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Ria Barretto Aquino
Dominican University of California

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Women Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church

A senior thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts in Religion.

By

Ria B. Aquino

San Rafael, CA

May 8, 2014

Sr. Carla Kovack, OP
Associate Director of Campus Ministry

Chase Clow, Ph.D. C and
Director, Humanities and Cultural Studies

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Abstract

Changes in culture and society continue to mold and shift the direction of the Roman Catholic Church theologically, pastorally, and doctrinally; the Roman Catholic priesthood has done the same but in a slow progression. This thesis will begin to focus on the Catholic priesthood and the current magisterial doctrine that supports it. Next I will argue this doctrine by counteracting it with evidence of significant roles of women in theology and New Testament. Then I will address another Christian denomination with the existing structure of women ordination from the Episcopalian church. Whether or not an all-male clergy is beneficial for the Roman Catholic Church, this paper will discuss its effects on their Church and how Catholicism could replicate it. Lastly, I will survey a variety of opinions toward the issue of women's priesthood, statements made from past papacies, the current pope, and myself, a future theologian/religious scholar, in hopes that paralleling these notions will indicate what position is most desired.

Women Ordination in the Catholic Church

The role of women in the Catholic Church is ever changing. Despite the patriarchal structure of the Church and its slow demise within modern culture, Catholic women religious vocation sisters, nuns, and laywomen continue to make their presence known in and outside the walls of the church spiritually, culturally, and politically. Who are these women? What is their impact on society? How might they serve the people of God? First, we cannot fixate solely on the image of an ultraconservative, elderly woman dressed in a habit as the *only* definition of a sister; even Whoopi Goldberg would say, “This is not *Sister Act*.” We must not limit ourselves; rather we should open our eyes, see beyond this stereotype, and educate ourselves on what we think we know.

Vowed women religious are the most visible spiritual leaders in the Catholic Church. They are commonly known throughout history as those who established hospitals, created and sustained schools, provided food and shelter for the less fortunate, and cared for the oppressed and the abandoned. Culturally and politically, they are advocates of social justice and promoters of change. Spiritually, they are women of the Church who provide guidance and counseling for people. They own and manage convents, retreat houses, and counseling centers. They are theologians, preachers, catechists, liturgical coordinators, ministers, church secretaries, teachers and more. Alongside with vowed women religious are laity who serve and minister in the same ways. Women today, whether or not they are religious, married, or single, are visible serving the people of God both inside and outside the church.

Despite all that women — vowed religious, laity, married, or single — do for the universal Church and the rest of the world, their ministry does not extend to liturgical or Sacramental traditions as presiders at Eucharist or ministering the Church's Seven Sacraments. Instead, these rituals are reserved for the Roman Catholic priesthood, an all-male vocation consecrated by the sacrament of Holy Orders. This doctrine is found in Canon Law 1024 which states, "A baptized male alone receives sacred ordination validly." For canonical, theological, and biblical reasons, the hierarchy of the Church does not ordain women to the priesthood. With many accomplishments made by Catholic women, it is only fitting that their roles be extended to ordination. This is done so to consecrate the leadership of Catholic women and their service to the Church. This thesis will demonstrate that the denial of vocational call for women is an inequality that must be addressed and changed.

The Church is about its people and is a structure that upholds tradition *and* welcomes progress. Therefore I believe the priesthood should alter itself for what the Church needs it in present time, allowing ordination of women to the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. Opening this door of opportunity for religious women is a revolutionary step that can transform and promote holistic growth in the Church spiritually, physically, culturally, and socially.

The Roman Catholic Priesthood

The role that a Roman Catholic priest has and what he does is essential in understanding the qualities one must have in order to enter into the clergy. What is a priest? How does a person become one? And why is that role so significant in the Church? This chapter will attempt to define what a priest is through the Church's Sacrament of Holy Orders, the process that allows ordination.

Men who are ordained to the priesthood, as stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, otherwise known as the CCC, are “Those who receive the sacrament of Holy Orders” and “are consecrated in Christ's name ‘to feed the Church by the word and grace of God’” (CCC 1535). The vocation of priesthood is the dedication of a celibate man's life to teach and serve the people of God, for God. After years of study in the seminary, the college for future clergymen, they are consecrated in the sacrament of Holy Orders and are given the responsibility to serve others in spiritual and religious matters. Holy Orders comes from the word *ordinatio* which is a religious rite or passage of blessing and can also be understood as *consecratio*, to be set apart (CCC 1538). Catholic men may discern a call to participate in this sacrament of ordination, enter into married life, or remain single. If a man chooses the vocation of the priesthood and is accepted by his local ordained bishop, he must vow to celibacy and be unmarried. Although celibacy is not a part of Canon Law, it is a normative for Catholic culture. In this case, priests are set apart from all other men for the sake of God and the Church.

The sacrament of Holy Orders is also known as the “sacrament of apostolic ministry” because it is the continuation of the same spirit Jesus instilled in his apostles on Pentecost, but now being put upon priests (CCC 1536). So not only do they dedicate their lives to living out lifestyles paralleled to Jesus, but they dedicate themselves to help make the Church grow.

The hierarchal structure of the priesthood is described through this process. The minor order in becoming a priest begins with ordination to the diaconate. This is followed by the ordination to the priesthood. Lastly the pope calls for certain priests to serve as local ordinary bishop of a diocese. The bishop can also be known as the episcopacy. The episcopacy is said to be the “fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders.” First, bishops are “transmitters of the apostolic line” who ensure that the Christian community continues to spread the beliefs and practices amongst generations. The word apostle comes from the Greek term *apostolos* which means “messenger” in English. This term also stems from another Greek term *apostellein* to “send forth.” Apostles in the Christian context are then those who spread the message of Jesus. Specifically the apostolic line is the succession of official messengers for the Church beginning with Simon Peter, the apostle. Matthew 16 demonstrates Simon Peter as beginning the apostolic succession when Jesus says,

“Who do you say I am?”¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter,^[b] and on this rock I

will build my church, and the gates of Hades_[c] will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be_[d] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be_[e] loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16: 17-19).

