One in Christ Jesus:
Fourth Draft of U.S. Bishops' Response to the Concerns of Women for Church and Society

HISTORY OF THE DOCUMENT


The fourth draft of the pastoral on women retains large portions of the third draft and introduces several major changes in tone and content. See Origins, Vol. 22, Issue 13.

Changes include a broader look at evils harming women and a lengthened discussion of women's ordination, addressing the third draft failure to consider the evil of 'radical feminism' and other movements today that do not correspond to a Christian understanding of women."

Both the third and fourth drafts condemn sexism and call for rooting out the structures and attitudes that demean women in church and society. And both urge essentially the same 25-point program of action by the church.

The fourth draft incorporates more material on sexual morality, and it drops most criticisms of alleged clerical insensitivity to women. Also, the new draft eliminates a statement that "an incapacity to treat women as equals ought to be considered a negative indicator for fitness for ordination."

On June 8, 1992 Bishop Raymond Lucker of New Ulm, Minn., advocated that "we should drop the pastoral, but continue the dialogue." The proposed pastoral had been in the process of development since 1983. The final document was not adopted by the Conference, but released as working paper to the Executive Committee of the NCCB.

For official documents concerning women in the Church consider:

"We repeat and affirm that women and men are equal before God and one another," says the fourth draft of the U.S. bishops' proposed pastoral response to the concerns of women for church and society. The draft says this equality includes "a respectful appreciation of sexual differences." The bishops are expected to vote on the proposed pastoral during their November meeting in Washington. Work on the pastoral began nearly nine years ago with extensive consultations of women. During their spring meeting this year at the University of Notre Dame, the bishops called for a new draft. It was sent in late August to the episcopal conference's Administrative Committee, a 50-bishop committee that sets the bishops' national meeting agenda, and then to the rest of the bishops. This draft significantly expands the third draft's discussion of women's ordination, pointing to "the natural symbolism of gender" for signifying "the relationship between the priest and Christ, the head and bridegroom of the church." The new draft describes the "destructive power of sexist discrimination" and ascribes the rupture of "the intended harmony between the sexes" to sin. At the same time, it warns against oversimplification in discussions of sexism, describing three perspectives that distort relationships between women and men: rejection of the notion of sexist behavior, along with an invitation to "return to a past, more 'idyllic' time when women knew their place"; a minimizing or denial of "all differentiation between men and women"; and an exaltation of "the gifts and traits of women, while belittling the gifts and traits of men." Further discussion of how the fourth draft differs from the third appears in the marginal note on Page 223 of this Origins edition. The draft discusses the single life, divorce, contraception, premarital chastity, homosexuality, religious life, the Virgin Mary and other points. The text follows.

INTRODUCTION

1. Twenty years ago, to implement the directives of Vatican II pertaining to the church's social teaching and to respond to repeated requests from women and men for further support, the Catholic bishops of the United States formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Women in Society and in the Church. After the committee had commissioned research and conducted dialogue with representatives of various women's organizations, its members proposed that a pastoral document be developed to address issues and concerns which had been raised. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops unanimously accepted their proposal in 1983 and appointed its own committee to research and draft a pastoral letter. Subsequently two widespread consultations with women from all regions of the country as well as a third consultation with bishops, professional societies and theologians were held over a six-year period from 1984-1990. During that time two drafts of a pastoral letter were prepared and distributed, "Partners in the Mystery of Redemption" (1988) and "One in Christ Jesus" (1990). An international episcopal consultation was held in Rome in May of 1991 to discuss the latter draft and its implications for the church universal. In June of 1992 a discussion of the third draft titled
"Called to Be One in Christ Jesus" took place at our semiannual assembly, resulting in this pastoral letter.

2. Women entered into this entire consultative process in a variety of helpful and challenging ways. Many expressed with joy and enthusiasm their love for the church, their loyalty to Catholic teachings and traditions, and their firm commitment to pass on to succeeding generations the moral values and spiritual guidance given in Scripture and tradition. Many others shared these sentiments but were of the opinion that such a document ought not to be written if it gave the impression that women were the problem. They advised us to focus on the root causes of discrimination in the church and in society and on men's and women's responsibility. The best we bishops might do, others observed, was to express compassion for women trapped in a cycle of crushing poverty; for mothers exhausted by efforts to maintain a family, a home and a job; for any woman who has been frustrated in the use of her spiritual and intellectual gifts by stereotypes, labels or sexual harassment.

3. Throughout the time it took to write this pastoral letter, we recognized and acknowledged certain unavoidable limitations. We did not respond as empirical scientists following a rigorous method leading to scientific conclusions. Nor did we attempt with scientific accuracy to clarify all the issues and the causes of the concerns women raise. Rather, in keeping with our task as pastors and authentic teachers of the faith, we were led to identify themes in Scripture, tradition, current church teachings and pastoral practices which both illuminated the questions raised by women and helped us to respond more effectively to their concerns.

4. Sometimes the commitment to be faithful to the Gospel compels us to put forward positions that are not agreeable to members of our own Christian community. We know that the search for truth, even among loving friends and respected scholars, involves tension and struggle. The process of growth is painful, but history attests that it is a fruitful and a Christian exercise to focus on fundamental truths about the human person and to express applications of these truths. Limited though our endeavors may be, we are confident that with all of our sisters and brothers in Christ we shall reach in time the clarity of mind and conversion of heart to which Jesus continually calls us. Our confidence rests not on human efforts but on the grace of God and on the Word who is the supreme revelation of God's love.

5. This pastoral response represents the results of three intertwining processes which comprise its methodology. First, we listened to women of the church who represent a vast variety of locations, age groups, states of life and interests. Second, we reflected on this experience in the light of our Catholic heritage and analyzed current concerns from the perspective of our faith. Third, on the basis of these reflections, we developed proposals and a pastoral direction for the church in the United States.
6. By attending to the experiences and voices of women, both confirming and critical, we came to see the need for a deeper analysis of how sexual difference is related to the equality between women and men in theory and in practice. The plan of this response is consequently threefold: First, we present a biblical understanding of equality rooted in God's gift to each person through creation and redemption; second, we explore the implications of equality and responsibility in interpersonal and social relationships; third, we discuss the call to service in the church and the diversity of ministerial gifts.

7. We believe that God invites and challenges the whole church to a continuing conversion of heart and an improvement of the structures that sustain our common life. Christ came to reconcile us with God and with one another, to mend the rupture caused by a history of sin. Entrusting ourselves to the power of his redemptive love and encouraged by the gift of the Holy Spirit, we pray that this pastoral letter will strengthen our common efforts to assure the true dignity and rightful equality of women and men created in the image of God and redeemed in the blood of Christ.

8. This response is not meant to bring our own or the Christian community's process of reflection and action to an end but to a new beginning. We have become aware, since we began this work in 1983, that the process itself has produced much that is good. We hope the task begun here will carry us into the third millennium of Christianity. What impels and inspires us is the simplicity and power of Christ's command: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:34-35). (2)

CHAPTER 1

EQUAL IN DIGNITY

Concern of Women to Be Treated as Persons

9. Our consultations confirmed the fact that there is no "typical Catholic woman," easily defined and described, whose concerns are shared by all. On the contrary, Catholic women are extremely diverse in their interests and commitments to the church and society. Still, in this diversity, common themes do appear. One clear theme shared by all is that women expect to be treated with dignity as persons in their own right. Women want to be acknowledged as individuals with unique gifts and talents, to be taken seriously as peers and partners, to be accepted as equals in a world that often seems to be dominated by men. Most women desire full inclusion and equal participation; they feel offended when they are judged on the basis of unexamined notions and preconceived stereotypes.

10. Women want to be valued not only for the roles and services they fulfill, but for the persons they are. Some married women, for example, said they regretted being perceived at times only as wives or only as mothers, as if their identity depended solely on their tie to husbands and children. While most women acknowledge the value of marriage and motherhood, they do not want to base their dignity solely on the functions they perform.
Most felt belittled by the subtle suggestion that the man is the "norm" for being human and the woman is an "auxiliary," someone defined exclusively by her relationships to men. (3)

11. Catholic women, along with women everywhere, justly demand "rights befitting a human person both in domestic and public life." (4) They challenge the expectation that they belong exclusively in the private sphere or that their roles must be subordinate to those of men. Women are indignant when they receive less pay than men for doing the same work or when they are blocked from advancement to positions of responsibility or when they are excluded from planning and decision making in family life, the church and society solely on account of their sex. Women express outrage when they are regarded as "sex objects" to be used for the selfish pleasure of men or exploited for economic gain.

The Core of Women's Concerns

12. In reporting their concerns and experiences women name the evil of sexism as a main cause of personal and societal discrimination today. Sexism may be defined as unjust discrimination based on sex. (5) Sexism is rooted in the erroneous conviction "that one sex, male or female, is superior to the other in the very order of creation or by the very nature of things." (6) This error and the sinful attitudes it generates represent, in fact, a radical distortion of the order of creation. Unjust discrimination of this sort, whether subtle or overt, distorts interpersonal relations and adversely affects the social patterns and the modes of communication that influence day-to-day life in our world.

Impact of Sexism on Women and Society

13. Women have traditionally borne the brunt of sexism, although both sexes suffer its consequences. Sexist attitudes can lead to or even excuse gross acts of emotional and physical abuse, rape, pornography, prostitution, adultery, abortion and abandonment. Sexism depletes and erodes the moral and social fabric of values that enable the just and loving treatment of spouses, the unmarried, children and the elderly. But attitudes and actions that demean women also weaken society in more subtle ways: by treating women's concerns as trivial, by failing to value their contributions and by ignoring their gifts. Even when women attain executive positions, they often receive less recognition for their labors; they are still stereotyped as the weaker sex, as more emotional than rational, more passive than assertive, more suited for caring and nurturing than for management and administration.

14. When women are seen as inferior to men, their contributions tend to be taken for granted or regarded as less valuable than those of men. Women are offended, for example, when social policy takes for granted the dedication and dauntless energy involved in childbearing, child rearing and homemaking, especially in the face of abandonment by irresponsible men. All too often women receive little or no credit for their strength, courage and creativity, for their capacity to overcome socially imposed obstacles and to care faithfully for their families.

15. The destructive power of sexist discrimination is especially detrimental to African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American women who bear the double burden of
sexism and racism. For these women, the erroneous conviction regarding their "inferiority" as women is compounded by the presumed "inferiority" of their race.

### Meaning of Sexuality for Human Beings as Persons

16. It is our conviction that the equality of women and men as persons is best served not by disregarding sexual difference, but by taking this gift and reality into account. What must be overcome is the disorder that enters relationships between the sexes on account of sin. It is not enough to avoid sexist slurs, attitudes and assumptions; it is necessary, as Catholic social teaching makes clear, to uncover and uproot the underlying causes of sexism. To begin with, we must strive for an accurate understanding of the human person and of the meaning of human sexuality. Admittedly, in an era marked by changing roles and relationships between the sexes, it is not a simple matter to identify what it means to be feminine or masculine. While we cannot begin to address all of the issues raised by such a discussion, we can call to mind certain basic truths from the church's teaching that shed light on the central question, What does it mean to be human?

### Created in God's Image

17. We begin with the church's continuing reflection on Sacred Scripture. In the first chapter of the Book of Genesis we read that God fashioned the human person in the divine image and made them male and female (Gn. 1:26-27). This passage asserts that both women and men are made in God's image. There is no hint of the superiority of men or the inferiority of women. This text is the centerpiece of our Christian understanding of the human person and continues to guide us today. The Second Vatican Council drew upon the same passage in discussing the dignity of the human person, and Pope John Paul II reaffirmed this truth when he said, "Both man and woman are human beings to an equal degree, both are created in God's image."(11)

18. To be created in God's image means that human beings can know and love God. The ultimate goal of human intelligence and freedom is the vision of God and union with God in time and eternity. The ability to know and to love shapes the very personhood of men and women from the beginning to the end of life, proclaiming that they are subjects and not objects. Every person has intrinsic dignity and should never be treated as a thing or as a means to someone else's end. Every person has value; every person is precious in God's sight (Ps. 116:15).

### Fulfilled Through the Gift of Self

19. The story of the creation of man and woman in the second chapter of Genesis proclaims the profound truth that we are not meant to be alone (Gn. 2:18). As human persons created in the divine image, we discover who we are by giving of ourselves to others. We fulfill or realize ourselves as persons through making a sincere gift of self to another. If society has erred in considering women as defined primarily by their relationships to men, it has also erred in defining men principally by their work. The truth is that human persons were not created as solitary beings but for one another. "To be
human means to be called to interpersonal communion."(12) This call takes many forms. In family life, in married, single or consecrated life, among friends, neighbors and co-workers, and within the community of believers, we discover ourselves through the gift of ourselves.

