



# ANGLICAN CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

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2nd February, 1976.

His Grace The Archbishop of Canterbury,  
Lambeth Palace,  
London, S.E.1.

My dear Donald,

The Pope's letter to you of  
30th November 1975

This letter is no more than one or two thoughts of mine, and of course I shall fully understand if you prefer to disregard it. I gather the Pope's letter eventually reached you in January - a copy was kindly sent to me.

In his third paragraph, the Pope gives reasons why the Catholic Church does not regard it as admissible to ordain women to the priesthood. You may have heard, as I have, one or two gentle suggestions from Rome that you might care to make this letter public. I feel a certain amount of concern on two points.

First, I think it may be better that any Roman statement on this subject is made from the Vatican rather than through yourself.

My second concern is the nature of the reasons the Pope gives in that paragraph: "These reasons include: the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has 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."

These reasons seem to me theologically slight and inadequate for so important a subject. The significance of the appointment of the Twelve we know is theologically debatable. Beyond that the Pope's position amounts to a reiteration of what the Catholic Church has done in the past. To any theologian, Anglican or Roman, this must appear a vulnerable defence. For example, in this context to ignore both the theology of Creation and the theology of Redemption is to avoid some of the subjects which are receiving most responsible and relevant consideration. To be brief and rather crude, I feel that if the Pope is publicly to defend the present Roman position, he needs to do better than that!

With best wishes,

Yours very sincerely,

JH.

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c.c. Canon Michael Moore