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New Women New Church

Winter/Spring 2010

A Voice for Women in the Catholic Church

Centennial Celebration

Mary Jeremy Daigler, RSM

I imagine that there is a national group of men who discriminate against women and will not recognize them as equals. **Imagine** that you have been working, lobbying, praying, writing, witnessing, and "agitating" for years to change this unjust policy. **Imagine** that your mother, aunts, and grandmothers before you had all tried their best in the same endeavor. One morning you wake up to headlines proclaiming that your work has succeeded and that the policy has been overturned. What would you do for the rest of the day?

Well, May Kendall and Gabrielle Jefferey had that very experience in London in 1911, when women were finally allowed to vote. Having achieved one goal they immediately began to build on their national success and moved toward the "logical" next step: work toward ordination of women in the Catholic Church. St. Joan of Arc had been their inspiration and patron in the years of struggle for the vote, so they retained that name as they worked for women's equality in the Roman Catholic Church.

There is a direct line from Kendall and Jefferey to you and your work for women's ordination today. At first a few women in the U.S. and in Europe joined the U.K. St. Joan's Alliance and implemented the mission as lone voices in their respective wildernesses. Frances Lee McGillicuddy was one of those relentless voices and in the 1970s she formed the U.S. branch of the St. Joan's Alliance. Independently of them, a young college student named Jeanne Barnes, initiated The Deaconess Movement in 1970. Unable to continue to serve the

Celebrating 100 Years

numerous constituents who emerged, Jeanne asked Mary B. Lynch to take it on. Within a few years Lynch shifted her focus from the diaconate to the priesthood, organized a group of influential individuals to brainstorm with her concerning women's ordination and the result was the Detroit gathering in 1975. When Mary Lynch became unable to continue, she asked Rosalie Muschal Reinhardt to organize and co-ordinate the event, and Nadine Foley, O.P. to chair the conference. Nadine did so and after Detroit she and Rosalie worked with Dolly Pomerleau and others to create a temporary structure and process which soon gave birth to WOC.

As you can see from the family tree described above, the life-line will be 100 years old in 2011. That centenary birthday will be a perfect opportunity for you to initiate creative and energetic celebrations of all sorts, and you can look to WOC to develop some special initiatives. Women (and a few men) have been working for equality in the Roman Catholic Church for 100 documentable years. **Imagine!**

Mary Jeremy Daigler, RSM is a historian engaged in the research on the U.S. Catholic women's ordination movement.

Save-the-Date!

Join WOC in Rome June 8-10

WOC will join women's ordination advocates from around the world to call for the full and equal participation of women in the Roman Catholic Church, including ordination as deacons, priests and bishops.

The press conference on June 8th will launch three days of events, including a demonstration at Saint Peter's Square immediately following the press conference. The events will coincide with the Vatican sponsored "World Meeting of Priests" in St Peter's Square.

For more information, contact Clarissa at woc@womensordination.org or (202) 675-1006

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Erin Saiz Hanna



Dear WOC Members,

As spring brightens our street corners, I hope this issue of *NewWomen, NewChurch* will also brighten your spirits.

Our feature story takes us on a historical journey of the past one hundred years when women's ordination advocates first started on the mission for equality and justice in our church. As we recall the foremothers that went before us, we are invigorated by their courage and inspired by their vision. As you continue to read through the subsequent pages of this edition of *NWNC*, I am positive you will find equal inspiration in the stories of WOC supporters who continue to advocate on behalf of women.

On page 3, Mary E. Hunt calls to attention the recent sex abuse crisis and the dangers of an all-male hierarchy in her piece "Father Does Not Know Best: How To Fix the Catholic Church."

Steve Paris shares his reflection of a recent *Shatter the Stained Glass Ceiling with Fr. Roy*

on page 9. Fr. Roy continues to visit cities across the U.S. sharing his story to support women's ordination.

"Then Came the Nuns" on page 5 highlights the power and voice of U.S. women religious, who despite the current investigation by the Vatican, prophetically challenged the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops when they spoke publicly in support of universal healthcare.

Jamie Manson brings to our attention the work of young people and their calls to religious work in her commentary "No Vocation Crisis" on page 6. Following this piece, you will find the stories of women who have prophetically answered their calls to priesthood through RCWP and the Ecumenical Catholic Communion on pages 8 and 10. Finally on page 11, Lorraine Lynch Nagy shares her interview with Ida Raming on her reflections of the first days of RCWP.

I hope you enjoy the beauties of spring and the spiritual springs of perspectives in this issue of *NWNC*. I look forward to sharing with you news about our upcoming event in Rome in our summer edition. Stay tuned and thank you for your support!

Your Sister in Christ,

Erin Saiz Hanna
WOC Executive Director

Erin Saiz Hanna

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.

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Father Does Not Know Best: How To Fix the Catholic Church

By Mary E. Hunt

From an all-male hierarchy that trains priests to look only to their superiors for guidance, to a theological emphasis on secrecy, to the "creeping infallibility" that confers divine authority on church leaders, the Catholic church needs reform—at a structural level. And it's up to the laity to begin the process.

Recent revelations of widespread sexual abuse by priests and cover-ups by bishops in Europe, as well as the abuse of deaf children in the United States, are signs of the implosion of Roman Catholicism. The price has been incalculable in human terms. A flatter, rounder, more inclusive community is the only possible way forward.

Allegations that Pope Benedict XVI acted with the same impunity as other bishops in the failure to bring perpetrators of abuse to justice, and instead protected the institutional church's reputation by secrecy, add up to the need for substantive structural change in Catholicism. Simply changing those in leadership, even adding women to a hopelessly flawed structure, will not be sufficient. A new, horizontal model of church led by teams of competent ministers who are accountable to local and wider communities is the best way to assure that these scandalous, damaging practices are ended.

The details of the clergy sexual and physical abuse of children make clear that the crimes that went on for decades were not done by a few bad apples who spoiled the bushel, as Vatican officials have long insisted about the perpetrators. Rather, what comes into sharper and sharper focus with each new hideous revelation is that the hierarchical model of the Church, with absolute authority vested in a few individuals at each step up the ladder (a priest in his parish, a bishop in his diocese, a pope in Rome) is in and of itself a danger zone. Human organizations, especially religious ones, need more checks and balances to assure that those who have unfettered access to the young and privileged relationships with the spiritually vulnerable are monitored. Helping professions have codes of conduct, professional associations, and other means of making sure their practitioners are on the up and up. Roman Catholicism needs the same. It will never happen without structural changes.

Here's How it Works

The clerical culture that arises from and permeates the Roman Catholic Church is a key part of the noxious mix in which hundreds of thousands of people around the world were victimized by their religious leaders. Jim Jones and his followers look like kids at camp by comparison. Here is how it works.

A boy (not a girl, mind you) goes to seminary to become a priest. He is housed in an all-male environment often from an early age. He is taught to respect and follow the dictates of his professors. He is expected to swallow the theology they spoon-feed him even if it flies in the face of reason and experience—as much of official Catholic theology of sexuality does. He is rewarded for such behavior by the same clergy who decide whether he is "fit matter" for ordination. He is judged whether he is compliant enough to be part of the "collegium" into which he will be welcomed as a priest, that is, whether he is trustworthy enough to play the clerical game. He is well advised to follow the program, conform to the norms, and do what he is told if he wishes to be successful; which is defined as being ordained, made a pastor, or sent on for further study, and eventually becoming a reliable colleague in a closed circle that continues to indoctrinate the next generation of clergy. This mindset is formed early and reinforced throughout a priest's career.