In having Simon Peter as the first disciple of Jesus to profess belief, the gospel writers create a motif for other Christians to see what a prime example of an ideal follower. This apostolic line also continues during Pentecost when Jesus’ disciples hide in the upper room and prayed (Acts 2). There they experienced the Holy Spirit, the one that Jesus is said to have sent as a guide for his disciples or followers. This spirit allowed Jesus’ disciples to be transformed into apostles because they were able to do miraculous things with the power of the Holy Spirit. It gave them the ability to speak foreign languages — otherwise known as tongues — receive certain spiritual gifts, and be strengthened in order to carry on despite persecutions. They were no longer disciples because they did not just follow Jesus, but they carried out his mission. This is the same spirit that is passed down to seminarians in ordination because they, too, are to carry on Jesus’ mission.

The importance of bishops is their authority to sanctify (make holy), teach, and rule. The Catechism says, “By virtue, therefore, of the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, bishops have been constituted true and authentic teachers of the faith and have been made pontiffs and pastors” (CCC 1558). There is a consensus from the greater population of what makes a virtuous and exemplary bishop. He is seen as one who best represents Jesus Christ and the Church. Therefore bishops specifically handle matters of

pastoral and collegial care. They focus on the overall running of church regions called dioceses and the religious education taught within them. Although they are designated to a specific geography, the collegial work of the episcopacy is to ensure they actively participate in the bishop-run council. This is where they discuss matters of the Church so to be continually aligned with the Apostolic mission of Jesus Christ. The one who looks after and takes care of the entire Church is called the pontiff or pope, the elected bishop of Rome seen as the ultimate imitation of Jesus Christ, head of the Church. This is why the episcopacy is titled the “fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders” because one has the opportunity offer himself to the highest extent that one can serve the Church.

Another portion of the Roman Catholic Church’s hierarchy is the Presbyterates. These are the priests who are “co-workers of the bishop” whom are able to “act as Christ the head” (CCC 1563). Although they are ordained with certain spiritual and religious rites they are under the jurisdiction of their bishop. Their main focus is to minister to the people of the Church specifically through preaching, celebrating the sacraments, liturgy, and offering service. First, as preachers of the Gospel, they “...are consecrated in order to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful as well as to celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament” (CCC 1564). To preach is to share and proclaim a message. The priests are then to share their knowledge of Jesus and the teachings that were passed down through the apostolic line. The bishop-priestly relationship then is a significant relationship within the Church because with the guidance of the bishop, priests are encouraged to give sound teaching to their congregations. One prime example that allows priests to “shepherd” and “celebrate divine worship” is through what is called

the Eucharistic Cult or Assembly. The Eucharistic Assembly focuses on the synaxis of the Church -- that is the liturgical means which people congregate for. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states,

It is in the Eucharistic cult or in the Eucharistic assembly of the faithful (synaxis) that they exercise in a supreme degree their sacred office; there, acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, they unite the votive offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of Christ their head, and in the sacrifice of the Mass they make present again and apply, until the coming of the Lord, the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, that namely of Christ offering himself once for all a spotless victim to the Father. (CCC 1566)

The priests' main ministry, then, is to preside with the people of the Church in the celebration of the Mass, the liturgy that reenacts the Passover feast prior to Jesus Christ's death. This sacrificial feast of the Passover was done through the sharing of scripture and breaking of the bread that later becomes Christ himself as defined in Catholic doctrine. This role is pivotal to the Church because the Eucharist is the foundation and basis of all Catholic beliefs. He must also minister to the people the Seven Sacraments. Thus the significant responsibility of priests is serving the people of God by ministering to them through the Sacraments of the Church.

The level of the ordain's service to God's people is that of the deacons whose title means "in order to serve." The Greek term of deacon also stands for "servant" and

“helper.” A deacon’s ultimate job is to assist the priests and bishops in the divine mysteries within the Mass. They are there to help the priest in performing certain sacraments. For instance they distribute the Eucharist at Holy Communion and can help in the blessing/presiding of marriages and funerals. They also can proclaim the Gospel during the Mass and preach their reflections (CCC 1570). There are two types of deacons: temporary deacons who are one step away from being ordained as priests and permanent deacons. Permanent deacons do not make a vow to chastity and can be married when entering into the clergy. Deacons, even more specifically, serve the pastoral needs of the church parishes. They are known for their extensive ministry in helping couples and charities.

As mentioned earlier, the important detail about Holy Orders is Canon Law 1024 that states only men are validly ordained within the Roman Catholic Church. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the reasoning behind this law is,

The Lord Jesus chose men (*viri*) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry. The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible. (CCC 1577)

Since Jesus was a man and only chose men to be his apostles, women's ordination is not possible. The role of the priest is to act in the name of Jesus Christ and the entire Church (CCC 1552). As the mirror image of Jesus, the priest is the human source of spiritual and religious enlightenment. In order to provide that nourishment and feed the people, the priest must live a life that is spiritually and religiously sound — being a model of who Jesus was. The priest is trained in areas of Scripture, theology, doctrine, religious history, etc.. He must lead a reverent and prayerful life so to help others in their own religious lifestyles. But do not women of the Church do this already? Women do not have the same anatomical structure that men do. But as women of the Catholic Church, especially vowed women religious, their roles still require the same quality of spiritual lifestyle and training. Therefore their roles as women in the Church are those of service, as well. Then if the image of service is what represents the priesthood, the sex of a priest should not matter. When one sees the priesthood like this, one is seeing it as a life of servanthood, not privilege or prestige. If the Roman Catholic Church continues to preserve the all-male celibate clergy, it may be viewed as a role of exclusivity. The male-only rule then makes the priesthood more of an exclusive fatherhood instead of an inclusive call for service. The core of the priesthood lies in the value of desiring to serve God and all humanity. The clerical hierarchy of bishop, priest, and deacon are then vital to the growth and continuation of Jesus' apostolic succession. Furthermore, the vocation of the priesthood should be permitted to women ordination to be an addition of present growth and continuation.

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The Mary Culture: The Significance of Mary in the Catholic Church

There are a few distinct images that the Roman Catholic Church identifies with. Roman collared priests are first and the Blessed Virgin Mary is second. Indeed, there is a great Marian emphasis in the Roman Catholic Church. Believers take part in the tradition and belief of giving devotion and veneration to the mother of Jesus. Even non-Catholics can see the visibility of Mary in the Roman Catholic Church through the many iconic statues, paintings, and stained glass windows visible in churches. Mary is not only an important woman in Scripture, but she is a significant focus in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as Mother of Jesus and the Church.

