

# Priesthood, Vocation, Service

- ‡ Unity in the Church
- ‡ What the Church means by the priesthood
- ‡ Why the Church ordains only men to the priesthood
- ‡ The call to service for every Catholic



Diocese of Pittsburgh

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# Statement on the Planned July 31, 2006 Ceremony

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According to an organization called “Roman Catholic Womenpriests” a ceremony will take place on the rivers of Pittsburgh on July 31, 2006 that is represented to be an “ordination” to the priesthood. The following is issued out of pastoral and spiritual concern for those who present themselves for such an invalid ritual, those who conduct it, and those who participate as witnesses since their actions will place them outside the Church.

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*“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” – (1 Corinthians 10: 16-17).*

The center of Catholic life and worship is the celebration of the Eucharist, the “one bread” where “we who are many are one body.” The Eucharist is the living presence of Christ in His Church, and is the deepest sign of our faith and unity of belief.

By his sacrifice on the cross, Christ is the unique high priest, the mediator between God and humanity. This priesthood of Christ is made present in our lives through the priesthood, which serves as an “icon” – or representative – of Christ in the world.

The call to the ministerial priesthood comes from God and is authenticated by the Church, not by any individual. Holy Orders is a gift that those called do not earn, deserve, or have as a right. The call to ordination is received unmerited through the grace of God.

Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time. It is the sacrament of apostolic ministry and it is through the bishops, the successors of the apostles, that this gift of God is passed on from generation to generation through ordination.

*“(The Catholic Church) holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood for very fundamental reasons. These reasons include: the example recorded in Sacred Scripture of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which imitated Christ in choosing only men; and her living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God’s plan for his Church” (Pope Paul VI, 1977)*

As apostolic succession represents the living presence of the apostles in the Church until Christ’s return, and the priest serves as an icon or representative of Christ’s sacramental presence in the Church, the Church must conform to the delegation made by the Lord.

The ordination of males to the priesthood is not merely a matter of practice or discipline within the Church. Rather, the Church has determined that this is part of the Deposit of Faith handed down by Christ through his apostles. The Church is therefore bound by it and not free to change in this regard.

*“In calling only men as his Apostles, Christ acted in a completely free and sovereign manner. In doing so, he exercised the same freedom with which, in all his behavior, he emphasized the dignity and the vocation of women, without conforming to the prevailing customs and to the traditions sanctioned by the legislation of the time” – Pope John Paul II*

Ordination to the priesthood must be conferred by an ordained bishop on a baptized man. A candidate must receive the blessing of the Church, which has the authority and responsibility to determine if a true call to the priesthood exists.

Just as a priest cannot consecrate the Eucharist if he uses something other than unleavened wheat bread and wine from grapes, so too a bishop cannot confer Holy Orders on anyone other than a baptized man. Because the sacrament of Holy Orders can only be received by a baptized man, no sacramental ordination took place for the women now claiming to be ordained bishops. Nor have the women who are alleged to be ordained at the upcoming event been accepted by the Church as they do not meet essential criteria for the ordained priesthood as found in the Deposit of Faith.

*“Take care, then, to have only one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to show forth the unity of his blood; one altar, as there is one bishop, along with the priests and deacons, my fellow servants. All this is so, so that, whatever you do, you may do it according to the will of God.”*  
– St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. 107 AD).

**This unfortunate ceremony will take place outside the Church and undermines the unity of the Church. Those attempting to confer Holy Orders have, by their own actions, removed themselves from the Church, as have those who present themselves for such an invalid ritual. Additionally, those who by their presence give witness and encouragement to this fundamental break with the unity of the People of God place themselves outside the Church.**

This separation is not a discipline, judgment or mandate of the Church. Nor is it the result of opinion or advocacy of a theological view by those involved. Rather, by conducting and taking part in such a ceremony, it is the choice of the participants to place themselves outside the community of believers.

The Catholic Church is prepared and eager to welcome back those who separate themselves from the community. Catholics in the Diocese of Pittsburgh are called to pray that those who involve themselves in this upcoming ceremony will reconcile with the Church and return to unity with the Body of Christ.

