

Since dialogue involves "speaking the truth in love", it is necessary to pose the problem of the effect of the ordination of women in some Anglican churches upon Anglican/Catholic relationships in its clearest and most precise form. On the one hand, the Catholic Church has declared that she cannot change an unbroken tradition which has been maintained throughout the history of the Church and which conforms to God's plan for his Church. It is therefore impossible to ordain women as priests. On the other hand, many segments of the Anglican church have declared that there are no theological grounds against the ordination of women, though some have maintained that on cultural and sociological grounds it is impossible to ordain women. After careful and prayerful consideration, some Anglican churches have validly ordained women as priests. Anglicans regard this situation as expressing a diversity in unity which is both legitimate and also insufficient for any of us to break communion with each other.

The question therefore poses itself: does the Anglican action go beyond the limits of legitimacy in the eyes of the Catholics? Anglicans will affirm that this diversity in unity in the question of the ordination of women as priests opens the way for serious theological discussion on the future shapes of the ministry. The recent Catholic Declaration does not explicitly affirm that the impossibility of the ordination of women is de jure divino; this leaves open the possibility of future dialogue on the whole question not only of the ministry, but of the doctrines of man and creation between Anglicans and Catholics, which will lead to mutual understanding and enrichment.