Priesthood is a male-only society where those who are higher in rank judge those who are below them. No one else's judgment matters—not lay colleagues, not women, not other ministry professionals, and certainly not the parishioners. Catholic clergy belong to a small, shrinking, and exclusive club. Many socialize with one another, vacation together, sometimes date each other. They project a holiness and piety that may or may not correspond with reality. They are also the object of plenty of projections.

Lay people, including all sisters or nuns, are entirely outside of and considered below the clergy in ecclesial status. Until very recently, most high-level jobs in a diocese were reserved for clergy. For example, personal secretaries of bishops were often priests who were schooled in the ways of the system and in turn rewarded for behaving according to the rules. It is obvious how in such a system of

collusion and cover-up of illegal behavior was easy to pull off, unquestioned by those who had been taught it was business as usual.

Creeping Infallibility

Two Roman Catholic theological confusions make the problems even more complex. One is the notion of secrecy and the other is a misunderstanding of infallibility. There is a culture of secrecy in Catholicism that is rooted in the "seal of the confessional." That means that when a Catholic confesses a sin to a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation the priest is bound by Canon Law not to reveal the content of that sin under any circumstances. This is meant to assure the confidentiality of the sacramental process. Violations of the seal are taken seriously. However, in the case of criminal activity, the confessor is allowed (one would hope morally compelled) to encourage the penitent to turn him/herself in to civil authorities. Since chances of that are nil in most cases, it does not happen.

In clerical circles, the confessor is only one person in a wide network of colleagues, many of whom know about offenses and would not break the seal by reporting a perpetrator. But instead of this happening, there is a mistaken extension of the "seal of the confessional" to other authorities in the same system who assume for a variety of wrong reasons—the good of the institution, the prevention of scandal, the hope that the perpetrator will rehabilitate himself, and so on ad nauseum—that secrecy is the way forward. This is a theological error that needs immediate correction.

Another piece of the problem is the dogma of papal infallibility. This is a technical theological matter declared in 1870. In essence, it means that when the pope promulgates a teaching to the whole church on matters of faith or morals claimed to be based in divine revelation, the teaching is free of errors. Thankfully, this convoluted reductionistic approach is not invoked often.

However, the mere idea of papal infallibility has been enough to make many people think: a) the pope does not make mistakes, b) everything the pope says is right, c) the pope knows best the mind of God. This is referred to as "creeping infallibility," and it is a disease rampant in

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No Vocation Crisis

By Jamie L Manson

The most recent statement to shame and blame young Catholics for the crisis in vocations comes courtesy of Cardinal Franc Rodé, the man overseeing the much-publicized investigation of U.S. women religious. According to the Catholic News Service's account of the speech, "Rodé said it was undoubtedly more difficult today for all religious orders to find young people who are willing to break away from the superficial contemporary culture and show a capacity for commitment and sacrifice."

Cardinal Rodé, like a majority of his counterparts in the clergy, would have us believe that young Catholics have contributed to the crisis of religious life by adopting a secularist mentality and embracing a culture of death.

Having spent seven years at a divinity school (three years as a student, four years as an administrator) and five years in non-profit work, Rodé's comments demonstrate for me, once again, how sadly out of touch Vatican officials are with the hearts and minds of many young adults.

Divinity schools and seminaries have no lack of applicants to the Master of Divinity degree programs. In fact, at Yale Divinity School, Harvard Divinity School, and Union Theological Seminary in New York, Roman Catholic students represent the second largest denomination on campus. In my time at Yale, I met Protestant students who admired the way in which the church's dynamic interplay of its sacramental life and social justice doctrine created schools, hospitals, retreat centers, and relief missions that have upheld a critical fabric of society. But the church's failure to turn its compassion and justice inward — especially toward women and LGBT people — forced these seminarians to turn away from committing to Catholicism.

And yet, not once have I heard a member of the Catholic clergy admit any accountability for the vocation crisis. Instead, they lament, as Cardinal Rodé did, that "the dominant culture, which is a culture of death, of violence and of abuse," has overcome newer generations.

In order to understand why young people are turning away from religious life, Cardinal Rodé and his associates would do well to consider the extent to which the

Roman Catholic institution has contributed to such a culture.

For nearly a decade, young Catholics have been formed with thoughts and images of the church's grim history of sexual abuse cover-ups, a past that seems to stretch back more than fifty years. It took seven years before the pope, with a mere few sentences and a secret meeting with pre-selected victims, addressed the crisis.

Newer generations of Catholics grew up in a church where their divorced parents were denied Communion, they or their sisters were barred from serving at the altar, and their gay uncles and lesbian aunts were called an "abomination."

Many young Catholics were raised during the height of the AIDS crisis in our country, and they have learned about the pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa. The disease has killed over 25 million people since 1981 and orphaned more than 14 million children in Africa. The institutional church has largely remained silent about the crisis, and refused to consider distributing life-saving condoms to poor countries that have been devastated by HIV and AIDS.

This is the church in which young adult Catholics have grown up. It is the church that has told them that if they are women they are not allowed to pursue ordained ministry; if they are openly gay or desire the possibility of marriage and children, they are not welcome to religious life. And, yet, young adults are supposed to feel guilty for not wanting to make a vow of obedience to the institution and its superiors. Church leaders might be shocked to learn that by fleeing the church, some young people feel that they are fleeing abuse and spiritual violence.

It would be hard to measure the loss to society that is created by the decline in vocations to religious life. When I served at a Catholic parish in Greenwich Village, I had the honor of working side by side with several of the Sisters of Charity who cared for, fed and dressed the wounds of AIDS patients at St. Vincent's Hospital in the 1980s. They embraced this ministry at a time when everyone else was afraid to breathe the same air as these individuals. I know the impact that these women had and still have, and I know that their work was made possible by their devotion to religious life and Jesus' gospel message of radical inclusion and service.

I also know of countless young adults who are doing similar work with equal levels of commitment, passion, and sacrifice by laboring in homeless and domestic violence shelters, hospitals and hospices, group homes and addiction recovery centers. They are working abroad in war-torn squalor, and locally in rundown, inner-city basements. They are empowering poor mothers, educating children, aiding undocumented immigrants, planting rooftop gardens in the projects, and feeding the hungry in pantries, soup kitchens, and nursing homes.

So many young people are honoring the dignity of human life, fighting for justice, and sacrificing to serve the margins of society. By doing this they are, whether consciously or unconsciously, consecrating their lives to the work of the gospel. Most young people probably do not realize that they are doing the work mandated by Jesus. Sadly their notion of Jesus and Christianity is too often one of fundamentalism, exclusion, and judgment. They would be much more likely to know where the church stands vis à vis their sexual practices than they would understand that they were doing the traditional work of the church.

This is tragic, since newer generations would benefit from learning from those who have lived in religious life for decades. Sisters and brothers could teach new generations about the importance of meditations and retreats for fostering strength and endurance, and they could guide them on the importance of community to uphold and support them.

But newer generations do not go where they and their loved ones are not wanted. Since they were not formed in the church in the ways of previous generations, they do not feel compelled to give their lives to a church that has created so much harm. Instead, they are committing themselves to organizations that welcome their gifts and their service, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or marital status.



