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Pope Tells Bishops: Do Not Condone Idea Of Women Priests

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By Father Kenneth J. Doyle
Castelgandolfo, Italy (NC)

In a strongly worded message, Pope John Paul II told U.S. bishops Sept. 5 to reject the idea of women priests and to withdraw support from any group or individual advocating a female priesthood.

The bishops were also told to be faithful to Church doctrine at the risk of being unpopular.

The pope coupled his opposition to a female priesthood with support for the dignity of women. Bishops should work for "every legitimate freedom that is consonant with their human nature and their womanhood," and "to oppose any and all discrimination of women by reason of sex," he said.

The bishop "must likewise endeavor to explain as cogently as he can that the Church's teaching on the exclusion of women from priestly ordination is extraneous to the issue of discrimination and that it is linked rather to Christ's own design for his priesthood," the pope said.

The pope's words came in a half-hour talk delivered in English to 23 U.S. bishops

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who were making their "ad limina" visits at Castelgandolfo, the pope's summer headquarters. "Ad limina" visits occur every five years and are required so that bishops can report to the pope on the status of their dioceses.

"The bishop must give proof of his pastoral ability and leadership by withdrawing all support from individuals or groups who, in the name of progress, justice or compassion, or for any other reason, promote the ordination of women to the priesthood," the pope said.

The exclusion of women from the priesthood, the

pontiff said, "is linked to Christ's own design for the priesthood."

Previously, Pope John Paul had said that women may not be ordained because Christ, faced with the possibility of choosing women to be priests, did not do so and the practice of the Church of today must model that of its founder.

In 1977 the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a formal declaration, approved by Pope Paul VI, stating that women could not be admitted to the priesthood. The declaration did not, however, take a stand on the ordination of women to the diaconate.

In the United States, a major group promoting women priests is the Women's Ordination Conference and it recently completed a two-year dialogue with an ad hoc committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The NCCB committee did not support women priests, but Bishop Michael F. McAuliffe of Jefferson City, Mo., chairman of the committee, urged the bishops to study the possibility of ordaining women as deacons.

On Sept. 5 the pope also asked bishops to stress other Church beliefs, even if they are controversial and unpopular.

A bishop "will proclaim without fear or ambiguity the many controverted truths of our age," said the pontiff. "He will proclaim them with pastoral love, in terms that will never unnecessarily offend or alienate his hearers, but he will proclaim them clearly, because he knows the liberating quality of truth."

The bishops were told to proclaim the Gospel "in all its purity and power, with all its demands."

This includes proclaiming the indissolubility of marriage, "the incompatibility of premarital sex and homosexual activity with God's plan for human love" and "the unpopular truth that artificial birth control is

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Parishes across the country and throughout the diocese will observe Catechetical Sunday this weekend, "a day on which the total parish community seeks to focus on one of its most important functions, the ministry of catechesis," Sister Mary Ann Binsack of the diocesan Department of Religious Education said last week. "Catechetical Sunday initiates a new year of programs of rededication to catechetical ministry, of sharing the light of faith, with and between young and old."

She said the theme this year is "Called to Be Enterprising Stewards," chosen from the readings of the day, and centers on both the person and the role of the catechist, both professional and volunteer, who is called in a special way, first by baptism and then by the parish community, to use well those personal abilities, skills, knowledge and com-

mitment in faith which are the bases for success in the ministry of catechesis.

"During parish liturgies this weekend those whose ministry this year will be teaching others will be commissioned. It is true that each person catechizes by what they say and do, but highlighted will be those who are called to be especially enterprising stewards as catechists/teachers in parish programs," she said.

