

## **An Open Letter to His Holiness, Pope Francis:**

We write this with the utmost respect and reverence for you and your office as head of the Roman Catholic Church.

To be sure your candid remarks during your impromptu interview on the plane coming back from World Youth Day, concerning the respect for and non-judgment of gay priests are to be applauded. "Who am I to judge them if they're seeking the Lord in good faith?" you asked. And you are right. We are told by Jesus himself not to judge lest we ourselves be judged. Yet you still continue to pass judgment on women. (You may be loath to admit it but it is judgment nonetheless.) You may have called for a deeper "theology of women" (Are you totally dismissing and ignoring all the work of feminist theologians since Vatican II?) but you still wholeheartedly support John Paul II who "definitively ... closed the door" to women priests.

History has proven many the judgments of your predecessors to be highly fallible. Take Galileo for example, or Joan of Arc, or the Inquisition, or the Crusades... The pontiffs have told us that Jesus chose only male disciples. The gospels actually tell us there were seventy-two disciples. Many of them were undoubtedly women. Who are Mary Magdalene, and Martha and Mary of the gospels if not followers of our Savior?

You have the greatest love for Holy Mother Mary who you say is "greater than the Apostles." Did not God "choose" Mary, a woman, to bring God's Son into the world, and in so doing collaborate in the Incarnation? The two foremost mysteries of our faith are the Incarnation and the Resurrection. ONLY women were personally and primarily involved in both of them.

If you want to refer to the twelve Apostles to have us concentrate on men "only," then "only" fishermen, farmers, tax collectors, tent-makers and Jewish zealots should be permitted to become Catholic priests. We should not be concerned with the restrictions of "only": We should be about inclusion not exclusion. To be a 'follower' or 'messenger' does not depend upon anatomy. It depends upon being called by the Holy Spirit whom Jesus said He would send.

John Paul II in his May 31, 1989 GA address quoted from the Old Testament to show that the Holy Spirit is not limited to males only but is poured out on sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants.: In speaking of the promise of the Father, Jesus indicates the coming of the Holy Spirit, already foretold in the Old Testament. We read in the book of the prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit" (Joel 3:1-2).

Let us return to Martha and Mary. Martha complained to Jesus that Mary should confine herself to domestic chores (in other words, "women's work"). Jesus told Martha in no uncertain terms that by concerning herself with the words and mission of Jesus, "Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her." In love and in sincerest honor, our hearts and souls and spirits cry out, Holy Father: Who are you to take it from her... and us?

Sincerely in Christ,  
Catholic Woman and Men Who Seek Equality and Justice in the Church