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Women Priests & Church Growth

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

My colleague, Maureen Fiedler, has a post up at NCRToday on CNN's recent coverage of the women priest movement. There she writes that "Denominations that refuse to treat women with equality will find it very hard to grow in the 21st century."

I confess I see no evidence for the linkage between church growth and the treatment of women. If anything, the contrary holds. The churches that are growing are in the global South, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and these churches have shown themselves to be very culturally conservative on gender issues. Conversely, the mainline Protestant churches of the West that have embraced women's ordination have shown declining numbers for years. I do not think the one causes the other but wishing it were otherwise does not make it so.

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