20. While the call to fulfill ourselves through the giving of ourselves is not limited to the vocation of marriage, the marital relationship is the "primary form of interpersonal communion."(13) In marriage the sexual differences of women and men come to expression in a unique way, especially when marital love brings a child into the world. Each of the two, the man and the woman, is individually made in the image and likeness of God. They are also an image of God together, in their mutual love, in becoming "one flesh" (Gn. 2:24). Their communion of love mirrors the Trinitarian life, the communion of love in God.(14) Human beings "image" God, then, not only in their spiritual capacities of knowing and loving, but also in their bodiliness, as masculine and feminine persons oriented to self-giving, communion, parenthood and fruitfulness.(15)

Significance of Sexual Difference

21. By means of our bodies we are capable of giving and receiving love, for the body expresses the person. While marriage and parenthood are prime illustrations of this love, it is also true more generally, for we are embodied spirits. If we acknowledge the unity of body and spirit in every human being, we are led to ask what is the significance of sexual difference. The two different ways of being human, masculine and feminine, have consequences for us as persons in all of our relationships, not only in the special community of marriage and family. This truth, however, has been challenged because it is sometimes misunderstood to condone unjust discrimination of persons on the basis of sex.

22. Two competing theories may be considered and briefly evaluated.(16) On the one hand, some theorists depict women and men as if they have two entirely different, though complementary, natures, each with its own characteristic attributes and social roles, predetermined and seemingly closed to further development. Others propose that sexual differences are only biological and that gender-based roles and characteristics are determined socially and culturally. This second theory regards sexual difference as incidental to the human makeup and implies a so-called unisex view of the human person.

23. We do not find either of these views compatible with contemporary Catholic teaching. Women and men share the same human nature. Their common humanity is the basis for the fundamental equality between women and men. At the same time, women and men possess this one nature in two different ways. They are different, yet equal. Sexual difference is part of God's good creation. Femininity and masculinity are values to be celebrated, not obstacles to be overcome.

24. We do not agree, then, with a "dual" anthropology that would deny the common humanity of both sexes in favor of a "separate but equal," "anatomy is destiny" point of view. Sexual complementarity, properly understood, does not require that one sex be regarded as naturally superior to the other or that males and females share human nature
as "two halves of a whole." A person without a partner of the opposite sex is not an incomplete human being nor do particular personality traits belong in some mutually exclusive way either to women or to men.

25. We also reject a "unisex" frame of reference that would reduce human sexuality to a biological fact that has no real impact on one's status as a person.(17) Sexuality is more than "sex."(18) We are masculine or feminine persons quite apart from whether we are married, single or publicly committed to celibacy for the sake of God's reign.

26. To articulate clearly and adequately what it means to be a woman or a man is more difficult by far than it is to identify what we judge to be weaknesses in some notions of personhood. The nature of the human person remains a mystery known ultimately only to our Maker. It is our intent here to affirm as strongly as we can the equality and dignity of every woman and man created by God. In our teaching, this affirmation means that women and men are oriented to one another in relationships of love and respect while enriching each other not in spite of, but precisely because of their God-given differences.(19) For example, the church has always taught that the special prerogative of women who are mothers must be respected. This teaching is essential to the deepest understanding and proclamation of women's dignity.(20)

Disorder Caused by Sin

27. If God created male and female equally in the divine image from the beginning, what has gone wrong? If sexual difference is to serve love and liberation, why are relations between the sexes so often troubled? The biblical answer is sin. The human refusal to follow God's will has continuing consequences both in our relationship with God and in our relationships with one another. Original sin plus the actual sins of men and women have ruptured the intended harmony between the sexes and obscured the image and likeness of God in us and in our human relationships.

Threefold Disorientation

28. The biblical account of sin's entrance into history is given in the third chapter of Genesis. Here one finds the human family, depicted by the original couple, misusing their gift of freedom to rebel against God. The result of this original sin was a breaking of humankind's intimate relationships with God and with each other. This caused in the human person a threefold disorientation toward power, pleasure and possession. The craving for power not only competes with God; it also prompts stronger people to dominate those who are weaker. The craving for pleasure not only turns one in on oneself and away from God; it also tends to use others for self-serving purposes. The craving for possessions not only tempts people to neglect God; it also makes accumulating things a higher priority than fostering friendship, community or charity. Women have suffered in a particular way as a result of original sin. The unjust domination of men over women, the violation of equality in relationships and the failure to respect women as persons are sins of sexism.
Redemption Through Jesus

29. In Jesus Christ God restored the original order of human relationships. Through his obedience to the Father, Jesus reversed the disobedience of Adam and restored the original relationship with God (Rom. 5:19). Thus Jesus in the Gospel portrait of his temptation in the desert (Mt. 4:1-11 and Lk. 4:3-13) rejected the seduction of power, pleasure and possession - typical signs of achievement in a fallen world. Jesus became a servant (Phil. 2:7). He associated with outcasts and found in their responsiveness a sign of God's reign (Mt. 9:11-12). Jesus' teaching and example promoted the equality and dignity of women. He related to women as friends and welcomed them as disciples. He spoke openly with them despite societal custom. Witness his interactions with the Samaritan (Jn. 4:4-7) and Syro-Phoenician women (Mk. 7:24-30). Witness his response to the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8:1-11) and the woman who anointed his feet (Lk. 12:1-8). He visited Martha and Mary as friends (Lk. 10:38-42) and accepted the ministry of women who accompanied him on his journeys (Lk. 8:1-3). He preached fidelity in marriage and rejected divorce, thus defending the dignity and security of women (Mt. 5:31-32).

30. By the example of his life, by his death and resurrection, by the gift of the Spirit, Jesus offers to all the grace of reconciliation with God and with one another. He invites all to become his disciples, to be members of his body where there is to be no unjust discrimination, division or exploitation. As Pope John Paul II writes, "In Christ the mutual opposition between man and woman - which is the inheritance of original sin - is essentially overcome."(21) In its place is a unity which "does not cancel out diversity"(22) but promises instead an end to opposition between the sexes, for "all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28).

Cooperation of Mary

31. God's redemptive initiative included the cooperation of a woman, Mary, the handmaid of the Lord. Through her freely offered yes to God's initiative (Lk. 1:38), through her act of obedient faith, the Word became flesh. Her motherhood of God's Son ushered in a new era for humanity. Because she was totally available to receive God's Word, Mary is also rightly designated the "new Eve." She was the first person to live to the fullest the new life we call Christian, the first woman to experience the liberation God intends for all.(23)

Denunciation of Discrimination, Reaffirmation of Dignity

32. We know as individuals and as a community that the hold of sin is strong. Yet there is hope. The Gospel message contains the promise of emancipation from sin and from its expression in patterns of domination or subjugation. It is this call to freedom in Christ which both women and men are hearing anew today.

33. A number of women in our consultations alluded to this hope in expressing their concern about sexism and their conviction about the church's prophetic role. With them
and with the whole church we repeat and affirm that women and men are equal before God and one another. We make our own the words of Pope Paul VI: "God created the human person, man and woman, in a single plan of love.... Men and women are therefore equal before God: equal as persons, equal as children of God, equal in dignity, equal also in their rights."(24) In the spirit of Second Vatican Council, we denounce sexism as a moral and social evil: "With respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent."(25)

(No Paragraph 34 appeared in the text sent to the bishops. - Editors)

CHAPTER 2

EQUALITY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN INTERPERSONAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

35. The vision of a restored humanity expressed in mutual care between women and men is yet to be achieved. In our consultations we came to see with more clarity and compassion how complex and pervasive the societal mistreatment of women can be and why many demand affirmative action on their behalf. In feedback given at our listening sessions, many women expressed how affected they are for better or worse by people's just or unjust, loving or violent treatment of one another. Women and men experience themselves not in isolation, but in relation to family members, friends, co-workers, parishioners, neighbors and the human community at large.

Expressed Concerns of Women

36. Inequality at Work. The truth is that in daily life at present many women experience not justice but injustice, not respect but disrespect. Patterns of hiring, pay, advancement and benefits in the workplace sometimes tend to penalize women. Single mothers, for example, report that certain hiring practices make it difficult for them to find employment. Some older women feel coerced to accept early retirement when they still have much to contribute. Less educated women say they have few opportunities to earn their livelihood except in low-paying industries.

37. Most of the teachers of our nation's children are women; women are primary providers of health care in hospitals and nursing homes; they are the backbone of the business and office world; yet those who work full time earn approximately 65 cents for every $1 paid to men.(26) The average man earns more per hour than the average woman of the same race, age and education. While these statistics are not necessarily indicative of deliberate sexist discrimination, they reveal that we live in a society where wage structures are generally geared toward men as the sole providers for a family. In fact, more and more women fill this role.

38. Poverty. We heard widespread concern expressed about the "feminization of poverty" or the "pauperization of women." The largest percentage of the poor in the United States today is women and dependent children. For example, more and more American families
are headed by single mothers with low incomes. A girl born into such a family tends to raise her children under similar circumstances, thus prolonging the poverty cycle. The plight of high unemployment has proven harmful to every sector of life in the African-American community. This economic crisis for men of color hurts their families too.

39. Most of the poor are women and children. As state and federal relief programs continue to be reduced, women know they are the ones to suffer most. Women, especially those heading families, become poorer. When income is not adequate to support a family, women who take responsibility for its survival pay the highest price. The cycle of poverty repeats itself.

40. Many low-income immigrant women work outside the home for minimal pay. They are not encouraged to learn English and to seek better positions. Undocumented working women, uprooted from their family of origin, face endless anxiety, fear of jail or deportation. Neither they nor their husbands and families can travel freely. Undocumented workers are exploited by some employers who threaten to report them to law agencies.

41. Violence. A woman's dignity is destroyed in a particularly vicious and heinous way when she is treated violently. It shocks us to learn that currently one woman in four will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. Girls and women are victims of incest, rape, battering, abortion and other forms of personal abuse. Besides inflicting physical injury, violence shatters a woman's sense of self-worth. Women are regularly abandoned by spouses in marriage or by the fathers of their children outside of marriage.

42. Most of the women we consulted expressed a deep concern about the rising tide of violence against women. Women and girls are exploited as "sex objects" by the mass media in ways which were not tolerated even a generation ago - in advertising, in movies and on television, in pornographic publications and films, in live entertainment and in public tolerance of prostitution. All of these exploitations violate the dignity of women.

43. As we reflect on the serious concerns women have called to our attention - the instances of violent and abusive behavior against them, the "feminization of poverty" in our nation, the weakening fabric of social and family relationships, and the unjust treatment of women in the workplace - we need to analyze and address the causes of these concerns and begin to resolve them. Convinced as we are of the equal dignity of women and men, we consider it urgent to examine first of all the underlying causes of the sinful distortion of God's plan confirmed sadly by these abuses.

Sexism and Social Patterns

44. To identify sexism as the principal evil at work in this distortion of relationships between women and men would be to analyze the underlying problem too superficially. Hence we shall describe three general responses to the issues which have emerged from society's heightened awareness of women's concerns.

45. In the first place we must acknowledge that there are those who implicitly or even explicitly reject the notion that there is such a thing as sexist behavior; they believe that
the "problems" identified by many women are caused by factors of their own making. In such a view, there would seem to be an invitation to women to find a solution to the "problem" of sexism in a return to a past, more "idyllic" time when women knew their place - in the home - and did not presume to compete with men in traditionally masculine pursuits and jobs.

46. For our part, we cannot accept such a view, even when it is espoused for the best of motives such as the preservation of family life. We intend to voice our concerns for the absolutely essential support of the family by society as a whole. But the abuses and injustices reported above are not adequately resolved by a nostalgic appeal to a supposedly "better" time. As Pope John Paul II stated in his address to the laity in San Francisco in 1987, "Precisely because of their equal dignity and responsibility, the access of women to public functions must be assured. Regardless of the role they perform, the church proclaims the dignity of women as women."(31)

47. A second inadequate approach to the awareness of sexism has been the effort to redress the bias in favor of men in social relationships and economic policies by insisting upon identical treatment of women and men - in the workplace, in the military, in social relationships, even in the family. Only when we are blind to sexual difference, in this view, can we guarantee true equality.

48. Although this approach expresses a point of view which is quite appealing to some in our society, it is important to recognize that it is rooted in an understanding of equality that owes more to the tradition of the Enlightenment than to the Catholic tradition. In the Enlightenment tradition, humanity is its own "god" and creates its own destiny. Each individual is endowed with a set of equal rights to be developed personally and protected socially. People are expected to be free to become whatever they are able to become by realizing their individual potential. Nature is to be mastered and superseded rather than respected. Society is structurally organized to maximize individual freedom even if this means forgoing a consensus on moral values. The pursuit of truth is reduced to a pluralistic respect for subjective opinion and conviction.