# The Church: United in Faith and Life

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**Rev. Charles S. Bober**

Unity within the Church is ultimately rooted in the relationship of Jesus with the Father. When Jesus says: “the Father and I are one” (John 10:30) he is laying the foundation for a unity He envisions for Himself with His disciples and they with one another.

We see this unity clearly expressed in words Jesus prays as He prepares for His passion and death: “Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you” (John 17:21). In this way, the principle of unity within the Church has its origin in a reality much more profound than just group identity.

This vision is captured in the First Letter of John, where we read: “What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us as we are in union with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

This theological foundation for unity came to be applied in both the faith and the life of the infant Church. In the Acts of the Apostle we find ample evidence of the value placed upon unity. Initially it was evidenced in the common life of the community of believers (e.g. Acts 2:42-47) but it quickly became the hallmark of disciples so that “the community of believers was of one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32).

Any threat to that unity was addressed quickly as is seen in the actions taken in response to complaints regarding the distribution of food (Acts 6:1-7). When concerns were raised that some were given preference, the Apostles appointed others to meet those needs and preserve unity. Challenges were also addressed with great concern so that the bonds of unity would prevail. This is seen in the discussions surrounding the Gentile mission (e.g. Acts, chapters 11 and 15). While some saw the ministry as limited to Israel, others clearly believed that the Spirit was leading them to a wider world.

It was important to the early church that believers understood that the eventual decision was the result of prayer and attentive listening to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Such a decision was not the whim of some, but the agreed upon action of the church led by the Spirit. Unity among the disciples, therefore, rested upon a unity of the church with the teaching of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament Letters, especially those of St. Paul also give evidence of the early Church's desire to establish a unity of teaching and belief. Even in this early stage, there was no need for a uniformity of practice. But there was an essential need for a unity of belief.

In the centuries that followed the New Testament, this desire for unity continued. Before bishops were ordained, it was the custom to have them make a profession of faith before the people. This profession was written down and other bishops present signed the profession. It was then sent as a testimony to the neighboring churches especially those linked to apostolic origin. Eventually, those testimonial letters were sent to the church of Rome.

As the letters were received, it was proof of a communion of faith between believers and teachers of every Christian community throughout the world. Communion in faith, then, was established as growing from one's communion with local leaders who were in communion with neighboring churches and the church universal. This was not merely a function of fraternity but seen as an essential link in the communion established by Jesus – that all might be one in Him and with the Father.

While this desire for unity continues in the Church today, it should not be interpreted as a rigid uniformity. The existence of various rites within the Church evidences a catholicity founded on a unity of faith with a diversity of expressions.

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Through two thousand years, the disciples of Jesus have attempted to maintain unity in response to the directive of Jesus. Each believer shares in the task of perpetuating that unity of faith and life. Each believer must appreciate that the welfare of the entire Body of Christ rests upon that unselfish commitment to unity.

*Father Bober is the author of “Questions for Fr. Bober” each week in the Pittsburgh Catholic. He is pastor of St. Kilian in Adams and Cranberry Township.*

# The Priesthood within the Church

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**Rev. Charles S. Bober**

The starting point for any discussion of the Catholic priesthood must begin with Jesus Christ.

The New Testament proclaims Jesus as a priest unequalled and excelling all others (see especially The Letter to the Hebrews). Nonetheless, the New Testament affirms that Jesus chose to share elements of that priesthood with all the faithful. In doing so, they become a “holy and royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5 and 9), a “kingdom of priests to God, his Father” (Rev. 1:6)

Reflecting on this, the Second Vatican Council reminds us that Christ continues to share His priesthood through a baptismal initiation. This common priesthood of the baptized enables – and mandates – each member to be an instrument of the on-going ministry of Jesus carried out through them (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, article 2).

The Council goes on to say, however, that from among those who share the common priesthood of the baptized, certain ones are chosen to exercise a special ministry of headship, a ministerial priesthood.

