AMERICA
Consilium Versus Curia
By Donald W. Trautman | APRIL 14, 2008
A Challenging Reform
By Archbishop Piero Marini
Liturgical Press. 205p $15.95

Archbishop Piero Marini served as the leading liturgist of the Holy See for 25 years. As master of papal liturgical ceremonies and as secretary/confidant to Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, the chief architect of the liturgical reform that followed the Second Vatican Council, Marini now presents the inside story of the fierce struggle fought within the Vatican to implement the liturgical restoration overwhelmingly approved by the council fathers. Written with firsthand knowledge, A Challenging Reform details the Curia's opposition and its tactics to reverse the direction set by the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy."

Carefully documented, critically analyzed and candidly presented, Marini's book reflects a historical memory of the clashes and conflicts between the anti-reformists and reformists over the interpretation and implementation of the liturgy constitution. Edited by three well-known liturgical and linguistic scholars—Mark Francis, C.S.V., John Page and Keith Pecklers, S.J.—A Challenging Reform is the best single-volume overview of the beginning of the liturgical reform. The first six chapters are devoted to the formative period of the liturgical restoration. The seventh chapter examines the developments after this initial reform (1965-80). The appendix contains the text of seven pivotal documents that are valuable resources for understanding the context of the reform.

To assist in implementing the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," Pope Paul VI established a group known as the Consilium. It was international, competent, collegial and productive: it generated reformed liturgical texts. But the Consilium met immediate opposition from the Congregation for Rites. As Marini notes:

The Consilium and the Congregation for Rites championed two different perspectives. The Con-silium remained true to its mission in support of a liturgy open to renewal. The Congregation for Rites was still firmly anchored to a limited tradition since the Council of Trent and not in favor of the broad innovations desired by the Council.

The suspicion and stress encountered by the Consilium in interacting with the congregation point out a basic failure in ecclesiology that persists to this day: a collegial mindset versus a Curial mindset. This was clearly evident at the very beginning of the liturgical reform, when there was strong, strident curial opposition to the conciliar endorsement of the vernacular. The Congre-gation for Rites sought to limit its use and to deny bishops' conferences the right to approve vernacular texts. The congregation opposed the use of the vernacular for prefaces and eucharistic prayers. Only with the en-dorsement of Pope Paul VI did the views of the Consilium finally prevail.

The Consilium also experienced a frontal attack from the Curia, with the unprecedented public opposition of Cardinals Alfredo Ottaviani and Antonio Bacci. Their statements reveal the re-trenchments so embedded in the Curia of that time. Marini's book fosters in the reader a new esteem for the liturgical re-formers and their efforts to make the liturgy more res-ponsive to pastoral concerns and biblical sources. They paid a personal price for their efforts, but they gave new liturgical life to the universal church.

Archbishop Marini has rendered a great service to the contemporary church and succeeding generations by documenting so clearly the birth pains of the liturgical reform of Vatican II. He takes us behind the scenes, showing the role played by Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro and the Rev. (later Archbishop) Bugnini in fighting against efforts of the Congregation for Rites to derail the reform. For example, even though the council had restored concelebration in the Western church for wider use, the congregation was still restricting the number of concelebrants and insisting on the use of a metal straw, excluding drinking directly from the chalice.

Thanks to Marini's book, we now appreciate all the more something we often take for granted: the restoration of the vernacular, "noble simplicity" in the rites, concelebration and reformed liturgical books (Roman Missal, Roman Pontifical, Ceremonial of Bishops, Liturgy of the Hours). He gives us a deeper appreciation of the enormous work that led to "full, conscious and active participation"—the prayer of the faithful, the rediscovery of the priesthood of all the faithful, the Novus Ordo and the recognition of various liturgical ministries entrusted to the laity.

All this did not happen without painstaking research and scholarly study, much dialogue and debate, and always countless meetings. This rich liturgical legacy of Vatican II has nourished the church's worship for almost 40 years.

But are we seeing signs today of retrenchment, a return to a liturgical practice and piety from before Vatican II? Do we see signs of a preconciliar mentality, a Curial ecclesiology, influencing the liturgy? Are there parallels between the first days of the renewal and the present time? Marini's book is a wake-up call to contemporary Catholics to sustain the liturgical achievements of the Second Vatican Council so that the past does not repeat itself. Will we learn that lesson of history and imitate those who fought so tirelessly to preserve and hand on the principles of the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy"?

When the Curia attempted to limit the liturgical reform, there was decisive and strong reaction from episcopal conferences and national liturgical commissions, especially from the French. Analyzing this, Marini writes: "Even during this initial phase of reform, the liturgy was no longer an exclusive preserve of the Roman Curia but belonged to the Church." That remains the goal for the liturgy today. We are indebted to Archbishop Marini for his chronicle of the events that brought about what is perhaps the most fundamental liturgical reform in the history of the Western church.

The Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, bishop of Erie, Pa., is chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on the Liturgy.

Mystery or Mystification?
THE LIMITS OF LATIN IN THE LITURGY
Rev. Gerard S. Sloyan

Rev. Gerard S. Sloyan is a priest of the Diocese of Trenton and professor emeritus of Temple University. His recent publications include Preaching from the Lectionary: An Exegetical Commentary (Fortress) and Jesus: Word Made Flesh (Liturgical Press).

A couple of years ago I received two requests. The first: to preside at a Latin *novus ordo* Mass, the post-Vatican II rite in Latin. The second: to say a funeral Mass from the *Missale Romanum* of 1570. In the first case, the Latin language and the melodies were familiar enough, but the text in song, apart from the *Pater Noster* (in which the congregation did not participate) was not part of my experience. In the second case, it was 1949 when I had last presided in black vestments and proclaimed that doleful text, Dies Irae and all, at a funeral Mass. The *novus ordo* celebration required sight reading modern musical notation, not the square Gregorian notes on a four-line staff that I had been familiar with. But that was not a problem. What proved problematic was the syllabication of the sung preface canon (one prayer; interruption by the Sanctus only came later), and seeing to it that the words, familiar in English but not in Latin, fell on the proper notes without the neumes provided in plainchant. My chief impression that Sunday morning was that the congregation regularly in attendance did not engage in the full, active participation I was used to. They attended Holy Mass and gave my leadership in prayer their strict attention.

