

Church of England expects to ordain 1,200 women

By Robert Nowell
Catholic News Service

LONDON — The Church of England expects to ordain 1,200 women as priests in 1994 — the first year in which women have been allowed into the ranks of the priesthood in the church's more than 500-year history.

The first 32 of that number were ordained March 12 in Bristol Cathedral by Bishop Barry Rogerson of Bristol.

Bishop Rogerson said that it is time "to rejoice that we have been able to recognize and affirm God's gift of these women who are to be ordained priests in God's church."

He said that there is also a challenge "to become a church that the world may believe and become what God always intended us to be — a community of women and men, serving each other and our neighbors, encouraging and wel-

coming and ensuring that all have a place of dignity and a part to play."

Bishop Rogerson also referred to the Anglican opponents of women's ordination, asking the congregation to "pray especially for those for whom this is a day of sadness, that God will keep us together in unity."

Three Catholic priests from Belgium reportedly asked to participate in the Bristol ceremony, but Anglican authorities turned them down. An unofficial delegation of Belgian Catholics was in the congregation.

One of the 13 Church of England bishops who voted against final approval of legislation allowing women to be ordained, Bishop Timothy Bavin of Portsmouth has changed his mind and will ordain the first women priests for his diocese.

In other dioceses where the bishop remains opposed to such ordinations, his suffragan — bishop of a subordinate dio-

cese — or the bishop of a neighboring diocese will officiate.

That is what happened in the Diocese of Sheffield where the suffragan, Bishop Michael Gear of Doncaster, was given the job of ordaining 25 women to the priesthood.

In a joint statement, the spiritual head of the worldwide Anglican Communion, Archbishop George Carey of Canterbury, England, and Archbishop John Habgood of York, England, called the Bristol ordinations "a significant milestone in the long history of the Church of England."

"The majority of people within our church believe it to be God's will," they said. "Others, of course, believe the move to be mistaken."

One of the church's strongest opponents of women's ordination, the Rev. Francis Bown, was in Bristol on March 12 to protest what he called the death of the church through the ordination of

"priestesses" and the creation of "a new order of transvestites."

The Catholic Church sees the question of ordaining women priests as a theological issue, not an issue of justice, the Vatican's spokesman said the same day.

"It is not a problem of equality or of justice, but it touches the reality of the church and the way in which the church understands its sacraments," said the spokesman, Joaquin Navarro-Valls.

"The Catholic Church, for well-founded theological reasons, in fidelity to the teaching of Jesus Christ and to the uninterrupted practice throughout the centuries, does not believe it has a right to authorize such an ordination" to its priesthood, he said.

On March 8, the Catholic bishops of England and Wales said in a statement that the decision to ordain women is a "serious obstacle" to unity between the Catholic and Anglican churches.

Catechism in English is scheduled to come out June 22

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The long-delayed English version of the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" is to be available in U.S. bookstores June 22.

The release date was announced March 15 by the U.S. Catholic Conference's Office for Publishing and Promotion Services, publishing coordinator of all U.S. editions.

Fifteen other publishers have joined the USCC as co-publishers of the single text, which will run about 750 pages with 3,500 footnotes and citations. It will cost \$29.95 in hard cover and \$19.95 in paperback.

The "Catechism of the Catholic Church" is a compendium of what Catholics believe, structured around four thematic sections: the creed, the sacraments, the commandments, and the Lord's Prayer.

According to the USCC, the catechism venture is the first time so many U.S. publishers have come together on a single project.

The first press run is expected to be around 400,000. Publishers had ordered

more than 250,000 copies over a year ago and a number of them have said they plan to increase their orders before the final first-run deadline.

Of the major Western languages, English is the last in which the catechism will appear.

Vatican officials overseeing the project considered the English draft translation that was submitted more than a year ago too free a rendering. They decided to redo it to make it conform more closely to the original French version.

The English draft's use of inclusive language whenever possible to refer to people was one of the areas in which Vatican officials found problems.

But they also objected to some other techniques for smoother-sounding translation involving what they considered excessive departures from the literal meaning of the French text.

The idea for an official catechism — the first since the 400-page *Catechismus Romanus* issued in 1566 following the Council of Trent — was approved by the 1985 world Synod of Bishops after Boston's Cardinal Bernard F. Law gave a speech suggesting such a text.

In 1986 Pope John Paul II set up a commission of cardinals and bishops to draft the text. A first draft was sent to the world's bishops in 1989, and they responded with some 24,000 amendments and comments.

In June 1992 the pope approved a definitive text and that December he formally issued it in French, the first of the catechism's five official languages.

Other officially recognized translations are German, Spanish, Italian and English. The Latin text, which is still being reworked, will become the primary or normative text for all others when it

is completed.

Last fall the USCC and six co-publishers issued the Spanish edition, "Catecismo de la Iglesia Catolica," available in paperback only at a cost of \$19.95.

EDITORS' NOTE: "Catechism of the Catholic Church" can be ordered from the USCC Office for Publishing and Promotion Services, 3211 Fourth St. N.E., Washington, D.C., 20017-1194. Call 1-800-235-8722, or fax 1-301-209-0016. Cost is \$29.95 for hard cover or \$19.95 for paperback, plus shipping and handling, with discounts available.

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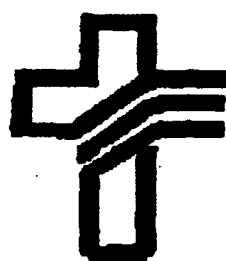
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