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Indianapolis bishop decries 'attempted ordination' of former nun as priest

by Catholic News Service

INDIANAPOLIS -- The apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis spoke out against the "attempted ordination" of a former nun to the priesthood.

"I am saddened that the woman who attempted ordination and anyone who took part in this invalid ceremony have chosen to take such a public action to separate themselves from the church," said a statement Tuesday by Auxiliary Bishop Christopher J. Coyne of Indianapolis, who is overseeing the archdiocese until a successor is named for recently retired Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein.

The Catholic church frequently uses the term "attempted ordination" since it does not view the ordination of woman as neither valid nor licit.

The ceremony for Maria McClain took place Sunday in Indianapolis with a woman bishop from the group Roman Catholic Womenpriests presiding. Coyne called it "a schismatic group."

"This group has no valid connection to the Roman Catholic Church or the Archdiocese of Indianapolis," he added. "Any supposed 'ordination' this group performed has no relationship with the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church and is not valid."

McClain, 71, was a Mercy sister in Buffalo, N.Y., for 15 years before leaving religious life, according to the *Indianapolis Star* daily newspaper. Now married, she moved to Indianapolis in 1977 to become director of religious education at St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis.

At his Holy Thursday chism Mass at the Vatican, Pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed the church's ban on women priests, asking: "Is disobedience a path of renewal for the church?"

"The ordination of men to the priesthood is not merely a matter of practice or discipline with the Catholic Church, but rather, it is part of the deposit of faith handed down by Christ through his apostles," Coyne said. "The Catholic Church has always followed Jesus' example and does not believe it has the authority to change what Jesus instituted."

Greg Otolski, a spokesman for the archdiocese, echoed Coyne's statement. He told Indianapolis television station WTHR: "He (Jesus) only chose 12 men, 12 apostles, all men. He did not choose women, and that's an unalterable part of the faith."

"According to the Roman Catholic Church, we excommunicate ourselves through ordination," McClain told the *Indianapolis Star*, saying she chose to disobey what she termed "an unjust law" in order "to change the church."

"I am sorry they have chosen this path. It is clear that they believe they are doing the right thing," Coyne said. "I wish them all the best but hope they will decide to return to the church's communion."

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