49. New legal norms and social structures in American society are already incorporating this understanding of the person, of society and of equality between men and women. In the attempt to eradicate the experience of discrimination which hinders personal development, all differentiation between men and women is being minimized if not denied. This approach neglects the unique ways in which a woman and a man give flesh to a shared humanity; it actually perpetuates or exacerbates the evils which many women confront.

50. We have already observed that male domination represents not the divine plan but the sinful rejection of God's plan. It is insufficient, however, to attribute all the ills women and girls experience in personal and societal relations to sexism. An analysis of the victimization of women must also include mention of the sinful violation, not exclusive to men, of the specific norms that govern genital relations. That is, we must consider how women's dignity is injured by disregard for the meaning and purpose of sexual relations. The sexual revolution of the past generation, often advanced by radical feminism, equated women's liberation with the freedom to engage in sexual relations without fear of
pregnancy. This behavior brought in its wake a new ambivalence toward motherhood. But by neglecting to value the distinctive contribution of motherhood, society even more easily overlooks the role of fatherhood and the call to male sexual responsibility.

51. The social mores emerging from the contemporary sexual revolution propose to liberate women by freeing them from responsibility for bearing children through ready availability of contraception and abortion. In reality, the result of this so-called "revolution" have contributed to the sexist exploitation of women. They have fostered male irresponsibility and ignored the aspects of self-gift, interpersonal commitment and partnership which are intrinsic to the sexual relationship. This trend has contributed significantly to the breakdown of respect for women and to the present crisis in family life. The impact of the sexual revolution extends beyond the individual and the family to society at large. It is not only sexism but the sexual revolution that accounts for the present oppression of women.

52. The development of social legislation which offers the same benefits to women and to men actually deprives women of the special kind of provisions they need for maternity and family support. No-fault divorce legislation has increased the feminization of poverty. Statistics confirm that women lose income and men gain it after divorce.(32) Thus a notion of equality which eliminates distinctive differences in women and men does not do justice to the challenges sexism poses.

53. Third, some contemporary commentators take a more radical approach, which seeks to replace the values and structures of a male-dominated, patriarchal society with the spiritual gifts and virtues nature has given to women. Hence masculine aggressivity must yield to feminine compassion, competition to cooperation and so on. In such a view, the focus on women's gifts in reconstructing society would have a quasi-redemptive character.

54. Although there is so much which women can and do bring to humanize societal structures, this view exalts the gifts and traits of women while belittling the gifts and traits of men. At times it seems to label maleness evil in itself. The problem with this view is not that it is too radical, but that it is not radical enough. In locating the evil of sexism in man, it fails to recognize its roots in original sin. Though men have a significantly greater share of the blame to bear, both the culpability for the present state of affairs and the responsibility for counteracting it rest with everyone.

Toward a Deeper Understanding of Catholic Social Teaching

55. We are convinced that the teaching of Jesus Christ in the church points to a deeper analysis and response. It is a more radical teaching since it explores the roots of the issues. Through the redemptive work of Jesus, God has revealed a new dimension of the divine pattern of creation. In contemplating the life of the triune God we begin to understand and even strive to imitate a love which is self-giving and generative. Thus the Christian faith sees the Trinitarian communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the source and model of human communion. This communion of persons in one God is marked by profound equality, mutuality and self-giving, in distinctive relationship to one
another and to all created reality. It serves as the pattern, challenge and goal of the human "koinonia" to which we are all called.

56. It is sin that has distorted the likeness of God, which was intended to be reflected in true human community. Sin plays itself out in the pursuit of pleasure separated from purpose, in the exercise of power in an abusive way and in the accumulation of possession as an end in itself. These personal sinful behaviors tend to become incorporated in the very fabric of society and even in society's institutional life as a kind of "social sin."(33) Thus an economic and political system can actually lose its way and abandon its responsibility to develop a just society by condoning hedonism, human abuse and consumerism.

57. Catholic social teaching focuses on the responsibility we have to foster a human society in which equality, mutuality and self-giving can flourish. We cannot truly mature unless we enter into loving relationships where we can discover and express ourselves. Interpersonal relationships experienced in the family, in friendships and in community life support our growth as persons and call forth our gifts for the service of others. They lead us to generativity. Human generativity is not restricted to the physical generation of new life; it includes also the expression of creativity in work, in culture, and in the nurture and education of children and youth.

58. Catholic social teaching also understands the family to be the basic unit of society. Therefore, sexual intimacy within marriage both expresses the mutual gift of self and leads to the physical generativity, the begetting and bearing of children. Through their loving and life-giving communion, the spouses experience fatherhood and motherhood. These roles are fulfilled not simply by bringing children into the world, but by parents pledging themselves to the formation and education of their children.(34)

59. It is not enough for individuals to be guaranteed their basic rights; families also have rights and consequent responsibilities. Marriage is more than an interpersonal relationship; it is a social institution. For this reason society ought not to neglect the special place of marriage and the family in the social order. Marriage and family have as their special focus the rearing of children who represent the future of humanity, a future for which all of society is responsible.

60. A society which focuses its enormous resources of creativity and power primarily on selfish purposes like domination of others, self-indulgent fulfillment, and self-serving consumption - without providing for its future by ensuring the health and well-being of its families and its children - is a society on the road to self-destruction and death.

61. Social responsibility is inherent in the plan of interpersonal communion given by the Creator to humanity as a pattern and goal for our personal and social relationships. For this reason it becomes the task not just of parents, who hold the primary responsibility, but of everyone in society - single and married, young and old - to acknowledge the creativity and generativity inherent in our being made male and female in the image and likeness of God. All of us must respond to the call to be a nurturing people who do not neglect the responsibility to provide for the future generations of humanity a legacy of caring, justice and equality.
Married Life

62. In our Catholic tradition, marriage is described as a covenant in which, by public agreement, a woman and a man live together for their whole lives to love and support each other and to be open to the procreation and education of children.(35) Marriage between Christians is one of the seven sacraments of the church instituted by Jesus Christ.(36)

63. The relationship of love in marriage symbolizes the love of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32).(37) Christian marriage is a human reality through which the mystery of divine love and life is expressed. Christ's gift of his life for our salvation (Eph. 5:25) thus becomes a model for Christian living as such. Often in the past the "submission" of wives to their husbands was seen as unilateral; in the contemporary teaching of the church, husband and wife are called to be mutually "subject" to each other in the Lord (cf. Eph. 5:21).(38)

64. In our consultations with women, frequent mention was made of male insensitivity. Some husbands seem unaware of the complex activities involved in homemaking such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, child care, nursing, chauffeuring. Insensitivity is particularly painful when a wife who works outside the home is also expected to bear the full burden of homemaking. Sometimes insensitivity is compounded by lack of interest, by rudeness or by husbands taking total control of money and finances.(39) Women can also be insensitive to the needs of their husbands. Self-centered behavior on the part of either spouse undermines marital life.

65. The ideal of mutuality in marriage must be addressed on many levels. Planning and offering courses to engaged and married couples on formation for parenting is one way to emphasize mutuality. Another way is to encourage wives and husbands to share with each other, with the engaged, with other couples and with the clergy the practical difficulties of married life. Especially when spouses are psychologically abusive or physically violent, pastors and counselors are obliged to help them see why such behavior is totally unacceptable and why they need to begin immediately to make lasting and effective changes to strengthen family life.

66. Many marriages are both happy and holy; yet the high rate of divorce in our society emphasizes the need to call upon every resource at hand to help people prepare for marriage and to maintain productive, life-giving relationships. Women and men who are teachers and counselors and who have been involved in movements such as Marriage Encounter ought to be encouraged to share their expertise with seminarians and priests and to help in the task of marriage preparation.

67. There is a growing social acceptance of the practice of "living together" as sexual partners without benefit of a civil or a church marriage. Whether couples choose this alternative through an unwillingness to make a life-long commitment or through a desire to test whether the relationship will prove satisfactory, it is evident that this substitute for genuine marriage represents an imperfect, incomplete and sinful expression of love. It threatens the dignity of both partners as well as of the children who may be born to them.
Marriage is not simply a private, individual arrangement; it involves a public social commitment to spouse and children.

Family Life and Parenting

68. Committed couples choose marriage and family as a way of life, often at considerable sacrifice, in the face of the lure of society to individualistic material comfort. For the woman, giving birth is a moment of supreme wonder. Motherhood is often a source of inexpressible joy and satisfaction. Nurturing a child is among the most intimate relations a woman can have. For the man, assisting at his child's birth offers him an experience of fulfillment little else can duplicate. Fatherhood is both a joy and a responsibility as a husband shares with his wife in the tasks and pleasures of child rearing. In the ideal circumstance the guidance and involvement of both parents contribute to the faith and character formation of their children and give witness to society of the fidelity and stability of a strong family unit.

69. Just as both parents must oversee the well-being of their children and the quality of their home life, so both must face decisions pertaining to the duties and responsibilities of parenting in relation to work inside and outside the home. Mothers have a particular and often difficult road to follow. Amid the confusion surrounding the call to motherhood in the last decades of this century, the church wholly supports the gifts of mothers and calls upon fathers to exercise their responsibility for parenting as well. We urge that parents together make time to enhance the quality of family life.

70. Recent teachings of popes and bishops stress that society should foster family life by providing a family wage so that "mothers are not in practice compelled to work outside the home."(40) It is one thing for women to choose to work in the marketplace to enhance their personal growth, to meet financial responsibilities and to contribute their gifts; it is quite another to be compelled to work because of economic necessity. Women's work within the family home must be recognized and respected as a value in its own right. As always, what a wife and husband decide in this regard must be evaluated in the light of the good of the entire family.(41)

71. With the number of divorces on the rise, single-parent families are more prevalent today than in the past, when the phenomenon was often due to accident or death. An increasing number of America's children are being raised in families in which one parent, more often than not the mother, remains primarily responsible for their care.(42) The need to be both the breadwinner and a homemaker-mother places an extraordinary burden on the single-parent woman. This fact alone causes us to underscore the serious responsibility men have to provide support for their children that goes beyond minimal financial requirements.

72. The efforts of single mothers and fathers to plan and organize complicated home and work schedules and to provide the parental formation children need are inspiring. To encourage them, we recommend the formation of more single-parent support groups within parishes and the establishment of parish-run day care centers. We also suggest that two-parent families be more sensitive to single parents, for example, by including them and their children in social gatherings and recreational activities. The church has
consistently urged that the government assume more responsibility for the support of families unable to support themselves.(43)

Friendship

73. Formation in the virtues of modesty and chastity counters the deformation caused by sexism. Learning to respect one's body and to exercise sexual self-control leads to self-esteem and increases the capacity for mature love. It frees people for other kinds of loving relationships like friendship, which holds a special place in human and Christian life. As a mutual offering of love and respect between two persons of the same or the opposite sex, friendship is a gift and a blessing to all who give and receive it. Friends help each other to relinquish defensive postures and to risk honest sharing of their thoughts, feelings, dreams and disappointments. Occasions of joy and sorrow, laughter and pain, experienced together deepen self-awareness and strengthen trust. Jesus calls his disciples "friends" (Jn. 15:15) since it is to them that he makes known all he has heard from his Father. Christian friendship enables the kind of intimate communion and communication many say is a rarity in today's world where people suffer more and more alienation resulting from acts of loveless sex. Many long to experience real friendship as an opening to the kind of intimacy Jesus invites his friends to share.

74. Friendship is a human good celebrated in Scripture (cf. Jn. 13:23) and in the writings of the saints and spiritual masters.(44) Recorded experiences like these reveal that while friendship is a good in itself, it should also offer friends a way to grow closer to God. Friendships that keep God at the center are impervious to violence and injustice. Such Christ-centered relationships help women and men to fulfill their baptismal call to holiness and to be faithful to their particular state of life as celibate or married persons.

Single Life

75. The number of women who find themselves single either by circumstance or by choice is on the rise.(45) While many tend to view being single as a transitional state to marriage or some form of communal commitment, more and more unmarried Christians are exploring their singleness as a possible and perhaps permanent way of life in the world.

76. Single persons generally find more opportunities now than in the past to express their gifts, but women who are single still face many obstacles in this regard. In the marketplace unmarried women have often been excluded and insensitively treated. Many seek but do not find the spiritual formation they need to help them appraise their calling to marriage or to the single life. Then, too, social gatherings in our culture seem to be organized principally around couples. Activities for singles often promote an irresponsible lifestyle, which can give in to the distorted craving for pleasure, power and possession.

