



# New Women New Church

Vol. 31, No. 3  
\$2.00

Summer 2008

A Voice for Women in the Catholic Church

## Two Priests, Two Prophetic Stands Bring Women's Ordination to a New Level

By Gerry Rauch

The ordination on August 9, 2008 of Janice Sevre-Duszynska by Bishop Dana Reynolds of the Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP) movement filled me with great anticipation. Though I have been to many women's ordinations by now (there are more than 50 ordained Catholic women in the U.S.), this was the first RCWP ordination in the U.S. that included the public support and participation of a Roman Catholic male priest in good standing. I am speaking of Fr. Roy Bourgeois, founder of the School of the America's Watch, a highly respected advocacy organization for peace and social justice.

The ordination was lovely. Wonderful music, well-crafted liturgy, and the newly consecrated Bishop Dana, the first RCWP bishop in the U.S., presided with grace and dignity. The ceremony was held at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Lexington, Ky., and the congregation consisted of the justice community with whom Janice has ministered and been a member for more than a decade. Janice sat in the first row, with Fr. Roy at her side, as friends, family, WOC Board members, and other theologians participated in the ritual. An alb made of sackcloth was laid on the floor upon which Janice lied prostrate, while holding an SOA Watch bandana. This symbolized her surrender to God and to the work of justice to which she has been called.

Certainly a highlight of the ordination was the homily given by Fr. Roy. He spoke of Jesus' call for justice and his coming to the conclusion that he could no longer promote



From left to right: Maryknoll priest, Fr. Roy Bourgeois; RCWP U.S. Bishop Dana Reynolds; and Janice Sevre-Duszynska co-preside at Sevre-Duszynska's ordination.

justice in the world while there is injustice within the church itself. He connected the dots between male only priesthood, sexism, and discrimination. He did not say anything that many of us had not heard before, but hearing it from a male priest at the altar felt as significant as humankind's first step on the moon! There is no going back.

How is it that this priest chose to participate in this event that few other priests would attend? Who is this unique man and what brought him to this place?

Fr. Roy is a Maryknoll priest. As a young man he witnessed torture and violence in Latin America in the 1980s. He learned that the U.S. was training Latin American troops, including torture techniques and that these were used to suppress the poor. From this experience, he founded the School of the America's Watch to expose these atrocities and to try to close the school.

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### WOC at Call to Action Conference November 7-9 in Milwaukee

#### Friday

**Nov. 7, 3:15 pm – 4:15 pm** Presentation with the National Catholic Ministries Alliance, "Exploring Leadership in New Communities of Faith: Shifting Paradigms"

#### Saturday

**Nov. 8, 11:30 am -12:15:** Caucus — Young Feminist Network members and supporters – *lunch will be provided*

**Nov. 8, 5:15 pm - 6:00 pm:** Caucus — Women's Ordination Conference members and supporters

**Nov. 8, 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm:** Presentation, same as above

**Visit us!** WOC's booth will feature our resources and merchandise.

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## Dear WOC Members,



Just when it seemed like Catholic women might get a break after the May excommunications and the punishment of Sr. Louise Lears, the heat only got more intense. Our joint conference in Boston was a great success, and we attended the RCWP ordinations that took place after the closing liturgy (you can read about both events on page 7). While we were in Boston, we caught wind that the University of San Diego (USD) rescinded its offer of an honorary chair from Rosemary Radford Ruether. In response, we worked with the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) and put together a petition with over 2,100 signatures in just two weeks. Read Mary Hunt's analysis on page 6.

A few weeks later, on August 9, Janice Sevre-Duszynska, a former WOC Board member and active supporter for many years, was ordained through RCWP in Lexington, Ky. Our cover story recounts Fr. Roy Bourgeois's participation in her ordination—preaching the homily and co-presiding the Mass. Read about the event and the ensuing reactions from Catholics around the country.

This issue also brings us three articles of spiritual nourishment. Jamie Manson writes about how she is fulfilling God's call in her life and inspires us to become bread for one another. Victoria Rue recounts her moving experience at a church in Indonesia and the way her preaching helped catalyze openness for women's ordination with the members of the congregation. Diana Wear shares how Jesus taught us to resolve conflict and relates it to the women's ordination debate, or lack thereof, between the hierarchy, theologians, and activists.

We also welcome four new members of WOC's Board of Directors, the essential governing body of WOC. The next round of elections is quickly approaching, so if you would like to be a part of the Board, or know some one who should be nominated, keep an eye out for the nomination form to be sent via email soon.

On a more personal matter, I would also like to express my appreciation to you—WOC members and readers of *NWNC*—for your friendship and unwavering support of WOC and our mission to ordain women into an inclusive and accountable Roman Catholic Church. It is with mixed emotions that I let you know I have accepted the offer of admission into the PhD program for Industrial/Organization Psychology at Portland State University in Oregon, effective fall 2009. I will be leaving my position as WOC's Executive Director on June 30, 2009.

While I am excited about my venture in graduate school, and returning to the West Coast, near my family, I lament leaving such an inspiring community. Over the past four years I have felt blessed and honored to be a part of the WOC staff, as Program Director until December 2005, and then as Executive Director. I have enjoyed my time here immensely. I remain so impressed with the deep spirituality and high caliber of WOC members and coalition partners who have consistently demonstrated an earnest commitment to equality and justice within the church and in society.

During my time at WOC, the Catholic women's ordination movement has changed a great deal, too—with many developments, including Mary Ramerman's ordination in 2001 and the founding of the Roman Catholic Womenpriests movement in 2002. WOC, in turn, has revised and solidified our prominent role as a leading advocate for an inclusive Catholic Church. In keeping with our mission of thirty-three years, WOC strives to represent the diverse thoughts and opinions within the movement by advocating many paths to ordination and speaking out against all forms of sexism and oppression in the Roman Catholic Church including, but not limited to, the ban on women's ordination.

Over the past four years, WOC's institutional commitment to creating an anti-racist, diverse, and inclusive movement has enabled us to work toward our mission with more integrity and authenticity. In order to create a renewing priestly ministry and an inclusive church, we must be open and honest about how oppression plays out within society, our Church, our organizations and ourselves. Our anti-racism initiative is helping us do just that. In addition, our collaborative work with church reform organizations—as well as our growing alliances with secular feminist groups—not only strengthens our advocacy, but also models the cooperation we want to see within the church.

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*NewWomen, NewChurch* is published quarterly by the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC). WOC works for the ordination of women as deacons, priests and bishops into an inclusive and accountable Roman Catholic Church.

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In principle and practice WOC values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.

A subscription to *NewWomen, NewChurch* is included in the WOC membership fee of \$45. WOC is incorporated under 501(c)(3) as a nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax deductible accordingly.

WOC archives, including microfilms of *NewWomen, NewChurch*, are held at Marquette University. For more information, contact Philip Runkel at the Department of Special Collections & University Archives, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI 53201-3141, 414.288.5903, or phil.runkel@marquette.edu.

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# WOC Board Launches Executive Director Search

By Kate Childs Graham

The WOC Board of Directors would like to extend our deep gratitude to Aisha Taylor for her remarkable work with WOC over the past four years. As a result of Aisha's hard work and dedication to WOC's mission, the organization is in a solid position financially, programmatically, and organizationally. While Aisha will truly be missed, we wish her well in all her future endeavors and know that her studies will help further her work in making this world more inclusive.

In preparation for this change in WOC leadership, the Board has established an Executive Director search process, including creating a committee and a timeline. The committee will oversee the process, with four persons who represent WOC's various demographics. Committee members will be responsible for finalizing the job description, posting the description, reading applications, and interviewing candidates.

The job will be advertised in mid-October 2008 with a proposed deadline of February 27. Applications will be reviewed by the committee and the Board of Directors, followed by phone interviews in mid-March. The top two or three candidates will be

invited to attend the May Board of Directors' meeting for final interviews. Our goal is to make an offer to the finest candidate during the first week of June, so that Aisha and the new Executive Director may work together for a few weeks before Aisha leaves on June 30, 2009.

Our hope is that this process will direct us toward a new Executive Director who maintains a sincere passion for WOC's mission and embodies the qualities needed for this position, including: demonstrated ability to raise money; dedication to anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion; public speaking ability; knowledge of the media; and experience with non-profit organizations. The job announcement will be more exhaustive.

We invite and welcome your support throughout this process. We welcome your prayers as we search for the optimum candidate for this position and, of course, feel free to forward the formal announcement to those who you feel would serve well as WOC's next Executive Director.

*Kate Childs Graham is a newly elected member of the WOC Board of Directors. Learn more about her on page 12.*



## Letters to the Editor

### Dear Editor,

Re: Board of Directors nomination/election process. Since the member vote count is so low each year at about 10%, and any WOC member can submit names for nomination, this seems to be enough member participation. Also, often when we get the list of nominees, the people listed are unknown except for the one paragraph on the form. This does not seem a good way, due to lack of sufficient knowledge, to decide on persons for the Board!