The Catholic Church continues to uphold the all-male clergy on the basis that Jesus was a male who only chose male apostles. Although it is never stated in the Gospels that Jesus had women apostles, this does not mean he did not have women disciples. Instead women, especially Mary, had just as an important role to the formation and maintenance of Christianity as his male disciples. More so, the role of Mary as a central person of devotion in the Catholic Church challenges this definition of who Jesus' disciples were. Despite this dogma that reserves the role of apostleship to men, the Church continues to uphold Mary as an important disciple and model in the Church. This chapter will then argue that because of the significance of Mary in the Gospels, theology, and dogma, her role as the first and most important disciple can be extended to her being an apostle.

Mary's role in the Church is indispensable in two ways: Catholic doctrine and devotional practices. First, the Church's teaching and doctrine on Mary is extremely important to the validity of who Jesus Christ is to Catholics. There are four doctrines that are seen as dogma, or authoritative principles, to the Church; these four teachings are the divine motherhood, virginity, Immaculate Conception, and the Assumption (CCC 484, 490, 495, 966).

Mary's divine motherhood begins with Jesus. As the mother of Christ, it is helpful to understand the Immaculate Conception and the Annunciation of Mary. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception states that Mary was born without original sin, a state of impure being inherited by all humans due to the fall of Adam and Eve (CCC 490). Since she lacks this impure state, she was made someone suitable by God to conceive who will be later known as the Son of God. In the Annunciation of Mary, she gives consent to the Angel Gabriel about her bearing Jesus (Luke 1). What makes this an even more miraculous event is that she is said to be a virgin fulfilling a prophecy told in the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14). Despite her initial fears, Mary says to the Angel Gabriel, "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38).

Catholics know this as Mary's *fiat*, or her total acceptance of God's will in accordance with the angel Gabriel's prophecy (CCC 973). In this she gives her body as a vessel to bear the Son of God, an act of great faith and obedience to God. Her faith and obedience is what makes her an ideal Christian model. On the fiftieth anniversary of the feast day of the Immaculate Conception Pope Pius X wrote an encyclical titled *Ad Diem*

Illum Laetissimum. In this encyclical he commemorates the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the role of Mary to the Church. He states, “it surely follows that His Mother most holy should be recognized as participating in the divine mysteries and as being in a manner the guardian of them, and that upon her as upon a foundation, the noblest after Christ, rises the edifice of the faith of all centuries.” Here Pius X places Mary secondary to Jesus, making a bold statement about who she is. This form of Mariology shows how some theologians, including Pope Pius X, view Mary as one who contributes greatly to the Church. It is encyclicals like these that build and support Mary as one who holds much significance in Catholicism.

The Nicene Creed teaches that Jesus was conceived “by the power of the Holy Spirit, he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” This section is so significant that it is a custom to either kneel or bow one’s head when it is recited during the Eucharistic liturgy. This demonstrates her role in salvation history. In *Summa Theologiae*, Doctor of the Church St. Thomas Aquinas addresses how the salvation of humanity relied on Mary’s consent of the conception (*Summa theologiae*, 3a, q. 30, a. 1). Aquinas also states “the one who gave birth to the only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth, received the greater privileges of grace than all others” (3a, q. 27, a. 1). Mary is seen here as a vital contribution to the Christian faith because she literally carries within her the grace of salvation. Lastly, the Assumption of Mary states that she was assumed into heaven as full body and spirit. The Catechism of the Catholic Church ensures that she is upheld to such a high standard that even she shares in the resurrection with Jesus (CCC 966). Mary therefore reflects and participates in the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Mary's divine motherhood to Jesus also extends to the universal Church. The entire Church's relation to making Mother Mary a mother of their own roots comes from the scriptural passage of John at the crucifixion:

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, **[b]** here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home (John 19:25-27).

Before his death, John's Gospel states that Jesus passes down his mother to the disciple John. From this action, all Christians inherit Mary as their own mother and a mother to the Church. From Mary being the maternal figure to all Catholics, came the development of devotional practices within the Church that has sustained practitioners up to present time. These modes of devotion can be divided into three common forms: sacramentals, apparitions, and artistic expressions. Such devotional practices can be highlighted as a Roman Catholic experience because not all Christian denominations show reverence in her the same way.

At the Marian Vigil in 2009, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the congregation in a homily about Mary's participation in the upper room during Pentecost with the apostles. In this address he refers to Acts 1:14 that states the apostles were "constantly devoting themselves to prayer" in the upper room with Mary, other women and brothers of Jesus.

Pope Benedict XVI notes how Mary's relationship with the Holy Spirit is "privileged and indissoluble" because of its constant presence in her life from the Immaculate Conception all the way to her own Assumption. Her faith in God is what allows this Spirit to be so ever-present within her. It is also the faith that was present as she and the disciples prepared for Pentecost in the upper room. The Apostles of Jesus are distinguished by their presence in the Upper Room at Pentecost. It is because of the Holy Spirit anointing them that they were able to receive spiritual gifts for evangelization. If Mary was present in the Upper Room at Pentecost, she is not just a disciple, this makes her an apostle. In another address even Pope John Paul II says, "The apostolic community needed her presence and that devotedness to prayer together with her, the mother of the Lord."

Catholics who believe in these doctrines and practices are aware of the sacred bond Mary and Jesus share. As stated earlier this bond is one that is inseparable and necessary for salvation history. By believing, all Catholics are welcome, as well, to share in this bond having Mary be the Mother of the Church. Therefore, one can raise the question – with all of the emphasis placed on Mary, is she just as, if not more, important than the twelve apostles? Since she is titled both Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church, one can argue that Mary is the first and most important disciple there is. Not only is she this disciple but she can also be considered an apostle through her participation and presence at Pentecost. When Mary gave her entire self in both body and spirit for the literal birth of Christianity, she made herself as a model for all believers. As the prime example for all believers in Christ, the Church then should acknowledge Mary doctrinally

as an apostle. Also with this evidence Mary being a women apostle, an opening to all women for a chance in ordination should be made.

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Women in Early Christianity: Gospels, Epistles, and Church History

In the history of the Catholic traditions, it can be assumed by the general public that the priesthood was always reserved for men. But women theologians and religious scholars began doing research into the role of women in the practice of the early Christian communities. Their studies show references to women leaders of house churches and deaconesses. The topic is now seeping its way to normative society through certain feminist theologian movements like the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) and their efforts to inform modern Christian communities. With such developments in religious life, one is able to study the development of the priesthood and see the alterations made in light of many socio-political and cultural norms of the time. One can come to the conclusion that tradition, no matter the scale, is created and maintained by humans due to the present culture. This chapter will explore how the significance of women disciples are often downplayed in the early Christian communities due to cultural and social pressures of the time. If described to their greatest extent, the women disciples of Jesus may have had a more prominent role in his ministry which is a platform for being apostles.