Jamie L. Manson

continued next page

Review of Current Art Exhibit "Women and Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America"

By Kate Bencivenga

One of the Smithsonian's newest exhibits, presented by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), highlights the many contributions of religious sisters and how these have impacted our society. "Women and Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America," invites visitors to journey through their beginnings as immigrants to America, the first arriving in 1727 when the Ursuline Sisters settled in New Orleans. The exhibit emphasizes how religious women have developed creative and deliberate support systems for those residing on the margins of society as intertwined with America's own history, from Westward expansion through the present day. Whether national crisis or local issues, this exhibit highlights how Catholic sisters continue to be responsive through their care and progressive work toward a more just world. Through the creation of schools and hospitals, to desegregation and peace-making efforts, to healthcare and environmental issues, women religious have been at the forefront of countless social justice movements. Exhibit artifacts include the diary of Sister Clare Joseph Dickinson, OCD, who writes of her transatlantic journey to the U.S. in 1790; Sr. Anthony O'Connell's nurse's bag from the Civil War; a shirt belonging to Sr. Dorothy Kazel, OSU, who was slain in El Salvador; samples of a variety of habits; and numerous primary source documents and other artifacts from over 400 religious communities. Focusing on the social justice component of sisters' lives, the exhibit



Kate Bencivenga stands next to a picture of Sister Francis Warde, Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy in the U.S.

considers their unique roles within their communities through inspiring and compelling stories.

As a future museum educator and a Catholic-educated young woman, I was able to connect in a personal way with the stories displayed on the wall texts, through the photographs and videos, and through the conversations and memories that I shared with a former classmate as we visited the exhibit together. We both observed that other visitors shared a similar intrigue as us and were equally touched by the stories and artifacts of this exhibit. Wall panels leading up to the exhibit entice visitors with the little known achievements of U.S. Catholic sisters, including their connections to the Mayo Clinic (Mother Alfred Moses), the famous LOVE stamp (Sr. Corita Kent), and DNA research (Sister

Miriam Stimson, OP). Multimedia videos display the contributions since Vatican II as well as weaving interviews with a diverse grouping of sisters who currently serve as school administrators, hospital staff, and political organizers. In addition, footage of WOC advisor Theresa Kane's (RSM) historic address to Pope John Paul II in 1979 serves as a critical, public example of the importance of fulfilling the exhibit's overarching theme of steadfast commitment to social justice through religious life. While in no way a vocation-driven exhibit, encountering this exhibit leaves one with the spirit of the communion of women religious who have a long history of pioneering through service as independent advocates and examples of Christ's love.

"Women and Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America" runs through April 25th at the Ripley Center of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., and will travel to other cities through 2012. More information can be found at womenandspirit.org.

Kate M. Bencivenga is a middle school educator who is currently pursuing a degree in Museum Education at Tufts University. She was educated by Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and notes that the spirit of the sisters has been a guiding force in her life. She resides in Watertown, Mass.

No Vocation Crisis...continued from previous page

Perhaps the greatest sorrow in the church's convictions regarding the decline in vocations is its implications for the power and presence of God. Our God who is Love, Justice, Understanding, Mercy, Peace, and Hope is calling young people as loudly and clearly as ever. And young people are answering — perhaps in greater numbers than ever.

There is no vocation crisis. To suggest that there is would be to suggest that God's calling is not powerful enough to permeate

a culture purportedly awash in vapidness, violence, and darkness. The serious and sacrificial work of so many young people, against increasingly tougher odds, brings this world greater light, grace, and hope. It is sad to think that they were raised in a church that refuses to see them for who they truly are and to take the courageous risk of meeting them where they are.

Jamie Manson is a member of the national board of the Women's Ordination Conference. She received her Master of Divinity degree from Yale

Divinity School where she studied Catholic theology, personal commitments and sexual ethics with Mercy Sr. Margaret Farley. A writer based in New York, she is the former editor in chief of the Yale magazine Reflections. As a lay minister she has worked extensively with New York City's homeless and poor populations.

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And Then Came the Nuns: Healthcare Reform in the U.S.

For the past year, the United States was consumed with the healthcare debate. There were many twists and turns making it look like a good thriller. And the eleventh-hour game-changer by the Catholic nuns added its own flair of drama.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, though supportive of universal healthcare, made every attempt to derail the Senate version of bill, which was to be the final version, as they claimed that the bill left room for federal funding of abortions. They put pressure specifically on Catholic Democrats, and at the top of the pack was Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Mich.). Stupak's name became synonymous with the efforts to add abortion restrictions to healthcare reform.

Healthcare reform was looking grim. Stupak, with the backing of the bishops, seemed to have votes that were desperately needed to pass the bill. And no one was budging.

Until the Nuns Spoke Up

First, Sister Carol Keehan, president of the Catholic Health Association, wrote a letter to the House of Representatives urging their support of the bill, much to the chagrin of many bishops. She wrote, "On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,000 Catholic health care sponsors, systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and related organizations, I am writing to urge you to move quickly to enact health reform by passing the Senate-approved legislation."

Then, NETWORK, a Catholic social justice lobby led by women religious, issued a letter signed by fifty-five women religious representing 59,000 U.S. sisters. It read, "[D]espite false claims to the contrary, the Senate bill will not provide taxpayer funding for elective abortions. It will uphold longstanding conscience protections and it

will make historic new investments—\$250 million—in support of pregnant women. This is the REAL pro-life stance, and we as Catholics are all for it."

Almost immediately, conservative pundits tried to diminish the power of the NETWORK statement. The USCCB went so far as to publish a "clarification" on the statement, which said, "A recent letter from Network, a social justice lobby of sisters, grossly overstated whom they represent in a letter to Congress that was also released to media.

Network's letter about health care reform was signed by a few dozen people, and despite what Network said, they do not come anywhere near representing 59,000 American sisters."

The bishops followed this with glowing praise for another statement published by the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious. That statement, pulled straight from the USCCB talking points, sought to have the language of the Stupak Amendment included in the bill.

Several bishops have denounced the actions of the women religious who signed onto the NETWORK statement. Bishop Gerald Gettelfinger of Evansville said the statements of NETWORK and CHA were "divisive" and either "beclouded 'skitterish' pro-life politicians or gave them a cloud to hide under."

In the end, though, the women religious can be credited, at least in part, for saving healthcare reform. Catholic Democrats from Rep. Stupak to Rep. Marcie Kaptur (D-OH), who were on the fence, voted for the bill at the last vote. They voted for it even though the compromise struck was not approved by the USCCB.

Sister Carol Keehan received one of the twenty-one pens President Barack Obama used to sign the legislation into law. That speaks volumes. However, it did not come without major blowbacks.

In Providence, R.I., Bishop Thomas J. Tobin demanded that the CHA remove local St. Joseph Health Services, the only diocesan hospital, from its membership rolls, calling its affiliation with the association "embarrassing" according to Religion News Service. In a letter to Sister Carol Keehan, Tobin said the CHA leadership had "misled the public and caused serious scandal" by supporting health reform legislation that he and other bishops so adamantly opposed.

In Greensburg, Pa., Bishop Lawrence E. Brandt forbade any women religious orders, who were signatories to the Network letter, to recruit new vocations in parish and the diocesan newspapers. Sisters of St. Joseph in Baden, Pa. were immediately affected. Brandt started, "an environment of dissent from and public opposition to the positions of the U.S. Catholic bishops does not provide an appropriate seedbed for vocations."