77. The challenge Christian singles face is to recognize and live their call in imitation of Jesus. A single person's life, like anyone else's, must be based on self-giving love and service to others. On the one hand, as an avenue to Christ-like love through service, singleness can be constructive and spiritually enriching (cf. 1 Cor. 7:34). On the other
hand, if the single life is lived as escape from the blessing and burden of other-centered relationships, singleness can lead to a self-centered isolated existence.

78. Many single Christians, especially in a time of sexual revolution, are coming to understand and embrace chastity with joy as a special way of loving. They validate the human capacity to love as Jesus did, with profound respect and purity of heart. Whether people choose the single state permanently or are in transition to a hoped-for marriage or live alone due to unforeseen circumstances, they need to be treated with sensitivity. Single Christians deserve to receive more support in their efforts to remain faithful to their vocation in today's world.

79. We want to call attention not only to the spiritual, but also to the material contributions made by single persons. Many singles sense a need for and consequently engage in some kind of "spiritual parenting" and in a wide range of volunteer work. Theirs is a gift of time, money and talent, of friendship and care not to be underestimated by the church or by society.

Questions of Pastoral Concern

80. Regulation of Birth. Consultation with women in national groups and in dioceses across the country attests that questions regarding the regulation of births are of great concern. Some women spoke of constant fear of unexpected pregnancy and of marital fights and frustrations. Others reported that since they were unable to follow this aspect of the church's teaching, they felt obliged to leave the church. Still others chose to remain in the church, but felt unable to comply with the teaching that contraceptive practices are objectively wrong because they did not think this teaching applied to their situation.

81. The gap between what the church teaches and the practice of married Catholics is and remains a troublesome reality. Often this teaching is poorly understood. Consequently, it appears necessary to restate that the church's opposition to artificial contraception defends the life-giving character of the marital act. Every marital act should be open to life. Contraception is a choice, a positive act of will, to do something or not to do something before, after or during intercourse to prevent the conception of new life. Similarly, the love-giving character of intercourse is protected by opposition to such forms of technological reproduction as in vitro fertilization. Our teaching thus favors the union of life and love.

82. To further the understanding and implementation of this teaching, we must not only present it convincingly, but also offer compassionate counsel to those who experience difficulty with it. When couples are faced with serious decisions in this area, their consciences must be both informed and formed. They have a right and duty to know what the church teaches and a responsibility to respect the authority of that teaching.

83. Catholic theologians, spiritual directors, educators, psychologists and experts in human sexuality must continue to provide better, up-to-date courses in sex education and spiritual formation, but more needs to be done. We therefore urge the initiation and continuation of diocesan programs for engaged couples. Pre-Cana conferences and Engaged Encounters must be followed later by marriage enrichment courses. Catholic
education and a vital parish life ought to contribute to the correct formation of conscience and the mature growth of engaged and married couples. (48) The participation of women in these efforts is invaluable as couples struggle to harmonize their experience with the teaching of the magisterium.

84. Natural family planning, the practice of using infertile times for the expression of marital love, is available for those who for serious reasons need to postpone a new birth. This practice expresses in a concrete way the right relationship between spouses in marriage. It calls for a profound respect for each other and a communion of minds and hearts regarding the regulation of births. It acknowledges the different yet complementary desires and needs of a man and a woman and insists that co-responsibility for decisions regarding children is essential. NFP admittedly requires proper initiation, commitment and the full cooperation of husband and wife. It respects human nature and moves beyond mechanical ways of expressing human love. The relationship between communion and generativity is preserved and a new level of understanding between husband and wife is promoted. Such planning builds an atmosphere in which the parents together are also much more inclined to assume co-responsibility for the rearing of their children. (49)

85. It is a painful reality that some couples who want to have children are unable to do so. The use of new therapies and drugs that increase fertility through natural means is consistent with Catholic teaching. (50) This use presupposes that conception must always proceed from an act of sexual love on the part of the parents rather than being a product of human technology. If the inability to bear children cannot be remedied by morally acceptable means, couples may consider the possibility of adopting a child, becoming foster parents or expressing their gifts for nurturing in other kinds of service.

86. Abortion. The killing of an unborn child for whatever reason shatters the right relationship between parents and their offspring. Vatican II summarized the Christian tradition when it said that "abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes." (51) Nothing can ever justify the direct killing of the innocent. As bishops of the United States we have documented our total opposition to this practice and to the legalization of abortion in our land.

87. We call all members of our society to open their hearts and minds to embrace with love and compassion their unborn brothers and sisters. We urge priests and all pastoral ministers to respond to women in this crisis with compassion and love and to support church-sponsored efforts to help them. This help must not be limited to prenatal care and must extend in practical ways to support mother and child after birth.

88. The physical, mental and spiritual pain of women who have had abortions and their reluctance to go to confession for fear of being judged harshly are matters of grave concern to us. We ask women in this predicament to maintain hope, to seek post-abortion counseling and to receive the blessing of sacramental reconciliation.

89. The dangers facing young people today also point to the urgent need for ministry to youth. Gathering the young together for mutual support and instruction offers ministers a way to model the dignity of the human person and to teach by example mutuality and respect in human relationships. More effective ways and contemporary terms must be
found to express the Gospel values of obedience and chaste love to young people. Their often unvoiced desire to belong to Christ and the Christian community must not be ignored.

90. Divorce. With divorce coming to be more common and acceptable in our society, with more than half of first marriages now failing, we are only beginning to appreciate fully what a tragedy divorce is for spouses and their families. It is no wonder that Jesus was so straightforward in his teaching about this: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (Mk. 10:11-12). In fact, Jesus tried to focus the attention of his disciples on desires that, if unchecked, can lead to marital disasters. "You have heard the commandment, 'You shall not commit adultery.' What I say to you is: Anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his thoughts" (Mt. 5:27-28).

91. Because the wounds people experience when they are victims of an unwanted divorce cut so deeply, we have a special responsibility in the church to offer them excellent pastoral care and appropriate support. Divorced and separated women reported with pain that they have been shunned by some priests and religious as well as by other laypersons. Some were asked to resign from being extraordinary ministers of holy communion and to cease teaching in catechetical programs. Others were no longer welcome to serve on family life committees, even if they had not remarried outside the church. Insofar as decrees of nullity were concerned, women and men alike asked for clearer explanations of the annulment process and its consistent administration from diocese to diocese. Administrative practices locally and nationally may need to undergo conscientious review, and we will try to take action in this regard.

92. Pope John Paul II has called upon pastors and the faithful at large to help divorced persons, especially when they are parents, through this time of crisis and "with solicitous care to make sure they do not consider themselves as separated from the church, for as baptized persons they can, and indeed must, share in her life."(52) Anyone who is divorced needs and deserves "much respect, solidarity, understanding and practical help, so that they can preserve their fidelity even in their difficult situation."(53)

93. Separated and divorced persons must be affirmed as valued members of the ecclesial community, for no one should underestimate the difficulties the breakup of a marriage entails. Preachers must be attentive to what people in this predicament suffer so that their instructions from the pulpit can be solicitous and effective. The divorced and separated members of our faith community must in turn be willing to share their gifts and help others learn from their experiences what makes a marriage good and what causes such pain.

94. Premarital Chastity. The breakdown of intimate and responsible marital and familial relationships seems to us to be closely linked to the permissiveness experienced in our society since the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s. The double standard which punished women for engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage while tolerating the same behavior on the part of men has given way to no standard at all. The wide availability of artificial contraceptives makes it possible for girls and women to engage in genital sexual


relationships without fear of pregnancy. Teen-age sexual experimentation, casual sexual encounters or non-marital relationships - both heterosexual and homosexual - between consenting adults are socially accepted; the only admonition society offers is that the partners protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancy. This development undermines the sanctity of marriage and ultimately attacks the personal dignity of the partners. True protection in sexual intercourse is that afforded by a loving commitment in marriage. Without this, both men and women risk being used and rejected, their gift of self trivialized rather than cherished.

95. We cannot foster human responsibility for one another and consider sexual activity outside of marriage to be acceptable. Catholic parents ought to speak frankly with their children about the beauty and sacred meaning of human sexuality and the importance of abstaining from genital sexual activity before marriage. They ought to advise their children about the dangers and consequences of unexpected pregnancies. If, however, such a pregnancy should occur, parents need to stand by their daughters and encourage them not to have an abortion; they should give the mother the support she needs to choose life for her child. Parents need to insist on the responsibility to be borne by sons who father a child out of wedlock. As problems related to lack of chastity and premarital sex proliferate, it is clear that young people need sound guidance in their moral and spiritual formation from parents, educators and the church.

96. Homosexual Persons. The situation of homosexual persons in our society and in our church today calls for special consideration and much prayer. As the church teaches, homosexuality is an objective disorder and every genital act of homosexuality is a morally grave matter.(54) Such acts are incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, it is equally incompatible with the Gospel to treat persons who may have a homosexual orientation in a demeaning way, for any such action violates their dignity as human beings.

97. Lesbian women were especially outspoken about the ways in which their dignity as persons has been belittled and demeaned by sexism, abetted by cultural prejudices. We condemn such treatment totally. At the same time, we also express the expectation rooted in Catholic teaching that homosexual persons need to strive to commit themselves to Christ and to chaste and loving friendships.

Promoting Christian Values in Society

98. Our Christian faith is countercultural. The church is called to be an agent of transformation, the sacrament of salvation, in a world marred by sin. To this end, we call upon all members of the church to offer their diverse and complementary gifts in the service of God and humankind. As God's people, we should and must cooperate with grace to make the Gospel the moving force behind our personal and social lives, the guiding light of our decisions and actions.

99. In listening to women's concerns for just treatment in society and an end to violence, we have been drawn to reflect deeply on our faith tradition and its condemnation of societal abuses and sexist discrimination. Vatican II insists that "the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on each other."(55) As Christian
pastors, we believe that societal problems are best addressed by both caring for and challenging individuals.

100. All people must strive to resist hedonism, consumerism and dehumanizing competition based on profit or power motives alone. These tendencies violate our Christian understanding of the centrality and dignity of the human person and are contrary to a preferential option for the poor. In harmony with the best traditions of our nation, we believe that the just treatment of each person is vital to the well-being of our society as a whole. This commitment is undermined whenever women are treated unfairly, whenever their special needs and prerogatives are disregarded. Although we believe that the inalienable rights of women should be protected by law, justice includes more than legislation. It calls for a change of heart that motivates people to defend and support women who are mistreated in any way. This conversion is both a work and a witness which the church is pledged to promote.

101. Conversion of heart must begin with every Christian person. Alone and together as a church we must strive with other citizens of good will to enact the ideals articulated best by Pope Paul VI: 1) recognition of the civil rights of women as equal to men in human dignity whenever their rights have not yet been acknowledged; 2) laws that will make it possible for women to fulfill the same professional, social and political roles as men, according to the individual capacities of the person; 3) the acknowledgment, respect and protection of the special prerogatives of women in marriage, family, education and society; 4) the maintenance and defense of the dignity of women as persons.(56)

102. In this spirit, we include as part of our pastoral responsibility a commitment to work toward improving wage-setting procedures, thus guaranteeing equal treatment for all persons under the law, with special attention to women. We will also encourage new legislation that seeks to remedy conditions that cause women unnecessary hardship and suffering. Use of flextime and job sharing, along with the guarantee of comparable pay for comparable work, are actions that will help women who even now suffer from unequal treatment because of their sex or social status.

103. After the birth of a child, mothers need time for physical recovery and infant care. Catholic social teaching maintains that if they work outside the home they ought to be able to take parental leave and return to employment without forfeiting their chances of advancement or incurring financial loss. A family wage should ensure the possibility that at least one parent can be present to the children in their critical formative years. Establishment of safe and affordable day care near the workplace of parents is another, although somewhat less desirable way to help working parents to care for their children and keep the family together.(57)

104. What we advocate for public institutions must, of course, be effected in our own. While the church's programs and activities are often only possible because of contributed services, we must also be sure that those who depend on a church salary for family support are appropriately compensated. To remain credible as teachers of social justice, we must face the issue of justice within the church. The 1971 Synod of Bishops declared, "Anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes."(58) We must make every effort to ensure that practices, possessions, authority,
organizations and behavioral patterns within our own house truly foster the proper advancement of women.

105. We recognize that in every age women have responded in exemplary ways to remedy injustice. Countless named and unnamed Christian women have been charismatic leaders in the fields of social service and health care, education and law. They have been in the forefront of efforts to preserve and enhance the Earth and the Earth's resources. They have taken action against oppression, demanded human rights, called for the just treatment of all and worked for an end to war. Women supported the labor movement and condemned the exploitation of females and children in the "sweatshops" of industrial nations.(59) Women the world over have made significant contributions to society by caring for the poor, by promoting peace and pro-life movements, and by advancing justice through legal and political means. They continue to uphold legislation and affirmative action laws that assure women the opportunity for advancement and the fair treatment on the job they so rightly deserve.