To stay true to the chronologic order in which the books of the New Testament appear, the women of the Gospels is discussed first. The presence of Biblical women such as Mary Magdalene and other unnamed witnesses of Jesus' miracles display a large percentage of his faithful and devout followers; people who can be considered disciples of Christ. The other Mary in the Bible that holds apostolic significance is Mary

Magdalene. She appears in the four Gospels a number of times, all for very critical moments in Scripture. In Luke, readers meet her as one of the women followers healed by seven demons (Luke 8). In all accounts Mary Magdalene is mentioned as one of the first women to see Jesus' resurrected self (Mark 16:9, Matthew 27:61, Luke 24:10, John 20:15). More specifically in both Mark and John, Jesus commands Mary Magdalene to tell the disciples about his resurrection. In Matthew, Mary Magdalene and the women follow through with the command. The Greek term for apostle translates to "to send away" or "to send out" in English. Technically then, an apostle is a messenger for Jesus, making Mary Magdalene an apostle. Her obedience to this command shows how certain women are yet again another vital factor to salvation history. The resurrection is one of the key events within Christianity, without it the theology of heaven through Jesus Christ would cease to exist.

Although Mary Magdalene only appears in the Gospels a few times, in religious scholarship she is a topic of much discussion. One particular scholar by the name of Claudia Setzer wrote *Excellent Women: Female Witness to the Resurrection*. Her research attempts to reveal the clear cuts and edits Gospel writers made when compiling the resurrection accounts. She concluded that depending on the Gospel writer and the specific time period they composed his Gospel altered the type of information presented about the women. Setzer states that despite the "unanimous transmission of the tradition of women witness," the inconsistency of each story as time goes on shows the different alterations that may weaken the validity of the women witnesses (367). For example, Mark mentions women followers a few times throughout his Gospel, but discredits the

women witnesses at the end of the resurrection story. Also, Matthew barely mentions any women throughout his account but show accreditation to the women witnesses and their accomplishment of sending the resurrection message (366). In the text *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, feminist theologian, Barbara J. MacHaffie argues the role of women throughout Christianity and the suppression that cultural society puts on it. She says, "Some scholars suggest that Mary's example may have been the foundation for female power and leadership in the early church. The Christian community, with no basis in Gospel fact, later identified Mary as a penitent whore, possibly to diminish her influence" (5, MacHaffie). The consistent visibility of Mary Magdalene and the other women witnesses in the Gospels show that this is an indispensable factor of the story; but the edits made may prove the Gospel writer's need to de-emphasize their roles. When looking at Mary Magdalene one should also consider the light which other religious people see her under, especially in the context of the Greco-Roman period.

Following the four Gospels are the Epistles of later apostle and Christian convert, Paul. The spread of Christianity around the world is highly accredited to him and his efforts to convert all people -- Jew and Gentile alike. During the time of Paul, as seen in the Acts of the Apostle's and the Epistles, is the expansion of Christianity through small, secretive communities led by other Christian followers. In these letters, readers learn that those who follow under the leadership of Paul attempt to evangelize the resurrected Christ; and the teachings that are passed on during this time still influence and remain today. It is the work of the apostles and those whom they declared as deacons that helped spread Christianity around the Greco-Roman world. Among those deacons were women

leaders stated throughout different Epistles. To name two there were Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2) and Priscilla (1 Corinthians 16:19).

The letters of Paul were written prior to the Gospels; but the context of the New Testament still highly reflects the patriarchal society that existed. Due to these patriarchal influences, women leadership declined and became hidden. This decline of women leadership was highlighted by the increase in degradation towards women. The viewpoint of women in contemporary Christianity stemmed from the viewpoint women are seen in from Paul's letters. They were subordinate to men in many ways. It says in a number of letters that they were to be "subjects" to their husbands (Colossians 3:18, Titus 2:3-5, Ephesians 5:21-33). Often times it is verses like these that many Christian congregations choose to form certain teachings around.

Although some can say Paul is sexist, one must realize the context which many of these letters were written in. So in reading such verses from Paul one must consider the following: Paul has a purpose in writing certain letters and not all letters are written by Paul himself. When studying the Epistles, scholars discovered contradictions and conflicts in Paul's teachings between different letters. One main example can be found within the letters to Corinth. As stated in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul assigns women of the congregation to a certain dress code during times of prayer. This required dress code was due to the superiority of men to women (11:3-9). But verses later, Paul goes on by saying that both men and women cannot be "independent" from each other (11:11-12). Scholars say that this means "in the Lord there is mutuality and reciprocity between

woman and man” (New Oxford Annotated Bible, 2015). A second example is in a later letter to the Corinthians, women are told to remain silent in church and only ask questions at home to their husbands (1 Corinthians 14:33). But in 1 Corinthians 16, the women deaconess Priscilla along with her husband Aquila are still mentioned as the heads of the Corinth church, despite Paul’s command of silencing the women. These variable teachings in one letter can be explained through the reasons above. First, Paul wrote his letters for a particular audience to solve different conflicts within a congregation. As Paul travelled Asia Minor, he created and settled different Christian communities (Sinclair, 8). Before his departure, he would assign different leaders (deacons) to cater to the congregation. When Paul would check in on these congregations through the assigned leaders, he discovered that a formation of problems existed. Depending on the congregation and what conflicts would arise, Paul wrote letters helping them solve their issues (Sinclair, 10).

In this case for Corinthians, the status of women may have caused some problems. These problems include people getting carried away with their spiritual gifts during liturgy, women divorcing their pagan husbands causing a divide amongst Christians and Gentiles, and lastly practices of sexual impurity (Sinclair, 36). Therefore the result that Paul sets regulations for women worshippers. So, Paul’s teachings were not created necessarily for doctrinal purposes, rather just to solve current pastoral problems that needed resolutions at the moment. Dr. Scott G. Sinclair mentions in his lecture series on the Letters of St. Paul that there are logical consequences to Paul’s teachings in that it promotes legalism and its exclusiveness for only one single culture

(9). These are same problems modern-day Christians may have when reading and interpreting Paul's Epistles. Legalism is having an adherence to one specific law and with it one must then revolve their entire life upon this law. The consequence of this is that because these laws are so specific, they do not necessarily apply to all situations and all people. Also, Paul in undermining his gender-directed laws with laws of equality, could be Paul reconciling the two cultures of Judaic life with Greco-Roman life.

