

Anglican-Catholic Dialogue Pondering Women's Role in Ordained Ministry

Washington (NC) -- "Further studies are needed" on the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood, the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the U.S.A. has concluded.

The key to such studies concerns "the nature of representational imagery, especially as it applies to the Eucharist and the ordained ministry," the theologians of the ARC dialogue said.

Another question that needs to be resolved, they said, is whether the different practices of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches with regard to ordaining women are "doctrinal or disciplinary" in their nature.

The question of women priests was just one area touched by a new ARC document, "Images of God: Reflections on Christian Anthropology," released Dec. 22 after four years of work.

The 9,000-word paper also:

- Cites both masculine and feminine images of God. While granting the predominance of masculine images in Scripture and Christian tradition, it rejects an exclusively masculine understanding of God.

- Rejects social norms or roles for women that treat them as inferior. "One cannot rightly appeal to Christian theology to justify" such treatment, it says.

- Rejects discrimination against the homosexually oriented but declares homosexual activity "morally wrong." A homosexual union cannot form the "one flesh" or "provide an image of God" needed for sacramental marriage, it says.

- Praises celibacy and consecrated virginity as an "eschatological witness." This witness complements and supports "the incarnational witness of the love between married persons," and "these vocations are mutually enriching," it says.

- Cites shared Catholic-Anglican beliefs concerning Mary and the saints. It suggests that Catholic beliefs about Mary and devotion to her need not be an issue that divides the churches.

The common thread running through the document's conclusions on such diverse topics as women priests, homosexuality and Mary is an attempt to understand the place of human sexuality in Christian anthropology -- in the understanding of human beings as created in the image of God and redeemed in Jesus Christ.

The Catholic and Anglican theologians in the dialogue group stressed the importance of human sexuality, "whether male or female," as a reflection in the created order of "the creating and nurturing activity of the living God."

The Genesis text about God creating human beings, male and female, in his image "helps us to realize that the image of God resides not simply in the solitary human being, but even more in human beings in interpersonal relationships...the division of humankind into two sexes creates a framework for interrelationships that images self-giving in God," they said.

In discussing Christ as the unique, ultimate revelation to humankind of the invisible God, they called for "careful and critical evaluation" of "the theological significance of Jesus' maleness."

Without resolving the question itself, the authors said that both churches need to study more deeply the question of "representational imagery" as it applies to the issue of whether a priest must be male in order to represent Christ as he does in celebrating the Eucharist.

Referring to the "hierarchy of truths" in Christian belief, the theologians also noted that "increasing numbers in both our churches" believe that "our differences (over women priests) need not separate us."

Regarding the role of Mary in Roman Catholic and Anglican life and belief, the theologians noted that "Mary has played a far less prominent role in Anglican piety and theology than in Roman Catholic."

Both Roman Catholics and Anglicans honor the saints, they said, but Roman Catholics more frequently and easily "use the language of veneration."

On the Catholic dogmatic definitions of Mary's Immaculate Conception and Assumption, they said that "some Episcopalians could" accept those teachings "without contradicting their accepted formularies."

On the other hand, they acknowledged that Marian piety is "thought to be unnecessary by many Episcopalians" and said the Roman Catholic dogmatic definitions "could not easily be accepted as requirements necessary to faith."

They suggested that the discussions of Christian anthropology in their new report offered "a significant beginning" for further discussions on Mary.

The U.S. national ARC dialogue is jointly sponsored by the (Episcopal) Standing Commission for Ecumenical Relations and the (Roman Catholic) bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. It is co-chaired by Bishop Arthur A. Vogel of the Episcopal Diocese of West Missouri and Bishop Raymond W. Lessard of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Savannah, Ga.

The Handicapped Remember Needy

The clients at the Sheltered Workshop for Developmentally Disabled Adults in Spencerport did something special this holiday season.

It may have been the first time they had the opportunity to give to someone else, said Susan Bayer, client services manager, explaining that the workshop clients usually receive from others.

This year, however, one of the clients came up with the idea of collecting money from returnable cans and bottles and giving the money to those more needy.

The money was collected when the 67 clients gathered for their annual workshop Christmas Party, Thursday, Dec. 22. The proceeds were donated to the Eddie Meath Christmas Fund.

The non-profit sheltered workshop is one of three programs of Lifetime Assistance, Inc.

The organization also sponsors a day-treatment center and a residency program. The clients attend the sheltered workshop every day and are paid for doing light industrial work.

Sarah Child



All in the Family

The Secret: Be Prepared To Be Sick

Some people, having battled the bug, never breathe a word of it. I, on the other hand, tell everybody from shoestore clerk to close relatives how I have suffered. This is not a plea for sympathy, I rationalize, but rather an excuse to cover any lapses manifested in the aftermath. Thus, today's subject matter.

This last bout with flu was a winner. Struck down for a period of 10 days, during the pre-Christmas season with the variety which leaves the victim not only weak but dizzy, I alternated between the bed and the family room couch.

Most of the time, I slept. Any waking moments were devoted to castigating myself for my inadequacies.

The first, and obviously most serious, was the failure to do my Christmas shopping in November. I always do all my shopping in the last two weeks before December 25 on the theory that anything purchased beforehand does not have the luster and the glitter associated with the season.

Also, I have been known to give in advance gifts that were purchased in advance. Last year, an

assortment of cleverly fashioned breadboards were given at Thanksgiving, a full month before they were intended to be presented. And robes and slippers bought as Christmas gifts for the kids are always hauled out at the first sign of a sniffle, as if the new stuff can better protect than the old.

Undone shopping wasn't the only thorn in my side. I also had plenty of time and opportunity to grouse about the house. Not just the pile of newspapers which grew a foot every night but the more serious problems as well.

Why hadn't I called the drywall repairman to fix the ceiling where the shower had leaked weeks before? Why hadn't we painted over the fireplace and so on and so on?

I also berated myself for coming down with a strain of flu which precluded reading, my favorite pastime.

There were no answers to any of the above and after a while I just slept all the time.

At the end of the bout I had made at least two resolutions. From now on, I will do all my Christmas shopping before Halloween and if I am unfortunate to get sick more than a day I will be ill in a room so dark I can't see all the things that should have been done.

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