

# Vatican Directive: No Priest, No Eucharist

Washington (NC) -- The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has condemned as "absolutely incompatible with the faith" any view holding that the Eucharist can be celebrated without a sacramentally ordained priest.

The condemnation, in the form of a letter to the world's bishops, seemed to be directed chiefly at the views Belgian-born Dominican Father Edward Schillebeeckx expressed in his recent book, "Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ." The letter did not, however, cite Father Schillebeeckx or any other theologians by name as proponents of the condemned view.

"Since it is of the very nature of the church that the power to consecrate the Eucharist is imparted only to the bishops and priests who are constituted its ministers by the reception of Holy Orders, the church holds that the eucharistic mystery cannot be celebrated in any community except by an ordained priest, as expressly taught by the Fourth Lateran Council" in the year 1215, the papally approved document said.

The doctrinal congregation's new document was released Sept. 8 at the Vatican and simultaneously in Washington by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Titled "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Certain Questions Concerning the Minister of the Eucharist," it is dated Aug. 6 and signed by the doctrinal congregation's prefect, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, and secretary, Archbishop Jerome Hamer.

The text of the letter states that Pope John Paul II approved it and ordered its publication.

In conjunction with distribution of the letter in the United States, the NCCB's Committee on Doctrine sent the nation's bishops a 46-page commentary on Father Schillebeeckx' views on ministry and the Eucharist, including published critiques of the Dominican's position by three theologians.

Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco, who is chairman of the NCCB Committee on Doctrine, also issued a pastoral letter on the question for his own archdiocese, and copies of it were sent by the NCCB to all the bishops in the country.

In his letter Archbishop Quinn said that the doctrinal congregation's statement is an

occasion "to renew and deepen our conviction about the central importance of the priesthood" in the life of the church.

It is also a challenge "to pray for vocations to the priesthood so that all the other ministries and charisms in the church may be nourished and energized" by the priestly ministries of preaching God's word and celebrating the Eucharist, he said.

Msgr. Richard Malone, executive director of the NCCB Committee on Doctrine, in the materials sent to the U.S. bishops summarized the Schillebeeckx thesis on ordained ministry and the Eucharist this way: "The election and recognition by the community is decisive. The laying on of hands (of sacramental ordination) is only secondary."

Father Schillebeeckx, recently retired professor of theology at the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands, argued in his book that as far as the New Testament is concerned, a Christian community faced with no eucharistic president could have chosen one of its members to preside at the Eucharist without requiring the laying on of hands by a bishop.

The doctrinal congregation's letter said the view "that the power to confect the sacrament of the Eucharist is not necessarily connected with sacramental ordination...is absolutely incompatible with the faith as it has been handed down."

The reason this view is wrong, it said, is that "not only does it deny the power conferred on priests but it undermines the entire apostolic structure of the church and distorts the sacramental economy of salvation itself."

"The apostolicity of the church does not mean that all believers are apostles, not even in a collective sense, and no community has the power to confer apostolic ministry which is essentially bestowed by the Lord himself," the congregation said.

"This apostolic succession which constitutes the entire church as apostolic is part of the living tradition which has been for the church from the beginning, and continues to be, her particular form of life," the congregation added. "And so, those who cite isolated texts of Scripture in opposition to this living tradition, in trying to justify new structures, have strayed from the truth."

# No Use Discussing What Will Never Be

Rome (NC) -- Pope John Paul II's request that U.S. bishops withdraw support from groups advocating a female priesthood was designed to discourage hopes that women will become priests, said some of the 23 U.S. bishops who heard the Sept. 5 papal speech.

The pope's thinking is that "to let the discussion continue would just cause ultimate frustration," said Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee.

"And I'm sure that the pope doesn't want to do that," he added.

The archbishop was among the U.S. bishops interviewed by NC News after they attended the meeting in which the pope spoke.

Archbishop John Whealon of Hartford, Conn., agreed. He said he was not surprised by the pope's remarks because "I've come to know the holy father as one who talks about situations and confronts them directly."

"When I meet people who support women's ordination, I always say, 'I don't see how it can be done and the church doesn't see how it can be done. It would be a dramatic change in theology, in tradition and in scriptural interpretation,'" added Archbishop Whealon.

"The point of the pope's remarks," he said, "is that to encourage any groups favoring women's ordination would be unreal in terms of theology."

Bishop Daniel Reilly of Norwich, Conn., also was not surprised.

"I thought that if he addressed the issue, he'd speak in this way. It's what he has been saying all along," Bishop Reilly said.

Bishop Reilly added that what the pope might have had in mind was a situation which developed in 1978 when, after a Women's Ordination Conference in Baltimore, an ad hoc committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops began to dialogue with the group.

In 1982 the NCCB committee issued a report asking that more church ministries be opened to women, but it did not call for women priests.

To Bishop Mark Hurley of Santa Rosa, Calif., the surprising fact was the strength of the pope's comments.

"What he said was direct, absolute and unconditional," said Bishop Hurley. "We knew of the pope's theological position on

women's ordination, but asking us not to give any support to those who advocate it is a further step."




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# Letter Said Aimed At Europe, U.S.

Vatican City (NC) -- A Vatican letter reasserting that only priests can celebrate Mass was issued in response to actual situations in Europe and the United States where lay people have claimed to celebrate the Eucharist, said Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger Sept. 8.

Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, mentioned a 1981 issue of the theological periodical, Concilium which listed several such "experiments" in various countries.

The doctrinal congregation issued the letter, which was sent to the world's bishops and published Sept. 8.

He said the letter came after information had arrived from several bishops and the Vatican decided there was a need for a statement setting universal guidelines.

The doctrinal congregation head said that many of the situations are not cases of alleged necessity in priest-poor areas but arise from "preconceived ecclesiological ideas," according to which lay people see themselves as endowed with the power to celebrate the Eucharist as a function of their membership in the church.

Cardinal Ratzinger spoke at a press conference marking the publication of the letter. He defended several practices in priest-poor areas by which lay people substitute other services for a Mass.

One of these is "spiritual communion," prayer coupled with a strong desire to receive the Eucharist, said Cardinal Ratzinger.

He also supported the practice of a Liturgy of the Word coupled with the distribution by a lay person of hosts already consecrated by a priest.

The view that the Eucharist can be celebrated by anyone besides a sacramentally ordained priest is "absolutely incompatible with the faith," says the letter.

Regarding spiritual communion. Cardinal Ratzinger said that while prayer is not the same as the reception of the Eucharist, "the benefits which come to a person through the reception of sacramental communion can be obtained from spiritual communion."

After the press conference, Cardinal Ratzinger told NC News Service that a Liturgy of the Word, including distribution of consecrated hosts, was also proper.

# Holy Year Not Spurring Rome Tourism

Rome (NC) -- The current Holy Year has not brought anything near the large influx of tourists that Rome's tourist industry had hoped for.

When Pope John Paul II declared a special Holy Year from March 1983 to April 1984 to mark the 1,950th anniversary of the redemption, some tourist industry representatives had hopefully predicted up to a 50 percent increase in visitors to Rome.

Instead, statistics released in September by Rome's Department of Tourism indicated that the number of tourists so far this year is up only 3 percent over comparable 1982 figures.

The statistics also show that the number of visitors to Rome from outside of Italy actually decreased by 6 percent.

The number of visitors from the United States has increased by 5 percent, however.

Most of this year's rise in tourism was attributed to visitors to Rome from other parts of Italy. Their numbers were 10.5 percent higher than for the same period last year.

The numbers of tourists visiting Rome from West Germany, France, Great Britain and Japan all declined slightly.

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