The second experience requires a brief explanation. A deacon friend in hospice ministry told me that a man he had assisted as death approached had expressed the wish to have his funeral Mass be the long familiar Requiem Mass of his youth. His wife was not enthusiastic, but she faithfully passed her husband's request on to the pastor. The latter was of an age to be familiar with the rite and the Latin language but declined the honor, asking the deacon to find another priest presider. He found me. On the morning of the funeral, I put in my coat pocket ad cautelam ("just in case") the *Missale Romanum* I had bought in 1938, just before beginning a six-year seminary course. Sure enough, the pastor, who was known to be a traditionalist, received me warmly and told me that a Latin altar missal was somewhere in the sacristy closets. But, after searching, he said he could not find it. My handsomely produced six-by-four-inch *Missale* (nineteenth edition, Regensburg, 1936) filled the breach adequately. As my eyes are the same age as my arterial system, I had to peer down at the text whose type grew smaller at arm's length. Holding it in my left hand throughout would have destroyed any sense of ritual.

Still, there was a much larger problem. Reading that long prayer of sacramental sacrifice and trying to communicate its content to the congregation, I could see that all I was

conveying was that this was, indeed, the text of the Mass. As I continued to proclaim that once-familiar canon facing them (in disregard of the rubric), I had the feeling I was somehow imposing on the hearers a display of my learning. This was a recital of a text that most of the worshipers had not previously been exposed to. Why now, some must have wondered, on the occasion of committing the body of a well-loved friend to the earth? Was there some new law about funeral liturgies they had not heard about? Most had been to many funeral Masses before. Why was this one in Latin and in a ritual celebration led by a priest no one in the parish knew?

I am guessing at the impression made on the people. I am sure of the one made on me. I was enunciating, in the people's hearing, words that kept them from comprehending the mystery of faith as human language attempts to express it. The church's Eucharistic prayer gives praise and thanks to God for reconciling a sinful world to the All Holy through the Son-become a human like us-in the power of the Holy Spirit. It asks, but is already assured, that the deceased will be raised up bodily with Christ on the last day. "If I do not know the speaker's language," St. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth on learning how much "speaking in a tongue" was being practiced, "his words will be gibberish to me and mine to him" (1 Cor 14:11). Paul did not suggest terminating public prayer in a non-language, saying that it might be good for the speaker but that it profited no one else. He granted that speaking in tongues could engage the spirit, but it left the mind barren. In contrast, the one who prayed in comprehensible speech did a service to the whole community.

My chief impression that day was that all sense of mystery was lost for the mourners. I speak of the mystery of faith. That mystery is not simply the change of foodstuffs into the sacramental body and blood of Christ but the preparation for the Communion rite that is the canon. "Take and eat," Jesus bids us, his disciples, speaking to us and not to the bread and wine. "This is my blood.... All of you drink from it." The mystery is the consuming of the body and blood of another in a personal union so intimate that there is nothing like it in the entire world. Worshipers of God need to hear this spelled out in their hearing, time and again, so that the awesomeness of the mystery may come home to them.

It is not clear what motivated Pope Benedict to say that celebration of the Holy Eucharist in the West in the *Missale Romanum* text of 1570 is permissible. It may be an enticement to Lefebvrists and other traditionalists in Europe to return to Catholic unity. More likely, it is part of his expressed desire to have a language in which large groups of people from all over the world, gathered as pilgrims in Rome or at a World Youth Day, may pray the Mass together. The Midnight Mass of Christmas, broadcast widely on television, is of course the Roman rite in the Latin of its origins. More basically, the pope is on record as wishing to keep that tongue alive to ensure retention of the theological heritage of the West. Easy communication among the world's bishops is perhaps a lesser, unspoken, hope. All admirable goals. May they be realized. But as to the ancient liturgical language of the West for a global church, as old Virgil said in another context, *Non tali auxilio*.

Why Not Ordain Women?
Scripture, History & Women's Ordination
Robert J. Egan
Commonweal

Why are women excluded from being deacons, presbyters, and bishops in the Catholic Church? Are the reasons given reasonable and convincing? What can be learned from the testimony of Scripture and tradition? And what can be learned from the experience of Christians in contemporary societies? These questions provide us with an illuminating example of the crisis of contemporary Catholicism.

"The meaning of Vatican II," Bernard Lonergan once remarked, "was the acknowledgment of history." Sometimes I think it was just this acknowledgment of history that so soon afterward provoked a screeching of the brakes in the church and a determined effort to go backward. For acknowledging history can be painful and confusing. It teaches us about the fictions of memory, the prevalence of legend, and the truth about diversity, conflict, change, and discontinuity. We have to learn how to live with the whole truth about our history, to face it and accept responsibility for it. Even making changes is not enough if we're still unable to acknowledge failings and experience repentance.

An issue like the exclusion of women from ordained ministry reminds us that the sense we make of anything-an event, a policy, an institutional arrangement-will be affected by our cultural context, by the shared meanings and values of the communities to which we belong. Many factors will shape the norms, implicit and explicit, for what seems plausible to us.

The possibility of ordaining women has not been much discussed in the church's history: briefly in the early centuries, and briefly again in the High Middle Ages, but not much at all in the past five hundred years. Nor was it raised or discussed at the Second Vatican Council. It was mostly just taken for granted that only men were suited for these important offices. But the second wave of the international women's movement, beginning in the early 1960s, brought this question to our attention in a new and more urgent way.

This movement initiated a compelling analysis of women's oppression by entrenched cultural systems. The response of most of the other Christian churches in the West was to acknowledge their own past bias and to welcome women into positions of public leadership and decision making. Many Catholics, once the issue had been raised, likewise became persuaded that including women in these offices today would be appropriate, desirable, and just. Theologians and Scripture scholars of stature, including Karl Rahner, had agreed.

In 1976, however, in the document Inter insigniores, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), with the approval of Pope Paul VI, said that women could not be ordained-that this exclusion of women was, in effect, out of our hands-part of the

unchangeable core of Catholic faith and practice. It was determined as such by Jesus himself, confirmed by an uninterrupted and universal tradition, taught by the worldwide episcopacy, and clarified and made more understandable by a theological reflection focused on the masculinity of Jesus, the nuptial relationship between Jesus and the church, and the need for anyone who represents Jesus in an ecclesial act-as presbyter or bishop is said to do when presiding at liturgies-to be male, to have a "natural resemblance" to Jesus, so as to be an image of Jesus more effectively and to symbolize more clearly "Jesus the Bridegroom."

Obviously there are many assumptions packed into this argument that require reflection and analysis. But setting aside considerations about natural resemblances and nuptial relationships, the key reason given for the exclusion of women from these offices was then, and has remained, Jesus' exclusive choice of men as members of "the Twelve."

