

Albany bishop finds 'no reason' keeping women from diaconate

By Laura Wilson
NC News

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Calling women the "backbone" of the church, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, N.Y., said he strongly supports having women deacons and girl altar servers in the church.

"The church would be enriched if women were able to use their enormously valuable gifts in opportunities not previously available, like preaching," he told *The Catholic Key*, newspaper of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo., in a recent interview.

Bishop Hubbard said he was "positive" about the possibility of ordaining women deacons. Research indicates that women served as deacons in the early church, he said, and there is "no reason why they can't do so again."

"The question is, 'What was the will of Christ, handed on to the early church?' There is nothing in Scripture that indicates

Christ's opposition to women deacons," he added.

Prior to the interview, Bishop Hubbard told about 70 people at the biennial Missouri Diaconate Conference in Kansas City that he wished the Vatican were more responsive to the issue of girl altar servers.

"We fight that issue all the time," he said, adding that girls function as altar servers in the Albany diocese despite the Vatican's opposition.

"I believe that ultimately, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the prophetic voice will win out," he told people at the conference titled "Affirmed and Challenged for Today's Changing Church."

Calling permanent deacons "messengers of hope in an age of narcissism," Bishop Hubbard urged the deacons, as ordained persons, to make empowerment of the laity a priority and to engage in collaborative ministry with priests, religious and lay ministers.

Feminism harmful to church, groups say

ST. LOUIS (NC) — Three national groups of Catholic women said feminine images of God and allowing female altar servers and other influences of feminism have a "pervasive influence and destructive effects on the church, on families and on society."

The statement was issued in mid-April by Women for Faith and Family in St. Louis, the Consortium Perfectae Caritatis in Middleburg, Va., and the Forum of Major Superiors of the Institute on Religious Life in Chicago.

"Ideological feminism, which denies the fundamental psychic and spiritual distinctiveness of the sexes and which devalues motherhood and the nurturing role of women in the family and in society, is often misrepresented as expressing the collective belief of women," the statement said.

Members of the three groups said they oppose attempts "to distort and transform language and liturgy" to conform to the agenda of feminism and other thinking "at odds with Catholic belief and practice."

They said they oppose the ordination of women to the priesthood because it is "a state of life and a service to which, by Christ's will, only men, not women, may be called."

The members also said it is "a privilege to call God 'Our Father,'" and that doing so is not an injustice to women.

Using male images for speaking of God, they said, "provides a powerful symbolic model for men of the steadfast love, faithfulness, justice, mercy, wisdom and objectivity which are ideal components of human fatherhood vital to women, to families and to the social order."



AP/Wide World Photo
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