Archbishop Raymond Burke, the head of Rome's Apostolic Signatura, is reported to have said during his keynote address at the Institute for Religious Life's national meeting at Mundelein Seminary in Illinois, that Catholic consecrated religious who openly dissent from the authority of Rome and the church's teaching on life are "an absurdity of the most tragic kind" and should cease identifying themselves as Catholic.

Despite attacks, women religious continue to hold their ground. Following Burke's attack, Sister Simone Campbell, executive director of Network, stated "because Network has interpreted health care policy and legislation for decades, we felt confident in our analysis of the bill's language." She continued, "To us, extending health care to tens of millions of people who lack access continues to be a strongly pro-life position."

For personal reasons, the author of this article asked to remain anonymous.

In Memoriam: Dr. Mary Daly

1928–2010

By Louise M. Doire

My students and I are about to complete a semester's work in a course entitled Religion and Feminism. We have been reading many of the primary texts in the field written by the mothers of feminist theology. These include Mary Daly whose *Beyond God the Father*, published thirty-seven years ago is still radical and "edgy" to my students. We are also reading a few essays that describe personal accounts of the transformation of women, who have been re-awakened through feminist awareness of the betrayal and misogyny of the Biblical traditions. When my students ask me about my feminist origins, I tell them that my own journey to "being" had begun with three books. One of them was Mary Daly's.

The section of the course that treats feminist theology must begin with Mary Daly and her brilliant and groundbreaking critique of a tradition that has elevated male imagery for God to the exclusion of all others. Her insistence that exclusive male imagery for God operates on spiritual, psychological, and political levels was made imminently conscious in me once more. On the psychological level, exclusive male images for God communicate messages that superimpose a "cosmic false naming," i.e., that by virtue of being female one is an inferior creature, so inferior in fact that the divine being cannot be imaged in female form. Add to this "the distorted mold of the myth of feminine evil" by which women have been judged as unfit to mediate between the human and the divine, unfit even to enter sacred space, unfit by virtue of their bodies to enact the blessings and rituals of the community of faith, and one has in place a system that creates within women what Mary Daly called a condition of "non-being." In *Beyond God the Father*, Mary Daly quoted a passage from anthropologist Gregory Baum's *Man Becoming*:

To believe that God is Father is to become aware of oneself not as a stranger, not as an outsider or an alienated person, but as a son who belongs or a person appointed to a marvelous destiny, which he shares with the whole community. To believe that God is Father means to be able to say "we" in regard to all men.

To which she wrote:

A woman whose consciousness has been aroused can say that such language makes her aware of herself as a stranger, as an outsider, as an alienated person, not as a daughter who belongs or who is appointed to a marvelous destiny. She cannot belong to this without assenting to her own lobotomy.

I recall a moment in my classroom when a young man became incredulous at the proposal that a human being could experience oneself as non-being. How to articulate this condition? How to express the seemingly impossible assertion that merely by reading a book one can move through the space of non-being to being? How to relate to him that even as he posed his question, some of his female classmates were moving through that very same space?

I sit here now and wonder if this short anecdotal essay is one that in any small way pays tribute to the work of a woman who spiraled into my life when I least expected it and in doing so, transformed it in ways I cannot measure. In the 1999 annotated bibliography *Feminism and the Christian Tradition*, Mary-Paula Walsh identified Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* as the watershed moment for a feminist theological literary tradition. She wrote:

The rationale for this beginning point stems from the literature on social



Mary Daly as a young theologian. Printed with permission of www.marydaly.org.

movements which argues consistently that the presence of a galvanizing text, leader or event is an early and necessary component in the successful launching of a social movement, in that without such an event, text or leader, the population frustrated by a given problem remains unmobilized as a movement resource.

She then concluded that, "it is Daly's text...which meets the criterion of a galvanizing event." And so, Mary Daly is recognized as the woman who brought the movement of feminist theology into Being. I recognize her as one of the women who brought me into being. And now, three generations removed from the publication of *The Church and the Second Sex*, I am witness to the galvanizing effect of her work as it spirals in and through the lives of countless young women and men who encounter her in the space where she spent much of her own time, in the classroom, where "The power of presence that is experienced by those who have begun to live in the new space radiates outward, attracting others." (Daly, 1973).

Louise M. Doire received a Masters in Divinity from Harvard Divinity School. She has been with the Religious Studies department at the College of Charleston since 1999 where she offers courses in *Women and Religion*, *Religion and Feminism*, and *Comparative Religious Ethics*.

Roman Catholic Womenpriests Celebrate Historic Ordinations

by Janice Sevre-Duszynska

The woman was ecstatic as she grabbed my arm. I looked at her face and understood her joy. "I don't want to leave this space," she told me. "I've waited all my life for this."

Her beaming face and comment were typical of the 250 or so people who filled St. Andrew United Church of Christ in Sarasota, Florida on Saturday, Feb. 6th for the priestly ordination of Dena O'Callaghan of Ocala and former WOC board member Katy Zatsick of Lexington, Kentucky and the diaconate ordination of Mary Ellen Sheehan of Tucker, Georgia. In addition to WOC members, many who attended the ordination belong to Catholic groups such as CTA, NOVA, and CORPUS. CORPUS offered the anointing oils and members Carol Ann Breyer and Lee Breyer presented them to the ordinands.

Dena was one of the women at the first Women's Ordination Conference in Detroit in 1975, who stood when asked, "Who feels called to a renewed priestly ministry in the Roman Catholic Church?" Said Dena: "I was convinced that I was called by God to become a priest. Consequently, I prepared academically, theologically, spiritually, and pastorally. But the obstacles of an exclusively male-dominated hierarchy did not allow me to say 'Yes' to God. A year ago my journey led me to the Roman Catholic Womenpriests movement through Bridget Mary Meehan, bishop. Today, Feb. 6, 2010, after 35 years of waiting, my 'YES' to God will resound for all to hear."

Dena has a Masters of Divinity degree, and Katy, an M.A. in Pastoral Studies. Dena and her husband John, a retired Roman Catholic priest, co-pastor a house church in Ocala. Katy has worked as a hospice chaplain, pastoral minister, and now serves the homeless in Lexington. Mary Ellen Sheehan earned an M. Div. at Notre Dame. She has worked with battered women in shelters in the Atlanta area and is presently an educator.

These were the first priestly ordinations of Roman Catholic Womenpriests in Florida. Bridget Mary Meehan, the bishop of the Southern Region of RCWP, presided and ordained the women.

She was assisted by other members of the RCWP community, including Suzanne



Ordinations in Sarasota, Florida.

Thiel of the Western Region. Judy Lee of Ft. Myers served as Mistress of Ceremony. Elly Marinaro called the women to ordination and I read the Gospel. Other womenpriests came from the Great Waters Region of RCWP, including Alta Jacko, Mary Ellen Robertson and bishop, Joan Houk. Other priests who participated were John O'Callaghan, David Marinaro, Lee Breyer, Michael Rigdon, and Phil Garrison, the pastor of St. Andrew's Church, and Dr. Jean Simpson, Regional Coordinator of the United Church of Christ.

Members of Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community (Bridget Mary's community) hosted the ordination. St. Andrew's community rents their church to the community for Saturday evening Mass. St. Andrew's welcomed the opportunity to support the equality of women in the church, said their pastor.