106. The many concerns women brought to our attention during our nationwide dialogues with them have led us to examine the effects of sin in our society, particularly as they harm women, families and children. We will continue to do all in our power to ensure that the work of society's renewal will one day overcome the evil effects of discrimination and inequality, particularly as these stem from sexism. The power of the Spirit of Jesus present in the world and in the church as a visible sign of his love, present also in many hidden ways to sustain what is good, gives us ample reason to be filled with hope as we work together to create a society open to the transforming effects of God's love.

CHAPTER 3

UNITY AND DIVERSITY OF GIFTS IN AND FOR THE CHURCH

Expressed Concerns of Women

107. It ought to come as no surprise that the impact of the women's movement in society is being felt in the church as is the reflection of society's own limitations and prejudices. In significant ways this movement as an expression of the pursuit of equality and justice is a contemporary manifestation of a quest for the dignity we believe women and men share as "children loved by the Father, members incorporated in Christ and his church, living temples of the Spirit."(60) The church herself, immersed as she is in human society, has not always given proper recognition to these fundamental truths in the daily life of the faithful.

108. In our consultations women expressed such a strong interest in contributing to the church's mission and in offering their gifts in various ministries to build up the body of Christ. We heard from many women for whom the church is the strongest source of strength and joy they know in a world antagonistic to Christian values. They welcome and appreciate the spiritual life they find in the church and the ministerial roles available to them. Women also admit to feeling a sense of frustration when church statements
affirm equality in dignity for all, but clergy or other ecclesial ministers fail to live up to that teaching in practice.

109. The concerns women voiced to us about the church ranged from these general concerns to more specific issues. Those mentioned most frequently: the admission of women to the offices of lector and acolyte; service at the altar; admission to the diaconate; the ordination of women to the priesthood; the relationship of jurisdiction to orders; a greater inclusion of women on consultative bodies at all levels; greater self-determination for women religious concerning, for example, the adaptation of their rules and constitutions; and the greater use of inclusive language in Scripture, liturgical texts and hymns. Women noted, too, that they are underrepresented at the level of church administration; that they are sometimes excluded from decision making on the parish level; and that they do not have the opportunity to contribute their expertise to the formulation of church teaching on the doctrinal level. Many women want to share their insights and to assist in communicating more effectively the teachings of the church, for example, on the dignity of women, on the value of work in and outside the home, and on the crucial role of parents in the initial formation and education of their children. Some married women and mothers, who are pro-life advocates, believe they have much to offer to the expression and communication of church teachings on birth regulation, respect for life and natural family planning.

110. As noted in the last chapter, some women shared with us their concerns about inadequate or unfair hiring policies and a lack of equal pay for equal work done in and for the church. While there will always be a needed and laudable place in the church for contributed services, there is no justification for not offering just compensation to employees. Some women reported that their dioceses do have standards in place for salaries and benefit plans for their workers. They share our concern for the reality of limited resources but insist there is always room for improvement. Women support our efforts to make hard decisions pertaining to the allocation and distribution of funds a priority in diocesan planning. Moreover, even when pay is not an issue, we must find suitable ways to acknowledge the contributed services of women to our dioceses. The value of their dedication must never be taken for granted.

111. Young single women of college age as well as those in the workplace told us that they and many of their contemporaries encounter real difficulty when it comes to finding outlets for their energy and talents in our parishes. They do not experience in the church the kind of support they need to cope with the pressures of competition and the secular values prevalent in our society.

112. Reasons for raising concern about the exclusion of women from ordination in the Catholic Church varied considerably, being of no concern to some and of major concern to others. The expectations and hopes of many Catholic women have been influenced by post-conciliar teaching and writing. Women's access to formal theological studies has enhanced their desire and their ability to contribute to the public mission of the church. In other Christian churches women have been admitted to pastoral offices. Many women have experienced what it is like to work as valued colleagues in pastoral ministry with priests. They are sharing more than ever before in various forms of governance and authoritative teaching in the Catholic Church. Yet for many more the entire issue of
equality in the church continues to revolve around the question of excluding women from holy orders. Critics point to a division in theological opinion and popular sentiment. They claim that the tradition of the church has been so dominated by men that it is not above critique in its interpretation of Sacred Scripture as it touches on the ordination question.

113. Rather than focusing on this issue numerous women said they would prefer to hold up as exemplary the teaching of Vatican II that emphasizes the role of the laity in sanctifying and evangelizing the world. Women are energized by the encouragement they have received from many priests to participate in the liturgical ministries that do not require ordination. Because the support of the clergy is so important, it is all the more disheartening to women when they meet with patronizing or condescending attitudes instead of being recognized as valued collaborators and co-disciples of Christ. Expecting to be treated as colleagues and partners, some women find themselves viewed more as threats or competitors. Women's expectation of being treated with respect rapidly dims when domination replaces collaboration. Most women say they do not want to run the church or be superior in it; they do want the opportunity to use their gifts and talents in service to society and the church.

The Mystery Which Is the Church

114. We have received a wide spectrum of advice about whether and how to address the questions and concerns surrounding the meaning of holy orders in our tradition. Some have suggested silence as the best way to avoid taking sides in a controversial matter. Others have counseled that the credibility of the bishops in addressing women's concerns hinges ultimately on their demonstrating an openness to the desire so many individuals and groups have expressed in favor of the ordination of women. In our view, the pastoral role of the bishop in the church requires us to address even controversial issues and to reflect on the reasons which underlie the practice of two millennia of Catholic tradition regarding eligibility for the reception of holy orders. The context for our addressing this question will be our understanding of what Vatican II calls the "mystery" which is the church.

115. The church as a divine mystery of shared life in communion with God, as modeled upon the Trinitarian life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is not adequately captured by any human model of society. The church is not an institution like any other. The divinely given hierarchical structure of the church, for example, is not at odds with its fundamental nature as a communion among persons and with God.

116. Some people view the church primarily as an institution. They tend to identify the church with the ordained - the pope, bishops, priests and deacons. Those who subscribe to this view express it by their reluctance to accept women even in the new lay ministerial roles which are open to them. Others, who paradoxically seem to subscribe to the same understanding, seek to reform the church by transforming the exclusively male hierarchy (or "patriarchy") through the admission of women to its ranks.

117. Other people tend to consider the church primarily as a human community along the lines of a sociological and political entity. They generally perceive the church in democratic terms, seeing authority vested in the people and then delegated to church
leaders. This view leans toward a simplistic egalitarianism; its suspicion of authority tends to marginalize the hierarchy.

118. Both of these approaches fail to grasp adequately the unique nature of the church. The first focuses too much on its external organization and loses sight of its distinctive inner life and the participation that should engage all of the baptized. The second stresses the role of the laity without appropriate reference to the sacramental role of the teaching and shepherding office. Would this not be to "replace a false, unilateral vision of the church as purely hierarchical with a new sociological conception that is also unilateral?"(62)

Toward a Deeper Understanding of Church

119. The biblical images for the church provide a variety of perspectives from which to appreciate the mystery and richness of the reality which is church.(63) The church is compared to a sheepfold. The church is God's people. The church is the new Jerusalem and a new creation. The church is the bride of Christ. The church is the body of Christ. In each of these images we also get a glimpse into the mystery of Christ as shepherd, the new Moses, the Lord of the New Jerusalem, the redeemer responsible for the new creation, the spouse of his bride and the head of his body. These images of Christ and the church symbolize the mystery of divine communion with our humanity.

120. As we read in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: "By her relationship with Christ, the church is a kind of sacrament of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity."(64) Its origin is in God, in whose life the church shares. Hence the 1985 extraordinary Synod of Bishops recognized that communio best expressed the mystery of the church.(65) The church is a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; thus the church participates in the divine communion and fosters a communion between its members and God and among its members themselves. Just as the church's internal life is modeled on the inner Trinitarian life, so its saving mission flows from the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit in accordance with the decree of God's love.(66)

121. The Trinitarian life is the best example for us of complete equality, mutuality and self-donating love. Our communion with one another in Christ as persons equal in dignity yet diverse in our gifts, as called to loving service of the community, also reflects this divine pattern. Such a vision of church sees it as both a gracious gift from God and an ongoing challenge to take our baptism seriously by putting aside whatever hinders us from becoming more fully that community of disciples which can truly be a kind of "sacrament" of life and love in and for the world.(67)

Sacramental Life in the Church

122. Rebirth in Christ through baptism, the first sacrament of initiation into the church, establishes among all believers "a true equality with regard to dignity and the activity whereby all cooperate in the building up of the body of Christ in accord with each one's own condition and function."(68) In baptism, the Lord saves us from the grip of sin and gives us a share in divine life. He sends the baptized to serve in this world. In the light of
this common gift of grace and the call to serve, the church affirms that men and women are meant to be "brothers and sisters equal in dignity and freedom."(69)

123. As baptized Christians, all the faithful share a common call to holiness, whatever the condition or state of life may be.(70) The baptized are united in real communion with God and with one another. This invitation necessitates a genuine conversion of heart and life and a growth in the virtues. Response to God's call is expressed in worship, in service, in love for others and in a gift of self for the good of the community.

124. The sacrament of confirmation enables us to grow in the Holy Spirit and to live our lives in such a way that we give witness to the Gospel through active participation in the church's life in the world. The Holy Spirit bestows a variety of gifts, enabling the faithful to offer needed services in various ways to the church and the world. We are thus confirmed in our call to join with one another in promoting the redemptive mission of the Lord in society and in our lives together.

125. Participation in the eucharist leads the faithful into a deeper involvement in the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a priestly people we are challenged to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice in union with our Redeemer. The eucharist provides continuing formation in God's word and nourishment at the table of the Lord. It also strengthens the Christian for courageous engagement in the transformation of family, workplace, community and the wider society. In a particular way it calls the faithful to resist sin and to foster, among other tasks, the right relationship between women and men in life. To share in the body and blood of Christ is to experience the restoration of human dignity and the freedom to follow one's unique calling in the Lord, for "through the sacraments, especially the holy eucharist, there is communicated and nourished that charity toward God and [humanity] which is the soul of the apostolate."(71)

The Ministerial Priesthood

126. In the sacrament of holy orders, Christ's headship of the church, his body, is made visible. This sacrament makes present Christ's ministry of gathering the baptized; it has a distinctively social purpose. Since, through baptism, all Christians participate in the priestly self-offering of Jesus, all of the baptized are to offer their lives to God as a spiritual sacrifice. To unite these spiritual sacrifices visibly to the self-sacrifice of the crucified and risen Lord, Christ calls some men to the ordained priesthood. Chosen from among the baptized and ordained for the service of the common priesthood of all the faithful, ordained priests must not seek their own good first, but be willing to lay down their lives for the flock in imitation of the Master. United with Christ in his headship of the church, priests serve the faithful by ministering to them God's word, by making possible sacramental celebrations and by providing pastoral care so that the whole church may more fully be a priestly people.(72)

127. Discerning God's call to the ordained priesthood only from among baptized men has become one of the most controversial issues in the life of the church. The 1976 instruction from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith(73) affirms an unbroken tradition in the churches of the East and West of calling only men to ordained priesthood. Since this tradition is judged by the church to represent fidelity to the "type of ordained
ministry willed by the Lord Jesus Christ and carefully maintained by the apostles," it is considered normative.

128. Tradition is more than simply the cultural continuity of religious practice or social custom. While some past efforts at theological reflection on this tradition are based on arguments "scarcely defensible today," the fact that the call to ministerial priesthood is addressed only to men is not arbitrary nor is it rooted in a view that women are inferior as persons.

129. To trace the reasons for this tradition we need to engage in a reflection on the sacramental nature of the priesthood, on the theology of the eucharist as the sacrifice of the new covenant and on the significance of the biblical symbolism of Christ as the bridegroom of the church as this is related to the eucharist and the whole history of salvation. The church does not consider sexual differentiation to be the same as cultural, ethnic or racial differences. Nor does it regard priestly ministry as only a matter of accomplishing certain tasks. There are many women who can do some of the specific tasks priests do. The rationale which supports the church's practice draws on another level of understanding. The priest is a sacramental symbol of Christ, who in his humanity stands among us as our mediator and high priest. The sacrament relies on the natural symbolism of gender to signify the relationship between the priest and Christ, the head and bridegroom of the church.

130. Since the bishops (and priests with them) represent Christ as shepherd of the flock, as head of the mystical body and bridegroom married to the church, they are to lay down their lives in imitation of this same good shepherd, who laid down his life for the flock (Jn. 10:18). They are to give themselves to the baptized as the divine bridegroom gave himself up for his bride (Eph. 5:25). The ultimate commitment of priestly service is rooted in this gift to the faithful of a self now configured to Christ, head of his body, the church. "Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all. The Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve - to give his life in ransom for the many" (Mk. 10:43-45).

