

THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN and GROWTH IN COMMUNION

I

Situation

1. Anglicans and Roman Catholics already share a real but imperfect communion. This involves a mutual responsibility to reflect and comment upon issues which might in the past have been regarded as of solely internal concern.
2. The statements and decisions of both Communions on the ordination of women, and their practical consequences, do not destroy this imperfect communion. Their impact on growth towards fuller communion must be explored.
3. a) The official Roman Catholic position as stated in Inter Insigniores is that the Church does not consider itself authorised to change an unbroken tradition of the Church, universal in the East and in the West.
b) Anglican Provinces which have ordained women to the priesthood see this as an authentic development of the tradition and actually required by the mission of the Church. No other Anglican Provinces have broken communion with them.

II

Interpretation

4. These positions will preclude the full recognition and interchangeability of ministers, even if other obstacles can be overcome through the ratification

of agreement in faith on eucharist, ministry and ordination, together with the resolution of the question of apostolic succession.

5. Nevertheless, these positions do not necessarily preclude some development in relation to eucharistic discipline based on agreement in faith on eucharist, ministry and ordination.
6. a) For Anglicans, the fact of the ordination of women is to be seen in the context of a continuing open process of reception by the Anglican Communion and by the universal Church.
b) For Roman Catholics, the fact of the ordination of women in some parts of the Anglican Communion has stimulated continued reflection on this issue; results of such reflection are already evident in Inter Insigniores and the correspondence between Rome and Canterbury.

III
Agenda

7. The role of women and the theological basis of that role is a vital issue requiring urgent study both within and between our two Communion. Anglicans and Roman Catholics are both committed to this study.
8. Any Anglican/Roman Catholic discussion of the

ordination of women must consider how the relationship of gender to the ordained ministry touches the faith of the Church. Also to be weighed are the differing implications for communion posed by the ordination (or non ordination) of women to the diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate. Further, discussion must also take account of the wider context of ecumenical experience and dialogue Orthodox and Protestant - in relation to ministry understood sacramentally.

9. This continuing dialogue is itself a sign of and contribution to our growth in communion.

N O T E

Future discussion would need to begin with a consideration of the context of the question: both the relationship of women and men in contemporary cultures and the developing role of women in both Communion, e.g. the Churches' experience of women's extended sacramental, teaching and pastoral functions.

Examination of how the relationship of gender to the ordained ministry touches faith would need to consider biblical interpretation and the question of the openness of tradition in the light of perceptions of revelation, christology, anthropology, symbolism, sacramental representation, and the Church as a sign of the Kingdom.

Attention should also be paid to matters relating to authority and ecclesiology. This would involve study of Anglican provincial autonomy and interdependence and how decisions on matters of faith and order are made and received when there are divisions amongst the Churches. The differing implications of the ordination of women to the diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate demand consideration of the unique role of the episcopate as the link of communion between the local and universal Church.

Permeating the whole question is the intimate relationship between truth, communion and unity.