The arguments of *Inter insigniores* were found unpersuasive by many theologians, church historians, Scripture scholars, and other Catholic intellectuals, as well as by many laymen and laywomen involved in the church's ministries. Finding its arguments unconvincing, many Catholics suspected that the reasons given for the practice were, consciously or unconsciously, rationalizations for maintaining the status quo.

Ten years after the election of John Paul II, there were further developments. In August 1988, the pope issued the apostolic letter, *Mulieris dignitatem* (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women); in December of that year, the apostolic exhortation, *Christifideles laici* (On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World); and in March 1992, the apostolic exhortation, *Pastores dabo vobis* (On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day). These complex documents set forth a detailed understanding of the differences between men and women and between clergy and laity from the pope's point of view.

Finally, in May 1994, John Paul II issued his brief apostolic letter, *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* (On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone). His argument followed closely the reasoning of *Inter insigniores*. But many Catholics remained unconvinced, even though John Paul had said further that this teaching was "definitive" and that he did not want Catholics discussing it publicly. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger-now Benedict XVI, but then prefect at the CDF-in the much remarked-on *Responsum ad dubium*, characterized this teaching as "infallible." Several other prominent theologians soon pointed out, however, that the responsum was the cardinal's own learned and important but fallible judgment.

Meanwhile the percentage of Catholics who favored the ordination of women was growing steadily. By 1998, in an extensive survey reported by Andrew Greeley, 65 percent of American Catholics believed that the pope should allow women to be ordained; compared, for example, with only 18 percent of Filipino Catholics, and 24 percent of Polish Catholics, but 58 percent of Italian Catholics, 67 percent of Irish Catholics, and 71 percent of both Spanish and German Catholics.

There has been no evidence of a reversal in this trend. People on both sides of the issue

probably feel that what needs to be said has already been said. Increasingly, in my experience, most Catholic undergraduate students find the exclusion of women strange and embarrassing.

And there, uneasily, the matter stands.

Now there is a book on the subject by Sara Butler titled The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church (Hillenbrand Books, $23, 132 pp.). Butler is a professor of dogmatic theology at St. Joseph's Seminary in New York. Her book is perhaps the fullest and fairest theological treatment we have from those who are opposed to women's ordination.

She sees the theologian's main responsibility, here, as it is described in the CDF document, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian (1990): to clearly and accurately present the official teaching of the church, to make an argument in defense of its cogency, and to respond to some objections raised against it. She does this carefully, in an irenic style, eschewing the sarcasm and ad hominem attacks one sometimes finds among conservative Catholic authors. She has not always agreed with the position she defends here, but has been persuaded over time that it deserves consent.

There is much that is helpful in the result. Butler places the postconciliar discussion in a longer history. She has a deep appreciation of John Paul II's own theological contributions, especially what he called the "Gospel innovation" that establishes the full equality of women and men. She calls attention to aspects of Vatican teaching that are sometimes overlooked in this continuing discussion.

Butler's basic argument rests on three distinctions, each of which she finds in her sources: between "fundamental reasons for" and "theological explanations of" the present practice, between "roles of public leadership in the church" and "the priesthood," and between "critical-historical method" and another way of interpreting Scripture that relies more on tradition and the contemporary magisterium.

First, Butler concedes that the main explanation given for the exclusion of women from ordained ministry throughout church history has been women's "natural inferiority to men" and their "subject condition in relation to men." She acknowledges, as has the Vatican, that this rationale can no longer be accepted. She sees these claims as "theological explanations" of the practice, however, not "the fundamental reason" for it, which she identifies as "the fact" of "Jesus' own way of acting" in choosing only men as members of the Twelve. This suggests that the traditional understanding of a practice may and sometimes must be challenged, while preserving the practice itself, the meaning of which may then need to be modified, or even replaced.

Second, Butler insists on making a distinction between "roles of public leadership in the church" and "the priesthood." For Butler the question of ordination does not pertain to roles of ecclesial leadership, as she argues it does in the Protestant churches. In Butler's view, ordination is essentially about "priesthood," and priesthood, as Butler understands

it, pertains mainly to rituals and sacraments. For several reasons, this is a controversial position, though for many Catholics it will sound unobjectionable. For Catholics, ordination is itself a sacrament, at least since the twelfth century, and through it the priest is said to become a kind of sacrament himself, a "representation" of Christ and his mission. In addition, the ordinary work of a priest includes important sacramental functions: he presides and preaches at liturgies, wedding ceremonies, and funerals; he baptizes, absolves from sin, and anoints the sick. For many Catholics these are the defining ministries of a priest.

This emphasis on rituals and sacraments carries forward the theological attitude of the Council of Trent. It permits Butler to deny the familiar accusation that women (and laymen) are barred from important roles of public leadership in the church. In fact, roughly 80 percent of those doing professional ministry in the American church today are laypersons, and more than three out of four of these are women. But this doesn't change the fact that women are barred-on the basis of their gender-from the most important roles of public leadership in the church, which remain: presbyter, pastor, bishop, curial official, and pope.

How should we understand these offices? Many scholars agree that Vatican II placed its strongest emphasis on a renewed understanding of bishops and of the laity. It was apparent in that situation that a new way of thinking about the priesthood was needed. The council fathers made an important decision in preferring the term "presbyter" to "priest" (sacerdos) in their documents, and in emphasizing both the ministry of the word and pastoral leadership in the community, rather than focusing primarily on the presiding role in ritual. But there were traces of tension and compromise in *Presbyterorum ordinis*, the conciliar document on the presbyterate, and many questions were left unanswered.

In the early 1970s, when the American bishops undertook their groundbreaking study of the Catholic presbyterate in the United States, the final reports were published in several volumes: a sociological study directed by Andrew Greeley, a psychological study directed by Eugene Kennedy and Victor Heckler, a historical study directed by John Tracy Ellis. There was also a theological study directed, first, by Bernard Cooke, and later by Carl Armbruster. The committee included Richard McBrien, Avery Dulles, Carl Peters, and several others. The final draft was signed by all the committee members and presented to the bishops. But surprisingly the document was never published or made public in any way. In the early 1970s, our bishops already felt that a broad consensus document written by several of our best theologians was too controversial to be published. An alarm should have sounded at that time.

