

1994 letter declared infallible

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Nov. 18 said the church teaching that women cannot be ordained priests belongs "to the deposit of faith" and has been taught "infallibly" by Pope John Paul II.

The teaching is "founded on the written word of God and from the beginning constantly preserved and applied in the tradition of the church," the congregation said.

"It has been set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal magisterium (church teaching authority)," it added.

Bishop Anthony M. Pilla of Cleveland, newly elected president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops,

issued a statement asking "all in the church in the United States, especially theologians and pastors who instruct and form our Catholic people in the faith, reverently to receive this teaching as definitive."

"It is not a teaching that diminishes the dignity of woman.... To say that women and men have different roles in the church, or in society at large, is not to say they are unequal," Bishop Pilla said.

The doctrinal congregation document referred to the teaching of Pope John Paul II in his May 30, 1994, apostolic letter, "On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone."

In that letter the pope said, "I declare that the church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the church's faithful."

The new Vatican document said, "In the present circumstances, the Roman pontiff, exercising his proper office of confirming the brethren, has handed on this same teaching by a formal declaration, explicitly stating what is to be held always, everywhere and by all, as belonging to the deposit of the faith."

It was signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the doctrinal congregation, and Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, congregation secretary.

The text, dated Oct. 28, said that the pope approved it and ordered it published following its adoption by an ordinary session of the doctrinal congregation.

It was issued in the form of a reply to a "dubium" — the Latin term for a question posed to a Vatican agency about a matter of church teaching or policy.

Continued on page 4



Catholic Courier

DIocese of Rochester, New York ■ VOL. 107 NO. 9 ■ THURSDAY, November 23, 1995 ■ 75¢ ■ 12 PAGES

Approaching God with the heart of a child

It's hard for Katie O'Toole of Webster to put down a book. The seven-year-old even reads while she's being interviewed. *Youth Pray the Rosary* ranks right up there with the *Little House on the Prairie*, and *Baby-Sitters Club* and *Nancy Drew* books. So does, *With Jesus Always: My Mass, Reconciliation and Prayer Book*. Anything but "boy books."

Prayers of all kinds appeal to Katie and her sisters Brenna, 11, and Rose, 3. The three sisters make their way through the day thanking God, from breakfast, where their mother Karen hears them murmuring their own prayers; to lunch at school, where Brenna stops her sandwich "in mid air" to say a quick silent prayer; and to dinner, where Rose has the last say after their usual prayer ("Dear Lord, we gratefully bow our heads, to thank you for our daily bread....") by leading "God is Great." Often, Katie goes off to whisper a quiet after-dinner grace.

For Lent one year, Brenna started the family praying the rosary together, but admits the repetition first sent most of them into giggles. Meanwhile, their mother continues acquiring prayer books for them.

"Even Rosie takes her prayer books to church in her church bag," she said. "I would rather have them focus on prayer and joys of Jesus than Sesame Street or something more secular in church."

The O'Tooles — members of St. Paul's Parish in Webster — are "typical" only in that the family prays in their own way, which happens to be a blend of contemporary and traditional.

In other words, there really is no typical family way of praying. A somewhat puzzled Father Alexander Bradshaw, pastor of Holy Ghost Church in Gates, recently acknowledged, "I don't know which standard prayers are part of the repertoire with children the way they used to be."

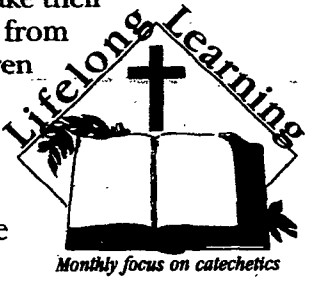
Part of this puzzlement emerges from the fact that he has noticed fewer children knew basic prayers when he has helped out at other churches.

"They're not familiar with the prayers by first Communion like they used to be," he said. "A number don't know the Hail Mary, for example. I asked children to say a Hail Mary as penance. They said they didn't know it."

Prayer is more complex today, according to Karen Rinefierd, coordinator of young adult, adult, and family faith formation in the diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis.

Children are learning several types of prayer, and families are using whatever works best for them, she said. But her department encourages a balance.

"They have the right and obligation to choose the ones that help them find God, praise God," Rinefierd said. "Families



Story by Staff writer/Copy editor Kathleen Schwarz
Illustrations by Eloise Wilkin

Hey teens — check out "On The Move" on page 6