As one enters the common priesthood through the sacrament of Baptism, one enters the ministerial priesthood through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The Second Vatican Council speaks of this when it says: “Through that sacrament, priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head.” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, article 10).

All of this rests upon the practical imagery utilized by Saint Paul as he writes to the Christians of Rome. There, he reminds them – us – that all the parts of the body are not the same, but that all are important (Romans, Chapter 12). This truth is illustrated even among those who receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. Bishops, priests and deacons have unique offices for which unique grace is given by the one sacrament of Holy Orders.

Priesthood within the Church rests upon a clear understanding that all are called to share in the priesthood of Christ through Baptism and some are called to exercise a special ministry of headship meant to which foster a unity of identity and activity within the Body of Christ.

While there is general agreement on the Biblical and theological soundness of that principle, its application can at times become confused.

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Philosophy has often understood reality in terms of both “relation” and “distinction.” As we ponder realities we are intrigued by how things are related and yet how they are distinct. For any number of reasons, citizens of our nation tend to place more emphasis on relations than distinctions.

From the beginnings of our democracy, we have tended to proclaim that “we are all equal.” On the popular level this notion has driven much of how we relate to one another. Unfortunately, it becomes problematic when it is applied

to the Church without reference to its unique theological perspectives.

At the root of the issue is the presumption that equality means “sameness” – if we are equal, then we are all the same. But we know that we are all equal in the eyes of God, but clearly not the same. We have different talents and abilities, different strengths and weaknesses, different identities and personalities. Yet we are all equal in our baptismal identity.

Likewise, we are equal as we share in the priesthood of Christ, but we are not the same. Some, through the Sacrament of Holy Orders share in a different responsibility for which they are given unique sacramental gifts. All of us share the responsibility of being witnesses of Christ. Some share the added responsibility of providing leadership as to how this is accomplished. All of us possess gifts given by the same Spirit, but some share responsibility for a discernment of those gifts and ordering their utilization toward the common good.

The common priesthood through baptism proclaims our equality in Christ. The ministerial priesthood through Holy Orders proclaims that some are called to an added service of headship and unity.

The Savior shared His priesthood in these ways so that the Body of Christ might be a living sign of His saving role. It remains for each disciple to live out one's priesthood in a way that responds to the intent of the Savior. This is accomplished on every level of Church life whether in the parish, diocese or Church universal.

For every disciple in every age the challenge of priesthood is one of service. The priesthood is not about us. It is about Jesus Christ. The priesthood is not about any agenda or ideology; it is about the ministry of Jesus Christ.

*Father Bober is the author of "Questions for Fr. Bober" each week in the Pittsburgh Catholic. He is pastor of St. Kilian in Adams and Cranberry Township.*

# Why the Church Ordains Only Men to the Priesthood

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By Susan Muto, Ph.D.

What are the reasons for the Church ordaining only men to the priesthood?

First, the ministerial priesthood is not a function like a career or a profession. It is not a right granted to everyone, but a vocation that is bound to obedience and steeped in the two thousand year-old teaching and tradition of the Church.

This definitive teaching, from which the Church cannot deviate, is articulated in *Inter Insigniores*, a document issued on October 15, 1976 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It states unequivocally that the Church is not able to confer priestly ordination on women because it has not been authorized by Christ to do so.

This is not a matter of Church law subject to change, nor is it a discipline characteristic of a certain cultural period. Rather, it is a declaration of Christ's lordship over the Church.

Second, the Congregation explains that a bishop or a priest, in exercise of his ministry, does not act in his own name. He represents Christ, who acts through him.

This means that the priest truly acts in the place of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the centerpiece of the Church's sacramental life. "The priest...alone has the power to perform [the sacrifice of Christ]...[he] acts not only through the effective power conferred on him by Christ, but *in persona Christi*, taking the role of Christ, to the point of being his very image, when he pronounces the words of consecration," the Congregation explained.

Third, in a post-modern world where brokenness becomes the rule rather than the exception, we are blessed in the Catholic Church by an unbroken tradition, also held by the Orthodox Churches, that ordination to the ministerial priesthood is reserved for men who are bound by their

special calling to lives of complete dedication to Christ and loving service of the people of God.

