

Jesus chose men only as his apostles?



A member of our team was at her book group meeting recently and the book up for discussion was the interesting book 'Conclave' by Robert Harris.

Though the book is fiction, some of the characters do bear striking resemblances to present day cardinals from the arch traditionalists to the more liberal. One of the issues appraised in the book is the role of women in the Church – the importance of women in the Gospels being downplayed today. The book, however, provides us with one powerful and very believable female character, a religious sister.

In the book group discussion the question of women's ordination came up and one of the group, a non Catholic, said that she didn't agree with women's ordination and said she commended the Catholic Church for holding out against it. Her main argument for this stance was that Jesus chose 12 men not women as his apostles. This particular reason comes up time and again. So it is worth revisiting the womenpriests website where the question of why women were not chosen as apostles is discussed in depth.

There are simple reasons to explain why Jesus did not include women among the original group of twelve apostles.

For instance, Jesus chose the number twelve to indicate that with this new group of 'patriarchs' God is starting the new Israel announced by the prophets. Men would fit more appropriately into this role since the original tribal leaders were all men.

Since this was the beginning of Jesus' ministry, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for him to break with the ancient Jewish tradition that ascribed all leadership functions to men.

Read more about this here.

Though a small group of women joined Jesus' travelling band later (Luke 8,1-3), in this initial stage it was not practical to mix men and



women. Available accommodation and social custom would have made this very difficult. Conclusion: **The absence of a woman among "The Twelve" does not have any lasting significance.**

<http://www.womenpriests.org/courses/inter/twelve.asp>

<http://www.womenpriests.org/debate-based-sacred-scripture/> and

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111A High Street,
Rickmansworth,
Herts WD3 1AN, UK
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111A High Street, Rickmansworth, Herts WD3 1AN, UK
t: 01923 779 446 e: housetop@btconnect.com w: [womencanbepriests.org](http://www.womencanbepriests.org)

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Doctor Maria Pilar Aquino, a Wijngaards Institute patron



María Pilar Aquino was born in Ixtlán del Río, Nayarit, México, on March 6, 1956, to a "campesina" (farm worker) family. The family later moved to San Luis Arizona.

Dr Aquino began her studies at the ITES, Theological Institute of Superior Studies of México City. Later she obtained a doctorate in theology at the Pontifical University of Salamanca, Spain. She is now Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at San Diego University, USA.

Her primary areas of teaching and research are liberation theologies, social ethics, and feminist theologies. Dr Aquino's research and scholarly works are influenced by concerns about the function of religions and theologies in society and human relationships, and about their implications for social justice and constructive change. This led her to become a member of the Society of Helpers, a religious congregation of Ignatian spirituality which aims to serve all who suffer, with a focus on the marginalized, and forgotten.

Aquino notes: "How are we Roman Catholic theologians expected to teach about the pertinence and validity of 'Catholic theology' when we are confronted on a daily basis with young students whose knowledge of the church has come through the news media speaking about the priests' sexual abuses, about unjust censorship against prominent Catholic theologians, about sexist Vatican policies and declarations, or about the abuses of power by the authoritarian Roman curia?"

Continued Aquino, "Each passing year it is becoming more and more difficult to teach 'Catholic theology' or 'Catholic social teaching,' I am faced with younger generations who have barely or never heard about the Second Vatican Council. **Contemporary youth increasingly finds it difficult to accept a Vatican-directed doctrinal content that is highly essentialist and speculative**" she said.

"Today, instead, the Roman Catholic Church is to me a site of struggle. This church will survive as a whole only if it has the vision and the strength to become a **discipleship of equals** as a whole. The major concern of the Roman Catholic church should not be that of exalting and glorifying any pope's figure, but that of radically transforming the structure of the papacy and the relationship of the Vatican State to the world. Only by doing that can the church demonstrate that it continues being faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Claire Daurelle



On our website www.women-priests.org we have several inspiring stories of women and their hopes and dreams of priesthood. One of these is Claire Daurelle.

As a teacher and catechist in the seventies in Lyon,

Claire asked her bishop for work and was offered a high school chaplaincy. A seminarian was also sent there to get experience prior to ordination. He initially assumed he could direct her, until she had to disabuse him of that idea.

"That made me realise all of a sudden that I needed to reflect in a serious manner on the notion of responsibility in the Church. I decided therefore not to be taken for granted or allow myself to be put down."

Hers was pioneering work for a woman in the church. She joined the National Committee of Chaplains in Public Education, a think tank for new pastoral ministries.

