



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WOMEN ANGLICAN BISHOPS CALLED HINDRANCE TO RECONCILIATION

WASHINGTON--Archbishop J. Francis Stafford of Denver said that the ordination of women as Anglican bishops would hinder the "process of reconciliation" with the Roman Catholic Church.

Archbishop Stafford, Chairman of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said in a statement issued on behalf of the committee that "The admission of women to ordination as [Anglican] bishops would be a hindrance to this process of reconciliation, one we want to see go forward. It would increase our difficulties in an unlimited way, since in churches which hold the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons it is bishops who ordain all others. Difficulties concerning a person's ordination as a bishop are multiplied many times over with regard to others who in turn are ordained by that person.

"Because of this and because of negative implications this issue could have for relationships with several other churches, we feel it an ecumenical responsibility to express this reaction."

Archbishop Stafford's full statement follows:

Both charity and honesty have always marked Anglican/Roman Catholic consultations here in the United States and on the international level¹. In that spirit

1. See Letters of Archbishop Donald Coggan (2/10/76) and Paul VI (3/23/76) in "Called to Full Unity: Documents on Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations 1966-1983." ed. by

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we point out the implications the ordination of women has on our close relationship. This has been a relationship recognized by the Second Vatican Council as "special," prompting in Pope Paul VI and in many of us the longing that our churches might embrace as "beloved sisters."²

Particularly now that the question of the ordination of women as bishops has been raised, we must repeat what was written by Cardinal [Jan] Willebrands [President of the Vatican's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity] in a letter sent to the co-chairman of the ARC-IC [Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission] in 1986.³ The Cardinal stressed that the mutual recognition and reconciliation of the ordained ministries of our churches is not something to be seen in isolation. Rather it forms a vital part of the whole process of "growth in reconciliation" between our communions.

The admission of women to the ordination as bishops would be a hindrance to this process of reconciliation, one we want to see go forward. It would increase our difficulties in an unlimited way, since in churches which hold the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons it is bishops who ordain all others. Difficulties concerning a person's ordination as a bishop are multiplied many times over with regard to others who in turn are ordained by that person.

Because of this and because of the negative implications this issue could have for relationships with several other churches, we feel it an ecumenical responsibility to express this reaction.

J.W. Witmer and J.R. Wright, Washington - USCC Publications (1985) pp. 134 f.

2. See Paul VI's and Archbishop Coggan's letters of February 10, 1976 and March 23, 1976 in "Doing the Truth in Charity," edited by T.F. Stransky and J.B. Sheerin, New York; Paulist Press, 1982, pp. 259-262.

3. Origins vol. 15, no. 40, March 20, 1986.

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