



The Catholic Priesthood

The issue pertaining to the ordination of women as priests has been definitively closed by the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed what Pope John Paul the II declared in 1994;

*"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". Pope John Paul II. May 22, 1994. *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis**

Well aware of the Catholic Church's definitive teaching on this, there are still today some who desire the ordination of women, such as the Women's Ordination Conference. Groups such as this see this issue as a civil rights issue. The issue of women's ordination should not be viewed as a civil rights issue as though the Church is a political body, but must be viewed in terms of the Church as the spiritual body; the Bridegroom of Christ, as it is. Sister Sara Butler, M.S.B.T is on the forefront of this issue and has published works and given many lectures on the Church's teaching on the Catholic priesthood. She has also served on national and international ecumenical commissions, was appointed by Pope John Paul II to the International Theological Commission, and appointed as an 'expert' by Pope Benedict XVI for the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October, 2008.

"To change the church's traditional understanding of the priesthood would be to change the priesthood itself and disconnect the church from the apostles, ending what Catholics believe to be their church's God-given power to teach." Sister Sara Butler 7/28/08

The following is a summary of the response to this topic as presented in the papal encyclical, *Inter Insigniores*, and is intended to serve as a beginning point for further examination of the Catholic Church's official stance on the Priesthood.

1. **The Church's Constant Tradition.** While a few heretical sects in the first centuries entrusted priestly ministry to women, the Catholic Church has never felt that priestly ordinations could be validly conferred on women.
2. **The Attitude of Christ.** Although the Blessed Virgin Mary surpasses all the Apostles in dignity and in excellence, Jesus did not call any women to become part of the Twelve.
3. **The Practice of the Apostles.** The apostles could have envisaged conferring ordination on women, if they had not been convinced of their duty of fidelity to the Lord on this point.
4. **Permanent Value of the Attitude of Jesus and the Apostles.** It is often said that if Jesus did not entrust this ministry to women, it was because historical circumstances did not permit him to do so. The Lord is not subject to social and cultural norms.
5. **The Ministerial Priesthood in the Light of The Mystery of Christ.** The Christian priesthood is therefore of a sacramental nature, and the priest, acting 'in persona Christi' takes on the role of Christ, to the point of being his very image, when he pronounces the words of consecration.
6. **The Ministerial Priesthood in the Light of The Mystery of the Church.** The Church is a society different from other societies, original in her nature and in her structures. The pastoral charge in the Church is normally linked to the sacrament of Order; it is not a simple government, comparable to the modes of authority found in the States. It is not granted by people's spontaneous choice.

Additional recommended resources:

*Catechism of the Catholic Church—Paragraph 1577,
Council of Nicea I, Canon 19*

Essay— Women's Ordination: Is It Still an Issue? By Sister Sara Butler, M.S.B.T 3/7/07