The theology of the presbyter has had a stormy, if not much-noticed, history during the past thirty-five years. Does this move made by Butler, following the lead of several Vatican documents, to rebuild this theology primarily on the basis of "priesthood" really help us make fuller sense of this role, office, and ministry? I do not think it does. For Jesus and his contemporaries, after all, "priesthood" was something associated with sacrifice and service in the Jewish Temple. On this subject, Jesus said: "Go, and learn the meaning of the words: 'What I desire is mercy, not sacrifice'" (Mt 9:10-13; Hosea 6:6).

This Jewish priesthood was the prerogative of a particular clan among the Jewish people and it ceased to exist after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. Apart from that, the idea could only have brought to mind service in the temples of the pagan gods and goddesses-the priests of Isis, for example, or of the Great Mother cult in Rome.

There was no Christian "priesthood" in the early church. It made an entrance into Christian discourse only slowly and metaphorically in the second and third centuries as a way of thinking about elders and overseers. To make the category of "priesthood" the decisive one, then, separates us from the first three centuries of church history, as well as from the testimony of the New Testament.

Butler's argument requires that a clear, strong connection be made between the Twelve and these roles of presbyter and bishop. Did Jesus entrust to the Twelve "an office...of teaching, sanctifying, and governing"? Does ordination to the presbyterate "hand on" this office? The New Testament gives no clear evidence for such claims but suggests a much more varied and complicated situation.

The third distinction that seems fundamental for Butler is about the historical-critical study of early Christianity and the New Testament. At several points in the book, Butler complains that the historical-critical enterprise cannot establish what, for theology, is most crucial. Few would disagree with this-since the craft of history can deliver only probable judgments based on available evidence, whereas theology, on most accounts, arises only from within a context of communal religious faith and practice.

But the historical-critical method is not itself a theory about reading texts or studying the past, much less about the human relationship with God. It is merely a shorthand way of saying "following the highest standards of contemporary scholarship in making an informed, intelligent, and deliberate judgment about the historical accuracy of a description, narration, or account of past events." Critical history cannot deliver faith, but there is no alternative, fully responsible way of making a judgment about historicity-if that's what we're trying to do. Statements about "Jesus' way of acting" are either intended to be historical judgments or are simply a disguised way of making an argument from authority. If "Jesus' way of acting" anchors the whole argument about women's ordination, then it must be carried through to a plausible conclusion in historical terms.

Yes, Jesus apparently chose only men to constitute the Twelve. But the "sovereign freedom" of Jesus from his contemporaries' prejudices and prohibitions doesn't necessarily mean he was "free" to choose women as members of the Twelve "if he had wanted to," as Butler and her sources argue, any more than he was "free" to speak Chinese to his disciples "if he had wanted to." If one wishes to communicate with others, the interpretive competence of the others puts constraints on what one can do or say. It has to do not with social pressures but with the nature of communication.

The Twelve were called to travel with Jesus under uncertain conditions. Such travel was perilous and often punishing. In addition, the Twelve were symbolic of ancient patriarchal tribes that were to be made whole and gathered anew. Their function was to

give testimony-about what God was promising and doing in Jesus and his ministry-which in those days women were forbidden by law to do. These factors, considered in context, make the all-male constitution of the Twelve more intelligible. But granting that Jesus chose only men to constitute the Twelve, is there any evidence that he intended the Twelve to be a model for later ministries and leadership roles in the new communities?

We know that those called Apostles constituted a group larger than the Twelve. Paul and Barnabas are obvious examples, as were Andronicus and Junia, the latter a woman, whom Paul describes in Romans as "outstanding among the apostles" (16:7). How do we know from Jesus' way of acting that there was any relationship at all between "the Twelve" specifically and the "elders" (presbyteroi) and "overseers" (episkopoi) of early Christianity?

There are, in fact, at least six serious problems with the argument Sara Butler is defending here and, although she is aware of most of them, I think she never fully faces them or resolves them in a convincing manner.

The first has to do with the clear evidence of the New Testament that there was no single fixed order of ministry, governance, or organization within the earliest Christian communities, a situation that Butler barely alludes to. In fact, they had quite different structures and types of organization in different places. Today we might call them different types of "institutionalization."

Initially there was a wide variety of spiritual gifts, roles in the community, ministries, and other specialized forms of action, which were structured or unstructured, full-time or part-time, authorized or unauthorized, prompted by the Spirit or by practical needs and considerations. There is no indication, for example, that presiding at Eucharistic liturgies was a function of any kind of office in the earliest period. It was certainly not reserved for the Twelve.

As time went by, the governing function was in some places carried on by a circle of elders, and in other places by an individual overseer and several assistants (deacons)-neither arrangement invented by Christians, but borrowed from Jewish and Hellenistic practices-or by some combination of these two. The terminology was fluid and not everywhere consistent. The Christian community in Jerusalem was headed by James, "the brother of the Lord," and other elders, whereas the Christian community in Rome does not seem to have had a single leader or "overseer" ("bishop") until late in the second century.

In comparative historical perspectives, "circles of elders" and "overseers with assistants" are different ways of organizing leadership within communities. They are not cultic roles. The implications of these facts seem to be that Jesus gave no detailed instructions about the way the earliest communities should be organized or governed. If he had, why would his followers have ignored him? Ironically, he did give explicit instructions about the distinctive kind of leadership he envisioned: one that was to be free of domination, "lording it over others" (Mt 20:25-28), a teaching put into practice in the church, over

subsequent centuries, very imperfectly.

The second problem has to do with the specific meaning and role of the Twelve and their relationship to the broader category of apostles. There is some ambiguity about these categories in Butler's book and some official documents, which at times speak of the Twelve as though they were the only apostles, even though in other places they recognize that others were also called "apostles."

The Twelve, symbolizing the original twelve tribes of Israel, seem to have had a "founding" or "re-founding" significance reflected also in their eschatological importance as agents of a future judgment. They symbolized the restoration of Israel, its wholeness and renewal. They were called to follow Jesus from early in his ministry-they were his intimates, his "inner circle"-and they represented a new beginning for the Jewish people. They were, like Jesus, heralds of God's imminent reign. They were foundational not for a priestly elite but for the entire community of faith. Their mission was the messianic mission of the church itself.

The word "apostle" derives from a verb meaning "to send or appoint" and means "someone sent," "someone entrusted with a mission." The Christian idea of apostle seems not to have had a uniform meaning in the early Christian movement. In the earliest literature it seems to have referred to those who were witnesses to Jesus' Resurrection, those who encountered the risen Lord and were sent to bring word of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus to those who had not yet heard this news of him.

