

7 March 1978

Dear Stuart,

I decided that the best way of reflecting upon the consultation in Versailles on the Ordination of Women, would be by way of writing to you. However as I wish to share what I had to say with a few other people as well it did not seem quite appropriate to do this simply by way of an immensely long personal letter, and so I have cast my thoughts into a confidential memorandum for you. I simply do not know when and how we are going to get our rather modest report of two or three pages out from under the wraps! It will go the Secretariat for Unity and to Bishop Howe. I understand the usual pattern for him would be to send it to Provinces but of course at that moment it would cease to be a confidential document and though, in all conscience, there cannot be said to be anything madly confidential or exciting in what we say, you know how it is with the Vatican. They sit on things. First it will be shared with the Secretariat. Then it will be shown to various other bodies and I suppose that will include the Holy Office. And given half a chance I suppose they will try and sit on it. ( I may add that not only did their famous declaration infuriate the biblical commission but I guess it annoyed the Secretariat for Unity who weren't consulted either and who have retaliated by minimising the status of the Declaration pointing out its poor reasoning and denying any official status to the commentary which they say was just put out as a briefing document for journalists!) However, we did urge the extreme importance of this being available, for example to Anglican Bishops at Lambeth.

What I decided I wanted to do was not simply to reproduce the report though I will gladly show it to you if you like, but to reflect upon it upon the discussion on which fortunately I already have considerable minutes, and my own impressions. You will notice I have labelled it confidential. It was agreed among the members of the consultation that the report could be spoken about or shown in confidence to responsible persons who would respect the same degree of confidentiality. What must not happen is that we either quote publicly or publish the report. I decided I would not put my memorandum on stencil as this would inevitably lead both to a wider dissemination than is perhaps prudent and an implication of lesser confidentiality. I suppose I take the view that anyone to whom I send it knows quite well where to quote it or to whom to show it. I hope you may find it of some interest and I suppose Bob may also do so. I certainly feel that the wilder statements about what the Roman Catholic Church will or will not do at either end of the scale are called in question by the Versailles meeting.

I am by now accumulating a considerable amount of documentation some of which I shall place in the resource files in Church House which are being maintained by Daphne Fraser of the BMU. It does of course mean that I am only too glad to be of any assistance in this area should you or anyone else wish.

Yours ever

C.