All of us, lay and clergy alike, belong to the priesthood of the faithful. By virtue of our baptism, we are called to offer our lives to God in family life, in society, and in the Church, witnessing in all that we are and do to our equality in dignity while upholding the complementary roles Christ asks us to play for the sake of the humanization and spiritualization of society.

This complementarity is manifested in Christ who is the Bridegroom of the Church, as the Church is his bride. Such complementarity is a beautiful expression of the masculine and feminine, which is one of equality and yet marvelous difference.

The *Petrine* tradition stands at the origin of the sacramental priesthood while the *Marian* tradition points to the common priesthood of the faithful. The late Pope John Paul II reminds us that “the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God and mother of the Church, received neither the mission proper to the apostles nor the ministerial priesthood clearly shows that the non-admission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity nor can it be construed as discrimination against [women]. Rather, it is to be seen as the faithful observance of a plan to be ascribed to the wisdom of the Lord of the universe.”

For that reason, Pope John Paul II declared on the solemnity of Pentecost, 1994, “...the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and...this judgment is to be definitely held by all the Church’s faithful.”

Beginning with his own mother, Mary, the honoring of women and their gifts by Jesus was nothing short of revolutionary. In a predominantly patriarchal culture, he numbered among his best friends Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). He welcomed into his circle of disciples Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna (Luke 8:1-3). To the Samaritan woman, he revealed that he was the awaited Messiah (John 4:1-42). To the woman taken in adultery, he offered forgiveness and respect (John 8:1-10). After the resurrection the risen Christ first showed himself to women followers and sent them to announce the news to the disciples (Matthew 28:9-10; John 20:17). Saint Paul mentions many women who were co-workers in spreading the Gospel: women like Prisca with her husband,

Aquila; Junia, whom Paul calls a relative and fellow prisoner, prominent among the apostles; Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, and the sister of Nereus (Romans 16:3-15). Evodia and Syntyche were missionaries of the Philippian church (Philippians 4:2-3).


Other women were patrons of the earliest Christian communities which assembled in their houses, such as Phoebe, called by Paul a “servant” or “minister,” who “has been a benefactor to many and to me as well” (Romans 16:2), and Lydia, who invited Paul to stay in her home (Acts 16:14-15).

In the New Testament we see the apostles calling upon both women and men to participate in proclaiming the Gospel and in building up the community where the gifts of each were offered for the service of all.

In this post-Vatican II era, the 1983 Code of Canon Law states that competent lay persons, women and men in good standing, can cooperate in the governance of the Church (Canon 129:2). Women’s participation in the liturgy as lectors and extraordinary eucharistic ministers has been validated by Canon 230:2-3.

According to Canon 1421:2, lay persons, both women and men, may serve in the tribunal and be one of three judges. Women, following Canon 482, may and have become, chancellors of dioceses, including our own.

Fuller participation of the laity in the life of the Church—as readers of the Word of God, as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, as members of pastoral councils, as team ministry participants, as marriage and family life counselors, as child and adult catechists, as spiritual directors, scholars, and educators, as parish collaborators—is one of the best outcomes of the Second Vatican Council.

 **We are blessed in the Catholic Church by an unbroken tradition, also held by the Orthodox Churches, that ordination to the ministerial priesthood is reserved for men who are bound by their special calling to lives of complete dedication to Christ and loving service of the people of God.**

The inclusion of women can be seen in their positions as consultants and members of bishops' committees, as administrators and participants in diocesan and universal synods, as collaborators in decision-making and policy-setting processes. Women have assumed leadership positions in departments of dioceses and on chancery staffs in accordance with the norms set by Canon Law and in recognition of their theological, ministerial, religious, spiritual, and administrative education and experience. For many years, Catholic women have exercised the highest leadership positions in Catholic educational and Catholic health care institutions.

