



New Women New Church

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A Voice for Women in the Catholic Church

Fr. Roy to Maryknoll: "I Will Not Recant"

By Erin Saiz Hanna

Fr. Roy Bourgeois, founder of the School of the Americas (SOA) Watch, is internationally known for his work to end U.S. government-funded combat training of Latin American militaries. For decades he has followed the gospel of Jesus by speaking out against war and against the torture of countless human beings, aided and abetted by the U.S. government sponsored SOA. He has been a prophetic voice for thousands of people, and on April 8th, 2011, he risked his nearly forty years of priesthood to end sexism in the Church.

A week earlier, Fr. Roy Bourgeois received a canonical warning from the leadership of his community, the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. He was given fifteen days to recant his belief that women, along with men, are called by God to serve as Roman Catholic priests. Failure to recant before the fifteen days would result in a second canonical warning from his superiors, whereupon, Maryknoll leadership would submit their charge for dismissal to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) with a request for removal from the priesthood.

With four days to go before likely dismissal, Fr. Roy told his order he would not recant his support of women's ordination.

At an hour-long vigil held outside the Vatican's Apostolic Nunciature in the pouring rain, Fr. Roy announced his stance with over one hundred of his supporters by his side. He read aloud from a letter he sent that morning to Maryknoll superior general Fr. Edward Dougherty. The vigil was organized by WOC, Call to Action (CTA), and Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP)/Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests, and endorsed by fifteen church justice organizations.

Following a blessing where supporters placed their hands on Fr. Roy's head and body, representatives from WOC, CTA, and RCWP attempted to deliver a copy of the petition, which had garnered over 6,000 signers in just one week's time. Though secret service prevented us from delivering the petition, copies were mailed to both the Nuncio and Maryknoll community.

A vigil in solidarity of Fr. Roy took place in Los Angeles on Sunday, April 10th, and multiple actions are planned for Holy Week, including a national call-in day to Maryknoll leadership on Holy Thursday. Check www.womensordination.org for upcoming actions near you.

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Erin Saiz Hanna



Dear WOC Members,

As we gather in reflective prayer this Lenten season, I find myself dreaming about the future of our church. This Lent is especially poignant for me, as it coincides with the last month of my pregnancy. My husband and I are expecting our first baby—a son—sometime around Easter. During these days of Lent, my mind can't help but jump forward to imagine what kind of life my son will have.

When he takes his first Communion, will he receive it from the outstretched hand of a woman? As he grows into adulthood and falls in love, will his relationship be blessed by his priest, whether he is partnered with a man or a woman? If he is called to the priesthood, might he be ordained by a woman bishop and hold himself accountable to the people he serves?

People will say it's too early to wonder about these things. Perhaps they are right in the sense that I should focus on our blessings day by day and not project too far into the future. However, it is not too early for the girl in CCD class who is just about

to ask her teacher if she can be Pope when she grows up. It is not too early for the male priest who cannot abide the Vatican's condemnation of women's ordination. It is not too early for the women priests and bishops who are faithfully serving their communities today.

For this reason, I am ever more committed to the work of WOC, and grateful to all of you who are building a new church. Through our support for women's ministries, our advocacy for ordination, and our media work to spread the message, we are not sitting idly, wondering when we will have a church that is welcoming to all—we are building that church together.

In this edition of *NewWomen, NewChurch* you will have a chance to read about our new planned giving program, which will ensure that our movement continues to grow from our generation to my son's generation and to the next. If you are interested in planned giving or have any questions, contact the WOC office.

Also, in this issue I am thrilled to introduce Kate Conmy, WOC's new membership coordinator. Following the birth of my baby, I will be on maternity leave until August so Kate will be in the office to support you and other WOC issues.

Thank you for your prayers for my growing family. I continually find myself overwhelmed by the love and support I receive from my WOC family.

Blessings,

Erin

Erin

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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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.

WOC Celebrates 35 Years!

By Marion Flynn

The stars certainly aligned in Chicago! The fabulous film "Pink Smoke" was ready for its debut screening, and WOC was looking for a way to honor its founders and celebrate its 35th anniversary. Board members Drina Nikola, Miriam Todoroff, and Laura Singer decided to wade in and see if there was enough interest to hold the celebration here.

The first few people they approached were not only excited but honored, and within moments, the theme was crafted: Making it Happen in Our Lifetime! And this was no ordinary fundraiser. The folks asked to call WOC contributors for special gifts had the remarkable experience of chatting with women and men who have been active in this movement for scores of years—faith-filled Catholics who love the church, but know what she misses in not ordaining gifted and called women. These conversations were nothing short of inspiring.

