

ABC NEWS REPORTS WOMEN “PRIESTS”

A report on the June 19 “World News Tonight” led viewers to think that eight women are about to be ordained as Catholic priests in the U.S.

The story covered the election of the first female presiding bishop in the Episcopal Church. Then came the following: “Most evangelical denominations and the Catholic Church steadfastly refuse to ordain women. However, that is changing. In late July, Joan Clark Hauk [sic], a grandmother from Pennsylvania, will be ordained as a Catholic priest, along with seven other women. It will be the first ceremony of its kind in this country, but one the Vatican will not condone.”

Bill Donohue immediately issued a news release and wrote a letter of protest to David Westin, president of ABC News. Below is an excerpt from our release:

“Some at ABC News are obviously hyperventilating over the election of the first female presiding bishop in the Episcopal Church, and that no doubt led them to package this story with a bogus account about women being ordained as Catholic priests. Joan Clark Houk, and seven other women, will hold an ‘ordination’ ceremony on a boat in Pittsburgh on July 31, but no one save mad feminists will give it any credence. Indeed, this happens every day in the asylum: some actually think they’re the pope.

“ABC News also errs in thinking that this make-believe game has never been played before. In 1981, AP picked up on a story by the National Catholic Reporter which said a woman ‘has been ordained and has been performing the duties of a priest for the past year.’ In 1996, Catholic World Report ran a story on a meeting of the Women’s Ordination Conference (which supports

next month's game) wherein four women dressed as Catholic bishops and then 'solemnly blessed the audience as they made their way to a stage that was filled with dancing women.' And just last month, Victoria Rue, wearing a white robe, appeared before a crowd in San Jose and declared, 'I am a Roman Catholic woman priest.'"

On June 21, Donohue received a letter from Greg Macek, associate director of news practices at ABC News. His letter, while respectful, was not satisfactory: he disputed our account, saying he didn't think the story was skewed. While Donohue was not persuaded by Macek's reasoning, he believes that if ABC News covers this story on July 31 when the "ordinations" take place, they won't make the same mistake.