

Beyond Stereotypes: Women As Full Participants As Leaders In Faith Communities

I have always had a deep appreciation and respect for women in ministry and this webinar really explained their struggles. The women on the panel came from diverse religious backgrounds but they had so much in common when it comes to the way they have been treated in ministry.

Rev. Jane, a Bishop in the Roman Catholic Church, explained that this is not usual in the Roman Catholic Church. The rules are made by men for men and the women's roles are defined for them by men. Any Priest who publicly aligned themselves with a woman who sought to become a Bishop would be threatened with excommunication because of their support for the women's ordination. Her belief is that God is not gendered but spiritual and that Christ is all one being and women can fully represent God and can serve women better in some situations. She was ordained at the age of 70.

Pastor Julie from a Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. spoke about the gender bias she received as she was assigned to various churches. There were protests against women preachers and she showed an example of a sign that was outside her church that said "Calvary Baptist has sinned by letting Jezebel lead the church". Clearly not believing that a woman could be called to lead just as a man could.

The Rev. Dr. TaNikka Sheperd Pastor of The Fountain in Miami Gardens, Florida presentation really left me with a clear impression of what it is like to be a woman in ministry. She said that she grew up feeling that God desired women to be Pastors but her life experiences showed her that some people did not want women to be Pastors. She was educated, ordained and often the best candidate but was never offered a church and as she developed further in ministry she began to experience the limitations and constraints that women in ministry experience. And often women are the greatest opposition and show the most resistance to other women. She said that "Males often have higher exultation with low expectation" as soon as they walk into the church. Meaning if a man does not do a great sermon he just had a bad day. On the other hand, "women have a high expectation and low exultation". Meaning if she preaches a bad sermon she's just a bad preacher. There should be equality but so much more is expected from women which often leads to burnout as she tries to prove herself to her congregations.

I truly enjoyed what each of these women in ministry shared with us because the struggle for equality for women is in all workplaces and we should not expect that in God's house..

Respectfully Submitted,

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