

Catholic church still steeped in tradition

By JOHN NEWLAND

To the vast majority of Catholics, even as recently as ten years ago, the bare idea of a woman priest would seem truly shocking. To a minority it would be an attack upon the institution of the Church itself. Although there is a more tolerant attitude towards the discussion of problems existing in the church today, through the influence of the Second Vatican Council, the mass of Catholics still seem indifferent, or dis-inclined to favour the concept of a priesthood composed of both men and women. It is the Protestant Churches which are making the first exploratory initiatives in this direction, while the Church of Rome lags on behind.

Perhaps the basic reason for the refusal, or inability, of Catholics to accept the concept of a priesthood staffed by women, lies in a fundamental misconception of the nature of the Church. For too long Catholics have looked upon their church as an institution, and no more. This meant that for all practical purposes, the entire emphasis concerning the nature of the Church was placed on the authority and leadership role of the church hierarchy. The Pope was the head of the Church, and decisions were handed down through the hierarchy of cardinals, archbishops and bishops to the parish priest. Although the last and lowest link in the chain, the parish priest retained considerable power in the eyes of his congregation, if only because he signified Rome to his people.

Traditionally, through the Middle Ages, this idea of the importance of the hierarchy was re-emphasized, indeed stamped, on the Catholic mind by the Council of Trent (The First Vatican Council) in the sixteenth century.

Called to meet the challenge of the new vibrant and expansive creed of Protestantism, the Council sought to strengthen the Catholic Church as a bulwark against Protestantism. It emphasized everything that the Protestants had rejected. Since the various national churches had rejected the supremacy of the Pope in breaking away, this was a major area to concentrate on.

Focusing on the power of the Papacy went hand in hand with stimulating the power of the Church hierarchy as a whole. This resulted in ordinary Catholics seeing power in the Church residing in the hierarchy, and so falsely equating the hierarchy with the idea of the Church itself.

The Council of Trent was the last general re-instatement of Catholic belief until the Second Vatican Council

in 1962. It can be appreciated that this attitude had plenty of time to become a part of Catholic tradition.

From the end of the Second World War there has been an increasing reluctance to accept this idea of the Church as being part of a divine grid which sucks in spiritual power from God, and then diffuses it to the mass of Catholics through the world-wide tendrils of the hierarchy. Such a system admits no possibility of change in any direction. It is eternally fixed in one particular form, irrespective of the changing conditions of the world in which it's supposed to operate.

With the coming of Vatican II, ideas concerning the nature of the Church were re-examined. The discussions and research coalesced in a new statement of the nature of the Church. A statement which got away from the false idea that it meant the religious hierarchy to one that defined the Church as being the living community of Catholic men and women.

This is not to say that the Church hierarchy never had any authority over the community of Catholics, it did, and still does. It only meant that the situation, especially the popular conception of the situation, got out of hand.

This understanding of the Church as a community of people, rather as a static institution, provides the tool through which it is possible to establish the equal right of women to the priesthood.

As the Church is composed of a community of living people then it will always be responsive to the cultural needs of the moment, simply because it's very being is made up of individuals who have been socialized in that culture and who also live and interact with other people in the self-same culture. Moreover, if this is true of the twentieth century, it must also follow, accepting the definition of the Church as a community, that it is also true of any other century and period, including the setting up of the early Church in the first century.

Why then, did Christ just choose male disciples to spread His teachings? The answer lies in the nature of the society in which Christ lived, and of the societies in which His disciples would have to operate. These societies were very much male dominated, in which women had a lower status and played an inferior role. Discriminatory by any standard of individuality, this is nevertheless how things actually were.

Therefore, in facing a male-dominated world, to be responsive to the cultural needs of this world, Christ could only effectively choose men as his disciples. It is this continuation of

male-domination within society that has caused the association of men with the priesthood. What is under discussion is a tradition with a long history of cultural conditioning behind it. There is no reason at all why this tradition should not be changed.

With the painfully slow re-discovery in the past few years of the essential humanity of women as individuals in their own right, the idea of women priests has taken on much more meaning - in theory.

For, it would be silly to do other than admit that many people, including "the Church" as so defined, are anywhere near abandoning the incredibly patronizing stereotype that typifies women as "the weaker sex". Until attitudes change the prospects in this most important field seem somewhat bleak.

The Church hierarchy is a further problem. Not only has Pope Paul come down officially against the idea of women priests but he is supported by a

much more conservative echelon of cardinals. Even in the very nature of institutions, which the Vatican most definitely is, there is an opposition to change built into the system.

So, the prospect for the ordination of women priests into the Catholic Church looks dim, at least in the immediate future. This is not meant to be a counsel of despair, merely the outlining of a situation, which can be changed. How is this to be achieved?

Simply by each and every person doing what they can with whatever abilities they have. After all if every person, man or woman, is a human individual in their own right, how could any more, or any less, be asked of them?

Books wanted for Vietnam

By TWEED

The Union of Vietnamese in Canada, with the help of Canadian friends, is organizing a campaign to collect scientific and technical books to be sent to Vietnam. Books on medicine, agriculture, engineering, the sciences, and related subjects are needed by the people of Vietnam to help in the reconstruction of their country.

The Vietnamese general election, held in the entire country last April 25, marked a new era in the effort to build a democratic, independent, peaceful, united and

prosperous land. Thirty years of devastation by war make this effort a monumental undertaking. Anyone who wishes to donate books may leave them at the office of Professor Passaris, room 219b, Tillev Hall.

Financial contributions for the purchase of books can be sent to: Mrs. Norah Toole, 824 George Street, Fredericton, N.B.

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Film

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A decade ago film were the only legitimate small university town showing sexually titillating (and therein lay one of the reasons for popularity of film). But today everything is everywhere, and our movie house can produce scatology as any other UNB Film Society in ship is keeping up the offering a flick bank provinces and maybe the New Brunswick only because the title the board was misread. Movie.

1974. Canada, France, Colour. 99 mins. Dusan Makavejev. Laure. The Film Society - 6th Head Hall, UNB. Sat 1976 [8:00 p.m.] Sun 1976 [6:30 p.m. and

Sweet Movie is bound most controversial film. The Film Society this people (mostly the love it, raving that making has arrived at Film Society graduated Age. Other people (old) will detest the film unbecoming passion, that film making has dogs, with no hope of and The UNB Film

G & S

By ROSEMARIE H

Memorial Hall took appearance on Thursday. That was the opening of Gilbert & Sullivan compiled, edited and written Mullyaly. The foyer of Hall was decorated with antiques donated and local antique dealer

Memorial Hall decorated as a cabaret with lamps adorning. There was a portrait of Victoria over the bunting of red, white