Dorothy Irvin is available to give her presentation if invited at other events. You can contact her at irvinalendar@hotmail.com

Jack Meehan, Bridget Mary's 85-year-old father, brought along his sax and trumpet. When the priests and deacon were ordained, he played a trumpet reverie. Among those who led the singing were former WOC board members Gerry Rauch and Ruth Steinert-Foote. They also vested Katy. Jack Duffy and Michael Rigdon of Bridget Mary's community also led the singing. Judy Lee's Good Shepherd Community along with Ruth Steinert-Foote followed liturgical dancer Sheila Carey in the welcoming and leave-taking procession as well as during the Offertory. Linda Miska of St. Andrew's provided piano and musical direction.

Longtime Chicago WOC member Maura Neuffer and her husband David also sang. Maura laid hands on Katy in blessing on behalf of the Chicago WOC community. Both Katy and Maura were members of the Chicago Seven, the women and one man who challenged the Archdiocese of Chicago in 2000 with the WOC billboard: "You're waiting for a sign from God? This is it! Ordain women." This billboard went on to Milwaukee for the month of November 2000 during the CTA conference, to Lexington, Kentucky and then on to Philadelphia. It inspired other billboards across the U.S., the New Last Supper billboards in Ireland for the Women's Ordination Worldwide Conference (WOW)

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The Year of the Priest—A Time for Change

By Steve Paris

Months ago, I had committed to provide refreshments and attend the “Shattering the Stained-Glass Ceiling” presentation at Orinda Community Church in late January. As the event got closer, I noticed that both the NFC and AFC championship games were taking place at just about the same time as the presentations. I am an avid lifelong football junkie, but I also honor my commitments so there was no getting out of it, and I settled for recording the football games for later viewing. As I drove to the event, I couldn’t help but notice how gray, cold, and wet the day was, somehow akin to the pronouncements emanating from Rome about ordaining women to the priesthood.

Once the presentations started, Christ’s light filled the church, in stark contrast to the weather outside. After roughly 150 men and women settled in, Fr. Roy Bourgeois set the stage by succinctly describing his discernment about the injustice regarding the non-ordination of women in our church. Then three women, Victoria Rue, Diana Wear, and Kate Doherty, shared their thoughts and fire with us. Absolute commitment and thirst for making their vocations real was clearly evident. I found myself becoming alternately hopeful for change and angry at Rome as I listened. As I looked around the church, I sensed that many of the attendees were experiencing similar feelings. I validated this observation later in speaking with many of them. Like Fr. Roy, as a young man, I blindly followed all that the Magisterium dictated, questioning nothing. Like Fr. Roy, as I grew, I began to question. Vatican II promised much, defining us as the church. That turned out to be hollow as the church’s leadership stayed faithful to more recent historical dictates, not the fervent will of the people.

The reasons for not ordaining women to the priesthood were simply and completely described by the presenters, most specifically by Diana Wear, explaining to us

how the reasons eventually became circular and indefensible. It doesn’t seem to matter what has been articulated as a reason for ordaining women. Rome just trots out one tired denial after another. Diana and Kate summarized the church’s position so well when they said that women couldn’t be priests just because they said so. Incredible as it seems, that’s what it comes down to, as unacceptable as that may be to a prayerful, discerning populace.

The reason that really got to me was that Mary Magdalene wasn’t really an apostle. How ridiculous. God chose her to announce the Resurrection of His Son, an announcement that was not readily accepted by the male apostles who were locked away in fear for their own safety. Yet the early church got it right, listening to the Holy Spirit, and utilizing the skills of women in leadership roles as they, working in concert with their male counterparts, grew the numbers of believers. Now, however, women in both priesthood and church leadership have been absent for centuries.

God gives each of us talents, and some of us vocations. Today, half of our population is denied the opportunity to apply those talents and vocations in the Roman Catholic Church. As I read and pray over the words of the gospels, I can’t help but notice how easily and often Jesus, though fully masculine, manifested his feminine side. Throughout Jesus’s public life, and I suspect prior to that, he focused on the marginalized and his common theme was inclusion for all. God created man and woman in God’s image, and it just makes sense that God’s will is that the talents of all of God’s children are fully utilized. Today, that doesn’t happen for half of God’s children in our church, and that’s such a waste.

To anyone paying attention, it is obvious that the shortage of priests today is critical. In Rome, it may not be evident since church attendance in Europe is so woeful.

It may become so here in the United States as well while Rome continues to ignore the promise of Vatican II that the church is the people. An overwhelming majority of those people, especially the young, believe that women should be ordained.

We hunger for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to be acknowledged by God’s Vicar in Rome. He, and his advisers, are somehow deaf to that wisdom. I will continue to pray for the ordination of women, and, as stated earlier, move between hope and anger through my prayer. All four presenters are so enlightened, and yet only one is allowed by Rome to, in their eyes, actualize his vocation. In a church in such dire need of people able to relate to the young in their quest for spiritual connection, it is just shameful that the three presenters we heard are dismissed as inappropriate. On the contrary, they, like hundreds of other women I have known and been taught by in my over sixty years, these three are eminently qualified to not just the priesthood, but some of the sacrosanct senior positions in our church. At an absolute minimum, they listen and nurture, as the Blessed Mother did during Jesus’s formative years.

In closing, shame on Rome and its tired, unresponsive, and yes, even disrespectful attitudes, conclusions and pronouncements. Cheers to Fr. Roy and the brave and insightful women who shared their passion with us last January in Orinda, California.

Steve Paris is a lifelong Catholic who attended Catholic schools in San Francisco, graduating from USF in 1966 with an economics major and a philosophy minor. Prior to his retirement in 2007, he held senior IT positions with both an international engineering company and a copier and document distribution company. As a resident of Pleasant Hill, he now works on social justice advocacy and execution issues such as Homeless and Hunger initiatives, Detention Ministry and local St Vincent de Paul service.

Go Green with WOC!

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 page 15 for a membership form.

My Story

By Reverend Mother Kathleen Jess, Ecumenical Catholic Priest

Being raised in a family that was obedient to the Pope in Rome in matters of church and education, I seldom asked questions. To obey the Pope meant simply that it was our duty to attend Mass on Sunday, Holy Days of Obligations, at Easter, and Christmas. Obedience was what mattered. Understanding why was less. In high school, I remember asking a nun during religion class, “how do we know about the Trinity?” and was informed that “it’s a mystery.” Later in life, when I asked a priest in confession to guide my confusion in faith regarding the Roman Church returning to plenary indulgences, he simply replied, “it’s a mystery.”

That remark was made during a critical time in my religious life. As a graduate student, I was studying at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington for my Master of Divinity degree, which I received in the late spring of 2000. Of the many issues facing the Roman Catholic Church such as inclusive language, married priests, women’s ordination, gay and lesbian acceptance, the rights of married couples to have or not have children, it was a set back for me that the Pope at the time, John Paul II, thought it wise to install plenary indulgences yet again. I was so dismayed I almost left my church but ultimately did not, choosing instead to wrestle with what I understood as the mystery of obedience.

Mystery in and of itself is an illusive word. I enjoy reading a good mystery. But the mystery of my faith and my obedience to it is a *living* story, with constant, new revelations. As I lived in the mystery of my faith, I learned to ask questions and to seek answers. Unknowingly, the call to priesthood was an unnamed mystery within me.