The Board Nominations and Elections Committee does all the screening and discussion of pre-nominees and recommends for approval to the Board the individuals they think would be good for the Board of Directors. The Board then approves a final slate of nominees. This is a long process, and would certainly be an adequate selection process. The Committee members are the ones who talk to the pre-nominees and find out a good deal of information about them. Not much of this information appears in the one paragraph that WOC members then see to make their decisions. This has been an issue for several years now, and I think it proper to consider names presented by WOC members as their participation in the selection process. It may take amending the Bylaws and that would be fine.

Thanks for the great spring issue and great coverage of recent events impacting WOC's mission!

All the Best,  
Evelyn Hunt  
Cleveland, Ohio

### Dear Editor,

This letter is responding to Amy Scanlon's request for feedback relative to the Board of Directors elections and appointments in the spring issue of *NewWomen, NewChurch*.

Let me say up front that I think WOC is an outstanding organization. The credit for this, I believe, goes to those who staff the office as well as those who agree to fill Board positions. I am grateful for what you all do for the organization. I like the results I see via your press releases, your newsletter, your public activities, etc. The fact that you are so much younger than I am and yet seem to have so much wisdom behind your public stances gives me hope in our continued struggle for justice within our Church. I admire your ability to speak so well in the public arena. I stand as one of your cheerleaders!

Therefore, I agree with Scanlon when she suggests changing the by-laws in order "to allow Board discretion to fill seats through appointment in lieu of an election during the years when the number of available seats is equal to the number of candidates." In this way, you will have more time and money to do what you all are now doing so well. My prayers and best wishes are with you.

Gratefully,  
Beth Rindler, SFP  
Detroit, Mich.

## News Note

Katy Zatsick, former member of WOC's national Board of Directors, has been appointed as a WOC representative on the Committee on Specialized Ministries of the Federation of Christian Ministries (FCM). This committee oversees the Chaplaincy Endorsement Program sponsored by FCM and supported by the National Catholic Ministries Alliance (CORPUS, WOC, FCM/Roman Catholic Faith Community Council, and RCWP). The Endorsement Program allows for ordained or certified members to be recognized for formal chaplaincy, placement in hospitals and prisons, or clinical pastoral counseling.

# Father Roy Bourgeois's Homily at the Ordination of Janice Sevre-Duszynska

August 9, 2008 • Lexington, Kentucky

When I met Janice Sevre-Duszynska years ago in the SOA Watch movement, she spoke about her journey of faith and her call to be ordained in the Catholic church.

That day has arrived. And we are here to share in her joy and to support Janice in her call to the priesthood.

As we know, the ordination of women in the Catholic church is a controversial issue. Ten years ago I wrote the following letter to my Maryknoll community about why women should be ordained. It was published in the Maryknoll newsletter under the headline "No One Likes a Bully."

In prison one has a lot of time for long thoughts and long prayers. Among my thoughts has been the issue of the ordination of women in the Catholic church.

Years ago, while in the military, I felt called to the priesthood and entered Maryknoll. Today I have women friends who say God is calling them to

the priesthood. Who are we to judge their calling? As people of faith, we believe that a person's call to ministry is initiated by God and is something sacred. Who among us has the right to tamper with God's call?

In my twenty-six years as a priest, it is my experience that we need the wisdom, sensitivity, experiences, compassion and courage of women in the priesthood if our church is to be healthy and complete.

Sexism is a sin. However, [according to] Joan Chittister, the problem is not so much with sexism, as it is with the perception of God held by those who oppose the ordination of women. As people of faith we profess that God is all powerful and the source of life. Yet, when it comes to women being ordained, it seems that opponents are saying that this same God who is all powerful and created the heavens and the earth and can bring the dead back to life, somehow, cannot empower a

woman to be a priest. Suddenly, we as men believe God becomes powerless when

women approach the altar to celebrate Mass.

I am in prison for protesting the training of Latin American soldiers at the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA). The SOA is about men in Latin America who abuse their power in order to control the lives of others.

They cause people to suffer and are seen as bullies. There are also bullies in prison who cause fear and threaten to punish those who speak out.

Just as soldiers in Latin America and inmates in prison abuse their power and control others, it saddens me to



Fr. Roy Bourgeois publicly supports women's ordination at Janice Sevre-Duszynska's ordination on August 9, 2008.

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## *Two Priests, Two Prophetic Stands Bring Women's Ordination to a New Level ...continued from page 1*

During these same years, Janice was teaching English as a second language to mostly Latin American immigrant children in Lexington (Kentucky) Public Schools. She learned of the plight of these children and their families, as well as the wars being waged in our name in their countries of origin. Aware of her call to ordination since childhood, Janice had long focused her energies on justice and peace issues in the world and for women within the Catholic Church.

She protested at the gates of the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Ga. over the years and on one occasion was arrested and served three months in federal prison.

Likewise, she began publicly witnessing at the U.S. bishops semi annual meetings, holding signs while wearing an alb and stole outside of the meeting sites. During one such demonstration, she commandeered a microphone on the floor of the meeting and addressed the bishops on the issue of women's ordination until the stunned clerics turned off the microphone. These are but two of Janice's many daring and prophetic actions. Her ordination, the first in the South, acknowledged the priestly work she had

been doing for decades. Fr. Roy understood this and admired it.

When reached for an interview on September 16, 2008, Roy was busy touring the West Coast. Everywhere he went, he included within his speeches about SOA his commitment to justice for women in the Roman Catholic Church. "How can we priests, who have experienced our own calls to ordination, say that women can't receive this same call? We need to name this omission what it is, discrimination! I cannot continue to speak out on issues of justice in the world and not address the denial of justice for women called to ordination."

Fr. Bourgeois said that he is feeling hopeful by all the interest he sees as he speaks around the country. "More and more people are coming into the circle on this issue. People are also afraid for me, and ask me if I am worried. I tell them that the Maryknoll community is supportive, and they have agreed to begin discussions on the place of women within the church. I tell them that I am at peace. When you follow your conscience there is a great sense of peace."

When asked what people can do, he suggests:

1. Ask your parish priest his views on women's ordination
2. Write to your bishop about the need for changes
3. Encourage priests to talk with each other about the call of women to the priesthood

No time to worry about what repercussions might occur. These two prophets are out speaking their truths. Roy is on a speaking tour and gearing up for the annual November SOA demonstration in Georgia. Janice celebrated her official first liturgy at the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker in Washington, D.C. She will be hosting liturgies in Lexington and will be witnessing once again this November at SOA, but this year, she will be co-presiding at Eucharist. Thank you, Roy and Janice, for following your hearts, your consciences, for teaching us by your bold and Christ-like actions.

*Gerry Rauch is a former WOC board president and she has led Walking With Women Called for a number of years. She writes for us from St. Louis, Mo.*

# Academic Freedom and Feminist Catholicism

By Mary E. Hunt

Academic freedom in Catholic institutions of higher education is on thin ice as the case of Rosemary Radford Ruether and the University of San Diego proves. Feminist Catholic scholars are particularly in jeopardy. I fear this is the wave of the future, putting Catholic education as we have known it in question. What happened in the Ruether case and what does it mean?

The facts are not in dispute. The Monsignor John R. Portman Chair in Roman Catholic Theology was established in 2000 at USD in the Theology and Religious Studies Department. According to the University's Web site, "The Portman Endowment allows the department to bring an eminent theologian to the University of San Diego for one or two semesters. As envisioned by the donor and Msgr. Portman, chairholders are to be distinguished theologians who think from within the Roman Catholic tradition while exploring and expressing the tradition in contemporary contexts. During his or her tenure at the university, the Portman Professor delivers the Annual Msgr. John R. Portman Lecture in Roman Catholic Theology." Rosemary Radford Ruether more than fit the bill with her dozens of books, hundreds of articles, years of outstanding teaching and research, tireless activism on behalf of oppressed people and the earth, and signal contribution to Catholic thought from a feminist perspective. No wonder the department was anxious to land her for the position.

As is customary in these matters, early in 2008 Dr. Lance Nelson, Chair of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, offered an initial, informal invitation to Professor Ruether. Negotiations were undertaken and a formal invitation was officially extended in a letter from Nicholas M. Healy, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, requesting that Ruether sign to indicate her acceptance, which she did. According to the Department's web page, it was "pleased to announce that Professor Rosemary Radford Ruether, leading Church historian and pioneering figure in Christian feminist theology, has accepted appointment to the Monsignor John R. Portman Chair in Roman Catholic Theology for 2009-2010."

In mid-July, Professor Ruether received a call from Vice President and Provost Julie Sullivan canceling the agreement allegedly because the donor of the chair had a "certain vision," still unspecified at this



*Barbra Calantas, WOC representative, and Al O'Brien, representative of Call to Action San Diego, delivered the letter with more than 2,100 signatures to USD on August 21, 2008.*

writing, that Ruether did not share. Assistant Vice President for Public Affairs Pamela Gray Payton, speaking for USD, stated: "Upon review of the specific purpose of the Monsignor John R. Portman Chair in Roman Catholic Theology, the University of San Diego is no longer considering the appointment of Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruether as the 2009-2010 Chair holder."