It seems likely that the Twelve were themselves not originally thought of as apostles. It is only in Luke/Acts that they become "the twelve apostles." Nor is it clear, as Butler too much takes for granted, that the Twelve had anything to do with ongoing instruction, or spiritual guidance, or governance in the early communities. So, third, there is the question of whether the Twelve should be understood as paradigmatic in regard to the evolving roles of "elders" and "overseers."

Is there a compelling reason to connect this group in any way with the categories of presbyter and episcopos? There does not seem to be. The Twelve were not thought to play a role that needed to be institutionalized and extended into the communities' ongoing histories. Except for Judas, they were not replaced after they died. Of course they were honored among the early Christians; and many remembered them as founders of their own communities and traditions. Yet Paul of Tarsus and James the Lord's brother seem to have been comparably important, and they too were called apostles, but they were not members of the Twelve.

Consequently, to many Catholics it seems far-fetched to insist that because no women were chosen to be among the Twelve, no women could later be chosen to be elders or overseers, especially when there is general agreement that women did play significant leadership roles in the early Christian communities, even to a surprising extent. That fairly quickly after the first generation only men were chosen for official leadership positions could, however, be explained easily enough in terms of those very stereotypes,

prohibitions, and cultural prejudices from which Jesus himself seems to have been so remarkably free.

The fourth problem is that to frame this discussion in terms of excluding women from "the priesthood" confuses the matter considerably. There is no talk about a Christian "priesthood" in the New Testament. Two texts are key: the Letter to the Hebrews, which says that Jesus, in his life, death, and Resurrection, summed up and transcended what priests everywhere had always been doing in the past, and did so once and for all, obviating any need for "a priesthood" in the future; and the First Letter of Peter, which says that all Christians together are "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Peter 2:9), obviating the need for any distinctive class of priests to perform a specialized mediating role among them.

Early Christianity had no priests. It can even be said, on the basis of these New Testament texts, that early Christianity did not understand itself to be the kind of religion that has or needs a priesthood. It was only in the second century that bishops, in reference to their role (by then) as chief presiders at the communities' Eucharistic liturgies, began to be likened to priests. Later, during the third century, presbyters too, as delegates of a bishop for presiding at liturgies, also began to be likened to priests.

Building a theology of the presbyterate and episcopate on the basis of "priesthood" tempts us to read back into New Testament times attitudes and ideas that developed only centuries later. It also resists the effort made at Vatican II to provide new foundations for a theology of the presbyterate that were exegetically, historically, theologically, and ecumenically sounder and more convincing than those we inherited from the Council of Trent. In addition, this approach leaves the newly reestablished diaconate, which is also entered through the sacrament of holy orders, a mysterious anomaly.

These sacerdotal metaphors were, of course, gradually but eventually understood literally, and with that came an emphasis on priestly "powers," rules of "cultic purity," and a mystique of difference and separateness. Many historians call this "resacralization." The gradual evolution of the offices of presbyter and bishop into a priesthood must have met important needs and expectations of the church during this period. It also had consequences that many Catholics today view as unfortunate, contributing to the separation of clergy and laity as distinct classes and reintroducing the notions of cultic purity and impurity that would have a profound impact on Christian attitudes toward sexuality and marriage.

There is no evidence in the New Testament that Jesus made any connection between the Twelve and any established offices or continuing roles of leadership in the local communities like elders or overseers. There is, for that matter, no evidence that Jesus himself explicitly intended or foresaw elders or overseers in the new communities. And there is certainly nothing in Jesus' way of acting or his teaching that suggests that he intended any of his followers to become priests. In regard to Sarah Butler's argument, one thing seems clear: If evidence of "Jesus' way of acting" were to be consistently normative, it's hard to see how we could justify having a priesthood at all.

This brings us to the fifth problem with Butler's presentation. In spite of the historical slant of her starting point, Butler's treatment of the central issues-of apostles, apostolic ministry, ordination, priesthood, sacraments, etc.-seems strangely but insistently ahistorical. A reader could come away with the impression that "ordination" to a "priesthood" was already a sacrament in the first century. Talking about things in this way creates a false impression about the evidence.

Perhaps that is the real knot of our problem today. The religious idea of tradition does not mean whatever our ancestors thought had happened in the past. The more rigorous study of history in the last two centuries has underscored how often our impressions of past events require correction. We no longer believe that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, or that Mary Magdalene was a reformed prostitute, or that the Gospels were all written by eyewitnesses, or that Constantine actually donated the middle part of Italy to the bishop of Rome. We think and converse, we study and learn, and we sometimes change our minds.

Similarly, the religious idea of tradition does not mean "whatever happened." All kinds of things have happened in church history-some fortunate and some unfortunate, some glorious and some infamous-including a great many sins, and sins are never indicative of God's will. They are not part of God's plan. We all believe that God is at work in our history, but not in a way that diminishes our freedom or manipulates our choices. The Christian God is not a puppeteer. We believe the Holy Spirit makes its presence felt in our tradition, but the Holy Spirit is always free to do a new thing in our midst. Unbroken continuity might mean fidelity to God's grace; or it might mean stubborn persistence in our refusal of grace. By itself it doesn't prove anything. The moral toleration of slavery was an unbroken and universal tradition in the church from the beginning at least until the nineteenth century, and arguably until Vatican II, but today it is understood to be an intrinsic evil.

The mere fact that the church has always, or almost always, up to a certain point, said or done something a certain way does not in itself preclude critical reflection, spiritual discernment, even radical change-or even reversal. This is apparently difficult for some Catholics to acknowledge or accept. But it isn't a theory. It is merely a fact of church history. There is nothing esoteric about it. A library card and an open mind are all that are needed to confirm it.

Butler does not clarify her understanding of tradition. Her use of the idea suggests an attitude that remains uncritical. Where there is no evidence to warrant a historical claim, she relies on later judgments of church authorities. If there were reason to believe the magisterium had never made a serious mistake, this attitude would be more understandable, though still not entirely defensible. Yet the magisterium justified the institution of slavery, tolerated and endorsed a harsh misogyny and the oppression of women by men, defended the use of torture, blessed the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the burning at the stake of heretics, cultivated a disdainful and punitive attitude toward the Jewish people, insisted that sexual intercourse was morally tolerable only for the sake of

procreation, condemned democracy, ridiculed the idea of religious liberty, denied the legitimacy of the idea of human rights, and condemned the separation of church and state. These last six teachings were only reversed at Vatican II, which some church leaders now claim was in perfect continuity with the church history preceding it.

