

C-J Opinions

Writer calls female diaconate characteristic of 'low church'

To the Editor:

There are no doubt others like Marion Brown who are chagrined by the use of married men in the diaconate — to extend, assist and augment the male priesthood — but not of women as is the practice of the Protestant Episcopal Church. In Episcopalians' view, (to exclude women) simply is to "discriminate against celibate religious merely on the basis of sex."

But there are, I believe, deeper and varied reasons why women are not ordained even to the diaconate, and discrimination in the prejudicial sense is not one of them. The third Person of the Trinity was not incarnated. Was that prejudicial? Men cannot conceive children however much they could want to — consider today's surrogate mothers. Is that prejudicial? Everything has its own purpose for our good emanating from the Creator. But technological man and woman have come to contradict and interdict the Creator.

Certainly our own bishop is not one who would discriminate against women. But Catholic bishops through the wisdom of Christ are under the headship of the Holy Spirit residing in the magisterium that ultimately comes to rest in the office bestowed in Peter. Providence has seen to it that His Church body on earth was not to be a headless one or with a titular head like the English monarchy, without means to keep the Church on the solid foundation prepared long before Christ — regardless of the desires of many pressing against it.

I believe, as do others outside as well as inside the Episcopal Church, that their bishops have made a colossal sacramental blunder without this crucial office (the papacy) to stay their coming to believe they are enabled to give women male-priesthood. Without doubt, their female diaconate represents, in their minds, a genuine first step to that state, a state I would not wish on us.

Recently the Scottish Anglican bishops banned in their jurisdiction the ordination of women and the officiating of any from without their jurisdiction. Presently this issue in England, cradle of Episcopalianism, is being hotly debated with those seeing in it a disastrous threat to the validity of sacrament and the episcopacy itself preparing a possible continuing Anglican Church in staunch rejection of it. Do we want a quasi-sacramental low church?

Sadly, then, the real question should read "What is it that Episcopalians and like-minded Catholics do not know?" What one doesn't know can hurt you.

It is easy to understand Brown's saying he thought the Church was founded on principles of justice and love for all mankind. Then one would have to ask if he believes that those most closely involved with the magisterium truly are unloving, unjust for all mankind? Or are they in some other kind of darkness? I really don't believe he thinks that. He simply errs in forgetting that our religion is not based on mere vacant principles but rather founded on the very real presence of an author of principles.

Precisely because our religion is the real, living, identifiable Person, openly Self-revealed, recorded in scripture, defined by councils, repeated by tradition, expounded by sainted theologians and present in the sacrament that the magisterium wisely guards ordination upon which He is so much depending.

One wearies of the Marxist derived liberationist cudgels of rhetoric, logic and tactics that were used upon an unprotected Episcopal Church, and its equivalent Americanism

sloganizing. There are alternatives to this and ordination.

All Christians believe their will be a denouement in history. As earth begins to shake and shafts of light search the dark His body the Church will be revealed in Him and we will be glad that we were company with Him and His earthly Vicar.

Gene Charles
Geneva Turnpike
Canandaigua

Documentation conflicts with case for dissent

To the Editor:

While I welcome Bishop's Clark's statement of affirmation for the teaching of the Church's magisterium (Along the Way, May 8), I'm struck by what seems to be his attempt to keep a foot on each side of the fence. He recently explained his support for Father Curran (July 12) and Curran's so-called legitimate dissent by using the misleading argument that Father Curran's dissent to the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is limited to fallible teaching because the encyclical was not an ex cathedra statement — as if only ex cathedra statements are infallible. An ex cathedra statement is only one example of an infallible teaching. Following Curran's 1969 dismissal over his dissent to the 1968 encyclical — and his coerced reinstatement at Catholic University — the Vatican has repeatedly pointed out that the teaching contained in the encyclical is infallible because it has been repeatedly defined by the magisterium, as in the 1930 encyclical *Casti Connubii*, and the 1951 *Address to Midwives*. In addition, the teachings contained in *Humanae Vitae* had been universally held for 1,500 years prior to Curran's attack.