In 1986, just as she was feeling the need to diversify in her job, her bishop offered her a parish in a poor area on the outskirts of Lyon. There she worked for three years, while also continuing in her role as high school chaplain.

By 1987 she was considering ordination. Her bishop pointed out the obvious, while remaining supportive until he died seven years later.

Indeed, **in 1987 her bishop officially commissioned her to be responsible for the parish. Even more remarkably, he did so publicly**, both by writing her an official commissioning letter, and by a public liturgy repeated during all Masses on a Sunday. **During each Mass, the bishop handed Claire** - as well as the two priests who were appointed with her - **a copy of the Bible**, which they then carried around the

church **to signify that they were charged with proclaiming the Gospel**. She was *de facto* recognised on a par with the two priests.

One month later, her parish work expanded when one of the new priests fell ill with cancer. She refused to confine herself to just youth work unless her colleague took an equal part in it. She was put in charge of funerals and **everything else she shared with the parish priest apart from sole celebration of the sacraments**.

Initially, the bishop had balked at allowing her to preach. Her argument that she be allowed to do so bore fruit when he proclaimed publicly, "I send you for the ministry of the Word." In private the bishop explained to her: "It means **I authorise you to preach**." And she did so fortnightly for the next eight years.

The collaborative model between her and the parish priest inspiring other lay people to help in the parish. Once it had had four priests; it now had only one, and a woman who still longed for ordination. It was not easy. She held that every community had the right to ministerial service and that merging parishes, often under an ageing priest, defied logic while there were lay people capable of pastoral service. *"The response of a young woman may be interesting. 'When I heard you preach, it dawned on me for the first time I too can preach the Gospel.'"*

Experiencing lay ministry, and specifically women's preaching, opened the community's eyes and inspired people. By then, expressions such as "Mother Church" and addressing priests as "Father" had become anachronistic. They were all brothers and sisters. Claire's hope for the future of the Church was one led by the Spirit into new paths.

Claire died in November 1999.

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Why do gender issues matter?



"Fifty years later, it may be time to re-open the question" of the prohibition of "artificial contraceptives" -

Thus one of the last surviving Italian bishops who was present at Vatican II! Mons. Bettazzi, now 94, has just released an interview reported by Luciano Moia for the Italian newspaper Avvenire 30th October. In it he makes some unusually frank comments, among others:

1. It is time to re-examine the papal prohibition against contraception expressed in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*;
2. Paul VI decided to withdraw the topic of contraception from the debates of the council fathers during Vatican II likely because he was afraid the council would reach a conclusion he disagreed with;
3. Both the majority of the council fathers and the vast majority of the members of the Pontifical Commission on Birth Control (1963-66) were in favour of a more nuanced position on contraception than the rigid "no" that Paul VI eventually endorsed in *Humanae Vitae*;
4. It was incredible that in the years and decades after Vatican II, the implementation of that Council was left to the Curia, i.e. to the very people who had opposed the council before, during and after its existence.

Here are the most important excerpts:
"Why did Pope Paul VI stop the bishops gathered

for the Second Vatican Council from discussing contraception?

Perhaps he believed that, had he left the Council free to discuss that issue, he would not have agreed with its conclusions. Paul VI didn't deem it appropriate to modify the theology received [from his predecessors]. Now, fifty years later, it may be time to re-open the question.

"Paul VI knew that the majority both of the conciliar fathers, and of the experts of the Pontifical Commission on Birth Control, leaned towards a more nuanced opinion than the "no" which was eventually affirmed in *HV*. which is why he was opposed both by many theologians and by many episcopal conferences."

"The Church doesn't like leaps forward. Fifty years ago Paul VI convinced himself he could not abandon the received doctrinal strictness on everything that touched the issue of procreation. Maybe today the time has come to listen to John XXIII: it is not the gospel that changes, it is us who, with time, grow in our understanding of it."

"Brazilian bishop Helder Camara wrote in one of his books that he had urged Paul VI several times to establish a commission for the implementation of the Second Vatican council. Camara, just like many other bishops, was asking how on earth was it possible to leave the implementation of the Council to the very people who had been against having a council in the first place. Unfortunately yes that is what happened. Then the 1968 revolution happened, and the Church got even more scared. And the enemies of the Council got the upper hand. Not that there weren't post-conciliar exaggerations to be addressed. But instead of addressing them, we've frozen everything. We threw the baby away with the bathwater."

"For most women, whether and under what circumstances to bear a child is the most important economic decision of their lives. An unintended pregnancy is virtually certain to impose substantial, unplanned-for expenses and time demands on any family, and those demands fall disproportionately on women."