131. From this brief overview of church teaching on priesthood, it is possible to see several of the theological issues involved in the conviction reiterated in the papal documents of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II that the church is unable to authorize the ordination of women. It involves an understanding of the mystery of the church, the nature of priesthood and holy orders, the theology of sacrament and sacramental symbolism, and the limits of church authority over the sacraments. There are further implications from Christian anthropology regarding both the way in which God's revelation has manifested itself in Christ and the significance of human sexuality in God's creative plan.

132. To appreciate the deeper issues at stake for the life of the church, we urge careful study of the sacramental nature of priesthood, of the distinction between the common and ministerial priesthood, and of the relation between jurisdiction and orders. The theology of the eucharist as the sacrifice of the new covenant and the significance of the biblical symbolism of Christ as the bridegroom of the church as this is related to the eucharist and the whole economy of salvation must also be studied and taught more clearly. We
recognize the need also for continuing reflection on the meaning of ministry in the church, particularly in regard to the diaconate and the offices of lector, acolyte and servers at the altar. Such study should proceed with an objectivity and serenity whose necessary context is respect for the authority of the magisterium of the church.

133. It is sometimes suggested that the exclusion of women from ordination amounts to perpetuating an injustice against half the members of the church. This question of injustice arises, as the bishops of New Zealand suggest in their recent theological reflection on the "Made in God's Image" report, only "if the church has in fact the authority to ordain women and then fails to do so. The theological question is: Does the church have the authority to ordain women? We cannot make claims about injustice that beg or bypass that question."(79)

134. It would be wrong, therefore, to see the exclusion of women from ordination as a denial of the equality of women in the church. In describing the nature of the church, we have underlined our conviction that we "are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28), that our baptism initiates us into a radical equality that transcends social and ethnic diversity. This initiation goes beyond class distinctions based on inheritance or achievements. It permits no claim of superiority because one is a man or a woman. The priest's distinctive role in the church's sacramental life as representing Christ, who continues to call us to be church through his ministry of word and sacrament, does not remove him from baptismal equality in the community of the faithful as a fellow disciple of the Lord.

135. In a sinful world where power is used to dominate others, abuses of power should rightly be challenged even when they occur in the church. For any abuse of ecclesiastical power, past or present, we express our sorrow and ask for forgiveness. As bishops who have been given authority in the church, we must also be vigilant that our use of this authority unfolds according to the theology of the Second Vatican Council:

"The bishops as successors of the apostles receive from the Lord, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, the mission of teaching all peoples, and of preaching the Gospel to every creature.... That office, however, which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people is, in the strict sense of the term, a service which is called very expressively in sacred scripture a diakonia or ministry."(80)

The more the authority which accompanies ordination to priesthood can be seen and lived as a genuine 'service to God's people, the more will be allayed the suspicions some women have that the link between such power and holy orders is a patriarchal expression of domination and inequality.

The Example of Mary and the Saints

136. In today's society it is common to analyze social structures in terms of power and authority. It is sometimes presumed that the status of bishops and priests within the hierarchical structure of the church suggests that they occupy a position or status of greatest importance. The reality is otherwise. The most important people in the church are saints. No matter how hidden or ordinary one's life may seem to oneself or others,
whoever in the church has made a complete response to the love God offers to all, that person, male or female, is the most important in God's reign.

137. The experience of the church from apostolic times presents, not without imperfections to be sure, a rich tapestry of saints and servants of God, of edifying examples of Christian faithful who have responded to the call to image Christ in a broader sense. Women are an important part of this picture, as we shall see. To serve this mission Christ gave his church a wealth of workers and ministries to draw upon: "To some, his gift was that they should be apostles; to some, prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

138. Above all, holy persons reveal to us most fully what it means to be church. They accept Christ's redemptive and sanctifying offer of himself in their hearts, minds, bodies and souls. They embrace him as Lord of their lives. They accept his grace of conversion and experience a transformation and a love of life that would not otherwise be possible to nature alone. Their self-giving always includes some form of self-sacrifice in imitation of the Lord's death.

139. Mary exemplifies this dimension of the church in the fullest way. The grace available in the church's sacramental life was anticipated in Mary. God was lavish in the gifts of grace given to her. She received them and then offered herself to God early in life. When the Holy Spirit overshadowed her, she gave free assent to receiving the Word of God. She lived out her dedication to God by daily service to her family. She faced the ambiguity, confusion and disappointments of her life with steadfast faith. She endured the rejection and crucifixion of her Son with persistent hope. She united herself with his sacrificial love and shared in his redemptive mission. She is thus rightly called the first disciple. In her we see what it means to be formed by God's word and transformed by God's life.

140. Mary's life of holiness and discipleship is the proper context for viewing the specific vocations to which Christians are called. Every other vocation in life - to single life, to married life, to holy orders, to vowed religious life, to consecrated celibacy - is secondary to this prior call to holiness. This call is lived out in the daily activities of the family, in the church, in business, politics and culture, and in every other area of human life. In all of these ways we share like Mary in the one saving reality of Jesus Christ.

Collaborative Ministry in the Early Church

141. We have already noted that Jesus included women among his friends and disciples. He praised their faith, generosity and love. He had compassion on their grief, healed them of sickness and defended them against accusers. Women accompanied him along with the Twelve and supported him (Lk. 8:1-3). He prompted the Samaritan woman to announce the good news to the villagers (Jn. 4:28-29); he made Mary Magdalen the emissary to the apostles to announce the resurrection (Jn. 20:17). In the early church we find an excellent example of the collaborative ministry that binds Christians in their commitment to faith, hope and charity in response to the teaching of Jesus. The Gospels give examples of many women who were among the earliest disciples of and collaborators with Jesus. In
apostolic times and beyond, local forms of leadership and authority varied. Women, along with men, received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14, 2:34), came to believe (ibid. 5:14) and provided homes for the breaking of the bread (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19). They prophesied (Acts 21:9) and taught others about Jesus (ibid. 18:26), braving persecution and imprisonment for the sake of the name. Paul mentions many women who were co-workers in spreading the Gospel: Prisca, who with her husband, Aquila, instructed many in "the way"; Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia and the sister of Nerius (2 Tm. 16:3-15). Evodia and Syntyche were missionaries of the Philippian church (Phil. 4:2-3). Other women were patrons of the earliest Christian communities, which assembled in their homes: Phoebe, called by Paul a "sister" and "minister," who "has been a benefactor to many and to me as well" (Rom. 16:2), and Lydia, who invited Paul to stay in her home (Acts 16:14-15). Women like Lois and Eunice (2 Tm. 1:5) were also noted for passing on the faith within their own families and households.

142. The fact that these women were remembered by name is a testimony to their extraordinary influence and suggests that women shared with men the work of spreading the Gospel according to their own gifts and charisms. This vision of church, in which women and men live as friends of Christ and partners in mission, is our inheritance from apostolic times.

Women in Consecrated Life

143. Women have also occupied public roles in the life of the church since apostolic times. A particular expression which has characterized Catholic life is the witness of women religious. By their gift of self to God, made through the profession of religious vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, these women respond in love to a personal call from Christ. Their vows express a public renunciation of the pursuit of pleasure, possession and power. Women religious are consecrated to God, by the church, under a new title which is rooted in their baptismal consecration and ordered to the perfection of charity. By virtue of their call, women religious belong exclusively to God in a covenant of spousal love. Their witness is an eschatological sign, a reminder to all Christians that the real hunger of the human heart is for God.

144. Institutes of consecrated life belong to the life and holiness of the church. The call of women religious leads some to the cloister to serve the church through intercessory prayer, praise, contemplation, labor and penance. By moving into the "desert" to remain hidden with Christ, they are within the church a reminder of the primacy of love. In other cases, the call leads women to enter monastic life where they combine commitment to common life and liturgical prayer with apostolic works. Still others join religious institutes dedicated to the active apostolates of evangelization, education, health care, social service, retreat work and other forms of pastoral care. Consecrated for mission and sent in the name of the church, active women religious manifest in a vivid and public way the compassion of Christ for poor, suffering, needy humanity. According to the charism of each institute, women religious witness to the power of the Beatitudes for the pursuit of holiness, the salvation of the world and the building up of the church.

145. Today's society presents many challenges to the revitalization of religious life in the church. Diminishing numbers and the financial challenge of caring for sick and elderly
members can impose heavy burdens on the active members. Still the leadership in congregations seeks new ways to enkindle the flame of the original charism and spirit of their founders for our own day. Together we need to make every effort to preserve and strengthen the special witness of religious life in the church for the world. We respect the rightful desires of religious congregations to experience appropriate autonomy in the details of daily living and work. At the same time, we recognize the need to work together, in accordance with our respective roles, to discern how these charisms can best serve the mission of the church.

146. Women are also attracted to new forms of consecrated life. Some feel called to ecclesial dedication as members of secular institutes. They profess the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience in the context of secular life, striving for the perfection of charity while working for the sanctification of the world from "within," usually through their circumstances of employment. Others are drawn to public consecration as virgins, a vocation that has been restored to women living in the world by recent post-conciliar reforms. Still others, wishing to lead a more intense life of prayer, find support through the older forms of attachment to institutes of women or men religious in established traditions of spirituality.

147. Partly as a result of Vatican II and partly through the influence of the women's movement, women religious and laywomen are discovering a new solidarity. Patterns of religious life that once kept sisters separated from laywomen have been replaced by new modes of sharing. Women are finding new expressions of sisterhood in their roles as retreat directors, teachers, prayer leaders and mentors. In some cases, the initiative comes from laywomen, who are increasingly visible in ministries formerly reserved for religious and whose desire for a deeper spirituality and a stronger theological formation continues to challenge the church. In other cases, women religious have taken the initiative by encouraging interested laywomen to find out more about their institutes through associate or affiliate programs. Such woman-to-woman support holds great potential for good when it is animated by the spirit of the Beatitudes.

Witness of Women in the Church

148. Since the days when they joined Jesus as his disciples, women have participated in the life and mission of the church, functioning in many roles and exercising a variety of gifts. As martyrs, contemplatives, wives and mothers, as scholars, mystics, rulers, spiritual directors, administrators, missionaries and leaders, women have enriched the church's teachings, shaped its traditions and practice, and edified God's people. Women have ruled nations and religious houses, excelled in the arts and sciences, counseled popes and princes, established and taught in universities and colleges, and provided for the poor and disabled. Countless women have given glory to God and service to humanity through lives of heroic virtue. The litany of women saints is part of the glory of the Catholic Church and attests both to the contributions women have made and to the esteem in which they have been held as exemplars of faithful discipleship.

149. Women immigrants brought their Catholic faith with them to America. They helped to establish the church in this country by keeping religious practices alive in their homes and families; by community building, catechizing and pioneering schools, hospitals and
other charitable institutions; by their personal example, prayers, sacrifices and steadfast
piety.

150. Members of women's religious congregations fostered the progress of women
through the establishment and operation of educational institutions. The availability of
formal education made it possible for girls and women to assume leadership roles. In
times when society excluded them from policy-making positions women, both religious
and lay, managed and served in hospitals; administered and taught in schools; provided
social services to the poor and needy through centers and institutions; and established
missions in the United States and many nations around the globe.

151. This witness continues in our times. A recent survey verifies the popular observation
that women are more active than men in the life of the church. (91) Whereas many work
as paid professionals and in other salaried positions, large numbers carry on the tradition
of the generous gift of contributed services that have sustained the church over the years.
Today women still function in a wide variety of traditional church activities, but many
are also assuming new roles as lectors, pastoral associates and team members for the Rite
of Christian Initiation of Adults; as spiritual guides and leaders in retreats, Bible studies
and prayer groups; as counselors, pastoral ministers and theologians; as extraordinary
ministers of holy communion, parish administrators, canon lawyers and chancellors.

152. Laywomen have risen to the fore in the movement to safeguard life, especially the
life of the unborn, through their opposition to abortion, and in the corresponding
movement to minister to women victimized by abortion, desertion or any form of abuse.
Married women with their spouses have supported and led marriage preparation and
enrichment programs. Women have been prominent in developing new ministries such as
at-home retreats, support groups for separated and divorced Catholics, and ecumenical
services for the homeless and refugees. Single and married women have served as
volunteers or as paid staff members in the home and foreign missions and have led lay
apostolic groups in faith renewal and shared prayer.

153. Catholic women have embraced the causes of justice and peace, working in politics
and in the labor movement and operating in non-violent action groups to promote social
change. The dramatic witness of many missionaries and activists, some of whom made
the supreme sacrifice of laying down their lives, calls to mind "so great a cloud of
witnesses" (Heb. 12:1) and the eminent role U.S. Catholic women played in the service of
Christ and the church in past generations and in the present age.