Many parishes have planned special Masses and events for the weekend. Among them is St. Anne, Rochester, where, according to Kathleen Mahoney, religious education coordinator, there will be a commissioning of all catechists at the 9:30 a.m. Mass followed by a reception for all parishioners to meet the catechists. Immaculate Conception, Ithaca, will commission at the 9 a.m. Mass; and at St. Mary's Church, Elmira, Sister Kay

Nicosia, SSJ, and Sister Marcia Kusse, RSM, will explain the religious education programs at all Masses, with a special commissioning rite at the noon Mass. Special bulletin articles have also been written.

Some parishes have postponed their celebration until Sept. 25, Sister Mary Ann said. Among those holding later events are St. Rita's, Webster, where Denise Mack, director of religious education, has planned a commissioning at the 9 a.m. Mass, followed by a breakfast for the catechists and their families.

Also on that day, Sacred Heart in Auburn will commission catechists at the 10:15 a.m. Mass, in conjunction with the opening of religious education classes, according to Vince DeWitt, religious education coordinator.

"All the celebrations are ones of recognition and support for the catechists in our diocese, as well as a conferral of the profound responsibility of sharing the light of faith," Sister Mary Ann said.

250 Attend Rome Mass For Cardinal

Rome (NC) -- About 250 U.S. Catholics joined members of the diplomatic corps to the Holy See at a Sept. 6 Mass in Rome for the intentions of Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York, who is terminally ill with leukemia.

The Mass was held at the Basilica of Sts. John and Paul. Cardinal Cooke is titular head of the basilica.

American Cardinal William Baum, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Education and a friend of Cardinal Cooke, was the main concelebrant. Also concelebrating were more than 90 U.S. bishops and several members of Religious Orders working in Rome. Most of the U.S. bishops were in Rome for a month-long educational program.

Cardinal Baum announced that another liturgy was being celebrated simultaneously for Cardinal Cooke in his room at his residence in New York.

Cardinal Baum also read a message from Cardinal Cooke.

"My illness is an opportunity of grace, as the Lord makes it possible for me to partake of his passion and death," said Cardinal Cooke's message.

"He continues to hold out to me at every moment the sure hope of resurrection as sadly he draws me close to his altar of sacrifice," it said.

Bishop Praises Catechists

My dear brothers and sisters,

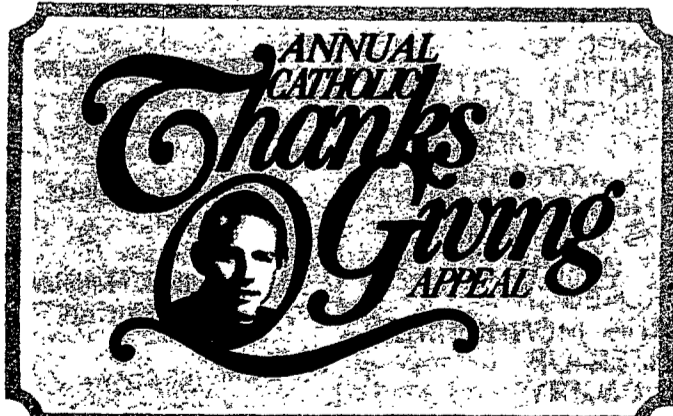
We will observe Catechetical Sunday in our diocese on Sept. 18. The theme for this year is "Called to Be Enterprising Stewards" and comes from that Sunday's Gospel reading. In it we are challenged by the Lord to use wisely the gifts of our time and our abilities in service of others.

Catechists are called to be enterprising stewards, not only of their own lives but of their catechetical ministry as well. Whether working with children, adults or families, catechists help people to recognize their gifts and to use them well for the good of the kingdom. Catechists also have a special responsibility to be enterprising stewards of the faith and the message of Jesus and strive to hand on the message in such a way that all understand it not only with their minds but also with their hearts.

I am grateful to the many people throughout our diocese who dedicate their lives to the catechetical ministry. May Catechetical Sunday 1983 be a celebration of their call and our call to be enterprising stewards of our own lives and the lives of others; of the world, and of our faith, especially as it is expressed in the Word of God.

Your brother in Christ,

+ Matthew H. Clark



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