"Considering the appointment" is a strange euphemism for an invitation extended, received, responded to, and the person's acceptance advertised. The Provost later claimed that procedures had not been followed, that she should have been involved in vetting the candidate but was not. Whether such a technicality would have mattered had the candidate not been a feminist Catholic is unclear. I think not.

While not privy to the inner workings of USD's administration, my best guess is that pressure from the religious right was involved. LifeSiteNews, a conservative Web presence, reported the hiring with consternation (<http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008/jul/08071013.html>). I suspect that the President, Mary Lyons, as well as Provost Sullivan, felt the squeeze from influential donors and/or Trustees. I imagine that they were threatened either in terms of money to be withheld for future chairs and/or reports about USD directed to Vatican authorities who would weigh in against the appointment. For whatever reasons, they felt free to disinvite Rosemary Radford Ruether, a senior scholar in the field. They later admitted that it was Ruether's support for reproductive justice (not to mention her pro-gay/lesbian views, her support of women's ordination, her skepticism of papal infallibility, among other well-founded Catholic theological views) that was at odds with the intention

behind the Portman Chair. Note that nowhere on the LifeSiteNews website is the doctrinal orthodoxy of the chair holder mentioned. I submit that Ruether was caught up in a much larger effort on the part of those who, with the blessing of the current pontiff, would narrow the parameters of Catholicism to define out those who impute full moral agency to women, those who support rights for all regardless of sexual identity, those who do feminist work in religion.

The move ignited a firestorm of protest from those who value academic freedom in Catholic institutions, who expect freedom of expression in theology as well as other departments, who prize quality and clarity of research and argument and not doctrinal conformity. USD faculty members in religion realized the seriousness of the matter. While the Provost argued that it was only in the case of this one chair that she would insist on doctrinal orthodoxy, faculty are not naïve enough to think that is the case.

Women's Alliance for Theology Ethics and Ritual (WATER) and WOC developed a petition stating, "While scholars might engage in critical dialogue with Ruether's position on a variety of theological points—conduct that is wholly appropriate in an academic context—in fact, the Catholic tradition is broad and expansive, filled with theological differences and disagreements, but rich in its diversity. Academic freedom in Catholic institutions involves acceptance of and respect for such diversity.... We consider it unacceptable that any scholar, much less one of Professor Rosemary Radford Ruether's world class status, would be treated in such a cavalier and disrespectful way by an institution. Of primary importance, we feel the chilling effect of the erosion of academic freedom that this case raises in a Catholic institution." More than 2,100 persons and organizations signed on and the petition was delivered to the USD officials in August 2008.

We urged, to no avail, that the invitation to Ruether be honored and that she deliver the Portman Lecture on academic freedom at USD on the topic of academic freedom in Catholic higher education. We also asked that she be compensated as agreed upon since consequences to such unprofessional, perhaps illegal, behavior are important to prevent their being repeated. None of this has happened. Happily, the American Association of University Professors has

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# Intellectual Freedom and the Catholic University

By Rosemary Radford Ruether

In July of this year my invitation to teach at the Catholic University of San Diego was abruptly canceled by a phone call by the provost. I had been invited to teach as a visiting professor under the John R. Portman chair in Roman Catholic Theology in January of 2008 and had completed negotiating the terms of the contract with the head of the Theology and Religious Studies Department and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and had signed a letter indicating my willingness to accept on April 30, 2008. Although the Provost did not admit it at the time of her call in mid-July, it soon became evident that the primary "problem" with my occupying this chair of theology, even for a short time (I had accepted to teach part time for one semester) was pressure on the school from a right wing Catholic group. Their chief objection was my membership on the board of a Catholic reproductive rights group, Catholics for Choice (CFC).

Catholics for Choice takes a nuanced view of abortion. They do not see it as an unequivocal "good" *per se*, but a "choice" which, in former President Clinton's words, should be "legal, safe and rare." The best way to make it "rare" is to promote effective sexual education and birth control. In other words, to avoid abortion, reduce as much as possible the likelihood of unchosen pregnancies. We also believe that the Catholic

Church, in forbidding contraception, *de facto* promotes unchosen pregnancies and hence abortion. For this reason, among our major emphases at CFC is a campaign called "Catholics for Birth Control." We also have a campaign called "Condoms for Life" where we argue that the use of condoms should be accepted and made readily accessible to prevent the transmission of AIDS, a view that is generally rejected by the Catholic bishops, although several bishops have also argued for this position.

I was not planning to talk about abortion in my class as USD. My agreement was to teach a course on Ecology and Theology. That fact made no difference to those who wanted to exclude me from teaching there. The fact that I was a member of a dissident Catholic group was sufficient to declare that I should not be allowed to hold this chair, even though I am the author of forty-five well received books on theology and social issues and have been a professor of theology for over forty years at several universities, including some Catholic ones. As a retired professor with a standing invitation to teach at the Claremont School of Theology and the Graduate University in Claremont, California I am not in need of this job. However, this decision for me, and for many others, signals something very disturbing about the state of intellectual freedom at Catholic Universities.

Over 2,100 people world wide, in addition to fifty members of the faculty of USD, signed a petition asking for this decision to be reconsidered, but the administration has declined to do so.

My concern is that Catholic colleges and universities are dismantling academic freedom by not allowing discussion on controversial issues, particularly in relation to Catholic teachings and practices. But if they cannot be discussed at Catholic universities, where else can they be discussed? What better place is there for them to be discussed? I believe that if an issue like abortion could be really examined in an open and respectful forum, many Catholics could find common ground with the views taken by Catholics for Choice. We *all* agree that it would be good if there were as few abortions as possible. The question at issue is how to accomplish this goal. Is it accomplished by forbidding contraception even within marriage? Or is it best accomplished by effective use of contraception within responsible sexuality?

Catholic universities in the last forty years have increasingly excluded the presence of critical Catholic thinkers who are seen as diverging from Catholic teaching, even though they themselves see their views as appropriate developments of Catholic teaching. Leading Catholic moral theologian Charles Curran was excluded from

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## *Academic Freedom and Feminist Catholicism...continued from page 5*

taken an interest in the case; further word from them is forthcoming but a censure from them would not be surprising.

What is at stake in this case is nothing less than the future of Catholic higher education. This is not simply about Rosemary Radford Ruether, though it is an egregious act of disrespect toward her, and if USD would treat her in such a shabby way one wonders how they deal with their own students and other prospective faculty members. Rather, at issue is what passes for authentic Catholicism and who gets to decide what it is. This case was unique in the public nature of the invitation and equally public rescinding of that invitation. Far more frequently in these matters such vetting takes place behind closed doors and the likes of Ruether and other feminist theologians never get on the short list. Whether for a chair or an academic appointment, feminist work is considered outside the narrow limits of orthodoxy—

not Catholic. Few institutions are as transparent as USD in making their conformity so obvious, in their willingness to jettison any semblance of academic respectability with regard to freedom to debate and discuss issues as befits a university at every turn, not simply when it is convenient according to donors. Instead, they kowtowed to the kyriarchal church's position and by so doing cheapened their degrees, broke faith with their alums, and raised serious questions about the quality of their academic product. I say this while at the same time having the deepest respect for members of the Theology and Religious Studies Department, many of whom were taken aback as I was by the actions of the University. It is those colleagues who will need to push this matter internally. Their authority to select subsequent Portman Chair holders seems to be undercut.

The fact that the President and Provost are both women makes clear that adding women and stirring, as I have long cautioned against in any kyriarchal structures, is dangerous. When push comes to shove some women no less than men are susceptible to the pressures of kyriarchal institutions and will gladly do their bidding, convinced that the greater good is served. But the sad result of such actions is that Catholicism shrinks to a fraction of its glorious intellectual and moral potential, and the opportunity to debate and discuss issues with some of the best scholars is denied, leaving behind a shadow of what Catholic thinking could be. To prevent this, those in Catholic institutions as well as those who care about them will need to be vigilant before it is too late.

*Mary E. Hunt is the co-founder and co-director of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) in Silver Spring, MD. She is a feminist theologian who is a National Adviser of WOC.*

# Historic Collaborative Group Sponsors Boston Conference

By Evelyn Hunt

Nearly three hundred participants gathered in Boston, Mass. for the conference last July. For nearly two years, a dedicated band of Catholic reformers put their heads together to bring a collaborative planning process to bear on organizing a National Joint Conference.

CORPUS, Federation of Christian Ministries (FCM), Women's Ordination Conference, and Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP) sponsored the first ever conference. Working together to bring reform-minded Catholics across the U.S. to Boston for the conference titled "Inclusive Ministry and Renewal in a Complex Age" was a work of love and faith. It was love for our sisters and brothers who were schooled in the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II and Pope John XXIII that propelled us into this brave new venture. It was also the realization that our ministries are becoming wider as the world changes and becomes more diverse.

We set goals to come together as communities of people engaged in ministry, to address issues of renewal in today's spiritual worlds, and to explore the challenges and impact of ministry in a complex age. Under the expert guidance of FCM's Michaelita and Tom Quinn, the conference committee gathered monthly via conference call to organize a conference that would draw on all the gifts and resources of our progressive faith organizations. We put out a Call for Papers and received over thirty-five submissions on a wide variety of renewal topics from "Vigiling Parishes" to "Preparing Women and Men for Ministry" to "Inter-Religious Dialogue in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Through many hours of discussion, we shared our visions and hopes for furthering the understanding of inclusive ministry for us and our constituencies who would attend. It was moving and motivating to work with such a dedicated team of planners.

