

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

December 8, 2009 at 4:12pm

Vatican stops women's ordinations in Catholic church

by Kim Cain by Religion News Service

MELBOURNE, Australia -- An Anglican ordination that was scheduled to be held in a Roman Catholic church in rural Australia was moved to a Protestant church because the Vatican refused to have women ordained in a Catholic building.

Catholic Bishop Joseph Grech of Sandhurst had given permission for the Anglican bishop of Bendigo, Andrew Curnow, to ordain seven candidates in St. Killian's Catholic Church on Nov. 29 after the local Anglican cathedral was closed for safety reasons.

But when it was discovered that four of the ordinands were women, Rome vetoed the local leadership, saying the ordinations could not take place within the Catholic building, even though it was an Anglican service.

Curnow told Ecumenical News International that he had been informed that the decision was entirely due to the presence of female ordinands. "It was felt that this would be sending the wrong signal regarding the ordination of women from a Catholic perspective," he said.

Instead, the ordinations were shifted to a local church of the Uniting Church in Australia, a Protestant denomination that has a history of ordaining women.

The decision to stop the ordinations in the Catholic church building was handed down through the office of the apostolic nuncio, or Vatican ambassador, to Australia, Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto.

"After much discussion with Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto and the Vatican, the ramifications were investigated," Grech told the Bendigo Advertiser. "The Catholic Church's doctrine on the ordination of deacons and priests is well known.

"There were certain issues within the doctrine that created problems. It's the best thing for both churches."

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