Questions of Special Pastoral Significance

154. The challenges women face in the church and in society do not belong to women
alone. They are shared by men. In responding to women, we are therefore obliged to call
upon husbands and fathers to participate with their wives and children as fully as they can
in the life of the church and to attend to their responsibility as parents. In addition, we
call upon men who are employers to treat women employees fairly, especially when they
must work and care for children at the same time. With Pope John Paul II, we affirm that
"the coordinated presence of both men and women [is essential] so that the participation
of the lay faithful in the salvific mission of the church might be rendered more rich, complete, and harmonious.(92)

155. The education and formation of all in the church has to be a central concern. Children, adolescents, young adults and mature men and women hunger for a deeper appreciation of faith and moral life. We hope that this pastoral letter helps to make clear that a fuller understanding of creation, the fall, redemption, the church and its mission to society provides a broader and deeper perspective for addressing the particular issues raised by contemporary society.

156. It is also important to stress that the 1983 Code of Canon Law has eliminated a number of restrictions placed upon women and has provided a number of new opportunities. Canon 129:2 states that competent persons, women and men in good standing, can contribute to the governance of the church. According to Canon 1421:2, laypersons, both women and men, may serve in the tribunal and be one of three judges. Women may and have become chancellors of dioceses following Canon 483:2. The new code provides the legal basis for women's wider role in the church.(93)

157. One final issue seems to require more direct attention and that is the use and possible misuse of inclusive language. We support the practice of replacing formerly acceptable generic terms such as men and brothers with language which includes women.(94) However, we cannot compromise the integrity of biblical language which refers to Christ, even if only in prophecy. Especially we must recognize the normative nature of Christ's revelation to us that God is our Father and hence preserve the Trinitarian names. Such language is not merely metaphorical. It is analogical, that is, it expresses albeit in an imperfect and limited way the truth of the life of the Trinity.

The Teaching and Mission of Jesus

158. Jesus is our beginning and our end, the one who calls us to unity by the witness of his risen life. Sent into a world darkened by sin, he became flesh (Jn. 1:1-14) and fulfilled his mission to redeem us. Through his life, death and resurrection he reconciled us to God and showed us how to be reconciled with one another. His teaching was challenging. It confronted inappropriate behavior. He extended love to enemies and persecutors (Mt. 5:43-46). He proclaimed that in the kingdom of God the poor in spirit, the sorrowing, the merciful, the peacemakers are blessed (Mt. 5:3-12). He told his disciples they were not to be served but to serve (Jn. 13:14-15); they were to lay down their lives for one another (Jn. 15:13); they would save their lives by losing them (Lk. 9:24). In the end his most eloquent witness was his agonizing death on a desolate cross.

159. Jesus charged his disciples to carry on his mission in the world - to proclaim throughout the centuries and to all people that God loves us and calls us to the kingdom. "You go into my vineyard, too" (Mt. 20:3-4). "This vineyard" is the world. This call to work for its transformation is addressed to everyone, to women, men, clergy, laity and religious. All who labor "in the Lord's name" as equal partners made one in Christ Jesus are called to work as groups and as individuals to uphold "the communion and mission of the church" and to promote the equality of all peoples. Fulfilling this call on behalf of the
church and the world is one of the surest signs that God's reign is remaking the world according to the image of Christ.(95)

Signs of the Times and Our Response

160. In this and every era the church, under the guidance of the Spirit and in response to the "signs of the times,"(96) seeks to become an ever more credible instrument of God in the service of God's people. At this time in the United States and around the world one recurring "sign" is the testimony of women who express their concerns for the present and future condition of church and society. We are moved as the bishops of the United States to respond to what we have heard in the light of our role as teachers and ministers of God's word. Our responsibility is to make known the wisdom of Sacred Scripture and the depth of our tradition so that with all of God's people we may adhere unfailingly to the faith, penetrate it more deeply with right judgment and apply it more fully in daily life.

161. Our life in communion with our God and one another is indeed a mystery. It is an extraordinary grace given to us in Jesus Christ. It is our hope that this pastoral letter will serve to strengthen our communion with one another in Christ Jesus.

CONCLUSION

162. As we have stressed from the start of this work of reflection response, the equal dignity of women and men is not a privilege to be earned by anyone but a reality belonging to all by virtue of our creation in the image of God and our redemption by Christ Jesus. It is a challenge to be faithful to this truth. A right response guided by the teaching of the church results in relationships in family, community and society that are accepting, respectful, appreciative and collaborative in bonds that are forged in friendship, fulfilled in partnership and celebrated in mutuality. Equality for Christians includes also a respectful appreciation of sexual differences in personal and social relationships, and of the diversity of our gifts in service of the church.

163. It is one thing to reflect on our faith; it is another to take action and to initiate change. We therefore commit ourselves to the development of a pastoral plan of action in our dioceses to implement the teaching and initiatives included in this letter.

164. In order to assist this development, we gather together the recommendations which are contained implicitly or explicitly in our message, and we conclude with the following proposals:

-1. To start early education programs to teach children and youth healthy and respectful attitudes toward one another, attitudes which promote Christian friendship and model mutual and respectful relationships.

-2. To enable all the faithful to use their gifts and talents at every level of church and society.
-3. To present ever more persuasively the Lord's teaching on chastity, commitment and fidelity to persons in all states of life.

-4. To stress the importance of marriage preparation for young people and engaged couples and to provide suitable programs to assist them.

-5. To offer sound information about the meaning and obligations of Christian motherhood and fatherhood.

-6. To develop new initiatives to stem the tide of divorce, for example, by establishing marriage crisis centers and providing continuing formation for married couples.

-7. To promote education for all age groups with respect to their psychosocial development according to the Christian view of human sexuality.

-8. To address the issues of human sexuality and birth regulation in the light of the Gospel and church teaching.

-9. To provide continued, loving support for unmarried parents and their children.

-10. To offer alternatives to abortion through pastoral counseling, compassionate outreach and financial assistance.

-11. To denounce violence against women through preaching and teaching and to expand ministries especially to women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

-12. To provide ministries and programs for youth and to address the special needs of single adults.

-13. To expand existing efforts to develop new approaches to minister to those who are separated or divorced and to include in our pastoral efforts special care for the widowed.

-14. To provide teaching and formation fully consistent with Scripture and the church's tradition on the equality and dignity of women in the training of all persons involved in lay or ordained ministries.

-15. To ensure that all preaching, catechizing and practice promote the equality and dignity of women.

-16. To employ appropriate means such as parish bulletins and diocesan newspapers to publicize the contributions of women.

-17. To stand ready to collaborate with women religious in leadership roles in planning for their contemplative and active missions and in supporting retired members of religious communities.

-18. To adopt language and behavior which foster attitudes of mutual respect, appreciation, acceptance and collaboration between women and men.
-19. To provide spiritual support and recognition for women whose primary work is rearing their children at home.

-20. To encourage the scheduling of classes and the provision of tutors to help women to complete high school.

-21. To offer fair remuneration for women working in church positions and to provide for benefit programs and just procedures for promotion and grievance.

-22. To support legislation that assists families at the poverty level and to afford more adequate treatment of all families, including those victimized by unjust laws or social situations.

-23. To advocate legislative efforts that will respond to the needs of women, especially the poor, the elderly and those requiring special care.

-24. To condemn pornography and the exploitation of women and children in the media and in society at large.

-25. To continue to seek governmental assistance in providing for the establishment of church-sponsored child and adult day-care centers.

165. To implement these initiatives, we propose that each diocese consider establishing a commission on women in church and society or some comparable body or council that will promote the just and equal treatment of women and men on a continuing basis. To facilitate this process, we further call upon the NCCB Committee on Women to assist dioceses in carrying out these recommendations and in developing new initiatives as new needs arise.

166. We pray at the conclusion of this message that the Holy Spirit will assist all in the local churches we serve and each of us to affirm both in word and in practice that we are called to be one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). May we be guided now and in the future by the vision that we are in God's eyes women and men equal in human dignity, equal and responsible in interpersonal and social relationships, and in the call to holiness within diverse vocations in the church.

Footnotes


3 In fact, over the centuries even leading theologians and influential pastors have interpreted the Scriptures as teaching that women are naturally inferior to men, weaker in
the face of temptation and thus rightly subject to male governance. For a review of the
case in question, see Prudence Allen, "Integral Sex Complementarity and the

Catholic Conference Office of Publishing and Promotion Services), 41.

5 In Webster's New 20th-Century Dictionary, sexism is defined as "the economic
exploitation and social dominance of one sex by the other, specifically of women by
men."

6 See "Male and Female, God Created Them," a joint text by Bishop Victor Balke of
Crookston, Minn. and Bishop Raymond Lucker of New Ulm, Minn., Origins, 11:21

7 For further comment on this concern, see in its entirety National Conference of
Catholic Bishops, "Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism in
Our Day" (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1979); and "Economic Justice for All: Pastoral
Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy" (Washington, D.C.: USCC,
1986), 179.

8 These two evils, however, do not present an exact parallel. Unlike racial difference, the
difference between the sexes actually structures human existence in a unique way.
Together a man and a woman have the capacity for generating new life. Regardless of
creed or ethnic identity, regardless of age or social standing, the human race is divided by
sex. People acknowledge this when they refer to women or men collectively as "half of
the human race."

9 See Pope John Paul II, "Mulieris Dignitatem," Apostolic Exhortation on the Dignity

10 See "Gaudium et Spes," Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 12.


12 Ibid., 7. See also "Gaudium et Spes," 24.

13 "Gaudium et Spes," 12.

14 See "Mulieris Dignitatem," 7. Also "Gaudium et Spes," 24, points out that in any
community of persons unity in truth and in charity also images God as Trinity.

15 In the reflections of Pope John Paul II, this orientation to another, to the gift of self in
love, is referred to as the "nuptial symbolism" of the body. See Pope John Paul II,
"Marriage Is One and Indissoluble in the First Chapters of Genesis," general audience
address (Nov. 21, 1979), 1.
16 These two extremes are sometimes referred to as "dual" and "single" or "unisex" anthropology. For a review of these approaches see Mary F. Rousseau, "Theological Trends: The Ordination of Women, A Philosopher's Viewpoint," The Way, 21 (July 1981), pp. 211-224; and Mary Aquin O'Neill, "Toward a Renewed Anthropology," Theological Studies 36:4 (Dec. 1975), pp. 725-736.

17 See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Personae Humanae," Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1975), 1, which states: "The human person is so profoundly affected by sexuality that it must be considered as one of the factors which give to each individual's life the principal traits that distinguish it. In fact, it is from sex that the human person receives the characteristics which, on the biological, psychological and spiritual levels, make that person a man or a woman, and thereby largely condition his or her progress toward maturity and insertion into society."

18 See Pope John Paul II, "Original Unity of Man and Woman," general audience address (Nov. 7, 1979), 79. Sexuality is a "constituent part of the person." Being female or male, for human persons, is not "incidental" to who we are, but is a biological "given" that we freely integrate into our personalities. We are embodied spirits. The unity of soul and body affects us in such a way that we cannot imagine ourselves to be ungendered "persons" without falling into a philosophical dualism.

19 Ibid.


21 "Mulieris Dignitatem," 11.

22 Ibid., 16. Our understanding of unity in Christ in the context of the theology of baptism would be incomplete without reference to 1 Corinthians 12, which reveals the unity in diversity of the body of Christ.

23 See Pope John Paul II, "Redemptoris Mater," "Mother of the Redeemer" (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1987), 46. According to "Mulieris Dignitatem," 5, "The dignity of every human being and the vocation corresponding to that dignity find their definitive measure in union with God. Mary, the woman of the Bible, is the most complete expression of this dignity and vocation. For no human being, male or female, created in the image and likeness of God, can in any way attain fulfillment apart from this image and likeness."


25 "Gaudium et Spes," 29.

26 In 1986, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the typical full-time woman worker earned a median salary of $290 per week, the typical man $419. An African-
American woman earned $263, a Hispanic woman $241. In every occupational
classification listed by the bureau, the median female wage was lower than the male. See

27 See Diana Pearce, "Feminization of Poverty: Women, Work and Welfare," Urban and
devoted to this theme. The 1986 policy statement of Catholic Charities USA, "The
Feminization of Poverty," is published in Charities USA, 13:10 (December 1986), pp. 12-
14.