According to many attendees, the high point of the conference was the keynote speech delivered by theologian Matthew Fox. Participants also enjoyed the twenty-six workshop sessions covering a variety of topics that spanned all day on Saturday.

The liturgy theme, "Ministries of the Earth: The Bread of Life" exemplified the spirit and substance of the conference in new and colorful ways. The Spirit of Life



From left to right: WOC Board member, Kate Childs Graham; WOC assistant director, Erin Saiz Hanna; WOC National Advisor, Sr. Theresa Kane, RSM; SEPA-WOC core committee member, Regina Bannan; and WOC executive director, Aisha Taylor.

dancers swirled their colorful rainbow veils into the assembly via the four directions and danced to "Rise Up, O Flame, by thy light glowing, brought to us beauty, vision and joy." Celebrants representing each of the sponsoring organizations, two of whom



Representatives from sponsoring organizations co-preside at Joint Conference liturgy on July 20, 2008 in Boston, Mass.

were ordained and two who were not, led the inclusive liturgy, and Peter Hickman, Bishop of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion, delivered an inspiring homily.

A lively group of musicians, under the leadership of Stan Doherty, provided music for "All Are Welcome," "Agua de Vida," "One Bread, One Body," "Table of Plenty," and "Sing a New Church."

Though the liturgy closed the very successful conference, later that evening, Women's Ordination Conference, along with many of the conference participants,

attended the RCWP ordinations of Gloria Carpeneto, Judy Lee, and Gabriella Velardi-Ward to the priesthood, and Mary Ann McCarthy Schoettly to the diaconate. The ordinations took place at Church of Covenant in Boston.



Dorothy Irvin blesses Judy Lee at RCWP ordination in Boston, Mass. on July 20, 2008.

Evelyn Hunt served as the President of WOC's Board of Directors for four years. She is currently a Director-at-Large, and in this role, she represents WOC in two coalitions of which WOC is a member: the National Catholic Ministries Alliance and the North Atlantic Federation for a Renewed Catholic Priesthood.

*Intellectual Freedom...continued from page 6*

teaching at Catholic University in 1986 for opening up questions on the morality of contraception. Eminent Catholic theologian Hans Küng was excluded from the chair of Catholic theology at University of Tübingen in Germany for questioning papal infallibility. Jesuit theologian Roger Haight was excluded from teaching at Weston Seminary for his book on Jesus which opens up his human historical context. The list could go on. Küng continues to teach at the University of Tübingen, but now in a chair of Ecumenical Theology. Curran and Haight teach at Protestant schools. World wide the most creative Catholic theologians and ethicists find themselves teaching outside the Catholic university. Is this good for the Catholic community? I think not. A church confident in its quest for truth should be open to respectful discussion of differing views. Only in this way can we arrive at fuller understanding.

Rosemary Radford Ruether is a National Adviser of WOC.

## Step by Step: A Woman Priest in Asia

By Victoria Rue

Kathryn and I arrived in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on a warm Saturday morning. Our journey had taken us from Thailand to Cambodia to Jakarta and now to Yogyakarta. After a wonderful rice soup breakfast, we were taken to a liturgy meeting for the Mass that would take place the next day. Damai, an extraordinary woman activist and a member of the Yogyakarta International Church (YIC) had invited me to preside at a Eucharist there. The YIC is a home to Protestants and Catholics. It has no ordained clergy but instead creates worship from among its members and a Board oversees it. Fifteen people began the meeting, and Martin arrived a few minutes after we had started. Out of breath, he seemed embarrassed as he began to speak. He told us that the night before, the Board had met and had had a difficult discussion concerning the Mass. "Unfortunately," he said, "they cannot permit you to do a communion, a Mass." Later I learned that a Catholic Board member had been pressured by conservative Catholic "friends" to dis-invite me. Well, you might imagine that I was stunned, and so were the organizers who had set this up. At first I was confused and angry and tried to clarify what I had heard from Martin. Then I felt Kathryn's knowing hand on my back. Her hand was saying, "Slow down. Calm down. Breathe." What a blessing my partner Kathryn is in my life.

And so, with new breath I responded that this was an important "educational moment" for all concerned, and that we might all take the time to discuss it and perhaps then come up with a solution. For the next twenty minutes, there was a lot of discussion in Bahasa Indonesia (the language of the country), so it is impossible to relate the content here. However, at the end of it, piece by piece people suggested in English what might be created instead. What transpired was a group decision on how to save the situation and thus "save face" by essentially inviting me to participate as guest homilist in what would be a Protestant service where I would bless the children, give a shared homily, and give the final benediction. Martin was still embarrassed saying this was not how he personally felt. He offered the added thought, this was indeed an educational moment for this church group composed of Protestants and Catholics. And hopefully this was the first step in learning more about women priests, and that there would be a second step, a second invitation that

would be offered next year to invite me back to preside at a Catholic Mass. I wondered, to myself, how I would use all this in the shared homily the next day.

We all gathered at 5:00 pm for the Sunday Service of the Yogyakarta International Church. YIC rents a room in the Plaza Hotel for their worship service that normally has twenty-five people attending. Kathryn led the liturgical singers in a rousing "Magnificat Now!"—a hymn of liberation that set the tone for the service and certainly for my message. Most moving to me was that a third of the seventy-five folks present were Muslim women we had met earlier that day who had come out to support me. It was wonderful to look around the room at the jilbabs/hijabs nodding at my homily message:

"As a Roman Catholic priest I am risky to invite to the Eucharistic table. I am validly ordained, yet my ordination goes against Canon Law. So I celebrate Mass in the U.S. in communities that will have me, because it is a risk for people to simply be present at a Mass celebrated by a woman priest. (Then I told them the story of Sister Louise Lears.)

"What is so threatening about a Mass by a woman priest? Perhaps the answer lies in the story of what heaven is like. The gospel talks about a 'kingdom of heaven.' But feminist scholarship asks us to question the medieval terms of a 'king of heaven' and a 'kingdom.' Perhaps a better model is a space of shared governance—a place of the common good—the common wealth of God. Yes I know the word commonwealth has a colonial context, but perhaps we can re-think its real meaning.

"In a Mass presided at by a woman priest, all present celebrate the common good, not by hording the Mass with one male priest representing Christ but by all people being Christ to each other. A Mass presided at by a woman priest is a Mass where all participate in leading the liturgy, in sharing the homily, in speaking together the 'words of institution.' After all, whether Protestant or Catholic, it is the assembled community, the common wealth of all, through which the Holy is manifested.

"But the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church does not seem to like this idea of shared governance. Unfortunately, it seems that all who have absolute power do not like to share it. But Jesus' message is much more radical. Jesus' life welcomed all to the table, not just some, but all



Roman Catholic Womanpriest, Victoria Rue, standing next to her partner, Kathryn Pothig, with some of the members of the Yogyakarta Women's Coalition who attended the service at the Yogyakarta International Church.

people. The story of the wedding banquet reminds us that when those who were invited found various excuses, then the passersby, those in the market, strolling on the streets, the poor struggling for bread, all were invited to the wedding.

"And that is the threatening, risky message of women priests—all on the margins are invited into the church. All are welcome at the table. This is the pearl of great price, God's 'common wealth' for the common good. Okay my friends, this is a shared homily, and now let's hear from you..."

One man said that in the beginning he was not sure what to think of a woman priest. After all, he had been schooled in a seminary and so he had never thought of about it before. But now, he said, having experienced the presence of a woman priest—and here he started to cry—he found how meaningful and right it was. Another man spoke up, with his mother sitting next to him, that he and his mother had spoken many times about how wonderful it would be to have women priests in the Catholic Church. And now they were experiencing it, and how happy they were to be there. The young man who is the prime organizer for liturgies approached me afterwards and said he had never experienced such beautiful feelings in the congregation before. He said he felt the Spirit of God moving among us. And so I believe that the seeds were sown for a woman priest next year to return to YIC and reap the harvest. Changes come as they come, bit by bit, step by step. And the Spirit moves!

*Victoria Rue is a former WOC Board member, a priest ordained in 2005 through the Roman Catholic Womanpriests.. She writes to us from Watsonville, Calif. Her journey was funded by The Sister Fund, NYC, and San Jose State University where Rue is a lecturer in Comparative Religious Studies and Women's Studies. For more stories from the trip to Asia: [www.womanpriest-asia08.blogspot.com](http://www.womanpriest-asia08.blogspot.com)*

# The Grace of Living on the Margins

By Jamie L. Manson



For more than fifteen years now, I have felt starved by the Roman Catholic authorities. But lately I wonder if they haven't done me a favor.

Since the age of fourteen, I have felt called to the priesthood. The only real opportunity I was given to discern this call was through my studies for my master of divinity degree (at a Protestant divinity school, of course). Perhaps it was the insurmountable heights of the ivory tower's walls or the unshakable hope of feminist theology that clouded my judgment, but it wasn't until graduation that I realized that an openly lesbian, unapologetically liberal, Catholic woman with an M.Div. had somewhat limited career possibilities.