All these teachings were probably "settled doctrine" and considered definitive by the authorities who promulgated them and wrote about them. That should teach us something about not trying to bind the future to the current stage of our own comprehension. Seeing theology itself simply as a defense of magisterial teaching would, in the eyes of most contemporary people, make it indistinguishable from ideology. The church risks setting a bad example, modeling a behavior which, in any other social body, would clearly be considered falsifying and corrupting.

So the "fundamental reason" for this exclusion of women turns out to be questionable from several vantage points. Reasonable people in good faith may remain unpersuaded. Seeing larger issues of justice and honesty involved, many may feel impelled by conscience to continue the public discussion.

What of those "theological arguments" that have been advanced? Do they help? I think they do not. In what sense do presbyters and bishops need to "resemble" Jesus? Jesus was Jewish; he spoke Aramaic; we think he died in his early thirties. Yet no one is suggesting that church officers should be Jewish, should be fluent in Aramaic, or should leave office when they reach the age of thirty-five. Is the gender of Jesus the one decisive factor in "resembling" him? Would a loving and caring woman represent Jesus less effectively than a man who was grouchy, evasive, and preoccupied with self? Might not the ability to love in a mature, wholehearted way be the single most important factor?

And why is there this need for a resemblance to Jesus? Is it mainly an issue in regard to presiding at the Eucharistic liturgy? We have no reason to believe that presiding at the liturgy was originally thought to require an appointment or an office at all. And the liturgy is an event of communal worship, of praise and thanksgiving, not a theatrical event. Besides this, most of the time during the liturgy as a whole, and most of the time even during the Eucharistic prayer, the presider speaks in the first-person plural on behalf of the gathered assembly. It is only during the presider's recitation of the institution narrative-and then only when the presider is quoting the words Jesus used at the Last Supper-that the impression might be given that the presider is acting "in the person of Christ."

More fundamentally, since it is the common testimony of the New Testament, but especially of the Pauline and Johannine traditions, that we live in Christ and Christ lives in us, it is not clear in what sense it is necessary or meaningful for some members of the church to "represent" Christ to the others. This misappropriation of the Jesus role by clergy seems to require deemphasizing the real presence of Jesus in the members of the congregation, which might be said to be at the very heart of the Eucharistic celebration.

I do not see how claiming that the clergy represent "Christ the Head" to the laity

coherently resolves this problem. When we read, “The mystery is this: Christ in you” (Col 1:26-27), surely it is the whole Christ that is meant. Furthermore, in the image of the Body of Christ (see Col 1:17-18), it is Christ himself who is said to be the head, not presbyters and bishops. And if acting in the person of the Bridegroom requires that someone literally be male, why is it apparently a matter of indifference that half of those who act in the person of the bride are also male? In half the cases this would look like same-sex marriage. By what logic of symbolic action could this be explained? The response to this question can only be: We should not take this metaphoric language quite so literally.

As I see it, judgments about women’s ordination, pro and con, are not based on theological explanations such as these, nor merely on exegesis and a particular understanding of ecclesial tradition, notwithstanding the great importance both the latter have. They are also based on a judgment about the significance, and moral and political seriousness, of the women’s movement conceived of as “a sign of the times”-a concrete historical movement for liberation from oppression and for women’s full equality with men in regard to basic human rights and social opportunities.

This is the sixth problem with Butler’s treatment of her subject. She makes only an occasional reference to the women’s movement, which remains peripheral to her theological approach, and most of her references are negative. But the movement is an extremely important part of the modern history of freedom, one that has decisively transformed the cultures of contemporary societies in such a way that we have become capable at last of recognizing the full equality of women with men.

This movement, which inspires so much loathing among some Catholics, is not merely some faddish element of the Zeitgeist. The women’s movement has its own proper theological significance and gravity. It has become apparent that the impetus for women’s equality and freedom, including its critique of patriarchy, its explorations of the complex interplay between power and knowledge, and its profound revision of our understanding of sexuality and gender, is advancing steadily. Not merely in Europe and North America, it is also found in Latin America, Africa, India, China, and all around the world, including among the traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

It is probably in Latin America, Africa, India, and China, and within the realms of Hinduism and Islam that moral and political significance has become most apparent and manifests its urgency most strongly. In his A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America (Simon & Schuster), Peter Steinfels compares the impact and importance of the struggle for women’s equality to the shift in human history from hunting and gathering to agriculture.

The emancipatory movement has in its essential purpose already been embraced by the church, despite a very long tradition of regarding women as inferior beings. But is it really possible to embrace this purpose of women’s full equality while entirely disregarding or dismissing the actually existing social movements to achieve it? Or while

disregarding these movements' way of interpreting our cultural history up to this point? Can we really plausibly deny the primary rationale of a customary practice such as the exclusively male priesthood, for example, and still so easily retain the practice unchanged-but with an alternative rationale?

When advocates of women's ordination speak of an injustice being institutionalized in the present structure of the church, they are not talking about the individual rights of women to gain power, rise in status, or secure benefits. They are talking about the influence of a vast cultural system-more than a billion people living today-that excludes women, entirely on the basis of their gender, from full participation in the life and mission of the community. There are obviously important roles of service, decision making, and leadership from which women as a class are entirely excluded. There is a sacrament from which women, because they are women, are also excluded. That exclusion teaches something and models something, whether we intend it to or not.

To question this exclusion does not require that we conclude all gender roles are inconsequential. Gender roles are different in different cultures and in different historical periods. To what extent they are socially constructed or are rooted in natural sex differences is difficult to determine. Through most of recorded history, in most cultures, women were subordinated to men; today we believe men and women are essentially equal. Throughout most of its history, the church reflected this subordinated view of women; now it does not.

The church cannot remain exempt from the principles of its own social teaching. Catholics cannot bear witness to principles of justice, equality, subsidiarity, and participation, and claim exceptions for themselves. The question is this: Has the tradition of excluding women from the diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopacy really been faithful to the teaching and practice of Jesus? Or has it been part of a mostly unexamined and partially unconscious bias for subjecting women to men's authority and power? Which is the more believable interpretation of our history as a people?

This is a very important question, one that urgently needs and deserves an open, prayerful, learned, patient, and discerning conversation among Catholics t**oday.**

And yet it does not happen. And so the crisis deepens.

Priest, presbyter, sacerdos
A "priest" is a type of religious specialist, a person associated primarily with cultic functions, having the authority or power to perform and administer religious rites, especially rites of sacrifice to a deity or deities. As such, priests are viewed as intermediaries between human beings and their god or gods. Their office may be called "the priesthood," a term which may also apply to such persons collectively. Such priests existed in ancient Israel and in ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman religions. There are analogous roles and functions in many other religious traditions. In Greek the word for "priest" is hiereus; in Latin, sacerdos.