These Spirit-led ways of serving the Church throughout the world offer priests and laity a new vision of Christian community that heals harmful conflicts and strengthens our shared commitment to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ to whom he has entrusted the awesome task of "reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

*Dr. Susan Muto is the executive director of the Epiphany Association and Dean of its Epiphany Academy of Formative Spirituality on Crane Avenue in Pittsburgh.*

# Ministry in the Church and in the World

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**By Susan Muto, Ph.D.**

“Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord” (2005), a resource document issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, confirms that since Vatican Council II, lay participation in ministry continues to ripen and expand.

In “Co-Workers in the Vineyard,” the bishops point to the “primary distinction between the ministry of the lay faithful and the ministry of the ordained, which is a special apostolic calling. Both are rooted in sacramental initiation, but the pastoral ministry of the ordained is empowered in a unique and essential way by the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Through it, the ministry of the Apostles is extended... The recognition of the unique role of the ordained is not a distinction based on merit or rank; rather, it is a distinction based on the sacramental character given by the Holy Spirit that configures the recipient to Christ the Head.”

The priest is “the primary collaborator with the bishop” and assists the bishop “in the work of teaching, sanctifying, and guiding the community of disciples. In union with the bishop, whom he makes present in the local community, the priest sacramentally represents Christ, the Head of the Church, and so serves to guide the Body of Christ in its mission of salvation and transformation of the world.”

The role of the laity – women and men – is distinct from the role of the ordained priest. Yet, as the bishops point out, this is not a distinction based on merit or rank. And the laity, through baptism, are called to serve in the mission of the Church.

Laiety today serve as parish life collaborators, pastoral associates, directors of religious education and catechists, youth ministers, school principals, music and choir directors, lectors, and Eucharistic ministers, all the while maintaining in fidelity to Christ their apostolates in the working places of family and society.

From a sacramental perspective, rebirth in Christ through baptism establish-

es among all believers “a true equality with regard to dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for building up of the Body of Christ” (*Lumen Gentium*, 32). A key theme of this Dogmatic Constitution of the Church is that all of us as baptized Christians share a universal call to holiness.

Whatever our condition or state of life may be, we are “called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity” (*Lumen Gentium*, 40). Our mission and our ministry as the people of God, as “sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ” is to “work for the sanctification of the world from within” (*Lumen Gentium*, 31).

God did not create us for a life of isolated individualism. We are to be partners in the mystery of redemption, women and men formed in the image of Christ, who seek “the will of the Father in all things, devoting [ourselves] with all our being to the glory of God and the service of [our] neighbor” (*Lumen Gentium*, 40).

While laity do not perform functions reserved for our ordained priests and pastors, we must be “other Christs” wherever God places us in the world. It is through our daily work itself that we “can achieve greater apostolic sanctity” and in a special way be “united with Christ for the salvation of the world” (*Lumen Gentium*, 41).

While some laity are called to exercise their ministries in the internal life of the Church, most laity sanctify the world by their work, their witness, and their service in the home, on the job, and in their respective communities. By such a witness, the worlds of education, business, government, the arts and science become open to the transforming power of the Gospel.

An excellent example of collaborative ministry can be found among the earliest disciples of Jesus. In apostolic times, women, along with men, received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14, 2:3-4), came to believe (Acts 5:14), and provided homes for the breaking of the bread (Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19). They prophesied (Acts 21:9) and taught others about Jesus (Acts 18:26), braving persecution and imprisonment for the sake of his name.

In addition to men like Titus and Timothy, Paul mentions many women who were co-workers in spreading the Gospel: Prisca who, with her hus-

band, Aquila, instructed many in “the way”; Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, and the sister of Neriuss (Romans 16:3-15). Evodia and Syntyche were missionaries of the Philippian Church (Philippians 4:2-3).

Other women were patrons of the earliest Christian communities, which

assembled in their houses: Phoebe, called by Paul a “sister” and “minister,” who “has been a benefactor to many and to me as well” (Romans 16:2), and Lydia, who invited Paul to stay in her home (Acts 16:14-15). Women like Lois and Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5) were also noted for passing on the faith within their own families and households.