It would take years to find a Catholic community that would hire me as their pastoral associate. When the chance finally arrived, I was welcomed to the staff of a Jesuit parish in New York City noted for its ministry to the poor and gay and lesbian communities.

The congregation had an interesting phenomenon that they referred to as "upstairs church" and "downstairs church." Upstairs church was the sanctuary itself, where Mass, confessions, weddings and baptisms took place. Directly below the church was an auditorium where, each Sunday afternoon, more than 800 men and women received a hot meal, clothing, toiletries and a variety of other services.

In upstairs church, my body always seemed to get in the way. Though I had received an education equal or superior to most current Catholic seminarians, I could not preach the sermon or consecrate the Eucharist because of my female body. Though I held the ordination degree and all of the appropriate ministerial experience, I could not baptize the baby or marry the couple because of my God-given gender. Though I did my very best to serve the community, I was never held in the same esteem as my priest colleagues because of my unordained and unordainable body.

In downstairs church, my gender and sexual orientation never seemed to create barriers. The poor reached out to me, whether on instinct or impulse, and asked me to

pray for them, with them, and over them. Their longings were basic and bodily: to be touched and listened to and looked at with love. They didn't know my previous education, my background, my theology or politics, and none of this seemed to matter anyway. They only saw presence—my presence. And if I wasn't especially present on a given Sunday, they saw that, too, and they let me know it!

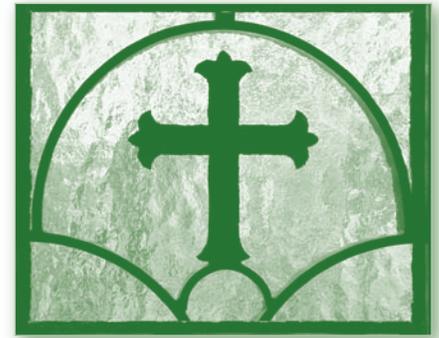
These moments had a raw authenticity that always seemed elusive in upstairs church. I've been present at countless consecrations of the Eucharist, but most of those rituals paled in comparison to the presence of Christ I saw in the despairing eyes of a homeless man when I put him in a car headed for a long-overdue detox, or in the grateful gasp of a poor couple when I gave them fifteen dollars to obtain a copy of their marriage record that would allow them to stay in a shelter together.

I was feeding people, and I, too, was being fed. This really is all that Jesus asks of us: that with our bodies we become bread for one another. Our minds do such harm to the Eucharist. We convolute it, politicize it, gender it. And with each act, I've come to see, we starve one another and ourselves.

Working in a Catholic setting, I often felt at best underutilized and limited, and at worst oppressed and useless. And yet, I cannot help but see what a gift it has been to be forced to live on the margins of the institutional church. It's a paradox, I know, but I've met God in more paradoxes than I have in houses of worship.

Being excluded from the church's center gave me, as John's prologue says, "grace in place of grace." It compelled me to discover the face of God in places I might never have ventured into. If I had not been rejected by the upstairs church, I may have never had the chance to experience God's real presence on the edge of our society. Living on the outside pushed me to be creative in seeking the sacred, and kept me wary of the power trips, elitism, and self-aggrandizement that I've encountered in so many ordained people. Though being excluded will always break my heart, the experience allowed God to break through to me in shattered, lonely spaces.

I moved on from that Catholic parish, and now serve as Director of Social Justice Ministries at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. My primary role lies in directing our homeless outreach program which, each day, assists more than fifty homeless individuals with supportive counseling,



food pantry items, clothing, toiletries, and the use of phones and computers. I'm still incorrigibly Catholic in my passionate insistence about the sacramental nature of every encounter we have with our poor and homeless guests. But it is a relief to do the work without having to feel afraid or less than valid because of the body God has given me.

I do get a rush of sorrow now and then when I remember that I cannot practice ministry in the church that raised me, within the theological tradition that formed me, and amid the social justice doctrines that ground my convictions. But brokenness is the heart of the Gospel story. And living on the margins helps me continue to identify with the margins I serve. There is no perfect church, no perfect ministry, and no perfect community. Instead, it is in the midst of radical imperfection that true Eucharist seems most likely to emerge—in those downstairs churches where people are genuinely being fed. The Church may continue to give much to some, and starve many. But in that hunger there are endless possibilities for us to be bread for one another.

*Jamie Manson earned her Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School where she studied Catholic theology, personal commitments and sexual ethics with Margaret Farley, RSM. She is the former editor-in-chief of the Yale magazine Reflections. She is a member of WOC's national Board of Directors.*

**Women's Ordination Conference is ecstatic to announce we have redesigned our website!**

Check it out at [www.womensordination.org](http://www.womensordination.org)

Enjoy faster updating and new features, including

- Action Center
- Renew/Join Online
- Members Only pages
- Archived issues of *NewWomen*, *NewChurch*

# The Women of the Catholic Diocese of One Spirit

By Bishop Jim Burch



The Catholic Diocese of One Spirit acknowledges that the existence of its women priests is wholly unremarkable. It is, rather, as natural as breathing, as easy to accommodate as

a change of season, as joyous as new friends.

Years ago we took great pride in our progressive insistence that women, too, had the right to be priests for all the psychological, historical and justice reasons articulated so widely. But it didn't take long before we discovered that women priests, married priests, gay or lesbian priests, celibate priests—all are just as normal, remarkable, and unremarkable as the beauty of God's fecund diversity bursting forth all around us on a daily basis. Frankly, we all sort of got tired of celebrating our own special-ness, preferring instead to get on with the joyful work of sharing the Good News.

Joyfully sharing the Good News is one of our charisms, and it compliments the charisms of other groups, such as the Women's Ordination Conference, of which we are a member, who plow new fields, break open calcified hearts, and pry open sealed eyelids. We try to be and to live out in the present what WOC is trying to get other organizations to do. Some groups have to settle into the normalcy of it all – in advance of the sacred waterfall that is surely coming – and we are one of those groups.

Each and every life spirit/soul starts off, and remains through all eternity, *perfect*. That is because each and every one of us is an individuated manifestation of God: the drop in the ocean, who can claim to be the ocean but not the totality of the ocean; the candle in the sun, who can claim to be the light of the sun but not the totality of that light. Each soul has always known its perfection, but starts off without the *experience* of that perfection. Each soul then chooses to come into this magnificent universe, created and sustained by God as a place for us to accomplish that experience of our Divinity within: of our compassion, justice, love, kindness, honor, integrity, and

all the other virtues, the sum of which is God itself.

Along our eternal journey – much longer than a mere fifty to one hundred year “lifetime” – we express ourselves in myriad situations that will lead us to become the *experienced* perfect reflection of God Within ... each becoming the Christ, just as Jesus was, and just as he invited us to become, “like him.”

And so, each of our priests comes with her or his own journey's goals to the priesthood. The up-to-minute accomplishments of each individual may be overt or they may be carefully camouflaged. Each may reflect some of their honed perfections and others that they are still working on. Each of us priests, like every other human being, is *perfectly imperfect*, enjoying God's great gift of free will, in which we experiment in this universe created for just that reason until we experiment our way into the perfection shown us by Jesus. Because of that recognition, we do not yet expect perfection from our priests, or from anyone, because it is the God-given process of discovery that is our real blessing. For our priests, we only expect an exuberant, passionate desire to get there, through love of others and the personable, wise sharing of Jesus' message.

Each of our priests, male and female, have virtues which are obvious, and each have just as dazzling virtues which are not obvious at this time. That's okay with us; God made us that way. For this reason, we honor all who have become, or who will become, members of our diocese, for being wherever they are in their spiritual journey and for assiduously working to bring joy and recognition of God, who is at the core of All That Is, to others by being Christ to them.

To date, the Catholic Diocese of One Spirit has five ordained women: three priests, one deacon, and another woman priest who will be ordained a bishop next summer.

The female and male priests of the Catholic Diocese of One Spirit fill a different niche than institutional religion historically has in recent centuries. We behave much more like the early church communities.

Jesus lived in an exceptionally “religious” time. And yet we don't see much of that in the Gospels except as a backdrop. Jesus was much more interested in inviting people to see things in a new light than he

was in getting them to participate in religious observances. His structure was very simple. The Catholic Diocese too is not very “religious,” not very “churchy,” certainly not “clerical.”

After the resurrection, the apostles kept Jesus' only structure intact, by electing Mathias to replace Judas. Then they destroyed the only structure Jesus had. We know this from the Acts of the Apostles which tells us that James, the brother of Jesus, was the bishop of Jerusalem, and he was not one of the original apostles.

So the early church saw their structure as primarily a way to carry on Jesus' message – and not itself as the required pathway to salvation. Communicating Jesus, being Jesus ... that was the joyful work for those who followed right after Jesus. The Catholic Diocese of One Spirit also keeps its structure to a minimum.