In early Christianity, many types of religious specialization and leadership were recognized by the communities, including prophets, teachers, deacons, and apostles, as well as elders and overseers. In Greek the word for "elder" is presbuteros, from which Latin gets presbyter. In Greek the word for "overseer" was episkopos, from which Latin gets episcopus and English gets "bishop." Eventually the episcopus, the presbyter, and the deacon emerged as the principal offices of leadership in the Christian church.

None of these words or roles has any particular connection with cult or sacrifice, but in the second century, as the episcopus became the ordinary presider at the community's Eucharistic liturgy, he began to be likened to a sacerdos. Later, in the third century, as the presbyter became the delegate of the episcopus to preside at some Eucharistic liturgies, he too began to be likened to a sacerdos. Eventually the terms presbyter and sacerdos came to be used interchangeably to refer to an ordained Christian minister of a rank above deacon but below bishop. Ironically, the word "priest," which is the only word we have to translate sace**rdos or hiereus, is derived hist**orically from presbyter.

Church failed to adapt in new era
March 2, 2008
BY ANDREW GREELEY

Immigrant Catholicism flourished until 1965. The churches were filled with worshippers, the rectories were filled with priests, the schools were filled with students. Novitiates and seminaries were filled with vocations. New parishes, new schools and new high schools sprung up all around Cook and Lake counties.

New organizations like Cana and CFM provided outlets for the laity who were seeking to learn more about their faith and to live a more-dedicated life.

The controlling social structure -- routine behavior and motivation -- was a fear of mortal sin and resultant hellfire.

It had worked for a long time. No one thought it could stop working.

Now, a half century later, only older folk (like me) can remember those days with perhaps bitter and sometimes melancholy emotions.

Everything has changed. The churches are two-thirds empty on Sunday. There is, at most, one priest in the rectory. Schools and parishes have been closed, and few, if any, new ones have opened. Seminaries and scholasticates have emptied out. Cana and CFM are moribund.

The immigrant church should have segued to a post-immigrant era with some ease. It did not. On the contrary, it imploded, collapsed from the inside. Conservative Catholics blame the Vatican Council and would like to repeal it, as would many of the curial

cardinals who are more or less running the church. But you cannot repeal a council because fighting the Holy Spirit is even more difficult than fighting City Hall.

The Vatican Council changed the church. We had been taught that the church could not change, should not change and would not change. Then, it did change. Everything was now under question. Many of the structures of 19th century Catholicism collapsed, most notably the central role of hellfire and mortal sin to keep people in line. Many of the church's leaders thought the only way to end the chaos was to restore the old rules. But it was too late.

Many bishops, like all leaders at a critical time, did not do good but did the thing they do well: They made new rules and "reinstated" the old ones. They tried to restrict the sexual lives of the laity, just as they had protected the sexual lives of the abusive clergy.

A cardinal once said to me, "If only Cardinal Meyer had not died." He was right that Albert Meyer had the intelligence, the spiritual depth, the courage, the flexibility and the stubborness to have led the church in this country, and this city, through the crises. We did not see his like again. Laity and clergy decide for themselves what is morally wrong and what is not. Bishops insist on the rules, and no one listens. There does not seem in the short run any way out of the mess, though it is patent that rules and lists of sins will not do the trick.

There are good signs on the horizon, including the volunteer movement in which lay people practice the thesis that God is love. Another is that, while there are still many serious sins, you no longer fear the pains of hell if, for example, you take a sip of water before receiving the eucharist.

Another is the appearance of theologians like Robert Barron and David Tracy, who point in the direction of new structures which will replace those that collapsed.

Moreover, the enthusiasm of the young -- as manifested, for example, in the Peace Corps, TeachAmerica, Notre Dame's ACE (Alliance for Catholic Education), the Jesuit and Vincentian Volunteers -- is categorically different from the limited, cautious and fearful enthusiasm of the young in the old church. I admire the new identity the laity have fashioned for themselves. I am impressed by the community loyalty of the laity, almost half of whom (in my current research on the Archdiocese of Chicago) report that their five closest friends are Catholic.

So I rejoice in the long-term possibilities of a more flexible church and the stubborn fidelity of the laity who will not leave, nor will permit the leaders to drive them out.

From Telegraph.co.uk
May 22, 2008

One of the Catholic Church's most senior theologians, and former mentor to Pope Benedict XVI, has launched a stinging attack on the Vatican.
By Malcolm Moore

Father Hans Küng, 80, a Swiss priest and professor at Tübingen University said it was a "tragedy" for the Catholic Church that Rome had failed to follow the path of liberalisation set out by the Vatican II council in 1965.

In his autobiography, *My Fight for Freedom*, Fr Küng said he was responsible for Benedict XVI's appointment as a professor at Tübingen in 1966 when he was dean of the Catholic theology faculty. Unusually, Father Küng put forward no other candidates for the post.

"I called only the strongest colleague, not any mediocre ones. Mediocre professors appoint mediocre colleagues; strong professors call strong colleagues," he said, adding that their three-year relationship had been fruitful.

However, Fr Küng fell out with the Vatican and his former colleague in 1979 when he was stripped of the right to teach theology by Rome after criticising the doctrine of papal infallibility.

The bitter row continued after Benedict's election as pope in 2005, when Fr Küng said he was "bitterly disappointed". However, he was unexpectedly called to dinner with the pope shortly afterwards and the two men appeared to have reconciled, with Fr Küng publicly stating his hope in the new regime.

In an interview with *La Repubblica*, however, he said: "Rome continues to block every sort of renewal, and is blocking any ecumenical unification with the protestant and orthodox churches. This pope has made serious mistakes."

He softened his attack, however, by adding that he hoped Benedict would carry out "other courageous acts" to reverse the situation.