The team made a special outreach to members of local parishes, graduate theology schools and other Catholic communities, and the result was nearly 200 people in attendance. Even more impressive than the numbers was the spirit. In the room were heroes of the movement, sitting alongside people who had no idea that there had been a movement around for that long. Great hope, determination, and powerful stories filled the room, and we all hope there won't need to be a fortieth anniversary. In our lifetimes...

Special thanks to the filmmaker of "Pink Smoke," Jules Hart. If you were not able to join this, find this film and see it (<http://www.eyegoddess.com>). It is moving, poignant, rich in his-

tory, and powerfully describes where we are and what's before us. It helped set a beautiful tone for the night.

And warm loving gratitude to all our donors, auction donors, shoppers, caterers and to the great staff at the Irish American Heritage Center. And a shout out to the planning committee: Alan Klonoski and Erin Hanna, Drina Nikola and Terry Houk, Erica Granchalek, Sara Sullins, Suzanne Cosgrove, Pat Tomich, Mimi Peterson, Miriam Todoroff, Laura Nutini, Laura Singer, and Marion Flynn.



Fr. Roy to Marknoll ...continued from page 1

Rev. Edward Dougherty, M.M.,
Superior General
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
P.O. Box 303 Maryknoll, NY 10545

April 8, 2011

Dear Father Dougherty and General Council,

Maryknoll has been my community, my family, for 44 years, so it is with great sadness that I received your letter of March 18, 2011 stating I must recant my belief and public statements that support the ordination of women, or I will be dismissed from Maryknoll.

When I was a young man in the military, I felt God was calling me to be a priest. I later entered Maryknoll and was ordained. I am grateful for finding the happiness, meaning and hope I was seeking in life.

For the past 20 years I have been speaking out and organizing against the injustice of the School of the Americas and U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. Over these years I discovered an injustice much closer to home - an injustice in my Church.

Devout women in our Church believe God is calling them to be priests, but they are rejected because the Church teaches that only baptized men can become priests. As a Catholic priest for 38 years, I believe our Church's teaching that excludes women from the priesthood defies both faith and reason and cannot stand up to scrutiny for the following reasons:

(1) As Catholics, we believe that we were created in the image and likeness of God and that men and women are equal before God. Excluding women from the priesthood implies that men are superior to women.

(2) Catholic priests say that the call to be a priest is a gift and comes from **God**. How can we, as men, say: "Our call from God is authentic, but your call, as women, is not"? Who are we to reject God's call of women to the priesthood? I believe our Creator who is the Source of life and called forth the sun and stars is certainly capable of calling women to be priests.

(3) We are told that women cannot be priests because Jesus chose only men as apostles. As we know, Jesus did not ordain anyone. Jesus also chose a woman, Mary Magdalene, to be the first witness to His resurrection, which is at the core of our faith. Mary Magdalene became known as "the apostle to the apostles."

(4) A 1976 report by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the Vatican's top Scripture scholars, concluded that there is no valid case to be made against the ordination of women from the Scriptures. In the Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran, United Church of Christ, Presbyterian and other Christian churches, God's call of women to the priesthood is affirmed and women are ordained. Why not in the Catholic church?

(5) The Holy Scriptures remind us in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither male and female. In Christ Jesus all are one." Furthermore, the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on *The Church in the Modern World* states: "Every type of discrimination ... based on sex. ... is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent."

After much reflection and many conversations with fellow priests and women, I believe sexism is at the root of excluding women from the priesthood. Sexism, like racism, is a sin. And no matter how hard we may try to justify discrimination against women, in the end, it is not the way of God. Sexism is about power. In the cul-

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Meet Kate Conmy, WOC's New Membership Coordinator

In my last semester as a Religion student at Mount Holyoke College I sat in my Feminist Theology seminar with only one question for our guest speaker: "Why are you still a Catholic?" A question I rarely dared to ask myself as I spent most of my studies concentrating on Buddhism, travelling abroad to Dharamsala, India, interning with the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Berkeley, even learning Tibetan; by most observable assessments I had swapped the pew I grew up in for a zafu. But Mary Hunt reminded me in such a simple and smart way that Catholicism is about community building and justice seeking. She said: "This is what a Catholic looks like. We have a responsibility to speak this language."

In that moment I realized I had been resisting something that has always belonged to me. Raised in a Jesuit-educated Catholic family in Upstate, New York I felt less confirmed within the church, and more convinced that we were celebrating a god that was too small. One of the great mysteries for me growing up in a church-going family was the personal and religious reconciliation the Catholics I knew negotiated, sometimes weekly to make sense of their faith. The dissonance between what was practiced during Mass, and what Catholicism meant at the dinner table seemed an exhausting spiritual dance of ambivalence. It wasn't until I began to identify as a feminist theologian that my spiritual worlds converged in a moment of *satori*: ambivalence is a virtue! The sisters and daughters of Mary Daly gave me permission to reclaim my Catholicism with all of my questions as an extraordinary action of faith. Ambivalence means courageously engaging the sacred to foster critique, conversation and innovation in the pursuit of knowing God. Just as Carter Heyward writes, "To love God is to un-do evil," I so strongly believe that God must manifest as expression of creative justice whereby inclusivity, "right-relation," and the elimination of discrimination are central on the path toward a higher liberation. I graduated feeling empowered by women, activists, and radicals who claimed their faith and the responsibility to speak a language beyond the binary in order to celebrate the wisdom of all human and divine goodness.

