

# Second draft of women's pastoral completed

By Laurie Hansen  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Sexism is a sin that reduces people to objects "to be used or abused at will," says the second draft of the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on women's concerns.

Titled "One in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Response to the Concerns of Women for Church and Society," the draft defends the church's stand against the ordination of women, but says this stance and others must not be used to justify oppressing women.

It encourages women to participate in all

liturgical ministries that do not require ordination.

Men and boys, it says, must be educated to recognize that every form of sexual exploitation is sinful.

A seminarian's incapacity to deal with women as equals should be "considered a negative indication for fitness for ordination," says the draft pastoral, which was sent to the U.S. bishops in late March and released April 3.

The 99-page draft, the second published result of a process of consultation with Catholic women and writing begun by the bishops in 1983, was written by a com-

mittee of six bishops — including Rochester's Bishop Matthew H. Clark — headed by Bishop Joseph L. Imesch of Joliet, Ill., with five women consultants. The first draft was released in April, 1988.

Bishops have been asked to submit amendments to the second draft by Sept. 1. The resulting amended draft is slated for a vote at the bishops' general meeting in November.

The pastoral's second draft says that "the church's focus on marriage and the family must not be placed in opposition to the authentic realization of other life-giving roles and vocations; that the church's rec-

ognition of distinct offices must never justify clericalism; that the church's teaching on distinctiveness (between men and women) must not be translated into societal structures that subordinate women to men."

The proposed pastoral asks that a thorough study of the possibility of ordaining women as deacons in the Catholic Church "be undertaken and brought to completion soon."

It calls for a reversal of church norms excluding women from certain lay ministries, such as lector and altar server. It says existing norms "seem to contradict our mandate that women be more visibly involved in the life of the church."

It urges an end to economic inequities that women suffer, and says men need to be more responsible in marriage and family relationships.

Sexism has "seeped into the fabric of our civilization, invading economic and governmental systems as well as social and ecclesiastical structures," the second draft says.

Sexist attitudes "foster sins" of rape, prostitution, adultery, emotional and physical abandonment and exploitation of women through pornography, it says.

Significantly shorter than the first draft, the second document focuses on the theme of women's "equality" to men. The first draft had used the theme of women as "partners" to men, which was used in the title and ran throughout the previous document.

In an interview with Catholic News Service, Bishop Imesch said the use of the word "partners" in the first draft had drawn "considerable criticism." "People felt it implied an equality that was not real," he said.

While the draft is the second to be made public, it is actually the ninth writing of the proposed letter.

The document is divided into an in-

## Ordination question plagued authors

By Laurie Hansen  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — How to treat the topic of the church's ban on women's ordination has from the very start plagued the bishops' committee drafting the proposed pastoral on women's concerns, the committee's chairman said.

The chairman, Bishop Joseph L. Imesch of Joliet, Ill., said in an interview with Catholic News Service that each time the bishops came together "we tried to figure out how to handle" the topic of women and ordination.

The second draft of the proposed pastoral includes an expanded explanation of church teaching prohibiting the ordination of women and clearly states that the U.S. bishops support that position.

Bishop Imesch said the committee felt "we had to say a little more on what the church teaches on the topic, and not leave it so uncertain as it might have been in the first draft."

Critics of the first draft "said we waffled," placing responsibility for the decision keeping women from ordained ministry on the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith rather than stating it is

church teaching, said Sister Mariella Frye, a member of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart who is staff consultant to the bishops' drafting committee.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark of Rochester, a member of the drafting committee and chairman of the bishops' Committee on Women in Society and in the Church, noted that the topic of women's ordination came up "at every meeting" during hearings held with Catholic women throughout the country in preparation for the pastoral's writing.

Bishop Imesch said that during the consultations he attended, he was surprised to find women of varying walks of life "who expressed their view that women should be allowed to be ordained to the priesthood."

"It was more than just people who were out there feeling they were being deprived of their rights. These were just people who felt women should be ordained," he said.

Bishop Imesch said he was made aware of the "depth of feeling (about the church) on the part of the average woman, if I can use such a term."

These women, he said, had never before been asked their views. "Now that they had been asked and had the opportunity to

respond," he said, women expressed that they felt "a great love for the church" but at the same time "a great hurt and a great pain" as a result of its treatment of them.

Bishop Clark said the committee "felt the same tension that lots in the community have felt" as far as "recognizing the differences, nuances and distinctions between the formal, explicit teaching on ordination and the theological reasons that are discussed and elaborated in support of that teaching."

Just because the bishops support the church's position prohibiting women from becoming priests doesn't mean they support all of the arguments that have been used throughout history to defend that stance, Bishop Clark said. In fact, the second draft says some theological arguments used in the past to defend the church's position are "scarcely defensible today."

The church is required to maintain its position against ordination of women out of "fidelity to the example of Christ and to the practice of the apostles," not because of any belief that women are inferior as persons, the draft says.

Committee members were aware from

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