Sinclair mentions Roman-Greco law allowed both men and women to participate in religious activities, but women still had to remain subordinate to men. Although this may not be the Christian way as Paul states it to be (Galatians 3:28), it is his way of satisfying both Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians. Lastly, scholars knew that not all of Paul's letters were written by Paul him. Some letters were recorded by a few of his own students addressing themselves as Paul according to custom (Sinclair, 10). Hence, another reason why there might be some contradicting teachings within a letter. Paul's students could have made edits to these letters before having them enter into the formation of the complete bible. Therefore one must be especially careful when applying these teachings to modern-day Christianity. They are highly catered and cut to fit a specific theological shape designated for a particular time period. This was an era of great inequality of women and this same time period was what molded Christianity into what it is today.

When one is knowledgeable about the Gospels and Epistles being written during the formation of early Christianity, it allows readers to gain a better contextual

understanding of the displayed text. One is able to see then how much current cultural influence dictates people's actions. It is then very obvious to see the alterations made in the New Testament so to fit the social standards and expectations of the early Christian, Greco-Roman period. These attitudes contribute to how the Church forms its teachings forbidding against women's priesthood. If we study and understand the basis of this teaching we can see the some of the errors that this dogma stands upon. Therefore it makes the the idea of cultural sexism a stronger argument against the all-male priesthood.

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Women Priesthood in the Episcopal Church

Amongst multiple Christian denominations, there are many churches with an existing women clergy. One example is the Episcopal Church of America (ECUSA). Their recent implementation of ordination for women throughout a number of their dioceses caused a greater sense of inclusivity within the Anglican Church. Today, American women are given the same opportunity to serve their churches as bishops and priests just as men are. Despite these changes, issues of inequality toward women clergy still remain. But in order to understand this reformation within the Episcopalian Church, one must understand who they are as a people of faith and the pivotal events that led up to this revolutionary change in male/female clergy.

The Episcopal Church is associated with the universal Anglican community and has many shared roots and theological relations to the Roman Catholic Church especially in Apostolic succession. Although the Catholic Church is likely to face the same challenges as the Episcopal Church of social/structural inequality and a possible decrease in members, this can open greater opportunities for women in liturgical and ministerial life. Due to these close religious ties and commonalities, I believe that the Catholic Church can ordain women just as the Episcopalian Church does, so the Church could still further grow and expand in the number of clergy, the increase of active members, and enhance the liturgical quality of its prayers.

The Episcopal Church is the American and Scottish branch of the Church of England, otherwise known as the Anglican Church. This form of Christian denomination holds a rich religious and political history and plays a significant role during the era of the Protestant Reformation. The reformation was a wave of religious outrage specifically targeted toward the papacy of the Catholic Church during the 16th century. The people of England under the rule of King Henry VIII demanded a separation from the Catholic Church, its papacy, and what they thought of as unjust and immoral practices. There is also one very infamous reason as to why King Henry VIII wanted a split from the Church. He divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and that put him outside of communion with Catholicism since it did not recognize divorce. King Henry then took the papal authority to himself by splitting away from the Roman Catholic Church. This decision seeped into King Henry's political and personal life and although it may not be the sole reason for the split, it is a significant one.

As the Anglican Church developed over time through Elizabeth I, the daughter of King Henry and his once mistress Ann Boleyn, it became known as the *via media* between Catholicism and Protestantism, or the middle way between the two (Nesbitt, 225). Since this is to be an equal mix between these two main Christian sects there are numerous similarities present. For example, just like the Catholic Church, the Episcopal clergy consists of bishops, priests, and deacons who are designated to certain dioceses throughout different geographic areas. One main difference in this is that they do not believe in the authority of the Pope in matters of faith and dogma. This is to keep a distinct differentiation between the two traditions. Instead the Anglican alternative is the

House of Bishops and Deputies. They meet every three years to discuss doctrine, practice, and any other issue within their church. The head of these houses is somewhat similar to the pope in that he is a bishop who is elected by other bishops. This occurs every twelve years by the houses (Nesbitt, 226). Closely related to the Church, the Episcopal Church upholds the Catholic tradition of the seven sacraments: “baptism, communion, confirmation, penance, ordination, matrimony, and laying of hands on the sick” (Nesbitt, 226). They also profess the same set of beliefs present in the Nicene’s Creed. But one difference in the Episcopal Church is the allowing of women’s ordination. Although not accepted by all in totality of the Anglican and Episcopal Church tradition, a good number of dioceses allow this to happen.

There are pivotal events that illustrate the turning points of women ordination in the Episcopal Church. Originally ordination, let alone obtaining any higher laity roles, were restricted to all women of the church and exclusively reserved only for men. According to *Women and Vocation in the Episcopal Church: Reflections on Our History*, author Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook researched that women only started being admitted into seminaries in the 1950’s (115). In the early 1970’s, women’s role in the Episcopal Church surfaced as a significant topic of discussion. In 1973, the House of Bishops held a General Convention in New Orleans where they discussed their views and understanding on women’s ordination. The consensus of the votes were obviously split into half and because of that, opposing sides spent about two hours debating the different aspects of the topic (Diocesan Press Service). Despite the Bishops’ attempts to fully reveal theological reasoning both for and against this subject, women were still were unable to

be ordained. The argument revolved around the idea that it would cause great “disruption” within the Church; mostly the idea that many people around the world would just not accept it (Diocesan Press Service).