To follow Jesus as a companion in the Roman Catholic Church was difficult at best. During my teenage years and young adult life I courted with the idea of becoming a nun as that was one of the few options available to me as a woman in this tradition. But it never felt right inside of me. I realized that I was not called to that vocation. I married because that too was acceptable for a woman—of course marrying a good Catholic man. The struggle to love that man tore at me, and the marriage ended in divorce. For decades I endured the stigma of being a divorced woman, being forbidden to receive the Eucharist, my heart’s love. The mystery of my love for Jesus pulled me through this nightmare by



Reverend Mother Kathleen Jess

obedience to living in the standard of Jesus, beyond what Roman Catholic Church officials taught. It was not an easy time for my wholeness. Trust took roots within my heart.

For many years I became a wanderer, travelling north, south, east, and west. I learned a most powerful lesson in this mystery of unknowing, that if I were to follow Jesus I had to let go. If Jesus were to be found, I needed to become empty. Healing workshops aided me and my own spirituality soon began to take shape. I had moved to Long Island, NY during this time, working as a rehabilitation instructor for severely handicapped adults, (the only job I was able to land). This is where my preparation to the mystery began unfolding. While I served those who depended on others for all their needs, I discovered my capacity to simply love, and to be open to receive love. Out of this I yearned to advance my education.

I applied to the University of New York at Stony Brook and was accepted. I left my position as a rehabilitation instructor and entered the academy as an older student. I graduated with a major in psychology, and minored in philosophy. During this time I also applied, and was accepted, as a mem-

ber of the first three-year class in the newly formed Pastoral Formation Institute (PFI) for laity through the Archdiocese of Brooklyn. I was certified in basic theology and as a spiritual mentor. Discerning the spirits with mature people of faith, I was encouraged to profess temporary private vows with my confessor in 1994. My desire to be a servant disciple of Jesus had deepened and I professed vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity in the spirit of the Blessed Trinity from whence all life comes.

Teaching junior high in a parochial school followed, but the urge to move forward in education had me applying for graduate studies and in the spring of 1996 I entered Gonzaga University in Spokane. It was here that I met my Jesuit spiritual mentor, who listened well to God in my life. Through his attention to my spiritual quest, I grew in maturity in faith, and after the three years of temporary vows, went back to New York to profess final vows with my faith community there. My confessor again heard my vows and the faith community responded in affirmation.

After graduation ceremonies at Gonzaga, I drove across the country to Deming, New

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Reflections of a Quiet Revolutionary: Ida Raming Recalls the First Days on the Occasion of the Ordination of Four United States Bishops Santa Barbara, California, April 20, 2009

Interview and Remarks by Lorraine Lynch Nagy



Lorraine Lynch Nagy

In Santa Barbara, California an historic gathering of the Roman Catholic Womenpriests took place on April 19, in a quiet, rustic setting and a small chapel. Within this sacred space the first episcopal ordination within the United States, and the second in history was conducted amid joyous singing and prayer. With full liturgical splendor, four women humbly accepted the signs of their calling: a Book of Gospels, ring and cross. Dana Reynolds, Womenpriests' first U.S. bishop, sent her blessing but was not able to preside. She and her sister bishops in the United States: Bridget Mary Meehan, Joan Houck, Andrea Johnson, and Maria Regina Nicolosi have now entered a new stage in the movement, with regional representation and responsibilities for the growing cadre of candidates for the priesthood.

I wonder what must have been going through the minds of the presiding bishops during this ceremony. They had come a long way in a remarkably short time span. Christine Mayr Lumetzberger, Ida Raming and Patrician Fresen stood together at the entrance to the chapel, in readiness for what all realized to be something bigger than themselves or any of the faithful in the pews. These bishops (plus Gisela Forster, who remained in Germany) were the first to (in the words of the Civil Rights Spiritual) "wade in the waters" of this deeply challenging issue and by doing so to "trouble" the institutional church's intransigence over who in the world may "image Christ" in the sacrament of Holy Orders. From the ordination of the Danube Seven in 2002 to this ordination of four U.S. womenpriests—now womenbishops—an epic battle has been waged, quietly and with the full weight of the magisterium pitted against the determination of revolutionaries who are equally set to remain in the Catholic Church even as they struggle by example to bring it in line with the inclusive spirit of church of Holy Scriptures. As they lay prostrate before their bishops on that warm spring afternoon in California, these four women, priests since 2005-2006 and each one of them veterans of the struggle to reform from within one could feel the energy of a powerful transformation in the making. With this passing down of

apostolic succession, a rallying cry for justice, and all of the books, meetings and lectures that prepared for this moment, were quietly transforming them, from prophets to disciples of this vision of a church in the world. As each was called to give witness to her intention to be consecrated as bishop, the story of 2002-2003 played out in continuity for the movement and its prayerful, spirit filled protest against an unjust exclusion from the priesthood. How did this happen and why now? To answer this question one must follow the journey of those answering this call, and especially those called first. This ceremony was the culmination of at least thirty years of hard work, painful conflicts, and profound personal sacrifices in making this vision of an inclusive priesthood a reality for this generation.

What were these leaders thinking when they set off to take on the Roman Catholic Church on this issue? The many documents written in support of this reform, to include women in sacramental ministry, and the few published historical accounts beg more questions about the motivation of these leaders. In light of the impressive growth of the movement it is obvious that the womenpriests have touched a deep chord in the religious sensibilities of the faithful. As I followed the intricate liturgy of this episcopal ordination ceremony, I was struck by what I didn't know from the beginning. A brief conversation with Ida Raming at the reception following the service inspired me to learn more. Raming tried to explain more details about the earliest days of their reform efforts, but we were interrupted and could not continue. Quakers use the term, "a leaning" to define moments when the Holy Spirit guides the person to say or act upon an inspiration from within the heart. I had such a leaning the next day when I called the house where Ida was staying, and asked to speak with her. She graciously agreed to meet with me to finish our conversation. Fortunately for me, I had the privilege of speaking at length that day with Dagmar Celeste whose experience as one of the Danube Seven and comprehensive history of the movement steered me on the right path to getting the answers I sought. There were practical questions to raise in the privacy of

guest quarters' living room, such as how did it come about that Christine, Gisela and Ida (priests from the 2002 Danube ordination and the first to be excommunicated) were within one year approached by three male Roman Catholic bishops in full apostolic succession, to enter into full ordination as bishops? Whose decision was it to take their ordination to the next level?

Ida revealed a statement by the ordaining bishop in 2003 that may shed light on his motivation. He told her that these ordinations were part of a larger goal, not about them and their personal callings, but something more. Perhaps in the spirit of a leaning for him, he told her, "You must have full ordination, to be able to ordain priests in apostolic succession." By coming forward to assume this role, she was told, she would be accepting a very difficult mission, to save the Church which in practical terms meant returning to the practices and values of the founders. In ordaining Christine and Gisela, he passed on full power and authority (*potestas*) to ordain priests, establish communities of faith, and nourish those living out this heart-wrenching mission. In accordance with canon law, three bishops are needed to perpetuate the movement through the ordination of more womenpriests. It was simply too dangerous for him to continue. Ida was approached to join the ranks of womenbishops at this time but due to health reasons was unable. Later that same year, in 2003, Patricia Fresen accepted ordination and left her Dominican order to work with Gisela in preparing the theological foundation of womenpriests. Patricia was also told that this ordination was "not about you, but for the Church" as she accepted the call to become the third woman bishop. The movement then embarked on the next phase—a revolution by women and for the "good of all the church."

