Women's ordination may hurt accord with Anglicans

LONDON (NC) — Recently released correspondence between Pope John Paul II and the spiritual head of Anglicanism show the pontiff deeply concerned that the ordination of women by some Anglican provinces might result in deteriorating relations between the two churches.

"It is urgent that this aspect be given much greater attention in order to prevent a serious erosion of the degree of communion between us," Pope John Paul said in his letter to Archbishop Robert Runcie of Canterbury.

The pope said that the ordination of women in some of the autonomous provinces of the worldwide Anglican Communion undercuts an ecumenical study of ministries by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission.

Those ordinations, plus the recognition that provinces also have the right to ordain women as bishops, appear "to preempt this study and effectively block the path to the mutual recognition of ministries," he said.

Fatima Symposium planned for southern venues in July

The first-ever Fatima Symposium sponsored by the World Apostolate of Fatima (The Blue Army, U.S.A.) is scheduled for July 7-9 at Marymount University in Arlington, Va.

The symposium is intended to promote the Fatima message and place its consideration on the scholarly level. Featured will be a series of presentations on the Fatima message by a group of nationally and internationally known priests.

Pre-registration for the program is required. Those interested in participating in all or part of the symposium should write: The World Apostolate of Fatima National Fatima Symposium, P.O. Box 976, Washington, N.J., 07882.







The texts of the correspondence between the two religious leaders was released April 27 by Anglican officials at Lambeth Palace, church headquarters, after some of the material leaked to a British newspaper.

The letters were exchanged last year. Archbishop Runcie's is dated Aug. 6, 1988. It was sent following the Lambeth Conference, the major gathering of Anglican leaders at which the ordination question was addressed. Pope John Paul's letter was sent in reply December 8.

Archbishop Runcie said in his letter that while there are "ecumenical implications" in the decision to allow individual provinces to ordain women, the consequences of a split in the communion caused by denying such permission would also be "a grave ecumenical obstacle."

Release of the texts coincided with a meeting in Cyprus of Anglican leaders on the issue of whether to allow women to become bishops.

"The Catholic Church, like the Ortho-

dox Church and the Ancient Oriental Churches, is firmly opposed" to women's ordination, the pope wrote, "viewing it as a break with tradition of a kind we have no competence to authorize."

The pope also warned the archbishop of the consequences for his own position in the Anglican Communion if the Church of England, which is still debating the issue, were to decide in favor of women's ordination.

Pope John Paul noted the "delicate nature" of Archbishop Runcie's position in relation to the autonomy of the Anglican provinces. But he said that "since, however, as archbishop of Canterbury you also represent the Anglican Communion in its relations with the Catholic Church, a highly problematic situation could certainly arise for those provinces opposed to women's ordination if there were women priests in the Church of England."

Archbishop Runcie noted that the Amer-

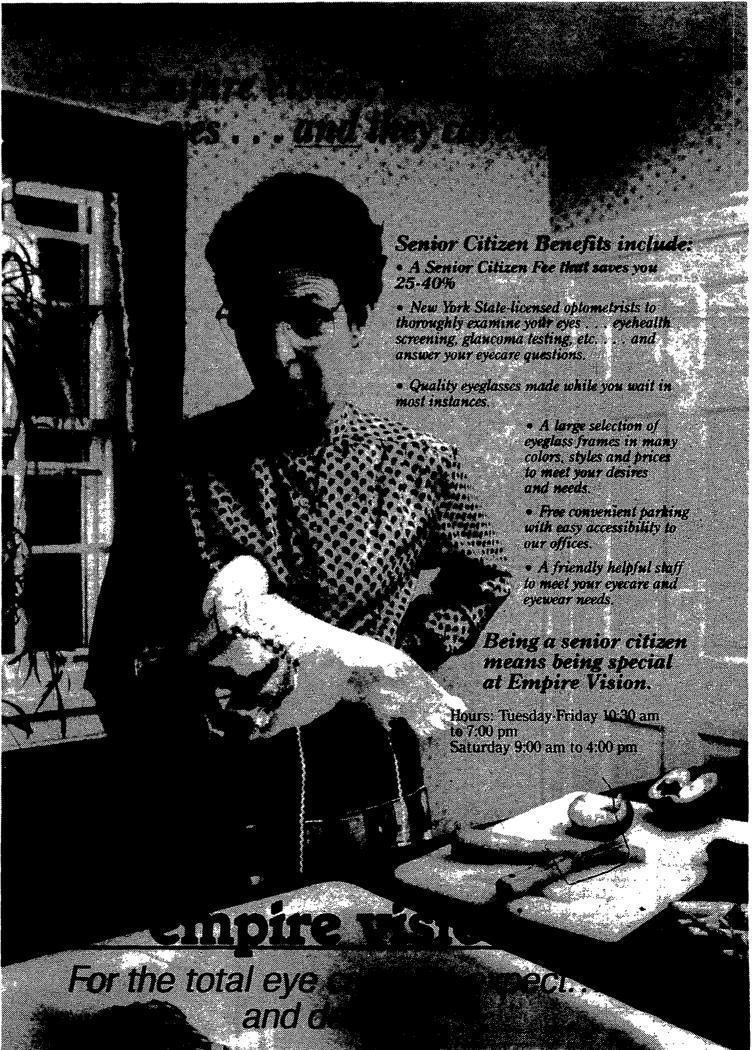
ican province was about to consecrate a woman bishop and that it would cause "the pain of some impairment in the communion."

But he also said that "difficult as this is, it is in the judgment of this conference, a more acceptable solution than a schism within the Anglican Communion."

"We recognize the ecumenical dimensions of this debate but know that the Catholic Church would also see a split in the Anglican Communion as a grave ecumenical obstacle," he said.

Both leaders also noted much ecumenical progress in other areas of the continuing dialogue between their two churches.

Pope John Paul said that Archbishop Runcie's letter, informing him of the Lambeth Conference proceedings, was a "gracious gesture" and a "further indication of the trust that exists between us and of the strong bond of communion by which we are already united."



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