

WHY WOMEN ARE NOT ORDAINED TO THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

For nearly 2,000 years only men have been ordained to the Christian ministry of bishop, priest and deacon; and long before that only men served in the Old Testament ministry of priest, levite and rabbi. The question of women's ordination did not even come up until the late 1960's; and when it did come up, it was raised as a political issue rather than a theological one. Ignoring the Bible, proponents of political correctness raised it as a matter of "fairness" and "equality."

The Bible has always declared the equality of men and women: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29 NIV). Men and women are absolutely equal in dignity and value before God; but they are not interchangeable. Gender can affect a Sacrament. For instance, Holy Matrimony can only be between one man and one woman. Any other combination is sinful.

The Bible declares God's order in creation: "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head

of Christ is God" (I Cor. 11:3 NIV). Ideally, the man is to be the spiritual leader of the family, and out of all Christian men a very few are called by God to be the spiritual fathers of the church family.

The Church is described in the Bible as the Bride of Christ. The priest acts in the person of Christ (in persona Christi), as the representative of Christ, the Bridegroom of His Bride, the Church. The priest also represents Christ as the spiritual father of the local church family. As St. Paul has written, "Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel" (I Cor. 4:15 NIV).

Christ chose twelve men to serve as His Apostles and said, "As the Father sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21 NIV). Following the example of Christ, the Apostles chose only men to be ordained to the ministry of bishop, priest and deacon. Despite the fact that the early Christian Church was surrounded by the Greco-Roman world full of pagan cults and priestesses, the Church has faithfully followed the

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example of Christ and His Apostles for some 2,000 years.

The Bible gives the qualifications for the offices of bishop, priest, and deacon, and makes it clear that these offices are male in character:

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach" (I Tim. 3:1-2 KJV).

"An elder [Greek: presbyter/priest] must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient" (Titus 1:6 NIV).

"A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well" (I Tim. 3:12 NIV).

Then the Bible adds, "In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything" (I Tim. 3:11 NIV).

To remove any doubt, the Holy Scriptures make it clear that God does not call women to exercise

the authority of the ministry or to preach (I Cor. 11:1-16; 14:34-35; I Tim. 2:9-15); and just in case someone tries to argue that such prohibition is not fair or binding, the Apostle Paul added "Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command" (I Cor. 14:36-37 NIV).

Not only does God not call women to the ordained ministry, but very few men are called. The ordained ministry is not a job or profession, it is a vocation of service established by God. No one has the right to it; and it does not depend on individual talents and abilities. An attitude of service and obedience to God's Word should guide what Christians do in the church, not a demand for "rights." We are disciples of Christ and serve Him as He desires. The ordained ministers of the Church are not the leaders of the Church, the leaders of the Church are the saints - and there are many, many women saints. In fact, the greatest of all the saints is a woman, St. Mary, the Mother of Jesus!

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Approximately 90% of Christians worldwide ordain only men to the ministry, including the Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, orthodox Anglicans, and Bible-believing Evangelical Protestants. Only a relatively small number of professed Christians, who intentionally over look, ignore, or seek to explain away, the clear teachings of the Bible and the 2,000 year old practice of the Church, "ordain" women. And no one outside of these small liberal-modernist groups recognizes such "ordinations" as valid and according to the revealed Will of God.

It is sheer arrogance to think that for more than 1900 years, "the Church of the Living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15 NIV) had it all wrong, and that it took the sexual revolution of the 1960's to set things right; or that Jesus, the Apostles, the martyrs, and all of the great theologians and saints of the Church have been wrong from the beginning on such a fundamental of Christian faith and practice as the ordained ministry.

The priesthood is not a man-made institution; it belongs to Christ. He is the true High Priest. No Church that wishes to remain faithful to

the Word of God can abandon the ordained ministry of male bishops, priests, and deacons in Apostolic Succession which Christ established and the Church handed down. To do so would be to invent a new ministry, a merely human institution dependent upon the whims of secular culture. When God has spoken, man's proper response is not to second-guess God, but to say: "Amen!" As Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15 NIV).

This article was written by Father V. E. Novak. For more of his articles visit his Parish website at: www.holycrossomaha.net.