In what became known as the "Washington Case," in the 1971 declaration, *This Sacred Congregation*, the Vatican declared that *Humanae Vitae* was to be understood in terms of the Vatican II decree *Lumen Gentium*, sec. 25, dealing with infallibility.

Subsequent declarations *Mysterium ecclesiae*, 1973; *Quaestio de abortu*, 1974; *Perso-*

nae humanae, 1975; *Jura et bona*, 1980; and the book *Human Sexuality*, all dealt with the infallibility of the Church on the teachings Father Curran dissents to. Furthermore, the 1980 synod on the family declared: "This Sacred Synod, gathered together with the Successor of Peter in the unity of faith, firmly holds what has been set forth in the Second Vatican Council (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 50) and afterwards in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, particularly that love between husband and wife must be fully human, exclusive and open to new life (*Humanae Vitae*, 11; cf. 9, 12)."

Moreover, *Humanae Vitae* was written to fulfill the charge given the Holy Father by the Second Vatican Council in the document *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 51, note no. 14, and as such is an extension of that document and the council. In 1983, John Paul II restated these same infallible teachings.

Bishop Clark laments the fact the Vatican has taken action against Father Curran and questions why it was necessary in view of the competency of the American hierarchy.

I suggest 18 years is long enough for the Vatican to wait for the American hierarchy to act, and long enough that many have questioned its members will to act. Clearly Father Curran's dissent is not limited to "non-infallible" teachings as Curran and "his friends" wish us to believe.

Louis G. Joy
Stowell Dr.
Rochester

Victor Bartolotta Jr.

A Closer Look

A fail-safe argument

Women can't be priests because Jesus, the High Priest, was a man and so were all his apostles. Women can't be U.S. presidents because every U.S. president since the beginning has been a man. Neither can women be legislators, though I admit some are. Still, our forefathers who wrote the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence and who first served in Congress were just that — fathers and men. No one has ever heard of the term "foremothers," has he?

Women shouldn't be doctors. The first medical schools admitted only males. Though medical schools now admit females, the practice is considered an aberration. Also, women shouldn't be scientists, because the first university graduates — and hence the first scientists — were all males. Yes, there are women who are doctors and scientists, but their numbers are small.

I have a four-year-old daughter who wanted to be a priest at one time. Originally, she wanted to be a break dancer, but knowing how hard it is for a professional break dancer (is there such a thing?) to make a living, I've been dissuading her.

Lately, in stereotypical fashion, my daughter has wanted to be a nurse. When I asked her why she wanted to be a nurse, she responded by giving me a blank stare. I asked her if she knew any nurses. Again, I got the blank stare. I finally rattled off a few names of people she knew who were nurses. Naturally they were all women, although I now remember that I have a male cousin who's a nurse. I had forgotten to mention his name. Still, it was easy to figure out why she — as a girl — had chosen nursing as a profession.

But at one time, my daughter did say she wanted to be a priest. Admittedly, it first took a bit of persuasion on my part to get her to consider it. When I proposed the idea her initial response was, "Daddy, girls can't be priests."

"Ah," I said, "not in our Church but in other churches women can be priests." My daughter seemed surprised. I immediately began to wonder how a four year old could have developed so firm an idea about the gender of priests in so short a time. As with other professions, I figured that she was only

reacting to her experience of seeing members of one particular sex function in one particular profession.

A recent poll indicated that a rising number of U.S. Catholics favor women priests. "Wow," I thought, "things are changing; I'd better tell my daughter."

No, women can't be priests, but they should be. In fact, it will only be a matter of time before women get ordained. In the interim, women ought to exercise their priestly ministry until such time as their vocations are recognized by the Church — that is, by the community and by Church leaders.

Officially, if you are a woman you cannot be recognized as being called by God to become a priest. Officially, the Church needs to change.

Officially, if you are unordained you ought to function in an unordained capacity. You ought not to preach or to preside. Officially, things need to change.

Legally, if you are a woman you cannot be saved because Jesus died for all men. Maybe when we men get to heaven we'll throw down a rope to you women and yell for you to come up.