For Ida, the personal connections worked hand in hand with her academic preparation to mold her image of a Roman

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Catholic priesthood without the barrier of gender. She understood that the roots of this idea are found in the seminal documents of Vatican II. In addition to her dissertation, "The Priesthood of Women—God's Gift to a Renewed Church" her concept was developed under the guidance of leading theologians and archaeologists who helped her find her way from research to activism. "What," I asked, "moved you at this time to take the actions needed to finally ordain women as priests? Doing so meant that you would incur great losses, both personal and career, not to mention the separation from tradition, at the heart of a catholic faith that you loved?"

The answer was surprising, as it is a story that is sometimes overlooked in the recounting of what happened between 1975 and the Danube ordinations of 2002. In 1994 John Paul II decreed that women were to be permanently barred from the priesthood in that they "did not image Christ." The irony of this statement struck Ida who knew well of the ordination of women "behind the wall" in Czechoslovakia and in more modern times, the ordination of women within the Anglican Communion. She and others were convinced that women in fact and in history do image Christ in sacrament and ministry. This inclusion of women in full sacramental priesthood was for her at the core of church tradition, starting with the earliest women disciples who in house churches nurtured this new faith, and lived it in service to others.

In the years leading up to the ordinations on the Danube much was being done, to lay the foundation, in keeping with earliest church practices. But it was frustrating work, with many disappointments. As in the reformation of the 16th century, the spark that ignited the fires of this revolution came from an academic exercise which put scholars in a direct path of opposition to a top-down clergy dominated imperial church. For Ida, Christine, and the priest candidates who would follow them, they had all had enough of "no." Once they

had exhausted all channels of appeal she perceived that it was their duty to act.

As the story of her own election as bishop unfolded, Ida first reminded me of the importance to her of the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC), starting with their first convocation in Detroit, Michigan, 1975. She recalled that WOC helped her understand that defiance of an unjust law was a divine calling. Some laws need to be broken to allow the church to be true to its mission, given by Christ, to take people at the margins into full communion in the kingdom of God. This understating of Scripture and tradition would lead her group, known now as Roman Catholic Womenpriests, to take the final step of ordaining women to the priesthood. The curriculum of formation, prepared by Christine, would be used to guide the first class, Ida among them. She was joined by students from the U.S., Canada and Europe. The Danube Seven were on their way.

Three years later, on Pentecost Monday, June 5, 2006 Ida was ordained bishop in a private ceremony within her apartment in Stuttgart. As Christine, Gisela, and Patricia followed the ancient rite that day, it was for the first time in written church history that women alone called forth a sister bishop, in full apostolic succession. Ironically, what might seem to future historians as a "Hegelian moment" was not central to Ida's thinking or her decision to accept episcopal ordination during this Pentecost weekend. She had to think through the question, "Did you realize that you were the first bishop of woman born? When I translated the American (Irish) turn of phrase, she responded that yes, this is historically correct. For her, the ordination to priesthood, this breakthrough was the defining moment, and her willingness to serve as bishop had mostly to do with the needs of the growing movement for a theologian. She was qualified to do so and now healthy enough to take on this role, so she agreed.

This poignant reflection helps me realize how silently, and sometimes more practically than not, momentous changes take place. Looking back we are able to understand the meaning, but to those in the vortex of this change, the flow of events is often perceived quite differently. Some day, the faithful may barely recall that there were no women bishops before 2003 or that Ida was the first to be ordained by women, but the revolution that made this happen, she insists, was the result of careful planning. Following this ordination, she insisted, a new definition of "called to serve" took shape. Ida reminded me that womenpriests are not only about ordaining women priests and bishops, but about what her ordaining bishop exhorted her to remember—it's about the reformation of the priesthood, creating a model of service, and full inclusion of the people of God in the work of transformative Christian principles.

In watching each bishop lay hands upon the U.S. priests, joining with the congregation in asking the blessing of the Holy Spirit to guide their ministries, I understand Ida's injunction, to think about this movement as a means to recapture the divine spark of the early church and its close knit communities of faith and service. The real revolution is a quiet one, as womenpriests and bishops leave the sacred space to create communities and to lead by example, a new church, and a church in desperate need of them.

Lorraine Lynch Nagy was raised a Roman Catholic in Boston and a graduate of Emmanuel College and the University of Michigan, with degrees in Russian History. In 2006, guided by Bridget Mary Meehan, she joined the RCWP witnessing the ordination in Pittsburgh and later serving on the team that certified the votes for the election of the American RCWP bishops. She is a member of the Mother of God Community in Arlington and Living Waters in Baltimore.

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in July of 2001 and our banner in Rome during the Synod of Bishops and the Shadow Synod of the People of God in October 2001. Based on the Chicago billboard, the Rome banner was draped across a street a stone's throw from the Sistine Chapel and the pope's window—on the edge of the Vatican and Rome. It read "Ordain women Roman Catholic priests" in eight languages.

Above the sanctuary in St. Andrew's, Pastor Phil and Bob hung our banner "Roman Catholic Womenpriests.org—reclaiming our ancient heritage" with the picture of Phoebe and Community painted by South African artist Dina Cormick. It is part of her "Heroic Women in Scripture" series.

Said Maura: "It is an honor to participate in this Spirit-led movement. The presence of Spirit at the ordination was palpable."

Media from radio, television, and newspaper covered the ordination.

Before the ceremony, St. Andrew's social hall filled to capacity to hear archaeologist and theologian Dorothy Irvin present a power point presentation on the evidence of women priests in the Early Christian

Tradition. Dorothy Irvin remarked, "I want to reassure the families and friends of the ordinands that there is solid archaeological and historical documentation that women were validly ordained in apostolic succession in the early church as deacons, priests, and bishops. Those attending do not need to feel any anxiety that the women being ordained today are breaking with Catholic tradition or violating Church teaching since we know that women in the early church were validly ordained."

Many people said they were astounded by the research she has uncovered and disseminated through her calendars. Her talk galvanized the supporters as it grounded them in the history of women's priesthood within our Church.

Catholic News Agency reported that the Diocese of Venice, which includes Sarasota, issued a statement on Thursday, Feb. 4 denouncing the ordinations stating "the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has issued a General Decree stating that those who attempt to confer Holy Orders on a woman, and women who attempt to receive Holy Orders, incur automatic excommunication." The Sarasota Herald-Tribune reported that "the diocese also sent

letters to parishes saying any Catholics who support the ordination of women by attending the ceremony will be automatically excommunicated—a banishment from participating in church sacraments such as baptism and communion until forgiveness is given by a priest."

Bridget Mary Meehan responded to this in her homily: "Roman Catholic Womenpriests reject the automatic excommunication issued by the hierarchy. Pope Benedict canonized Mother Theodore Guerin, an excommunicated nun in 2005, and will canonize Mother Mary Mac Killop, another excommunicated nun in 2010. So, my sisters and brothers, we are in good company, and perhaps even on a fast track to sainthood! We are not leaving the church. We are leading the church."

Janice Sevre-Duszynska is a former WOC board member who co-chaired the Ministry of Irritation. She is also a former prisoner of conscience for the School of the Americas Watch. She was ordained an RCWP on August 9, 2008 in Lexington, Kent. Maryknoll priest Roy Bourgeois participated in her ordination Mass and gave a prophetic homily in support of women priests.