Moreover, Jesus' Eucharists – the only two we know for sure he participated in, the Last Supper and after the resurrection – were informal and integrated into the fabric of everyday life. They were not stage productions for hundreds or thousands of onlookers. The Catholic Diocese of One Spirit works to make Eucharist much more pervasively celebrated in homes, feasts, liturgies, and all kinds of celebrations.

Integrate all these factors into what life following Jesus was like in his time, and move them into a Twenty-First Century lifestyle, and you find what we in the Catholic Diocese of One Spirit try to model ourselves after.

- We are not trying to grow parishes. Rather, we accept the movement of the Spirit wherever she might be. That means if a house church wants to ordain a member or two to lead their Eucharistic celebrations, we are ready to honor that movement of the Spirit. If accredited (e.g., by experience or by scholastic achievement) individuals want to use their ministry in ways to which they are called, we encourage them by ordination.
- If we can think up new ways of reaching people with the Good News of Jesus, besides Sunday morning services which they seem more and more to abandon, then we will (e.g., periodic email spirituality newsletters,

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# What Would Jesus Say About Excommunication?

By Diana Wear

The following is excerpted from a homily delivered this past September for San Francisco Dignity on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time. The complete set of readings for this Sunday include: Ezekiel 33:7-9, Romans 13:8-10, and Matthew 18:15-20, but for this article, the focus will be on the gospel, especially as it relates to women's ordination.

Gospel: Mt 18:15-20: Jesus said to his disciples: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by our heavenly God. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

## *The Women of the Catholic Diocese of One Spirit...continued from page 10*

weekly home liturgies, quarterly self-directed retreats, etc.).

- We do not seek members. (Nor do we have weekly envelopes.) For those who find that they think like us, who seek a new format for their spiritual quest, we reach them by email with our newsletters, weekly home liturgies, and other substantive contacts to come. To date we have approximately 10,000 participants in our diocese. But, of course, numbers are not important for us either; we could have five people in our range of reciprocal influence or we could have 100,000. We leave all that to the Holy Spirit.

At present the Catholic Diocese of One Spirit has about twenty-five ordained members. We especially encourage young people and women.

Bishop Jim Burch writes for us from Clifton, Va. He can be contacted at 703 818-8080 or at either website, [www.OneSpiritCatholic.org](http://www.OneSpiritCatholic.org) or [Jim@ContemporaryCatholic.org](mailto:Jim@ContemporaryCatholic.org).

I couldn't help thinking how this gospel passage relates to our story of women's ordination in the Roman Catholic Church and delivers the good news message that so many of us have been trying to follow. When the issue first publicly arose around the time of the Second Vatican Council, women started having one-on-one conversations with their pastors, with fellow seminarians, and later with bishops about how the church teaching and law disallowing women to become priests, was simply wrong, made no sense in light of new understandings of philosophy, theology, Scripture, and the understanding of what it means to be church. Those one-on-one confrontations would be followed up in subsequent encounters with evidence—countless articles would be published in theological journals, books, and popular Catholic press, and conferences would address and affirm that women should be ordained. Eventually there would be many priests, bishops, and women's groups lending their support—people from North America, Europe, Australia, India, parts of Asia, and Latin America. And yet none of those voices would change the outdated church law because a small group of men in Rome would still say no to women's ordination despite the plethora of evidence that they should be. It was wrong and the church would suffer over the next quarter century without the gifts of these women priests.

Ah, but the "good news" lesson doesn't stop there. Jesus says that if you don't get justice through these methods "treat them as you would a Gentile or tax collector." What's that about? Well if you look at traditional commentaries on this gospel text [e.g., the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*] they will refer to "excommunication" as the way to treat Gentiles and tax collectors. I couldn't help but chuckle at this one, because now that many women have gone ahead and been ordained without their Roman Catholic hierarchical approval, that is precisely what the men in the Vatican have done—they've excommunicated these women and anyone involved in these ordinations. But what is amusing is that it is the women who have not been granted justice, so taking this reading at face value it would be the women who would excommunicate the men in the Vatican. *Isn't that a switch.* Now as it has happened, scores of thousands of women did leave the church over this issue—that is, they separated themselves from the offending church men for this injustice. But in light of

today's gospel, I think Jesus is offering another way.

Jesus said, if you don't get justice, "treat them as you would a Gentile or a tax collector." So how did Jesus treat Gentiles and tax collectors? My brothers and sisters, he did not excommunicate. He did not throw them out of the community. And even if they would be enemies, Jesus had instructed the people to "love their enemies." In fact, Matthew had included the "love your enemies" discourse in chapter 5 of this gospel—today's reading is in chapter 18. In other words, the people had already been taught that teaching. And while I don't want to digress from today's gospel, for those of you who don't remember the love your enemies texts, it bears some mention, because it fills in some blanks for today's teaching. Briefly it goes like this: the first part, "if someone slaps you on the cheek, turn and offer the other." This was a cultural more at Jesus's time. A master would use the back of his left hand (the hand used only for cleaning and wiping oneself) to slap a slave across the face. That was a show of power over and subordination. If the person receiving the slap turned their face with the other cheek facing the master, the master would have to use an open-faced hand, which in this culture would connote equality—that is, that is how two peers would fight. This is not about passively accepting violence, it is turning the cheek to force the master to treat one as an equal peer. In the second part of the reading, "if someone takes your cloak, give him or her your tunic too" regarded the crime of public nakedness. In this culture, if a person caused another to be naked, the person causing the nakedness would be charged a fine. So Jesus is saying, if someone wants to take your cloak, give them your tunic too so that they have to pay the fine of making you go naked. Again, it is a confrontation that takes power from the aggressor. Lastly, "if someone asks you to walk a mile for him or her, walk a second." This related to the laws governing soldiers who were allowed to make a slave walk a mile for them but they could not demand more than that. In this case, if the person went more than a mile, the soldier would be fined. Each of these examples is about confronting the wrongdoer in such a way as to bring people face to face with each other and deal with each other as equals. That, Jesus says, is how we love our enemies. That is how

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## WOC Welcomes New Board Members

WOC introduces the newest members of our national Board of Directors. We extend our appreciation to the WOC members across the United States who voted in this year's election.

### Kate Childs Graham, Washington, D.C.

It is my pleasure to serve on WOC's National Board of Directors. I am constantly struck by the resonance I feel with WOC's objectives. My strong academic knowledge of the Roman Catholic Church and Catholic social teaching has enhanced my dedication to changing our church. I focused my graduate degree on gender and Catholicism, where I examined the interrelation of church policy and public policy, both domestic and international, in dealing with gender equality. I believe that while religion, specifically Catholicism, can be one of the primary causes of gender-based discrimination, it can also be the foremost means of ending this discrimination. I also work with other young, progressive Catholics around the country, and am well positioned to assist in organizing and bringing more young people to the table. I look forward to bringing my academic fervor for gender and Catholicism, my creative and innovative thinking, and my passionate dedication to promoting change in our church to the service of the WOC Board of Directors.



### Drina Nikola, Evanston, Ill.

I'm a cradle Catholic, born of Croatian Catholic immigrants in Cleveland, Ohio in 1962. The oldest of four girls, I attended parochial schools where I was active in music ministry, playing the guitar and singing for folk masses. I continued with music ministry through college and for a few years afterward I moved around the country quite a bit, but I always sought out Catholic parishes to call my spiritual home.

In 1990, my family moved to Evanston, Illinois where I have lived since. I soon became involved with St. Nicholas Parish, participating in liturgical ministries: Art and Environment, Liturgy Board, lecturing, and our church's renovation committee. At St. Nick's, we have a long-standing group of wonderfully spiritual women who gather throughout the year on Saturday mornings to reflect on the weekly scripture readings. We share what opens us for our lives and the life of our church. Sharing, listening, being open to spirit Sophia washing over us during these gathering times, is a powerful experience for each of us. It was in this group where I initially felt the pull to become involved with standing for women priests in the Catholic church. The first initiative was the WOC "Counter" Billboard Campaign in Chicago in 2000, and I have been an active member of WOC since. As a new WOC Board member, I'm looking forward to helping plan more



activities that will have a powerful impact on our organization and the future of our church.

### Mary Frances Smith, Long Lake, Minn.

I am a registered nurse who has worked in psychiatry for thirty-five years. I have been married to my husband for thirty-two years, and we have three adult sons and an adult stepdaughter, who is married and has given us our first grandchild. I recently earned a master of arts degree in theology. My thesis is called *The River and the Rock: Women Shaping Church*. I am a member of Roman Catholic Womenpriests and on May 4, 2008, I was ordained a Roman Catholic woman deacon. The church, to a great degree, framed my spiritual life from my birth. I perceived myself, at a very deep level, to be doubly in the margins of the church—female and not a member of a religious community. But with devout Roman Catholic parents of German and Slovenian heritage, the culture and beliefs of the church were inextricably woven through me.

My belief in the progress of women in the Roman Catholic Church is very deep and strong. This progress is absolutely necessary and it is, in fact, happening. Being an active participant in WOC's work provides me with new opportunities to continue the work that I love. I appreciate this chance to offer my service on the WOC Board of Directors.



