

AFFIRMATION FOR CATHOLIC WOMEN

By signing this affirmation women pledge their loyalty to the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Because of the assaults against the Christian faith and the family by elements within contemporary society, which have led to pervasive moral confusion, to damage and destruction of families and to the men, women and children who comprise them;

Because we adhere to the Catholic Christian faith as expressed in Holy Scripture, the Nicene, Apostolic and Athanasian Creeds, in the early ecumenical Councils of the Church, and in the continued deepening of the understanding of the revelations of Sacred Truth to the Church by the Holy Spirit through the teaching authority of the Church and of the Successors of Peter, Apostle;

Because we wish to affirm our desire to realize our vocations and our duty as Christians and as women in accordance with these authentic teachings, following the example and instruction of Our Savior Jesus Christ, and the example of Mary, His mother;

Because we are cognizant of our obligations as Christian women to witness to our faith, being mindful that this witness is important to the formation of the moral conscience of our families and of humanity, we wish to make this affirmation:

1. We believe that through God's grace our female nature affords us distinct physical and spiritual capabilities with which to participate in the Divine Plan for creation. Specifically, our natural function of childbearing endows us with the spiritual capacity for nurture, instruction, compassion and selflessness, which qualities are necessary to the establishment of families, the basic and divinely ordained unit of society, and to the establishment of a Christian social order.

2. We believe that to attempt to subvert or deny our distinct nature and role as women subverts and denies God's plan for humanity, and leads to both personal disintegration and ultimately to the disintegration of society. Accordingly, we reject all ideologies that seek to eradicate the natural and essential distinction between the sexes, which debase and devalue womanhood, family life and the nurturing role of women in society.

3. We affirm the intrinsic sacredness of all human life, and we reject the notion that abortion, the deliberate killing of unborn children, is the "right" of any human being, male or female, or of any government. Such a distorted and corrosive notion of individual freedom is, in fact, inimical to authentic Christianity and to the establishment and maintenance of a just social order.

4. We accept and affirm the teaching of the Catholic Church on all matters dealing with human reproduction, marriage, family life and roles for men and women in the Church and in society.

5. We therefore also reject as an aberrant innovation peculiar to our times and our society the notion that priesthood is the "right" of any human being, male or female. Furthermore, we recognize that the specific role of ordained priesthood is intrinsically connected with and representative of the begetting creativity of God in which only human males can participate. Human females, who by nature share in the creativity of God by their capacity to bring forth new life, and, reflective of this essential distinction, have a different and distinct role within the Church and in society from that accorded to men, can no more be priests than men can be mothers.

6. We recognize and affirm the vocations of women who subordinate their human role of motherhood and family life in order to consecrate their lives to the service of God, His Church and humanity. Such women's authentic response of consecrated service to the physical, spiritual and/or intellectual needs of the community in no way diminishes or compromises their essential female nature, or the exercise of inherent attributes, insights and gifts peculiar to women. Rather, it extends the applications of these gifts beyond the individual human family.

7. We stand with the Second Vatican Council, which took for granted the distinct roles for men and women in the family and in society and affirmed that Christian education must impart knowledge of this distinction: "In the entire educational program [Catholic school teachers] should, together with the parents, make full allowance for the difference of sex and for the particular role which Providence has appointed to each sex in the family and in society" (*Gravissimum educationis*, Declaration on Christian Education, Sec. 8, paragraph 3).

8. We pledge our wholehearted support to the teachings of the Church concerning all aspects of family life and roles for men and women in the Church and in society, especially as contained in Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*; and we resolve to apply the principles contained therein to our own lives, our families and our communities, God being our aid.

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