

Pope has 'no authority' to ordain women

Rita Fitch Catholic News Service | Dec. 1, 2010

VATICAN CITY -- In his latest book, Pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed that the church has "no authority" to ordain women as priests and rejected the idea that the rule was formed only because the church originated in a patriarchal society.

The pope said that man did not produce the form of the church, and does not have the power to change it. Christ gave the form of the priesthood when he chose his male Apostles, he said in the book-interview, "Light of the World: The Pope, the Church and the Signs of the Times."

"The church has 'no authority' to ordain women. The point is not that we are saying we don't want to, but that we can't," he said. This requires obedience by Catholics today, he added.

"This obedience may be arduous in today's situation, but it is important precisely for the church to show that we are not a regime based on arbitrary rule. We cannot do what we want," the pope said.

In the book, the pope responded to the argument that ordination was restricted to men only because priestesses would have been unthinkable 2,000 years ago.

"That is nonsense, since the world was full of priestesses at the time," the pope answered. "All religions had their priestesses, and the astonishing thing was actually that they were absent from the community of Jesus Christ."

The pope said there can be no question of discrimination in the church because women perform so many meaningful functions.

"Women have so eminent a significance that in many respects they shape the image of the church more than men do," he said, noting famous religious figures such as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta.

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