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## Group rallies for women's ordination

by Chris Guzman by Religion News Service



Women's ordination supporters gather outside Vatican Embassy in Washington, DC on March 25, 2009.

WASHINGTON -- Despite decades of fighting for women's ordination in the Roman Catholic Church, a Catholic women's advocacy group still hopes the Vatican will reverse its opposition to the inclusion of female clergy members.

"People have been fired who work at Catholic institutions because they even bring up the issue (of women's ordination)," said Aisha Taylor, executive director of the Women's Ordination Conference.

A small band of protestors organized by Taylor's group held a small vigil March 25 outside the Vatican embassy here to support the ordination of women as priests, deacons, and bishops.

The organization, which began in 1975, is trying to raise awareness around the prohibition against women priests. The Washington vigil was one of 12 held around the world in addition to regular weekly prayer services.

Leaders say their goal is to break the longstanding silence and fear around women's ordination that began

in 1994 when Pope John Paul II closed the topic's discussion by issuing an official decree.

"We're calling for the Vatican to open the discussion on women's ordination and to do what's necessary to create true equality for women in the church," said Taylor.

Church officials say they cannot ordain women as priests because Jesus chose only men as his apostles. Supporters, meanwhile, point to a 1976 decision by the Pontifical Biblical Commission that seemed to conclude there was no reason to prohibit women's ordination; conservatives say that's a misreading of the commission's findings.

"I hope that the Vatican just hears our call that women are hurting and that Jesus included women in his ministry years ago. It's time for the Vatican to follow Jesus' example," said Erin Saiz Hanna, assistant director of the Women's Ordination Conference.

Hanna said everyone is made in God's image and that it's unjust that women aren't included in leadership roles.

"I don't think it's sinful and I pray the pope doesn't think it's sinful," she said. "Women are answering their call to God, and not to the pope."

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