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Mexico where I moved in with a nun and began my pastoral fieldwork in order to receive my official degree. My mentor was the local parish priest who reported to my professor of studies at Gonzaga. He taught me my most valuable lesson as a servant minister, to follow through. In this rural setting, the people affirmed that I had a calling, but as a Roman Catholic woman, I did not know where that could lead.

A desire to know the language of the suffering rooted itself, and having completed all requirements for my degree, I applied to UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles to enter into their Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program obtaining my certification as a chaplain two years later. In this setting I served as a servant minister to oncology patients, and parents dealing with very sick children in the NICU. I witnessed my style of ministry under the guidance of our supervisor, and saw that I listened well to the spiritual needs of others of a variety of religious traditions and cultures. Again I was stretched beyond my Roman Catholic upbringing into ecumenical acceptance. God

is loved beyond one way of practice. My "formal" formation to the priesthood had begun.

Baptism and marriage were two sacraments at which I routinely officiated. I also anointed the sick, gave the Eucharist, and heard confessions. My priestly duties felt natural and good. Officiating at funeral and memorial services became regular occasions to lead prayer and preach. The growing faith community included the sick and the dying, colleagues, family members and their friends who in turn actively affirmed my call to ordination, a deepening mystery. Peace entered my soul. After I left UCLA I continued working as a hospital chaplain in a Roman Catholic Health Care System until I became a field hospice chaplain. In 2002 I discerned to leave the Roman Catholic Church, finding a faith community that was inclusive on the many issues facing Rome, the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. The bishop of that community listened to me and following those conversations and discernment, this formalized events that led up to my ordina-

tion to the priesthood, on October 8, 2005 at St. Paul of the Desert in Palm Springs, California. Obedience to the mystery of the call within me was named.

I am an ordained chaplain Catholic woman priest in good standing. Through the sacrament of Holy Orders I celebrate the Eucharist in homes, chapels, at weddings, anniversaries, funerals, outdoors, and in churches. I have no formal parish. As a field-priest I bring the sacraments to where the people are. The people gathered may be two, or hundreds. Whatever the place I hear the gospel, "wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am also." Jesus is my companion, He is most assuredly no longer a mystery. The gift I have received is the quieting of my mind. I go where I would not go willingly, prophetic obedience simply continues. The God of all grace called me, and I said, "yes, my Lord, yes."

Kathleen Jess is a member of the WOC National Board of Directors.

Angie O’Gorman. *The Book of Sins*. Austin, TX: Plain View Press, 2009.

230 pp. \$18.95. ISBN 978-1-935514-32-9

Reviewed by Gerry Rauch

The country is moving to the right. The Christian fundamentalists are becoming more emboldened. The Tea Party activists are garnering more press as they deride “big government” and acclaim “privatization” to be the solution to the nation’s problems. Ever wonder where this is going to end?

If the novel *The Book of Sins* has it right, our country would soon undergo a decade of demonstrations and social protests that would end in a new social order called the Restoration. Religion and business have finished their long engagement and are now clearly married, with religion controlling “faith and morals” and Transfaith (an ecclesial conglomerate), providing financial services that would go public as investment opportunities.

Such is the cautionary tale that Angie O’Gorman paints in this, her first novel. *The Book of Sins* itself holds the truths and virtues that all must live by in this new social order. The poor are given housing, mandatory jobs, “just enough” education and rules that make clear their place in society and how they should behave. Social

services are controlled through the Chamber of Commerce and police presence looms large to ensure everything remains under control, as they think it should be.

Our protagonist, Millie Parker Clee, is eighty-five years old, crusty, bitter, and lonely. Her husband died mysteriously during the World Trade Organization demonstrations in the 1990s, leaving her widowed with a young son, John. It is through Millie’s eyes that we see the decline in jobs and living conditions for the working poor as the chasm grows between rich and poor.

Through her daughter-in-law, Millie is introduced to a group of young women who are curious about how it was in Pre-Restoration times. Reluctant, at first, she agrees to teach them some history. (This group soon becomes her reason for living, as she begins to share her stories and encourages the women to speak out and value their own stories.)

The government is suspicious of such gatherings, so Millie couches them with the old-fashioned term of “bible study.” Gemma

Bradley, pastoral employee in charge of the Ward workers, saw it her duty to enforce the *Book of Sins*, gently but firmly. Thinking she would visit the women to impart the corporate wisdom and truth found in the new “good book,” she instead finds herself seduced into the comfort of women listening to and encouraging one another. This crossing of social boundaries and questioning of the status quo shakes Gemma’s world.

The Book of Sins shows us a perilous future where privatization rules supreme, religious freedom is banned, and morality and individual freedom are limited and strictly enforced. O’Gorman also shows us the triumph and the power of love—love that can bring women together to care and support one another; love that can enliven and thaw the heart of an old woman; and as in the surprising conclusion, love that empowers ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Gerry Rauch is a former WOC board member, active in Walking With Women Called, and she lives in St. Louis, Missouri where she also agitates for many social justice causes.

Father Does Not Know Best...continued from page 3

Catholicism. Not only is the pope assumed to speak for God and be right, but those down the ladder are grandfathered into the infallible realm. This accounts for a lot of the “Father knows best” thinking so dramatically portrayed in the movie *Doubt*.

Pyramid v. Pinwheel

Analysis of what went so tragically and devastatingly wrong in Roman Catholicism will take decades to sort out. But the hierarchical structure is an obvious place to start. The Vatican has displayed a strong allergy to liberation theological efforts, especially those in Latin America and among feminists, to replace the pyramid model with a pinwheel, as I have long envisioned it. It is time to dismantle the top-down structure and replace it with networks of local base communities that communicate and cooperate around the world. I realize that this is anathema to those in charge, but it would change both the players and the playing field of ecclesial power. It would involve women, married people, even young people in leadership, and it would decentralize authority.

Nothing less will be sufficient to assure the safety of children and the accountability of ministers.

Shorter-term solutions are tempting. It is clear that Pope Benedict XVI should fall on his crosier and resign. A lot of bishops should follow his lead. I am not holding my breath. But the specter of another conclave to elect his successor from the same old tired crowd of cardinal candidates is simply more of the same.

Maureen Dowd’s clever piece in the *New York Times* calling for “A Nope for Pope”, that is, a nun instead of a priest, is a fresh thought. On reflection, it changes only gender and not structure. Conservative nuns are currently doing the Vatican’s bidding in the Apostolic Visitation of progressive nuns. This makes me dubious about imputing special virtue to women in general, women religious in particular. Besides, nuns are as lay as the rest of us, so why privilege them? How easy it is for even smart columnists to fall into the old mindset! Change does not come easily or quickly.

My counsel is that we name the primary problem as structural—a hierarchy that ends in a sharp point at the top—and go about dismantling it. This doesn’t take any individual off the hook. To the contrary. But it does prevent others from taking their places. Withholding all money from parishes would give the process a jumpstart. Now that the hierarchy has imploded there is plenty of space to socialize the process of being Catholic. The task is clear. It is up to us, the laity and what would be in this model the former clergy, and we are up to it.

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WOC will join women's ordination advocates from around the world to call for the full and equal participation of women in the Roman Catholic Church, including ordination as deacons, priests, and bishops. The press conference on June 8th will launch three days of events, including a demonstration at Saint Peter's Square immediately following the press conference. The events will coincide with the Vatican sponsored "World Meeting of Priests" in St Peter's Square.

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