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Reasons

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that the church has "no authority whatsoever" to confer priestly ordination on women.

Q: Is the teaching of "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis" infallible?

A: In this letter, the Holy Father exercised the ordinary magisterium of the church. "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis" therefore shares in the infallibility of that wide range of teaching. The letter did not constitute an instance of "ex cathedra" or extraordinary magisterium; it was not a formally infallible pronouncement. However, it stated clearly that the teaching it contains is to be held as definitive.

The presentation document that accompanied the letter stated that "to teach the contrary is equivalent to leading consciences into error." The letter intended definitively to resolve lingering doubts about the possibility of the ordination of women.

Q: Doesn't a definitive teaching on this matter seem premature? Has there been enough theological discussion? After all, the issue only emerged within the past two decades.

A: It has happened frequently in the history of doctrine that the magisterium has had to intervene in a discussion in order to indicate that a certain line of in-

quiry is leading to a dead end.

Q: What were the main reasons for the nonadmission of women to the priesthood put forth by the Holy Father in "OS"?

A: The example of Christ, and the constant witness of church tradition to that example. The fundamental point upon which the Holy Father insisted was that the church has no authority to do in this area what Christ himself did not do, i.e., to ordain women.

Q: Isn't it simply arbitrary to limit ordination to men?

A: No. "OS" insisted and the "Responsum" reiterates that this teaching arises from the authority of Christ.

Consider an analogy. Bread and wine are essential to the celebration of the Eucharist. It could be argued that other foodstuffs or beverages would be more appropriate for whatever reasons, that the restriction of the Eucharist to just these foodstuffs is merely conventional or arbitrary. But there would be no Eucharist if Christ had not instituted it. So the elements he employed must be considered nonoptional, whether or not good theological and historical reasons (the Passover) could be adduced.

The Holy Father didn't argue that the church possesses a fully worked out case for the nonadmission of women to priestly ordination, but only that it must accept the fundamental structure of orders as

inherited from Christ.

Q: Some biblical scholars doubt that we can know for certain what Christ intended in many matters. How can we be sure that the exclusion of women from the priesthood was a deliberate decision on his part?

A: The science and art of biblical exegesis contributes to, but cannot determine what the church should teach. The church reads, interprets and proclaims Scriptures as a coherent, inspired whole which communicates God's revelation. Privileged access to the meaning of Scripture is a charism of the magisterium of the church.

The church's confidence that the Scripture bears witness to Christ's word and will is a matter of faith, not of science. In this perspective, the church takes account of the results of scholarly study, but is guided by the Holy Spirit in the authentic interpretation of the meaning of Scripture in the matter of priestly ordination and in many other matters as well. The "Responsum" states explicitly that this teaching is founded on the writ-

ten word of God.

Q: Granted we can trust the Scripture to bear witness to Christ's plan for the church, but if he were alive today, would Christ not respond to the greatly altered cultural circumstances and choose women for priestly ordination?

A: "OS" made a point of insisting that Christ's election only of men for priestly and episcopal ordination represented not an accommodation to the cultural circumstances of Palestine in antiquity but a deliberate choice bearing on the very nature of these orders.

In support of this judgment is the fact that he often showed little regard for the cultural and religious conventions of the day and would surely have done so in a matter as important as this.

We cannot suppose that he would mislead his disciples and the church by failing to choose women to be among the apostles with the certain foreknowledge that the future church would follow his example in this, and thus abet what some would come to see as a gross injustice.

Bishop

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The Congregation's pronouncement is not new; rather it reiterates previous teaching. Neither is it a teaching that is meant to diminish the dignity of women. Human dignity was bestowed equally on both women and men in creation; both are created in God's image. In his "Letter to Women" last June, John Paul II repeatedly affirmed this point.

Historically the Church has been a source of great opportunity for women. They have headed Catholic hospitals and colleges when such positions were all but unknown to women in other segments of

society. They have been founders and heads of great religious orders. Their contributions remain a lasting reminder of the gifts women have brought and bring to the life of the Church.

Today, our parishes and diocese could hardly function without the leadership provided by women. Two women serve as parish administrators; several diocesan ministries are headed by women, as is St. Bernard's Institute, which educates men and women, primarily laity, for a variety of ministerial roles. Throughout our 12 counties, parish and agency educational, worship, and social service programs are vital because women lead or are active in them.

Diocese

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He added that the church's bishops were not formally consulted as to their views regarding priestly ordination before the latest statement from the Vatican was issued.

"I would think there would have to be some consultation with the bishops as to what they are teaching in their dioceses,"

Father Hart said.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark emphasized that he will support the latest pronouncement (see accompanying statement), but he also expressed some surprise that the church's bishops were not consulted about such a weighty matter as pronouncing a church teaching infallible.

"Normally, consultation enhances the possibility of a peaceful reception of an action," he observed.

G48

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| 7:30 p.m. | Holy Family Church | 899 Jay St., Rochester | 716-328-3110 |
| 7:30 p.m. | St. Boniface Church | 15 Whalin St., Rochester | 716-271-1468 |
| 7:30 p.m. | St. Rita School | 1006 Maple Dr., Webster | 716-571-1100 |
| MONDAY | | | |
| 7:30 p.m. | St. Mary Lyceum Hall | 15 Clark St., Auburn | 315-252-9545 |
| 7:45 p.m. | St. Charles Borromeo Church | 3003 Dewey Ave., Rochester | 716-663-3230 |
| TUESDAY | | | |
| 7:30 p.m. | St. Stanislaus Church | 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester | 716-544-9951 |
| 7:30 p.m. | St. Helens Church | Gates Center Bingo, Westmar Plaza | 716-235-1210 |
| WEDNESDAY | | | |
| 7:30 p.m. | Guardian Angels Church | 2061 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester | 716-334-1412 |
| 7:30 p.m. | Holy Family Home School Assoc. | 899 Jay St., Rochester | 716-328-4800 |
| 7:30 p.m. | Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church/St. Andrew School | 923 Portland, Rochester | 716-226-6458 |
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| 7:30 p.m. | St. Anne Church | 1600 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester | 716-271-3260 |
| 7:30 p.m. | St. Stanislaus Church | 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester | 716-544-9951 |
| 8:00 p.m. | Holy Cross Church | 4488 Lake St., Rochester | 716-225-8363 |
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| 8:00 p.m. | St. Mark Church | 54 Kuhn Rd., Rochester | 716-225-3710 |
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| 7:30 p.m. | Good Shepherd Church | 3288 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester | 716-334-3518 |
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