In addition, one theological position shared with the Catholic Church is that Jesus never had women apostles. In an unpleasant reaction to these events and attitudes, during the summer of 1974 eleven women were ordained as deacons by three retired Episcopal bishops in what the Episcopal Church claimed as an “irregular liturgy.” (Nesbitt, 227) This was immensely contentious because women were still banned from the clergy. In spite of its controversial nature, the ordaining bishops saw this rule as a sign of injustice within the Church. One of the bishops who helped lay hands on the women deacons called this event a “prophetic witness on behalf of and for the oppressed,” the oppressed being Episcopal women (Diocesan Press Service). He also stated that while people viewed the ordination as an “act of disobedience, ecclesiastical disobedience,” in actuality it was a form of obedience that ultimately served justice. At the same time he clarified that the type of disobedience practiced was a “moment of tender loving defiance” (Diocesan Press Service). This drastic and shocking event resulted in another major occurrence a few years later. In September 1976, another General Convention made the decision to accept women to ordination as priests. Months later in January of 1977, the first woman Episcopal priest, Reverend Jacqueline Means, was ordained officially into the church. Today women continue to become ordained, not just as priests or deacons, but even as bishops who preside over dioceses throughout America.

The new canon law that accepts women to enter into the clergy currently states:

Sec. 2. No person shall be denied access to the discernment process for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise provided by these Canons. No right to licensing, ordination, or election is hereby established.

Sec. 3. The provisions of these Canons for the admission of Candidates for the Ordination to the three Orders: Bishops, Priests and Deacons shall be equally applicable to men and women. (Canon III.1.2-3)

This changed influenced and molded the Episcopal Church both positively and negatively. In 1999 it was reported that eighteen percent of seventeen thousand priests were women (Nesbitt, 227). The Huffington Post reported in 2010 that all 110 dioceses of the Episcopal Church have ordained at least one woman as priest among their 2 million+ membership. These events caused a chain reaction in the rest of the Anglican Church. Eventually women were ordained in selected churches around the world. The current Canon Law of ordination goes as follows, “Sec. 3. The provisions of these Canons for the admission of Candidates for the Ordination to the three Orders: Bishops, Priests and Deacons shall be equally applicable to men and women” (Canons III.1.2).

There are positive reactions and effects as well as negative and detrimental ones to the Episcopal Church. Due to the new canon law of women ordination being passed in the 70’s, a number of schisms erupted from it (Nesbitt, 227). Although a good majority of

the bishops accepted this change, not all people of the church did. In addition to this, the infrastructure of the clerical system still remains unequal and discriminatory despite its inclusiveness of women. Full-time women clergy still earn almost less than 18% of what men clergy receive and are continued to be placed in lower clerical positions (Kujawa-Holbrook, 106). This continual inequality pushes women away from further service to the church beyond their roles as laity. Kujawa-Holbrook addresses in her book, *Women and Vocation in the Episcopal Church* that not all lay women want to enter into the priesthood because of the high concentration of clericalism and hierarchal power. She states that laywomen prefer the relational, person-to-person ministries they already partake in and are empowered by (118). Considering that women ordination was passed within the past thirty years or so, it is still difficult to evaluate the effects resulting from this change. There are still internal and structural issues within the Anglican and Episcopal Church just as there are in the Roman Catholic Church. Although the Anglican Church continues to face many difficulties concerning women priests they are still a step ahead in allowing equal opportunities for both men and women to be ordained.

The main reason I believe the Anglican tradition changed its canons for women ordination is because of their progressive nature and suppleness towards doctrinal teachings. In the text *Contemporary American Religion*, Paula D. Nesbitt states in her chapter on the Episcopal Church:

Doctrinally, the Episcopal Church recognizes Anglicanism's three sources of religious authority: scripture, church tradition, and reason.

Since church teachings are intended as guidance rather than as binding policy, a diversity of religious interpretation has emerged over time. Consequently, the church tenuously holds together evangelical, low-church Protestant, high-church Anglo-Catholic, charismatic, theologically conservative, liberal, and feminist strains. (226)

Why is this important to Christianity? Why is this important to humanity? In the Christian tradition it is a duty for all believers to discern what is immoral, what is just, and act accordingly to serve justice. In the Roman Catholic Church, women religious and laywomen who would like to further serve the Church are restricted due to canon law that they believe is discriminatory. Arguing that women's ordination based on the biblical interpretation that women apostles did not exist is looking at apostleship through a patriarchal lens. As time evolves the lens of the people will not always be the same because they are adjusting to the issues of the time (Episcopal News Service). An important aspect of both the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church is that they are not supposed to be stagnant. Rather, both Churches acknowledge the importance of upholding tradition and adjusting to the signs of the times. If the Episcopal Church is able to make such a decision within their faith with a similar structure to the Roman Catholic Church, it can be possible for the Roman Catholic Church to make such a change. Of course, the Catholic Church will also face the same obstacles but these challenges are what helps all institutions grow.

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Women Priesthood: A Modern-Day Viewpoint

What do others think of women ordination? Women priesthood is a topic that seems more and more prevalent in the news today. Although amongst Catholics it seems quite taboo, all over the world people are discussing the issue of whether or not women should be given this call to service called priestly ordination. This last chapter will survey a variety of opinions toward the issue of woman priesthood. These viewpoints are statements made from past papacies, the current pope, as well scholarship and research in favor of women ordination. By paralleling these contrasting notions with one another, I hope to indicate what position is most desired by the general public.

Within the Catholic Church, numerous papacies addressed the topic of women ordination through encyclicals, homilies, press conferences, and more. Discussions on such a topic became more frequent in society from the 1960's onward, the same time the Anglican Church began their dialogue. Out of the many papacies, there are three major popes who dedicated a portion of their theological and pastoral attention on this issue from the 1960's until today. Specifically Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and current Pope Francis made statements in disagreement with women ordination. While their disagreements remain visible amongst the public, these popes also address the need to still honor women and their vocations in the Roman Catholic Church. Here are three example statements made by papal authority concerning women ordination.

The Second Vatican Council of 1962 to 1965 was the twenty first ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church. At St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, the College

of Bishops met over a span of these three years to discuss Catholic doctrine in light of current world events and issues. Their dialogue was recorded through official documents and letters addressed to the entire congregation of the Roman Catholic Church. Dialogue was key to this council and resulted to many changes within. Women and their roles in the Church were a portion of their dialogue. *Inter Insigniores*, a declaration document made by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was signed for and approved by Pope Paul VI in October of 1976. This document addressed the Roman Catholic Church's disapproving stance on women ordination. The disapproval of this reform was explained throughout this declaration.

