

(3) In addition to this, in those parishes or communities of faithful where this has not been the case, every effort should be made by those in positions of leadership to invite, encourage and provide the proper training that will help lay persons, men and women, to assume their rightful positions in the life of their respective Church communities.

(4) It is my wish that all our educational programs and institutions continue to improve their curricula on the roles and experience of women, the enormous contributions of women to the history of our Church, and the present rich gifts now being offered by women to our common life.

(5) In our communications at every level we need to make efforts to use inclusive language and to avoid using expressions which are offensive to women.

(6) Those of us who have such opportunity should make an effort to include the contributions of qualified women on all study commissions and policy-advisory bodies at the local, state and national levels.

(7) Those in the diocese responsible for the formation and education of candidates for the priesthood and permanent diaconate and for the continuing development of priests should make every effort to include study of the rightful roles and dignity of women in the Church.

(8) All members of the diocese should seek to be knowledgeable about the continuing work of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Women in Church and Society, as well as other responsible groups at the local, national or international levels that concern themselves with the role of women in society and in the Church.

(9) I encourage more inclusion of women in liturgical functions, in those roles now open to them or in new roles that may be legitimately created.

(10) I encourage all theologians in the diocese to participate according to their expertise in continued theological and pastoral reflection on the questions related to the roles of women in the Church. Such reflection needs to be characterized by honesty and reasonableness in the argumentation, theological and scriptural maturity, and respect for historical and sociological developments as contributors to tradition. Such reflection will involve thorough examination of Church history and the force of various Church statements and should include creative examination of the complementary relationship between ordained ministry and that which flows from the Sacraments of Initiation.

(11) I urge the Liturgy Department and Liturgical Commission, as well as parish liturgy committees, to examine creatively the work of preaching: its kinds, the qualifications required for it, its various liturgical and extra-liturgical forms and moments. I ask especially that we engage in an effort to improve the quality of our preaching. How can we encourage and assist those entrusted with this ministry to carry it out in an even more fruitful way?

(12) I ask the committee that plans conferences for our priests to plan programs dealing with such topics as Women in the Church, Ministry, Team Ministry, Sexism, and Clericalism, and to involve, as appropriate, qualified women in the planning and presentation of such conferences.

(13) The ministry of pastoral assistants should be recognized and developed as an important one in our diocese. For a decade they have extended God's love to his People through competent and loving service.

(14) I ask individual donors, Catholic organizations, and individual parishes that are able to do so to sponsor scholarships at St. Bernard's Institute or other institutions for the graduate theological, ministerial or religious education of qualified women who seek to prepare themselves to serve the diocese or their parish.

(15) I ask the priests of the diocese to unite with me in a prayerful examination of our attitudes toward women and the ways in which we communicate with them: Through such a sharing I believe that we will strengthen our bonds of faith and affection and, at the same time, lessen the possibility of any unhealthy clericalism among us.

(16) Homilies on Sundays and on the feasts of Mary and women saints should from time to time, as the scriptural readings permit, deal with such topics as the priesthood of the laity and the place and contribution of women in the Church.

## EPILOGUE

Let me close by reflecting, with respect and admiration, on the anonymous but dauntless women of the gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. From them we can learn, after all these centuries, what Jesus so cherished in them: their persistent faith, courage and presence to him.

These nameless but active women were in the crowds, in the synagogues, and in the homes he visited. They reached out fearlessly to touch the fringe of his cloak, in need they shouted after him, they entered his hosts' houses uninvited, they poured most expensive ointment over his feet to the consternation of some, they met him at wells, they resolutely waited on him and waited for him, they accompanied him from Galilee, they stood beneath his dying body, they ground spices for his burial, they calculated how to roll back the stone from his tomb. They attended firmly to the business of his living and dying, knowing his significance and deciding to stand and do on his behalf and on behalf of his Father's business.

For some reason, the evangelists did not record their names or much of what they said, but everyone knows that they "followed him." They knew where he was and they were there. They heard his words and they acted on them. They knew what he needed and they supplied it. They knew what he could do and they asked him to do it. They knew what he asked them to do and they did it. They knew the promise made to them, they went out to meet him on the road, they welcomed him, they knew from Jesus' own treatment of them the strength of their own testimony to him, and they were unafraid to show him great love.

Their lives were alabaster jars of nard poured out in active service, in decisive works, and in watchful presence at the end. Their action on Jesus' behalf was all very positive, courageous, and straightforward. Their active faith in him and their decisive following of him are, finally, the unchanging quintessence of the Church's vocation.

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