I'm wondering, though, in heaven, since we won't be subjected to the physical restraints of gravity, if we did throw a rope, would it fall down? Wait a minute. In heaven, will there be an "up" or a "down"? Will men who think they are in heaven discover, in the process of throwing the rope to save women, that they (the men) are the ones in hell and in need of salvation?

Oh dear, my head is aching and I'm getting confused. Is there a man out there who can help me out, a guy with an analytical mind who can assist me in sorting through all these confusing things?

Let's see, where did we start? Oh yeah, women can't be priests because ...

Suddenly my mind's blank. I can't think of any reasons why women can't be priests. But I know there must be some. Just recently I heard a theologian discuss the ontological impediments which prevent women from being ordained. However, right now I don't remember what he meant by the words "ontological" or "impediments."

But don't worry; when all else fails, I can go to my fail-safe argument: "We've never had women priests."



Disputes writer's view on revelation of truth

To the Editor:

Patty Federowicz's Church is purely subjective. (Opinion, July 7: "Today's Church not restricted to European experience"). She asked: "Where do you experience the reality we call 'Church?' Is it in the parish family . . . or is it in the city of Rome?"

(I ask.) Is the Church only a reality if we "experience" it? Or is it rather "formed in time, grown in history, a system whose head is still Christ, the God-man who has no successors, only visible representatives, and in this Church there is a hierarchy commissioned to teach, direct and distribute the sacraments, that is, the means of grace"? These words were written by Cardinal Montini, later Pope Paul VI.

Her (Federowicz's) Church seems to have "evolved" as "one generation prepared . . . understanding of a faith that was meant from its inception to be unfolded slowly." Can she mean what this says? Was the faith given to the apostles as a body of teaching to be passed on to each generation something less than what we know in this oh-so-proud 20th century? Was the Holy Spirit held back on the day of Pentecost in order to be revealed more abundantly in 1986? Where in scripture or tradition can

we find this idea?

She wrote: "The Holy Spirit can protect a pope from writing error when he writes an encyclical, or the Holy Spirit can move the faithful to withhold their assent to his encyclical if it does contain an error." Even the Holy Spirit, spirit of truth, cannot do two opposite things: protect an encyclical from error and then reveal an error in it.

Her (Federowicz's) Church resembles Protestantism or even Quietism, with each man free to interpret "truth" according to the "light" within him. This fails to recognize that human nature is tragically flawed by Original Sin, easily deceived and led astray by rebellion and pride.

Those of us, like myself, who have converted to the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church because we despaired of the mish-mosh of beliefs outside that Church — we submit willingly, gladly, gratefully to Peter's successors and glory in the rock on which our Church is built so that it might withstand the gates of Hell.

Doris Pace
Narcissus Farm
Dresden

Asks columnist to consider only subjects he knows well

To the Editor:

I do not wish to call names or to be uncharitable but since you print the column, I feel compelled to comment on the contents.

Mr. Bartolotta, in his column "Chernobyl and Ginna" (July 3), wrote: "I am not an atomic expert. . . I do not know the intricacies of atomic power. . . Any discussion of nuclear issues seems to short-circuit my brain."

I read his column. He is right. He is not an atomic expert, he does not know the intricacies of atomic power, nor does he know the theory behind the uncomplicated peaceful uses of atomic energy; much less the complicated questions of using atomic power in the field of geo-politics. The only use he seems to be able to make of atomic power is as an ingredient in a "grim" fairy tale.

If his brain is short-circuited by nuclear issues, as he wrote, why doesn't he write about something he does know about and share that wisdom with all of us?

In his article of July 17, "Baby Nora," Mr. Bartolotta did just that. The subject was motherlove.

I thought the column was pointed, sensitive, understanding and informative. I just haven't been able to figure out what a policeman in South Africa losing his temper has to do with the subject of the column "Baby Nora."

John J. Clark III
RD-1
Wayland

Cancel D&C subscriptions

To the Editor:

Regarding the Democrat and Chronicle's refusal to publish an apology to the Holy Father and the Catholic community, I suggest calling the newspaper at 232-5550 to cancel your subscription, as I did.

Morris J. Erdle
Routes 5 & 20 West
Canandaigua