From the Executive Director...continued from page 2

WOC will continue to be an authoritative voice in the media on sexism, women's ordination and women's leadership in the Church. Reaching out to young women and retaining young adult leadership on our staff and Board of Directors, and among our membership and activists will also remain a priority. Looking forward, we will also continue to improve WOC's public image with a new and updated website and promotional materials. WOC will be involved in planning the Women's Ordination Worldwide conference that will take place in Los Angeles, Calif. from July 15-18, 2010. Additionally, we have plans to gather a team that will develop a strategic plan for the future of WOC that is

committed to ensuring that the organization embodies the just and egalitarian principles we work to infuse into the Church and society.

I am proud of the advances WOC has made in the past four years, and I'm confident in the direction WOC is moving. The next Executive Director will take WOC to the next level and I look forward to seeing WOC reach new and greater heights. Kate Childs Graham, a WOC Board member has written about the vision and process for the transition in the next article on this page.

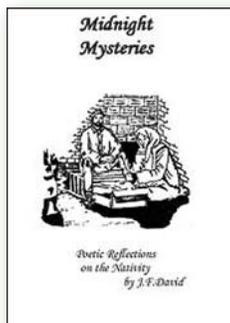
I know you will continue to support WOC in these endeavors. The need for feminist, women-centered leadership in the Catholic

Church is increasingly more evident, and our Board is strong, the staff is mission-led and incredibly talented, and our membership is as committed as ever. Your support has sustained us through both great and difficult times, and I am so grateful I have had the opportunity to serve you and the movement in this way. I am excited to remain a part of the WOC community, albeit in a new capacity, as we work toward Jesus' example of radical equality and justice for women.

With love and gratitude,  
Aisha S. Taylor  
Executive Director

**J.F. David. *Midnight Mysteries: Poetic Reflections on the Nativity*. Harwich Port, MA: Evensong Publications, 2008. 93 pp., \$11.95.**

Reviewed by Andrea M. Johnson



*Midnight Mysteries* is a collection of twenty-eight poetic and meditative, sometimes jarring and sometimes gentle, homilies which reflect on the birth of Jesus. They are inspired by the readings for Midnight Mass: Isaiah 9: 1-6; Titus 2: 11-14;

and Luke 2:1-14.

In his introduction, David explains his understanding of homily as something more than a reflection on scripture and life according to correct rubrics. He says it is like a dance or a painting, putting the soul in touch with the deeper mysteries of life, or a fire igniting the imagination of the hearer.

As I experienced these very creative and evocative reflections, I felt myself in a sort of whirlwind, being drawn personally into the scenarios, as well as being pressed for a response! Let me share a few examples.

In his reflection entitled *God Lights First the Barns*, David deliberately confuses the reader by mixing metaphors. He speaks of "hearing the darkness." He describes the darkness—"It clicks stealthily"—drawing

the hearer in, making him or her aware of the dis-ease of the human condition. When he comes to the verses which announce that a child is born to us, and that upon his shoulder *dominion* must rest, he plays turn-about with the word *dominion*, observing ... "but dominion had filled us, and there is no room," making the hearer reflect again on the dis-ease of the unredeemed human condition. "Will you see God in the homeless?" he asks. "God can be confined in unbroken hearts no longer – light must now burst forth from you and me ... hearts broken again for all to see the light."

In *Something of God in the Barn*, David paints a rather original portrait of Mary and Joseph, very different from each other, one old, the other young. Mary is described by Joseph as "willful and stubborn, scoffing at her husband's authority"; Joseph is painted as a bit of a curmudgeon, who recognizes nonetheless that there is "something of God" in their very unconventional relationship.

*To Make a Difference* is a meditation on the terror that seizes us when we realize that our comprehension of God's power displayed in the "powerlessness" of the newborn Babe means that we are called to *do something*—to make a difference *because* the Child born to us has *started* the difference.

*It's a Girl!* speaks to the promise of a church reborn through the full inclusion of women.

*Midnight Mysteries* is for homilists. It is also for thoughtful and prayerful believers, and for all spiritual seekers. It is food for the soul that results in a holy participation in the sacred moment of Christ's birth, and in all the sacred moments of our lives where God is sharing life with us. It is also a holy sending forth ... changed by the mystery, the pain and the possibility ... of sharing that God-life with others.

The Rev. Jim David, along with his wife, the Rev. Marie David, is Co-director of Evensong Ecumenical Retreat and Spirituality Center on Cape Cod, Mass. Ordained in the Roman Catholic tradition, Jim has also served as a theology instructor, and as a Roman Catholic pastor. He currently serves as a priest in the Ecumenical Catholic Church. He holds a Master of Divinity degree from the University of Notre Dame. He may be reached at jim@evensongretreat.com.

Andrea M. Johnson is a former executive director of WOC. She is a Roman Catholic Woman-priest, ordained July 14, 2007 in New York City.

*What Would Jesus Say About Excommunication?...continued from page 11*

Jesus taught us to resolve differences among ourselves. That is how to bring about justice and peace.

Paul then adds to this teaching in his letter to the Romans. He emphasizes loving one another as the supreme commandment and iterates the basic Jewish law: love your neighbor as yourself. That too, is about process, which is to say, it is not only that we are called to love each other but that when we are called to love each other, we do it as we would want to be treated—the famous golden rule.

So when someone sins against us, we are to go to them and treat them as we would want to be treated. And we treat each other this way at every stage of the dispute. We

treat them this way at the beginning when it is just one-on-one; we treat them this way when we join with others with mounds of evidence; and we treat them this way when we go to the public courts. Equally important, it is not about shunning or excommunication. Jesus welcomed the Gentile and the tax collector even as he called them to accountability and right relationship. He warned the wicked of their evil ways and taught us how to approach one another in seeking justice. It's about people meeting each other one-on-one and leveling the playing field. It's about treating each other as we would like to be treated.

We don't need to be attached to the results. Jesus tells us to get together and pray about

injustice and where two or three are gathered in that prayer, the Holy One is there too. We need to follow our convictions and beliefs and address wrongdoings up close and personally in ways that are justice-seeking and peaceful. And when just a few of us are gathered in the name of Christ in those prayers and actions, Christ will indeed be present.

Diana Wear is an editor of *NewWomen*, *NewChurch*, and she advocates for women's ordination wherever she works or plays. She has a day job in Berkeley, preaches in San Francisco, and serves on the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice in Oakland, Calif.

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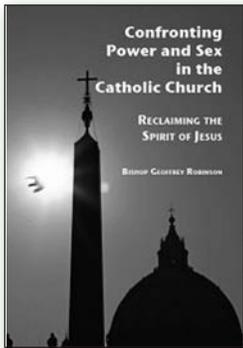
In our continuing efforts to keep things digital and dematerialized whenever possible, WOC now offers our members the option to download *New Women*, *New Church* directly from our website.

If you are an active member, you can get your username and password to log into our "For Members Only" section on our new website by emailing ehanna@womensordination.org and note in the subject: "Go Green." You can also receive membership notices and donation acknowledgements electronically.

If you're not a member, see the back cover for a membership form or see page 14 for renewal and giving options.

**Bishop Geoffrey Robinson. *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church. Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus.* Foreword by Donald Cozzens. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008. 307 pp. \$16.95 pbk.**

Reviewed by Diana Wear



A veteran Roman Catholic insider, retired Australian Bishop Robinson has dug into the sex abuse crisis to both understand its causes as well as offer solutions. Bishop Robinson's credentials are not simply hierarchical and institutional. From 1994

through 2003, he was appointed by the Australian bishop to a leadership position to deal with this crisis, and, in the course of listening to the stories of the many victims, he came to realize that he, too, had been sexually abused. His was not clerical sexual abuse, but it served as the impetus for him to do his own work dealing with the trauma. And one strongly senses that those revelations helped form his responses laid out in this book. Bishop Robinson shows both pastoral leadership as well as deep compassion for those who suffered at the hands of church leaders. And it doesn't stop at the sex abuse: as the title suggests, Robinson sees the link to power, and of course, for WOC readers, how this relates to women's ordination.

The book starts from the horror of the sex abuse crisis with the express intent to get to the bottom of the problem for healing, health, growth, and forward movement for the church. And by church he means *all* the people of God. His main premise is that we need to completely revamp our entire approach to and understanding of sexuality—whether it is the physical acts of sex, our understanding of sex through gender, or sexual orientation—and that first

and foremost, all of these are about people in relationship with other people and related to our God who desires love, praise, and mercy. He effectively turns asunder the ideas of sexual sins as being against a god who punishes or judges or ever requires a pound of flesh. This doesn't mean anything goes, rather our sexuality is part of our humanity and as Christian humans we need to relate to each other with love, mercy, and care in the light of our God who is loving, merciful, and caring. In some ways it seems obvious, but what Robinson does in his book is dig into our history to look at the genesis of the church's understanding and teaching of sexuality and he re-frames it in the light of people relating to each other rather than in the sternness of a vengeful god who would even perceive people's sexuality as an important factor to judge.