Their stance stemmed from these six sections: 1) The Church's Constant Tradition, 2) The Attitude of Christ, 3) The Practice of the Apostles, 4) Permanent Value of the Attitude of Jesus and the Apostles, 5) The Ministerial Priesthood in the Light of The Mystery of Christ, and 6) The Ministerial Priesthood Illustrated by The Mystery of the Church. The first four sections go over the belief that Jesus did not choose women as his twelve apostles and how they remained aligned with this same attitude when continuing on their apostolic mission. The Congregation stated that this tradition was "so firm in the course of the centuries that the Magisterium has not felt the need to intervene." The law was neither "attacked" nor "challenged" and when it seemed to be, the Church always returned to the same structure that Jesus Christ left. The remaining sections addressed the normative value of an all-male celibate priesthood and how the Roman Catholic Church simultaneously respects it as a mystery. As a mystery of Jesus Christ, the priest is *in persona Christi*, where he represents Christ during the liturgy. As a

mystery of the Church, Catholics must respect the Roman Catholic Church as a structure separate from all secular structures, governments, and societies. It is not a compilation of random elected priests or spontaneous choice. Rather it is a people of long, Spirit-led discernment who understand their individual roles within the whole group. The declaration is concluded with what the Church hopes for Christian women and that is to “become more fully aware of the greatness of their mission.”

This document displays a solid outline of why the Roman Catholic Church continues to dismiss women ordination. Vatican II is famous for the idea of relating Catholicism to the “signs of the times” (*Gaudium Et Spes*). This opened many Catholics to the idea that one must take doctrine, belief, and practice and learn how to apply it to the current issues and attitudes of modern day society. *Inter Insigniores* was written during a time when many reforms occurred and the Roman Catholic Church as a whole began to look at doctrine through modern eyes. Although Vatican II promoted this modern day adaptability to the Church, the all-male priesthood remained in its traditional structure.

In 1994 Pope John Paul II wrote an encyclical titled *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. This letter addressed his disapproval of women’s ordination resulting from the infallible authority he saw in both Vatican II popes John XXIII and Paul VI as previously stated. John Paul II supported the two Vatican Council popes in their argument that Jesus chose men as his apostles, not because of social or cultural pressures of his time, but that he acted in a “completely free and sovereign manner.” This document then states that this

tradition began on a matter of choice, a choice of Jesus the Christ that should be honored and upheld always. At the same time, John Paul II acknowledged women roles as something of great significance to the Roman Catholic Church in his writing. *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* states, “The New Testament and the whole history of the Church give ample evidence of the presence in the Church of women, true disciples, witnesses to Christ in the family and in society, as well as in total consecration to the service of God and of the Gospel. “ He then quotes his Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* and says, “By defending the dignity of women and their vocation, the Church has shown honor and gratitude for those women who-faithful to the Gospel-have shared in every age in the apostolic mission of the whole People of God...” The confusing manner of this statement is that although women are not considered apostles, John Paul II stated that they “share” in the apostolic mission by bearing witness to the faith and sharing it with their children. This is somewhat contradictory in that women are allowed to participate in apostolic acts but are not officially named as apostles of Jesus. The priesthood as stated in previous chapters is not a mode of privilege but a call to service. Here the term apostle is used as a mode of privilege which contradicts the definition of priesthood.

John Paul II concludes his letter by mentioning, “4. Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church's judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is

considered to have a merely disciplinary force.” Even with room for debate, he assures readers that they know the Church still has no authority to ordain women.

The current papacy, Pope Francis wrote his first Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, on November 24, 2013. This address concluded the Year of Faith as named by Pope Benedict XVI. In it he addresses to bishops, clergy, and lay people alike to a new wave of evangelization in today’s modern world that can renew and transform the Roman Catholic Church. Among the many topics he addresses, Francis spends an ample amount of time on women’s ordination. He, like previous popes, remain firm in the stance of maintaining the all-male priesthood. But instead he focuses on how “sacramental power” can often times be too “closely identified with power in general.” (104) He reminds the Church, “The ministerial priesthood is one means employed by Jesus for the service of his people, yet our great dignity derives from baptism, which is accessible to all.” It is through our baptism that all humans are equal and by this baptism no one should be superior or inferior, even if they are a part of the clergy.

Francis continues on and says, ”Indeed, a woman, Mary, is more important than the bishops. Even when the function of ministerial priesthood is considered ‘hierarchical’, it must be remembered that ‘it is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ’s members.’” (104) This challenges all people of the church to re-evaluate the way they see the hierarchal priesthood and its association with power. The image of power must shift from worldly power to a power that is helpful and beneficial to the betterment of fruitfulness of the Church. Pope Francis acknowledges that theological reasons behind

the rule, but identifies the misconceptions present among Catholic believers instead. This takes much of the focus away from the “do-not” and “cannot” attitude of the magisterium and re-focuses it on an attitude of improvement and evaluation. Although Pope Francis remains immovable in changing the all-male priesthood, he at least puts more emphasis on the vocation of women and their equality to men.

Aside from the Vatican, there are other viewpoints of women’s ordination by many people around the world both Catholic and non-Catholic alike. These viewpoints may align with the laws of the magisterium and some may not. The first piece of research is published in the Journal of Gender Studies from 2012. “The Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church: A Survey of Attitudes in Spain ” is a research article by Juan Agustin Franco Martinez, Macario Rodriguez-Entrena, and Maria Jesus Rodriguez-Entrena. Their research was based on surveying 110 alumni students from the University of Granada in Spain and seeing how their image of God correlated to their ideas of gender equality in the Catholic Church. Throughout the paper the authors try to analyze what they call “discrimination towards woman’s access to the priesthood” (17). A helpful graph found in the study was a table that states the top ten nations who support women ordination. The first five nations and their percentage of supporters are Netherlands with 86% whole population and 31% Catholics; Spain with 74% whole population and 94% Catholics; Portugal with 71% whole population and 93% Catholics, Germany with 71% whole population and 33% Catholics; and America with 68% whole population and 23% Catholics (22). From this table we can see the large percentage of people who are accepting of women’s ordination despite their own religious background. We can also see

a large percentage of Catholics who are for women ordination as well. These percentages are a concrete scale of what a large portion of the world would like to see.

Another example are those already within Catholicism who are in favor for female ordination. In the article “Women-Church: Feminist Concept, Religious Commitment, Women’s Movement,” Feminist theologian Mary E. Hunt proceeds to describe the concept of the Women-Church and its benefits to the Roman Catholic Church. Hunt states, “Women-church is a movement of autonomous groups seeking to actualize a discipleship of equals” (85). They comprise many different Catholic, feminist-based organizations such as the Woman Ordination Conference (WOC), the Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), the National Coalition of American Nuns, and the National Assembly of Women Religious (88). Together they hope to provide the resources all Catholics need in order network and participate in dialogue about current social justice issues, especially women’s ordination. With such networks and dialogue, their ultimate mission is to promote equality within the Roman Catholic Church.