28 The African-American bishops' pastoral on evangelization, "What We Have Seen and
Heard," Origins, 14:18 (Oct. 18, 1984), p. 279ff, contains this astute analysis: "In
traditional black society women have had to assume responsibilities within the family and
within the community out of necessity. As a result, black women historically have been
not only sources of strength, they also have been examples of courage and resolution.
This strength and courage are for us all a source of power and a powerful gift that we as a
people can share with the larger society." The pastoral also said that: "Central to any
discussion of the black family today is the question of the black man as husband, father,
co-provider and co-protector. For many historical reasons, the black man has been forced
to bear the crushing blows of racial hate and economic repression. Too often barred from
access to decent employment, too often stripped of his dignity and manhood, and too
often forced into a stereotype that was a caricature of his manhood, the black male finds
himself depreciated and relegated to the margins of family life and influence. Not the
least of the evil fruits of racial segregation has been the artificially fashioned rivalry
between black women and men." See also Sister Thea Bowman, "To Be Black and

29 Illustrative of this plight is the socioeconomic condition of Hispanics in this country.
See "The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment," (Washington, D.C.: USCC,
1984), 7.

30 In the United States alone a woman is sexually assaulted every six minutes; 20 percent
of women who visit emergency rooms do so because of injuries caused by battering.
Domestic violence is the largest cause of injury to women: husbands, ex-husbands and
male lovers beat 3 million to 4 million women in a year in women's homes; marital rape
victimizes one out of every seven married women; more than a third of all female
homicide victims in 1988 were killed by their husbands or boyfriends; 25 percent of
abused women are battered during pregnancy, most of them attacked in the abdomen.
Approximately 375,000 women and children sought refuge in about 1,200 shelters across
the country in 1987, but nearly 40 percent of women seeking immediate shelter were
turned away because of lack of space. For verification of these and related statistics see,
for example, M. Strauss, R. Gelles and S. Steinmetz, "Behind Closed Doors: Violence in
the American Family" (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Doubleday, 1980), and D. Finkelhor,
31 See the pope's address in "Unity in the Work of Service" (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1987), 207. Papal teaching since Pope Pius XII has been explicit regarding the equal rights of women to participation in cultural, economic, social and political life, but this teaching has invariably been accompanied by a statement of concern that the work in the home of women who are wives and mothers must be adequately valued and safeguarded.

32 See report to the pastoral committee from the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics, Aug. 25, 1985. The National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunities and many other agencies agree that the American family structure is undergoing a major transition. More and more women by virtue of divorce, separation and widowhood are becoming independent heads of households. Census Bureau statistics indicate that the majority of divorced, separated and single mothers face a future of rearing children, with no financial help from the fathers. About 53 percent of the nation's 8.7 million mothers fail to receive money from the fathers of their children either because these men cannot be found or because they refuse to pay child support. A nationwide study found that 79 percent of divorced fathers in America do not make child-support payments (cf. the Washington Post, June 11, 1983). After a divorce the wife's average income typically drops by 73 percent while the husband's rises by 42 percent. See Lenore Weitzman, "The Marriage Contract: Spouses, Lovers and the Law" (New York: The Free Press, 1986).


35 For most of Christian history marriage was a contract which was understood as an exchange of (bodily, property) rights. This arrangement may have offered certain benefits to women, but it was not an expression of covenant theology. See, by contrast, Pope John Paul II, "Familiaris Consortio," Apostolic Exhortation on the Family (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1981), 12 and 14.


38 "Mulieris Dignitatem," 24: "Whereas in the relationship between Christ and the church, the subjection is only on the part of the church; in the relationship between husband and wife the subjection is not one-sided but mutual."


40 "Familiaris Consortio," 23. See also "Laborem Exercens," "On Human Labor" (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1981), 19, which states: "Experience confirms that there must be a social re-evaluation of the mother's role, of the toil connected with it and the need
children have for care, love and affection in order that they may develop into responsible, morally and religiously mature and psychologically stable persons. It will redound to the credit of society to make it possible for a mother - without inhibiting her freedom, without psychological or practical discrimination, and without penalizing her as compared to other women - to devote herself to taking care of her children and educating them in accordance with their needs, which vary with age. Having to abandon these tasks in order to take up paid work outside the home is wrong from the point of view of the good of society and of the family when it contradicts or hinders the primary goals of the mission of the mother."


45 According to the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census Report, one of the most significant developments pertaining to the status of the population 18 years or older are the trends toward remaining single and the dissolution of marriage through divorce. For example, 50 percent of the women in the United States, aged 20 to 24, were not yet married in 1980, as compared with 36 percent of the same group in 1970. In that same year, there were 47 divorced persons for every 1,000 married couples; in 1980 this number had risen to 100. Another important example of change involves a significant increase in the number of persons who have never married. Those living on their own grew from 10.9 million in 1970 to 17.8 million in 1980. Three times as many persons under 35 years of age lived by themselves in 1980 than in 1970, and the numbers are increasing. Persons 45 years old and over constitute 65 percent of the population living alone. The majority of them are women (11 million in 1980 vs. 6.8 million men). Now there are 17 million never-married women age 18 and over; add to these the 11 million widows and 8.5 million divorcees, and that is over 43 percent of the female population. Single mothers number 8.4 million, and their number continues to grow. See also "The American Woman 1988-89: A Status Report," p. 33.

46 Celibacy, according to Pope John Paul II, points toward the life to come, in which humans neither marry nor are given in marriage. See in their entirety the pope's general audience addresses, "Virginity as a Sign," (Match 10, 1982), and "Supernatural Fruitfulness" (March 24, 1982). In a later address, on April 7, 1982, the pope emphasized that celibate love for the kingdom must lead in its normal development to "paternity" or "maternity" in a spiritual sense, to the fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit. Such love is not inward or isolationist but tends outward towards conversion of the world and the building
of God's kingdom. By the same token, celibacy, merely being unmarried, which remains loveless and sterile, does not reveal the true meaning of the gift. See also Susan Muto, "Celebrating the Single Life" (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1989).

47 According to one study, a majority of women believe that the church's teachings on birth regulation have been presented unconvincingly and are unrealistic in view of the experience of married Catholics. Moreover, disagreements among theologians as to the obligatory force of these norms has produced much confusion. Women continue to request recognition of a couple's right and responsibility to form and follow their own conscience in this regard. See Andrew Greeley and Mary Durkin, "Angry Catholic Women: A Sociological Reflection and A Theological Reflection" (Chicago: Thomas More Publications, 1984). Such dissent challenges us as bishops to ensure that the liberating teaching of the church on human sexuality is clearly and convincingly presented to our people.


51 "Gaudium et Spes," 51.

52 "Familiaris Consortio," 84. See also "Mulieris Dignitatem," 12 and 14.

53 "Familiaris Consortio," 83.


55 "Gaudium et Spes," 25.

56 Pope Paul VI, "The Role of Women in Contemporary Society," The Pope Speaks XIX (Dec. 8, 1974) p. 316. While the pope speaks of the equal dignity of men and women as persons, he also speaks of "the functional differentiation of woman from man within the nature they share" and of "the primordial place of women in all of those areas of human life where we confront more directly the problems of life itself ... especially in the area of motherhood."
57 See "Economic Justice for All," 208. Key sections of this pastoral dealing specifically with women's concerns are, among others, 178-180; 199; 334.

58 1971 Synod of Bishops, "Justice in the World," in "The Ministerial Priesthood and Justice in the World" (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1971), 44 and 30. It was later noted by the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace (174) that: "If her evangelical mission is to be effective, the church must first and foremost stimulate in the world the recognition, observance, protection and promotion of the rights of the human person, beginning with an act of self-examination, a hard look at the manner and degree in which fundamental rights are observed and applied with her own organization." See also "The Church and Human Rights," Origins, 5:11 (Sept. 4, 1975), p. 163.

59 See Pope Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum," "On the Condition of Labor" (1891); Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno," "On Constructing the Social Order" (1931): and Pope John XXIII, "Pacem in Terris." In this latter encyclical, in Section 19, Pope John XXIII indicates women must be accorded such conditions of work as are consistent with their needs and responsibilities as wives and mothers.

60 "Christifideles Laici," 64.

61 See "Justice in the World," 44.


63 Ibid., 6.

64 "Lumen Gentium," 1.


67 As "Lumen Gentium" states, "The church, in Christ, is in the nature of a sacrament - a sign and instrument, i.e. of communion with God and of unity."

68 See Canon 208 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law. See also "Lumen Gentium," 32.


70 "Therefore in the church everyone belonging to the hierarchy or being cared for by it is called to holiness, according to the saying of the apostle: 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification' (1 Thes. 4:3 cf. Eph. 1:4)" "Lumen Gentium," 39.

71 Ibid., 33.
72 See "Lumen Gentium," 10. All the baptized participate in the priesthood of Christ by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit; all, by reason of the priesthood of the faithful "can offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pt. 2:4-10). This common priesthood of the faithful is not identical with the ministerial priesthood. As Vatican II teaches, there are two ways of participating in the priesthood of Christ, and they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree. See also in this regard "Christifideles Laici," 22 and 23.


74 Ibid., 4.

75 See the doctrinal congregation's commentary on "Inter Insigniores," p. 27: "Unless the value of unwritten traditions is admitted, it is sometimes difficult to discover in Scripture entirely explicit indications of Christ's will." Earlier, on p. 24, this same document observes that "we must not expect the New Testament on its own to resolve" this question. "Keeping to the sacred text alone and to the points of history of Christian origins that can be obtained by analyzing that text by itself would be to go back four centuries and find oneself once more amid the controversies of the Reformation."

76 Commentary, p. 21. "Inter Insigniores," 1, when calling on the witness of the great medieval theologians to the church's tradition on ordination, adds that "the scholastic doctors ... often present arguments on this point that modern thought would have difficulty in admitting or would even rightly reject."

77 See "Inter Insigniores," 5.

78 See ibid. The theological reasoning supplied by the 1976 declaration is explored further in the apostolic letter of Pope John Paul II "Mulieris Dignitatem," 26. The pope notes the link between the mystery of the eucharist, the sacrifice of our redemption and the biblical analogy of Christ as the bridegroom who gives himself up for the church, his bride (Eph. 5:25). This relationship is symbolized clearly "when the sacramental ministry of the eucharist, in which the priest acts in persona Christi, is performed by a man."


81 See "Lumen Gentium," 40. "Mulieris Dignitatem," 27, explicitly emphasizes that the common priesthood of the baptized becomes especially clear in Mary.

82 Ibid., 52.

84 Pope John Paul II indicates how the three vows reverse that "triple disorientation" brought on by sin: Chastity overcomes the lust of the flesh; poverty overcomes the lust of the eyes; and obedience overcomes the pride of life. See "Redemptionis Donum," "The Gift of the Redeemer" (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1994), 9.

85 Ibid., 8.


87 See "Lumen Gentium," 46.

88 Ibid., 44.


90 See "Mulieris Dignitatem," 27. The Holy Father cites as exemplary: Monica, the mother of Augustine; Macrina, Olga of Kiev; Matilda of Tuscany; Hedwig of Silesia; Jadwiga of Cracow; Elizabeth of Thuringia; Birgitta of Sweden; Joan of Arc; Rose of Lima; Elizabeth Ann Seton and Mary Ward. For additional references, see Ronda Chervin, "Treasury of Women Saints" (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Publications, 1991).


92 "Christifideles Laici," 52.

93 See also "Apostolicam Actuositatem," Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 9: "In recent years, there has often been discussion regarding the vocation and the mission of women. May the church do its utmost so that [women] might be able to express, in the service of the church, their own gifts and to play a greater part in the various fields of the
church’s apostolate.” Then, too, pastors were asked to accept gratefully and promote the collaboration of women in ecclesial activity at the 1985 extraordinary Synod of Bishops. See also "Message to the People of God," 6. Of related interest is "Christifideles Laici,“ 49.

94 In the English language for centuries the word man was presumed to mean both women and men. In other words, women are subsumed under man. Today many women and men reject language which conceals women or puts women in a secondary light. Language which does not respect the autonomy of women is called exclusive, i.e., it "excludes" rather than "includes" women. Secular society and religious groups, including Roman Catholics, recognize the legitimate demands of women for the use of inclusive language. See the latest edition of the New Testament and also of the Psalms, approved by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and the Administrative Committee of the NCCB-USCC (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1986), which use inclusive language. The official translations of the Sacramentary and of the Lectionary, already in progress, will be in inclusive language. See "Criteria for the Evaluation of Inclusive Language Translations of Scriptural Texts Proposed for Liturgical Use,” NCCB (Nov. 15, 1990). We need to be sensitive, however, to the usage of the word man when it functions as a symbol for the unity of the human race. See Vernon Eller, "The Language of Canaan and the Grammar of Feminism" (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), and other sources that caution against dropping generic terms.

95 See "Christifideles Laici," 2.

96 "Gaudium et Spes," 4.