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Gender and the Priesthood of Christ: A Theological Reflection

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

GENDER AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION BENEDICTM. ASHLEY, O.P. Aquinas Institute of Theology St. Louis, Missouri I. Does "Patriarchy" Explain the Tradition? HE CONGREGATION for the Doctrine of the Faith, in its 1976 Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood, based its negative response primarily on tradition.¹ For many this argument is inter-insignior (Oct. 15, 1976, AAS 69 [1977]), *Origins* 6, 33 (Feb. 3, 1977) : 518-531. For a general bibliography on women's studies see Patricia K. Ballou, *Women: A Bibliography of Bibliographies*, 2nd ed. (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986). For select bibliography pro and con on the present topic see note 92, p. 560 of my *Theologies of the Body: Humanist and Christian* (St. Louis: Pope John Center, 1985) and Wendell E. Langley, S.J. and Rosemary J

ermann, "Women and the ministerial priesthood: An annotated bibliography," *Theology Digest* 29 :329-42 (Winter '81). Strong cases against ordination are made by Louis Bouyer, *Women in the Church*, tr. by Marilyn Teichert [Epilogue by Hans Urs von Balthasar and Essay by C. S. Lewis, "Priestesses in the Church"] (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1979); Manfred Hauke, *Women in the Priesthood? A Systematic Analysis in the Light of the Order of Creation and Redemption*, tr. by David Kipp (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988); L. Ligier, "Women and the ministerial priesthood," *Origins*, 7:694-702 (April 20, 1978); and Patrick Dunn, *Priesthood: A Re-Examination of the Roman Catholic Theology of the Presbyterate* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1990), pp. 173-196. Strong cases for ordination are made by Ida Raming, *The Exclusion of Women from Priesthood: Divine Law or Sex Discrimination*, tr. by Norman R. Adams (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976); Hays von der Meer, *Women Priests in the Catholic Church: A Theological-Historical Investigation*, tr. by Arlene and Leonard Swidler (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973); George Tavard, *Woman in Christian Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973); Karl Raimer, "Priestertum der Frau," *Stimmen der Zeit*, 195 :291-301 (May 1977); Joseph Komonchak, "Theological Questions on the Ordination of Women," *Catholic Mind* 75 CJan. 1977) : 13-28; Carroll Stuhlmueller, C. P., ed., *Women and Priesthood: Future Directions* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1978); and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

343 344 BENEDICT MOASHLEY, *OoPo fails to persuade* "It seems obvious to them that this "tradition" merely reflects the "patriarchalism" of the Jewish and pagan milieu of the early Church" The Declaration anticipated this objection when it pointed out (a) that Jesus was counter-cultural in many respects, especially in his attitude toward women; (b) a better explanation for the tradition can be found in the reality (res) which the sacrament of ordination symbolizes, namely, that the priest acts *in persona Christi capitis ecclesiae*" Thus the essential role of a Christian priest is to represent Christ present and acting in his Church as its male Head" The Congregation formulated its conclusion cautiously: "The Church, in fidelity to the example of the Lord, does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination." 2 Thus no other opinion may be followed in practice, and if bishops or theologians raise questions about the meaning of the tradition they must not trivialize its importance nor arouse illusory expectations of change. Final judgment on the matter can only pertain to the magisterium. In what follows I will not explore the argument from tradition as such, but only the supporting argument from symbolism, in an attempt to fill in certain steps which it seems to me the Declaration passed over. Nor will I deal here with other secondary arguments against the Declaration's conclusion, particular the pragmatic argument that since Christians have a right to the Eucharist, the decline of male priestly vocations in many secularized countries justifies the ordination of women" If the Church has no power to ordain women validly, obviously that argument, however practically attractive, is beside the point 2 2 *Inter Insigniores*, last paragraph of the Introduction. 3 The members of a local church have a "right" to the Eucharist only if they...

GENDER AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST:
A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

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1. Does "Patriarchy" Impair the Priesthood?

THE CONGREGATION for the Doctrine of the Faith, in its 1976 Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood, issued its negative response primarily on *tradition*.¹ For many this argument

¹ *Inter Inquisition* (Oct. 12, 1976), AAS 69 (1977), Coluber 3, 35 (Feb. 3, 1977), 228-59. For a general bibliography on women's roles and the priestly Eucharist, see *Women: A Bibliography of Bibliographies*, ed. by Lawrence G. K. Hill, 1986. For other bibliographies you can use on the present topic see note 92, p. 59 of my *Theology of the Eucharist: Homilies and Celebrations* (St. Louis: Page 3d, 1986), 145; and Wendell R. Longley, S.J., and Rosemary Johnson, "Women and the ministerial priesthood: An annotated bibliography," *Theological Abstracts* 20:22 (Winter 78). Some other useful citations are made by Paul Boyce, *Women in the Church*, 10; by Marilyn Tackett, "Priesthood: The Priesthood of Christ as Priest of C. S. Lewis," *Continuum in the Church*, 1 (1986), 10; by Robert G. Coak, 1979; Edward Healy, *Women in the Priesthood: A Scientific Analysis in the Light of the Order of Creation and Redemption*, 10; by David Klein (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 6; Lynn, "Women and the ministerial priesthood," *Catholic Theology* 7 (April 30, 1979); and Patrick J. Ryan, *Women: A New Perspective of the Roman Catholic Church of the Present* (Staten Island, NY: Alba Books, 1981), pp. 72-116. Strong case for inclusion are made by Th. Ruffing, *The Admission of Women into Priesthood: A Study into the Sacramental Order*, 2, by Norma K. Adams (Marion, NJ: Seabrook Press, 1975); *Hayes and the Most Holy: Priests in the Catholic Church: A Theological-Historical Investigation*, 1, by Adams and Leonard Siskler (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); *College Level Women in Christian Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973); Karl Rahner, "Priesthood for All," *Stimmen der Zeit*, 102:251-59 (May 1977); Joseph Ratzinger, "Theological Questions on the Ordination of Women," *Catholic Theology* 23 (July 1979): 106-61; *Journal of Theology*, 2, 1, ed. William and Elizabeth's *Women's Ordination* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1978); and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).



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Divided Anthropology: An Ontological Look at the Vatican's Rejection of Women's Ordination, interstellar matter obliges tachyon subject, which will inevitably lead to an escalation of tension in the country.

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