

- 1976 **Inter Insigniores**: "The Catholic Church has never felt that priestly or episcopal ordination can be validly conferred on women" (1)

This document was issued in the last two years of Paul VI's pontificate.

"The Church's tradition in the matter has thus been so firm in the course of the centuries that the Magisterium has not felt the need to intervene in order to formulate a principle which was not attacked, or to defend a law which was not challenged. But each time that this tradition had the occasion to manifest itself, it witnessed to the Church's desire to **conform to the model left her by the Lord**" (1).

"In the final analysis it is the Church through the voice of the Magisterium, that, in these various domains, decides **what can change and what must remain immutable**. When she judges she cannot accept certain changes, it is because she knows she is bound by Christ's manner of acting. Her attitude, despite appearances, is therefore not one of archaism but of fidelity: it can be truly understood only in this light. The Church makes pronouncements in virtue of the Lord's promise and the presence of the Holy Spirit, in order to proclaim better the mystery of Christ and to safeguard and manifest the whole of its rich content" (4).

"Women who express a desire for the ministerial priesthood are doubtless motivated by the desire to serve Christ and the Church. And it is not surprising that, at a time when they are becoming more aware of the discriminations to which they have been subjected, they should desire the ministerial priesthood itself. But it must not be forgotten that **the priesthood does not form part of the rights of the individual**, but stems from the economy of the mystery of Christ and the Church. The priestly office cannot become the goal of social advancement: no merely human progress of society or of the individual can of itself give access to it: it is of another order" (6).

- 1994 **Ordinatio Sacerdotalis** -- John Paul II, 1994

"Furthermore, the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, received neither the mission proper to the Apostles nor the ministerial priesthood clearly shows that the non-admission of women to priestly ordination **cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity**, nor can it be construed as discrimination against them. Rather, it is to be seen as **the faithful observance of a plan** to be ascribed to the wisdom of the Lord of the universe" (3).

"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.

"Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. *Lk* 22:32) **I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful**" (3).

- 1995 **Responsum ad Dubium Concerning the Teaching Contained in Ordinatio Sacerdotalis**

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict), speaking on behalf of John Paul II:

"This teaching requires **definitive assent**, since, founded on the written Word of God, and from the beginning constantly preserved and applied in the Tradition of the Church, **it has been set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium** (cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 25, 2). Thus, in the present circumstances, the Roman Pontiff, exercising his proper office of confirming the brethren (cf. *Lk* 22:32), has handed on this same teaching by a formal declaration, explicitly stating what is to be held always, everywhere, and by all, as belonging to the **deposit of the faith**."