Robinson then extends this theology to many other areas of church governance. He is not biting, hostile, or mocking. Bishop Robinson comes to us as an experienced insider, knowing the key characters in power, the dynamics at work in the system, the history, the process (or lack of good ones), and he endeavors at all times to diagnose the problems, and offer solutions. Bishop Robinson, like Jesus, has merely come to remind us that we have a God who desires love, praise, and mercy, not sacrifice.

For those keen on women's ordination, Robinson shows that he understands what we have been up against as well. In Chapter 6, he devotes a section on papal infallibility that he entitles, "Gradual Infallibility," where he details how the Vatican simply uses the tactic of repeating certain teachings even if they are contradictory and unconvincing to the People of God. Further,

Bishop Robinson shows not only his understanding of the issues but also the intransigence of the institutional arm of the church. He says: "Thirdly, the argument that constantly repeated opinions become infallible is exactly the argument that has been applied to the two most controversial papal statements of the last forty years—those on contraception and on the ordination of women. It is a claim used to add further authority on two papal teachings that, as a simple matter of fact, have failed to convince by the force of the argument used in them. But these two issues have today become the touchstone of orthodoxy. I find it strange that, if I were to tell a cardinal in the Vatican that I was struggling with doubts about the existence of God, I would receive sympathy and support. But if I were to tell the same cardinal that I had doubts about papal teaching on contraception and the ordination of women, I would receive a stern lecture on loyalty to the pope." (p. 122)

There are many important books on the sex abuse crisis but this book adds to that corpus in some new and refreshing ways. Robinson connects the foundation of the church's understanding of sexuality to the difficulty the men in the Vatican have with power and dealing with problems. And equally important, Robinson points the way to healing and dealing with this issue both from the top (not just a papal statement but the need for actions) as well as reformulating the church's understanding of sexuality.

*Diana Wear is a former WOC board president, and currently serves as both Book Review Editor and as an editor for NWN. She lives in Richmond, Calif.*

## Support WOC's Ministries...How Can I Help?

### Join WOC or renew your membership today!



Visit [www.womensordination.org](http://www.womensordination.org) to make a secure donation online.



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Call the WOC office today at (202) 675-1006.

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**Send monthly checks:** WOC will provide twelve envelopes for you to mail your monthly check. Simply contact our office and we'll send your donation envelopes.

## Upcoming events

### October

**October 15-19: Join WOC in Rome for a WOW Action:** WOC joins Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW), beginning on the feast day of Saint Theresa of Avila, October 15, for a press conference. We will call for women's ordination into an inclusive and accountable Roman Catholic Church. To RSVP or for more information, contact Erin Hanna at 202-675-1006 or ehanna@womensordination.org.

**October 22: WATER—Deep Peace of Changing Seasons to You,** Silver Spring, Md. RSVP annabeth@hers.com

### November

**November 1: RCWP—Ordinations of four Catholic women,** Chicago, Ill. All are welcome, but admission is by invite only. To receive an invitation, email Laura Singer at lts72@aol.com.

**November 6-9: North Atlantic Federation for a Renewed Catholic Priesthood (NAF) Congress,** Vienna, Austria. WOC is a member of the NAF and has delegate status in the organization. At the Congress, Dagmar Celeste will represent WOC on a panel along with Bill Manseau of CORPUS. For more information, contact Lambert van Gelder: gelder-lambert@planet.nl.

**November 7-9: Join WOC at Call to Action National Conference—Our Earth, Our Church, Ourselves: Embrace the Beloved Community,** Milwaukee, Wisc. **YFN Caucus** on Friday, Nov. 7 and **WOC Caucus** on Saturday evening, Nov. 8: For more information on WOC events at CTA, contact Erin Hanna at 202-675-1006 or ehanna@womensordination.org. For more information on the conference, visit [www.cta-usa.org](http://www.cta-usa.org).

**November 19: WATER—A Woman's Harvest Festival,** Silver Spring, Md. RSVP annabeth@hers.com

**November 21-23: WOC at SOA Watch Protest,** Fort Benning, Ga. For more information, contact Erin Hanna at 202-675-1006 or ehanna@womensordination.org.

### December

**December 12: Celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe**

**December 17: WATER—Winter Solstice as from the Womb of Night,** Silver Spring, Md. RSVP annabeth@hers.com

### February

**February 27–March 6, 2009: El Salvador: Land of Martyrs.** A GLBT-friendly pilgrimage to El Salvador with Sr. Jeannine Gramick, SL. For more information, contact Sr. Jeannine at 301-864-3604 or gramick@juno.com.

### March

**March 25, 2009: World Day of Prayer for Women's Ordination.** Events nationwide. For more information, contact Erin Hanna at 202-675-1006 or ehanna@womensordination.org.

### July

**July 15-18, 2010: Women's Ordination Worldwide Conference,** Los Angeles, Calif. Look for more information to come soon.

*To have your event listed in this calendar, contact Erin at ehanna@womensordination.org or call 202.675.1006. For a full listing of events, visit [www.womensordination.org](http://www.womensordination.org) and click on "Calendar."*

### *Father Roy Bourgeois's Homily at the Ordination of Janice Sevre-Duszynska...continued from page 4*

see the hierarchy of our church abusing their power and causing so much suffering among women. Jesus was a healer, a peacemaker, who called everyone into the circle as equals.

The ordination of women in our church is a moral issue and will not go away. A growing number of people of conscience and faith feel a responsibility to address this issue. I would very much appreciate knowing how my brothers and sisters in our Maryknoll community feel about women being ordained and respectfully ask that you write Maryknoll News and express your views. In peace, Roy Bourgeois, MM

Now I have been a Catholic priest for 36 years and I must say, more than ever before, I am convinced that women should be ordained in the Catholic church.

The hierarchy will say, "It is the tradition of the church not to ordain women." I grew up in a small town in Louisiana and often heard, "It is the tradition of the South to have segregated schools." It was also "the tradition" in our Catholic church to have the Black members seated in the last five pews of the church.

No matter how hard we may try to justify discrimination, in the end, it is always wrong and immoral. As Reverend Nancy Taylor of Boston put it, "Prejudice in liturgical clothing is still prejudice."

We can go to the Scriptures and find numerous passages that support the ordination of women in the church. In Romans 16:7, we read that in the early church of Rome, a woman named Junias is described by Paul as "an apostle" who was imprisoned for spreading the faith. In Galatians 3:26-28, we read, "It is through faith that you are God's sons and daughters. ... There is neither male nor female. In Christ Jesus you are all one." And in the Gospels we read that after Jesus was crucified, he chose to appear first to Mary Magdalene and other women. Jesus told the women to go and bring the news of resurrection to the men who, out of fear, were hiding behind locked doors.

Janice has been very active in the SOA Watch movement. As a high school teacher, she participated in a nonviolent protest against the SOA and was sent to prison for three months. Janice and the more than 250 others in our movement who have gone to prison are called, "Prisoners of Conscience."

Conscience is something very sacred. It gives us a sense of right and wrong and urges us to do the right thing. Conscience is what compelled Franz Jagerstatter to refuse to enlist in Hitler's army. On this day, August 9, 1943, this humble farmer was executed for following his conscience.

Conscience is what compelled Rosa Parks to say, "No, I cannot sit in the back of the bus anymore." Conscience is what compels Janice Sevre-Duszynska and the other women to say, "No, we cannot deny our call from God to the priesthood." And it is our conscience that compels us to be here today. How can we speak out against the injustice of our country's foreign policy in Latin America and Iraq if we are silent about the injustice of our church here at home?

Janice, all of us present in this church today, and the many who cannot be here, support you and walk in solidarity with you in the struggle for peace, justice and equality.

May our loving God bless you in your ministry and journey of faith.

## WOC Merchandise

### T-Shirts – 100% Sweat Shop Free

Front: "Good Catholic Girls  
Support Women's Ordination!"

Regular Tees: \$15  
(TS4, Black or Pink: S, M, L, XL, XXL)

### Purple Stoles

*Made by women in Nicaragua*

The purple stole was adopted as the international symbol for women's ordination in 2001. The women who made these stoles are a part of a sewing cooperative in Nicaragua called Taller de Corte y Confección Mujeres (Women's Workshop of Cutting and Sewing). WOC thanks Mary's Pence for connecting us with these women. (Item St1, \$15 ea.)

**Buttons** - Great for stimulating conversation

- Ordain Women (Item Bt1) \$2 (purple)
- Priestly People Come in Both Sexes (blue) (Item Bt3) \$2



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To place your order, call 202.675.1006, email [woc@womensordination.org](mailto:woc@womensordination.org) or visit our website to print an order form. Standard shipping and handling costs (\$3 for most orders) are not included in the price of the merchandise. Allow up to three weeks for delivery.

## Like what you read? Join WOC today! Women's Ordination Conference — Membership Form

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**I am called to ordination.**  Yes  No  Maybe  I have included names and addresses of friends who might be interested in WOC.  
 I am in my 20's or 30's and would like information about Young Feminist Network.

Can we trade your name with other church organizations for use in direct mail campaigns?  Yes  No

Can we give your name and contact information to WOC members in your area who are trying to do grassroots organizing?  Yes  No

*\* Only requests from WOC members and donors are honored. In addition, the data will be limited to a reasonable geographic region solely for the purpose of local organizing.*

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