Hunts states that “kyriarchy” is the “fundamental structural problem” that the Roman Catholic Church faces (88). She clarifies how women’s ordination does not exist because of sexism, rather sexism is one of the many negative -ism’s the hierarchal system was formed and built upon (88). She argues, “The clerical system is fundamentally flawed insofar as it creates a power caste that makes decisions both practical and spiritual, privileging the clergy and oppressing the laity. New models of church, not

simply tweaking the notion of ordination, are needed” (89). The Women-Church addressed such issues by hosting conferences for lay people to attend and learn. The hope of these conferences and meetings was to prepare lay people to apply their lessons when they returned to their own ministries. At these gatherings there were women-led liturgies, discussion sessions in light of feministic values, and community fellowship. This is what Hunt calls “be Church” (89). This method encourages people not to just state their critiques on the “kyriarchal” Church but to continue to be a part of it through open dialogue as well as leading active ministries that address such problems. This pro-active attitude is what led the Women-Church to grow today. But it is also movements such as these that are very controversial and looked down upon by the authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

From this research, one can see the clear division of opinions in relation to women ordination. On one hand, there lays the law of the Roman Catholic Church and the sound truth in their authority. On the other hand lays the opinion and wishes of the people of the world, some Catholic, some not. In this chapter we saw that for the past half century there seemed to be a lack of middle ground between what the Magisterium taught and what a certain population of Catholics want. Although, current Pope Francis has and continues to address hierarchal and other social justice issues within the Roman Catholic Church, his papacy seems to almost buffer the fine lines between papal authority and normative laity, allowing there to be dialogue and opportunity for some sort of change. Such open dialogue may eventually lead more officials at the Vatican to become more open to calls of service, including ordination of women.

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Conclusion: A Personal Experience

The Roman Catholic Priesthood is a vocational call to serve God, the Roman Catholic Church, and the people of the world. Its description is more than a career, rather it is a total giving of one's life for the sake of the Gospel. It is playing part in a legacy and tradition that promotes and emits love, life, mercy, service, and justice. As mentioned in previous chapters, all human beings are made equal through Baptism. Since it is baptism that is the basis of Catholic identity, human elements such as gender, sex, etc. do not matter. Being baptized under one God, one faith, and one Church, is the where equality lays. If the priesthood is a vocation of service, not prestige, it should be open to both man and woman to discern a calling for it.

Although the authority of the Roman Catholic Church argues that Jesus' decision of an all-male priesthood is not a decision of prestige or discrimination, women are still left out of the picture. Women are told in the Church to know their role, but their roles are limited in that they do not match the same roles as men. Allowing only all-male ordination places a border between men and women, and in itself makes the role of priesthood inherently prestigious and exclusive. If a group of people are prevented from participating in a certain ritual or event, that is exclusivity. Also, if the priesthood is a mode of service, the opportunity to serve God should be limitless for all people.

During my junior year at Dominican, I took a course titled Theology of Women. Here we discussed the evolution of women's leadership beginning with the goddess tradition going through the development of Christianity. I remember watching *Pink*

Smoke over the Vatican, a documentary film by Jules Hart about the controversy of women being illegitimately ordained within the Roman Catholic Church. I saw women of the Bay Area wearing priest's vestments and consecrating the Eucharist and it was right in my backyard. As a young, practicing Catholic woman, I was fascinated and moved by such an image. I always participated more than the usual "Sunday-Catholic." While dedicating a large portion of my life to youth ministry, I felt a call to serve my Church through teaching religion. Although, I am open to discerning vowed religious life, I am still uncertain about this life-calling. Regardless, this vocational call is hand-chosen by God and whether not it has extended to the priesthood, it is where my passion and God's wish for me align. Therefore any sort of outward denial to fulfill a vocation is disheartening and limiting. As seen in groups from the Women-Church as well as the document *Pink Smoke over the Vatican*, the call for priesthood has been and is present in women today. Despite the voice of the papacy, women feel a call to the priesthood. Some answered this call and in doing so are excommunicated. Formally and legally they are no longer considered Roman Catholics, but their hearts read differently. If all women simply did not want to be priests, this would not be a problem. But certain women today continue to consider the call to priesthood and are not allowed to further this vocation without severe consequences.

The Church is about its people. Without the congregation, there would be no need of a priest. The Church is also a structure that upholds tradition *and* welcomes progress. Throughout the centuries, papacies continued ancient practices and with the help of councils and synods such practices and beliefs are able to be put in the context of the

modern world. The Roman Catholic Church has the ability to take traditional beliefs and practices and make it relevant to current times. Therefore, I believe the priesthood should alter itself for what the Church needs it in present time. But what does the Roman Catholic Church need? The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University created a database comprising statistics on Catholic data within the United States and around the world. From 1965 until 2013, the entire global statistics always show a larger amount of Religious sisters over a total number of priests. For example in 1970, there were 419,428 total priests are around the world. In the same year there were 1,004,304 religious sisters. As of 2013, there are 412, 236 priests and 721,935 religious sisters in the world. From these statistics we can see two things: first, the number of vowed religious people in the Roman Catholic Church continues to decrease; second, the amount of religious women in the Roman Catholic Church has always surpassed the number of priests. This shows that the Roman Catholic Church needs more priests and with the amount of religious women present in the world, they could be called to become priests.

By allowing ordination of women to the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, it opens this door of great opportunity for all. The voice of a woman can be more prominent in a male-emphasized society. The people of the Church can be better represented if both man and woman are allowed ordination to priesthoo. With both sexes participating, the service-leadership of the priesthood would have a better balance of both male and female input. It is a revolutionary step that can transform the Roman Catholic Church into a more inclusive faith, truly becoming more universal and relative for all

peoples. It is a platform for the Roman Catholic Church to promote a more holistic growth in their clerical structure as well as within their believers. It is upholding the tradition of Jesus Christ's love for all people and treating the marginalized with dignity and respect. There may be hardships and remaining inequalities, but saying yes to women's ordination will push the Roman Catholic Church forward in a direction that can allow the continuation of the Gospel to be spread to and through all people both male and female.

Work Cited

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