

# WOMEN'S ORDINATION AND THE MEDIA

For three consecutive days in July, the high-profile media outlets of the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine showed their collective brazenness by bashing the Catholic Church on its policy regarding women's ordination.

On July 17, the Church was the subject of a critical editorial in the *Times*, the following day, columnist Maureen Dowd joined in on the attack. Both pieces were in response to the new set of norms that the Vatican released that touched on, among other things, priestly sexual abuse and the ordination of women. Although the norms were divided into 31 articles, both the *Times* and Dowd focused on these two issues.

They need to get a few things straight: the issue of women's ordination in the Catholic Church should be treated the same way that the *Times* treats the Orthodox Jewish strictures against eating pork and the Muslim practice of barring sex during the day while Ramadan is being observed—with silence. The *Times* never criticizes Orthodox Jews and Muslims for segregating the sexes in many settings, so why not stop bashing Catholicism's proscription of women clergy?

By contrast, it is perfectly acceptable to take issue with any religion's positions on public policy matters, but the house rules of all religions need to be respected (save for those few instances where innocent life may be threatened). Not to do so is to show contempt for diversity. And that is exactly what the *Times* did: it used its secular yardstick to measure the doctrinal prerogatives of the Church.

After two days of the *Times*' unfair criticisms, an article by Tim Padgett appeared on the website of *Time* magazine. Padgett declared himself Catholic, but upon further reading, one would

wonder why he would belong to a voluntary organization that he described as having a “malicious” and “misogynous declaration” that is evidence of its “increasingly spiteful rhetoric of bigotry”? Why would he want to stay in a Church that is “represented by a bunch of homophobes wearing miters”? Is he a phony or a masochist? Either way, he was surely not being intellectually honest with himself.

When asked about the Padgett article, Bill Donohue responded: “Today’s Catholic dissidents resort to bombast and vitriol, using a sledgehammer to get their point across. And they wonder why no one is listening.”

It was evident that most of the media wasn’t listening—or paying attention—to a story that the Associated Press ran about a German female bishop, Maria Jepsen, who was forced to resign amidst accusations that she was involved in a cover-up of a Protestant priest who reportedly abused as many as 20 children in the 1980s. She initially said that she became aware of these cases in March of this year, but then it was disclosed by the German magazine *Der Spiegel* that she knew of them in 1999.

Maria Jepsen is not just any Lutheran cleric: in 1992, she became the world’s first female Protestant bishop. The real story here, however, was not Jepsen—but it was the media blackout of this story.

We tracked this story for over a week to see how many newspapers picked up the AP article; the grand total was nine. By the way, of those articles, the longest piece was 211 words. The *New York Times*, which is obsessed with priestly sexual abuse in the Church, wouldn’t touch this story.

Why the media blackout? First, the media have no interest in discrediting mainline Protestant clerics, most of whom share elite secular opinions on matters sexual: the mainline religions are champions of abortion rights and are not known

to fight gay marriage. Second, the cultural elites like to blame men for sexual abuse; women, we are told, would never act the way male clerics do.