Catholic League Shenanigans
The Catholic League is not the "All Catholic" League. It is not official Catholicism: still less does it speak for each and every one of the nation's 60 million Catholics. As someone who once endeavored to work with the League, I was disappointed to learn that it is run out of a single office by a single ego. So, while I find newsworthy the recent exchanges between the League's president, Bill Donahue and Evangelical pastor, John Hagee, they don't amount to dogma.
Moreover, there are unanswered questions about the protest-apology sequence recently featured in the press. For one thing, Rev. Hagee has been repeating for two decades the stale rant that the Catholic Church is the "whore of Bablyon." Similarly, Hagee has

embraced the uncritical characterization of Pius XII as "Hitler's pope." *[Hagee's bigotry will receive a separate comment from Catholic America.]*

Why then did the Catholic League wait until February of 2008 to become angered by Hagee's career of bigotry over two decades? February was when the millionaire Reverend was invited to support Republican candidate, John McCain: but if the Arizona Senator's action caused the ruckus, why didn't the Catholic League denounce McCain or demand the candidate reject a bigot's support? Why surrender and give absolution so meekly -- especially when Hagee's two-page apology used the mealy-mouthed expression of regret for "any comments that Catholics have found hurtful," rather than the complete recantation called for?

Because Catholics who are committed to their religion would not sell out as easily as did the League, I think the whole episode smells of what my grammar-school Irish nuns called, "shenanigans" – and for political effects, not for defense of Catholicism.

Now, forgiveness is a virtue and I would not begrudge Mr. Donahue's low threshold for bigotry. What irks me, however, is his venomous and unyielding denunciation of Catholics who support Senator Obama for president. The Catholic League demanded the dissolving of Obama's Catholic support committee, accusing all of the members of disloyalty to the faith and labeling the actions of the Democratic Senator as "Hitlerian." In light of Donahue's meek passivity before the hateful career statements of a right-wing bigot, this is all too choleric bluster against fellow Catholics.

This contradictory behavior is explained by a glance at the League's criteria for Catholic politics: abortion, embryonic stem cell research and tax dollars to Catholic schools. Left out are major Catholic teachings like forgiveness of Third World debt and opposition by two popes to the Iraq invasion. (Please note that an unjust war is just as intrinsically evil as an abortion.) The League also ignores the American Catholic Bishops' support of universal health insurance, immigration reform that unifies families or repeal of the death penalty. Apparently, these major social justice teachings of the Church are not Catholic enough for the Catholic League.

Before anyone tries to make me choose between the Catholic League and the many others who don't agree with its politics, let me say that ALL varieties of Catholic politics deserve tolerance. Papal documents and the teachings of the U.S. Bishops recognize that no one party represents the Catholic Church. In political matters, therefore, Catholic voters are allowed to sort out the set of issues that they consider most in accord with the Gospel. It is a lot like an individual going to a cafeteria and choosing among the various dishes while watching dietary restrictions. Rather than condemn progressives or conservatives like the Catholic League for being "cafeteria Catholics," I praise both of them for demonstrating the freedom as citizens given to us by our Church. Now, if we could only keep the commandment to love one another....

http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/catholicamerica/

Legal Affairs

Chaplain Discusses 'Death House' Ministry

Fresh Air from WHYY, May 19, 2008 · Reverend Carroll Pickett was the death-house chaplain at the Walls prison unit in Huntsville, Texas for 13 years. During his tenure, he ministered to 95 inmates executed by lethal injection.
Because he was employed by the state, Pickett was unable to voice his disapproval of capitol punishment while performing his ministry. But he has become an opponent of the death penalty since leaving the prison system.
Pickett co-authored a memoir with Carlton Stowers, titled *Within These Walls*. He is now the subject of a new documentary, *At the Death House Door*.

Visit the National Public Radio "Fresh Air" Web site for the full story.

The Media Is the Message

In his first major appearance last week as the Vatican point-man on communication in the church, Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli warned against "fundamentalism" on the part of Catholic media:

> It is essential to be aware, the prelate added, that "our media is directed not just to Catholics, but to all men. They are not media for Catholics, but rather are the presence of a Catholic reality that is open to man, all men."
>
> He offered the example of Catholic newspapers or radio. "It is undeniable," Archbishop Celli said, "that they don't exist only for -- or are directed only to -- people who already belong to the Church, rather they should also give careful attention to what exists in the soul of man, in his heart, where sometimes there can be distance from God, or many times, a deep nostalgia for God."
>
> Our media, he summarized, "should search, and help in the search. Our media should not become, allow me to say it this way, instruments of a religious or cultural fundamentalism."
>
> Archbishop Celli contended that Catholic media should be at the service of the culture.
>
> He explained that media should know how to enter "in this search that man embarks upon every day […] as instruments of this 'diaconia' of the culture […] instruments that teach what it means to dialogue, to be men who respect others' positions, who know how to welcome, who know how to understand."
>
> "I emphasize it again," Archbishop Celli stated, "We are not seeking a religious fundamentalism, because sometimes this is the risk. And the Church itself is not that; it is not a 'tower of marble'" that proudly stands "in its possession of the truth, but rather a Church that knows how to welcome, understand, dialogue, respect."

...and in a recent column, Maryknoll Fr William Grimm, the editor of the Japanese Catholic weekly Katorikku Shimbun, sounds a call for "real journalism" in the church (tip to NewsHub):

> Some news sources such as the independent UCA News and Catholic News Service (owned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops but operating with editorial independence) hold to professional standards of timeliness, attribution, accuracy, balance and verification. There are also news "retailers" (newspapers, blogs, etc.) that hold themselves to the same standards.
>
> However, there has been a proliferation of Catholic "news sources" that do not follow those examples. Bias, distortion, refusal to cover the "bad news," lack of balance, deference to officials and failure to verify are common.
>
> Catholic media outlets with editorial freedom to accurately present the face of the Church to its audience rather than being mouthpieces for "Church authorities" -- Religious superiors, pastors, bishops, curial officials and popes -- are few. One diocesan newspaper I saw had 11 pictures of the bishop on its first nine pages. It was clearly not a paper that intended to present the life of the Church in all its variety.
>
> The chief news that Catholic media must convey is the life of the men and women who are the main body of the Church, the laity. Their story is the story of the Church in the world today, and is too seldom the focus of Church journalism....
>
> Why does it matter if the Church does not have a media voice like that which should prevail in the secular world?
>
> One reason is that if the Church is incapable or unwilling to report on its life and activities with transparency, others will step in. However, leaving honest reporting of the Church to outside media leaves us open to misunderstanding and even sensationalism. It is hard to refute charges of "cover-up" when, in fact, Catholic journalism either consciously or inadvertently fails to present a full picture of the Church, "warts and all."
>
> We need a trustworthy professional Catholic journalism in order to present the true face of the Church to the world and each other.
>
> Being trustworthy means having a commitment to the truth rather than to looking good. If Church media are seen as PR rather than journalism, others will not believe us when we actually have good news -- as well as the Good News -- to convey, nor will they look to us for information and insight.