

## Deacon Michael McElwee

### Religious Perspectives – Roman Catholicism

#### Despite modern changes, why is there inequality when it comes to women in the Catholic Church?

“I just want to address initially the whole thing, maybe some reference back to the middle ages. There was a cultural thing. Well basically, in the first ten centuries, eleven centuries, Christendom was united. And then in the 11<sup>th</sup> century there was a major split between east and west. And basically that followed the lines of the Roman Empire. The Eastern Roman Empire became what’s now referred to as Christian Orthodox and the Western Roman Empire is what we refer to as Roman Catholicism. Later in the west there was another split with the protestant reformation and that would have been another five hundred years later. So, it was all of Christianity basically. And, it was the same in the east and the west.

The idea of temporal power and religious power was very intermixed and sometimes the Pope had temporal power as well as religious power. And so that was part of the history and the culture of the time. Today our teaching is there is an equality among all people. God created all, equal. But god did create male, female. Not the same but equal. So there are roles in our tradition for example roles in ministry. Like the role of father is performed by men. We have a lot of sisters, religious sisters and all who perform wonderful full-time ministries. There’s an equality but it’s not sameness. And there is a difference in what people are called to. And it is also, since we’re in so many cultures, where certain leadership roles for women are accepted in our culture and some of the other nations and cultures, it’s not the same. So, as I said earlier. We can’t just make a change based on what one country’s needs are, we sort of have to move together globally. And I think that movement’s coming.

“I’ve been working full time for the Catholic Church for 35 years and most of the people I’ve worked with in full-time ministry are women. And not just women, religious sisters, but lay women who really do the bulk of the ministry in our church. So, I don’t know if that helps or not.”

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