✠ **While some laity are called to exercise their ministries in the internal life of the Church, most laity sanctify the world by their work, their witness, and their service in the home, on the job, and in their respective communities.**

Exemplifying this partnership in the mystery of redemption in the fullest way is Mary. Thanks to her free and courageous assent, the Word entered our wounded world. Mary showed her dedication to God by daily service of her family in Nazareth. She faced the ambiguity, confusion, and disappoint-

ments of life with steadfast faith. She endured the rejection and crucifixion of her Son with persistent hope.

Mary united herself with the sacrificial love of Jesus and shared in his redemptive mission. She is the first disciple and the model we must follow if we want to know what it means to be formed, reformed, and transformed by God’s Word.

As members of the common priesthood of the faithful, we share in the one saving reality of Jesus Christ. Through his life, death, and resurrection he reconciled us to God, revealed to the fullest extent what it means to love one another, and commanded us to make peace with and forgive our persecutors (Matthew 5:43-46).

Jesus proclaimed that in the Kingdom of God the poor in spirit, the sorrowing, and the persecuted are blessed (Matthew 5:3-12) He told his disciples that they were to lay down their lives for one another (John 15:13)

because, as his followers, they could only save their lives by losing them (Luke 9:24). The most eloquent witness of his mission would not be his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, but his agonizing death on the Cross. All of us who labor in the name of the Lord walk together amidst the vicissitudes of this world on the safest of paths, for “in keeping with the state of life and condition proper to each of us,” we grow closer to Christ in “companionship with the saints” (*Lumen Gentium*, 50). Amidst a culture of death, we mirror in our ministry what it means to be givers of life.

Undeterred by the divisive confusion of dissent, we come in the Eucharist to a unified vision of truth that makes us truly “one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). As joyful witnesses on earth to the likeness of Christ’s resurrected glory (cf. Romans 6:4-5), we bring forth “from the treasury of revelation new things and old” (cf. Matthew 12:52), thanking God that despite our limits our faith may bear fruit free of error and elevated by truth (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 25).

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## Summary

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- ‡ The call to the ministerial priesthood comes from God and is authenticated by the Church, not by any individual. Like every sacramental grace, Holy Orders is a gift that those called do not earn, deserve, or have as a right.
- ‡ The ordination of males to the priesthood is not merely a matter of practice or discipline within the Church. Rather, the Church has determined that this is part of the Deposit of Faith handed down by Christ through his apostles. The Church is therefore bound by it and not free to change in this regard.
- ‡ Ordination to the priesthood must be conferred by an ordained bishop on a baptized man. A candidate must have the approval of the Church, which has the authority and responsibility to determine if a true call to the priesthood exists.

- ‡ Just as a priest cannot consecrate the Eucharist if he uses something other than unleavened wheat bread and wine from grapes, so too a bishop cannot confer Holy Orders on anyone other than a baptized man.
- ‡ Because the sacrament of Holy Orders can only be received by a baptized man, no sacramental ordination took place for the women now claiming to be ordained bishops. Nor have the women who are alleged to be ordained at the upcoming event been accepted by the Church as candidates for the priesthood as they do not meet essential criteria for the ordained priesthood as found in the Deposit of Faith.
- ‡ **This unfortunate ceremony will take place outside the Church and undermines the unity of the Church. Those attempting to confer Holy Orders have, by their own actions, removed themselves from the Church, as have those who present themselves for such an invalid ritual. Additionally, those who by their presence give witness and encouragement to this fundamental break with the unity of the People of God place themselves outside the Church.**
- ‡ This separation is not a discipline, judgment or mandate of the Church. Nor is it the result of opinion or advocacy of a theological view by those involved in, or supportive of, Roman Catholic Womenpriests. Rather, by conducting and taking part in such a ceremony, it is the choice of the participants to withdraw themselves from the community of believers.
- ‡ The Catholic Church is prepared and eager to welcome back those who separate themselves from the community. Catholics in the Diocese of Pittsburgh are asked to pray that those who involve themselves in this ceremony will reconcile with the Church and return to unity with the Body of Christ.