

(Press Release Published
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Far-reaching changes in regard to the position of women in the Church who, as he says, "constitute half of the people of God", have been proposed to the Ecumenical Council by Archbishop Paul Hallinana, of Atlanta (USA) in an intervention he has submitted in writing to the Council general secretariat.

Archbishop Hallinana demands that the complementary role of woman as an equal partner of man be given proper recognition in the schema on the Church in the Modern World.

The Archbishop questions whether in this respect the Church "has given the leadership that Christ, by word and example, clearly showed he expected of her", and he adds:

"In proclaiming the equality of man and woman, the Church must act as well as speak by fraternal testimony, not only in abstract doctrine".

Therefore "every opportunity should be given women, both religious and lay, to offer their special talents to the service of the Church, and the role of 'auditrices' in the present Council must be only the beginning".

Specifically Archbishop Hallinan recommends that

- 1) in liturgical functions women should be permitted to act as lectors and acolytes (Mass servers);
- 2) women after proper study and formation be allowed to serve as deaconesses in proclaiming the Word of God and in providing those sacraments which deacons do, especially Solemn Baptism and the distribution of the Eucharist (Holy Communion);
- 3) women also be encouraged to become teachers and consultants in theology when they have attained competence in this field;
- 4) women be included in whatever instrumentality is established for the post-conciliar implementation of the lay apostolate;
- 5) women religious be fully represented and consulted, at least in all matters concerning their interests, in the Congregation for the Religious and in the Commission for the Revision of Canon Law.

In his intervention Archbishop Hallinan refers to a statement made on February 11, 1961 by Pope Paul VI when he was Archbishop of Milan, which reads: "Women must come closer to the altar, to souls and to the Church in order to gather together the people of God".

Archbishop Hallinan says that the "community between man and woman" which is mentioned in the schema on the Church in the Modern World should be "one of harmony, mutual respect, love and responsibility". Therefore, he goes on to say, "we must not continue to perpetuate the secondary place accorded to women in the Church of the 20th century; we must not continue to be latecomers in the social, political and economic development that has today reached climatic conditions".

In our society, the Archbishop explains, "women in many places and in many respects still bear the marks of inequality. This is evident in working conditions, wages and hours of work, in marriage and property laws. Above all it is present in that gradualism, bordering on inaction which limits their presence in the tremendous forces now working for universal education, for peace, for the rehabilitation of the deprived, the just and compassionate care of the young, the aged and the needy, the dispossessed and the victims of human injustice and weakness."

As for the Church, Archbishop Hallinan says, "her history, indeed has been a struggle to free women from the old place of inferiority. Her great women Saints, her dedicated Virgins, her defense of woman in the family, a few women theologians, but especially the unique honor given by her to God's only perfect creature, Mary Our Lady - all these are part of that history, but the Church has been slow in denouncing the degradation of women in slavery, and in claiming for them the right of suffrage and economic equality."

"Particularly, the Church has been slow to offer to women, in the selection of their vocation, any choice but that of mother or nun. In fact, among her Saints, there are only three groups: martyrs, virgins, and a vague, negative category called 'neither virgins, nor martyrs'".

Besides the recommendations already mentioned which he would like to see incorporated in number 55, chapter 4 of part one of the schema on the Church in the Modern World, Archbishop Hallinan also suggests in his intervention that in number 60 of the first chapter of part two be added that "Women who do not marry also promote these same excellent family values by witnessing in their own way, to the universal call to holiness; that in number 86 of chapter 4 of part two the reference to "the rights of the person in public life" be changed so as to read "the rights of men and women"; and that in number 95 of chapter 5 in part two the reference to "all members of the People of God" be changed likewise, so as to read "to men as well as women, each according to this or her distinct contribution".

It is pointed out in this connection that sixteen Council Fathers have so far made interventions in the Council demanding that a role of greater importance be granted to woman in the Church.

In the course of the second Council session Leo Cardinal Suenens, Archbishop of Mechelen - Brussels, first demanded that "in our age when woman almost travels to the moon", greater recognition be given to the importance of women in the Church.

He was followed by Bishop George Hakim, of Akka, Israel who pointed out that in the schema "De Ecclesia" nothing was being said about woman "as though she did not exist".

Other speakers discussing this same topic in the course of the third session were Bishop Gerard Coderre, of S. Jean de Quebec, Canada; Auxiliary Bishop Augustin Fretz, of Cologne, Germany; Auxiliary Bishop Santo Quadri, of Villanova, Italy; Bishop Joseph Malula, of Leopoldville, Congo; Bishop Bernard Yago, of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Afroca; Bishop Joseph Nkongolo, of Luebo, Congo; and Archbishop Joseph Urtasun, of Avignon, France.

Besides Archbishop Hallinan's whose was the first of an American bishop, there were written interventions regarding the position of woman in the Church by Michael Cardinal Browne, of the Roman Curia; Bishop Michel Vial, of Nevers, France; Archbishop Claude Dupuy, of Albi, France; Auxiliary Bishop Luigi Civaradi, of Tespia, Italy; Titular Archbishop Elie Zoghbi, of Egypt; and Auxiliary Bishop Ebert Bednorz, of Bulla Regia, Poland - in this order.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro