily responsible for such proclamation."

Though he is concerned

about women's roles, Father Rahner says he thinks that lay people and the press are giving too much attention to this and other "secondary" questions and not concentrating on the real problems of Christianity today, "problems such as how do we show the existence of God, where do we get our hope in everlasting life, how do we explain that Jesus Christ is the son of God?"

At 76, Father Rahner is forceful and witty in conversation. Probably the 20th century's most respected and most prolific theologian, he is retired from university teaching and lives at the Jesuit college in Munich but travels frequently — he came here from Budapest.

Discussing changes in the liturgy, Father Rahner recalled that before Vatican Council II, he was forbidden to write about concubination. Ten years later, at a private audience with Pope Paul VI, he mentioned this and added that the pope was now concelebrating frequently. The pope laughed, he recalls, and quoted to him from the Book of Ecclesiastes, "There is a time for every purpose under heaven."

Father Rahner said he believes Catholics of both leftist and rightist views err in believing all change in the Catholic Church has to be initiated in Rome.

"A look at church history shows this is a false conception," he said. "A great part of the life of the church — for example, the doctrine of transubstantiation or devotion to the Sacred Heart — developed among the people and theologians long before they were officially recognized."

Also scored by the RRTF statement are "attempts in this document to do away with women altar servers," and the prohibition on lay preaching.

"RRTF deeply regrets the theological understandings and norms contained in this Vatican document. At a time when the Church is called to minister in a broken and confused world, such a document clearly undermines the prophetic role of the Church by attempting to diminish the full, conscious and active participation of the laity," the statement says.

## CYO Swimming

The Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) will once again offer its summer swim program for children aged 3-14 years old. The program teaches basic swimming skills through advanced levels.

The CYO is currently looking for people who own in-ground pools to donate the pool's use for the program. According to a CYO spokesperson, "pools will only be used for short periods during the week and always at times when they are not in use by family or friends."

Those interested in the swim program or those who would like to donate the use of their pools may contact the CYO, 454-2030.

# Tabasco

Continued from Page 1.

residents to store grain raised for use during the year. Father Hoffman explained that before the silo was built local farmers had to sell the grain before it spoiled. Later on they would have to buy grain from the towns to eat.

Lourdes Perez-Albuera visited Tamulte de las Sabanas, where a six member team from Rochester will spend three weeks in July working on projects that range from evangelization to starting vegetable gardens.

The six — Barbara Fagin, Sister Susan Novak, SSJ, Mary Thompson, Paul Thompson, Sister Mary Lou Mitchell, SSJ, and Deacon Paul Tomasso — will leave July 2 and return July 28. In August Father Carmelo, pastor of St. Isidro parish in Macuspana, Mexico, will visit Rochester and work with leaders of the Hispanic



A street in Tamulte.

Community here, Perez-Albuera said. The sister dioceses, discussed last January when Bishop Garcia visited Rochester at the invitation of Bishop Clark, are discussing other projects that each may share in. During an interview in Rochester Bishop Garcia suggested that a clergy exchange may be possible. He

felt that the exchange could enrich the priests from both dioceses. Father Hoffman said that during his visit he was impressed with the people's appreciation of Rochester. He said that there is "a common bond" between the people of Tabasco and Rochester through the work being done there.

# USCC Presses for Refugee Help

Washington (RNS) — U.S. Catholic Conference officials have urged President Carter to take action to enable the more than 85,000 Cuban and Haitian boat refugees to receive government medical care and social services.

Bishop Thomas C. Kelly, OP, the Rochester-born general secretary of the USCC said that without such aid the massive influx of refugees will impose an "intolerable burden on the communities in which they settle."

Currently the refugees are not eligible for Medicaid and Medicare or supplemental income payments because

they have not been given refugee status, said John McCarthy, director of migration and refugees for the Catholic body.

The Cubans and Haitians who have fled their homes have been given asylum but have been classified as "asylees" rather than refugees, which makes them ineligible for government aid available to refugees from Southeast Asia and other countries.

McCarthy said the USCC's migration and refugees service is actively working to find homes and jobs for the

refugees, but the government is not carrying its share of the burden.

He said it costs an average of \$1,100 to properly relocate one refugee. Voluntary agencies receive government resettlement grants of \$500 for each Southeast Asian refugee, but they are receiving nothing except administrative costs for the Cubans and Haitians.

Conference officials estimated they will probably handle the relocation of 70 percent of the Cuban and Haitian refugees, most of them Catholics.

# Women Express 'Great Sadness'

The Rochester Regional Task Force on Women in the Church (RRTF) last week issued a statement expressing "great sadness" over "the drastic separation of the clergy from the laity" made in the recent declaration from the Vatican on abuses in divine worship.

"It has been the constant tradition of our Church," the statement reads, "to believe and proclaim that the people of God together with the

clergy are the Church. Yet, the document sets the clergy over the laity. In the document it is the hierarchy of the Church who determines what is beneficial for the laity without consulting them, without taking into consideration the needs, the concerns of the faithful which have found expression in such practices as distribution of communion by the laity even when there are enough ordained ministers present."

## At Your Parish St. Charles, Greece

A Vacation Bible School will begin at St. Charles Borromeo parish on July 28 - August 1, Mondays through Fridays at 9:15 a.m.

The Bible School is for children three years old to

sixth grade, and features bible lessons, crafts, music and refreshments.

Those interested in the program may contact the rectory, 663-3230 from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. on weekdays.

## St. Margaret Mary, Irondequoit

The Altar-Rosary Society

Puzzle on Page 21

PUZZLE ANSWERS FOR  
SUNDAY, JUNE 15, 1980

1. 1. Pharoah 2. Simon 3. sine 4. Jew 5. goat 6. youth 7. hay 8. coat 9. dead 10. suave 11. won 12. oaf.

Key Passage: I. Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go now in peace."

II. Nathan said to David: "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: I anointed you king of Israel. I rescued you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your lord's house and your lord's wives for your own."

III. I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God.

at St. Margaret Mary's parish has slated its annual garage sale for Friday, June 13 and Saturday, June 14 in the rectory garage. A baked food sale will also take place at St. Margaret Mary's on that Friday. Proceeds from the sales will be used for the altar (flowers, linen and cleaning).

## Deadline

The deadline for submitting news to the Courier-Journal is noon on Thursday preceding the following Wednesday's publication.

# JOIN the Holy Father...

in his concern for the victims of leprosy, which still claims 15 million people TODAY!

Like Christ, the Holy Father — and with him, the Church — reaches out to those suffering from this disfiguring disease. In some parts of the world, only dedicated Sisters, Brothers and priests offer medical care, love and service to these unfortunates who, even today, are stigmatized as outcasts.



RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE PHOTO

Yet, for a mere \$10.00, enough medication can be provided to cure one person afflicted with this ancient scourge.

Please join the Holy Father in his concern. Send your sacrifice to his own mission-aid society, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which supports Mission work around the world. (If you have been unusually blessed, please help more than one victim of leprosy.)

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