Pursuing an interest in the intersection between human rights, spiritual activism, and transformative justice, I interned as a researcher with the Pluralism Project at Harvard University and as the Religion and

Faith intern at the Women and Public Policy Program at the Harvard Kennedy School. Both opportunities raised questions of the civic life of a religious person, informing both activism and dialogue in the public realm. I went on to receive a Master of Human Rights degree from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, University of London), focusing on the human rights of women, peace-building processes, and earning a distinction on my master's thesis exploring the legal concept of Universal Jurisdiction. My time and studies in London allowed me to critically explore the dissonance between global and regional judicial bodies, and localized, holistic justice processes. SOAS encouraged the vitality of allowing space in one's research and mind to question what human rights and human dignity look like around the world and the various paths one might take to achieve transformative permutations of peace. As a student I was active in the local Amnesty International chapter and the Spiritual Dialogue Circle, hoping to balance peace work inwardly and outwardly. It is in the spirit of liberation from injustice and of celebration of diversity within divinity that I feel called to tirelessly work for an agenda of peace, hope, and security. The strongest women I know are Catholic women, whether out of

spite or out of a deep and radical love, and I trust in their wisdom.

The success of WOC and the work of championing a dialogical community of equals is a non-linear journey that I am excited to be a part of. As a human rights issue and as an issue of deep personal faith, this work pulls all of my heartstrings so that I may stand up as a young woman and say, "This is what a Catholic looks like." It is through the work, energy, and members of WOC that I feel I can finally embrace the Dalai Lama's famous words, "Stay in your religion and meditate." Even in my most Buddhist moments—holding the hand of the Dalai Lama, circumnambulating pagodas from Bodh Gaya to Boston, retreating into the fields of Vermont—I held my Catholicism in my being, with love and certainly with ambivalence. And so we dance, celebrating women of faith and performing our heartwork for what we know to be good. As WOC's new Membership Coordinator, I feel blessed to support and collaborate with our vibrant and committed members. Let's get to know each other and share our gifts to strengthen and renew the passion and vision within this amazing community.



Kate Conmy

Meet WOC Intern, Emily Cohen

By Emily Cohen



Emily Cohen

A recent graduate from Seattle University (SU), I am enjoying the adventure of a new landscape and the opportunity to share a one-year internship with both WOC and WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual) sponsored by the Loretto Volunteer Program. I am excited to join these communities and continue in a new way that has been stirring within and around me for quite some time. While at SU, I frequently found myself at the academic and personal confluence of religion and gender. I completed a double major in Theology & Religious Studies and Liberal Studies with a focus in feminist theology, gender studies, and Buddhism. Additionally, I developed and continue to

develop a lifestyle in which communal living and social justice are both necessary and perpetual pursuits.

An artist friend of mine whom I met over the summer was fascinated with my decision to study theology and continue on this path with WOC and WATER. One day as we were eating lunch and getting to know one another, he asked me, "So when did you become a feminist theologian?" After my initial fascination with the fact that he assertively called me a feminist theologian, the answer came clearly and without hesitation: "When it became necessary." There are things in our lives that it seems we can't help but do. For me, this work is one of those things. Art making, writing, being endlessly awed by trees are some other things. I know that I am called to work for justice and peace through the interconnectedness of community, spirituality, activism, and creativity. The various shapes of this calling are diverse and continually deepening.

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My Story

By Aileen Hayes

When I was in fifth grade I fell in love. Not with Brad Pitt or Angelina Jolie. I fell in love with St. Francis of Assisi. Let me tell you, I got a lot of funny looks for that. But I thought he was beautiful. I wanted to love Christ and Mary with as much passion and humility. (The passion I have down. Humility I am constantly working on.) What got me then and what still gets me, is how Francis gave up everything he could ever have wanted in this world because he fell head over heels in love with God and Lady Poverty. Francis showed me the kind of love that can move mountains.

God, who is Love, called out to Francis one day saying, "Francis, go rebuild my house, which is falling in ruins." Francis, at first taking this literally, rebuilt the walls of the chapel of San Damiano with his bare hands. At the same time, throughout his life and ministry, Francis rebuilt the body of the Church, human by human. I thought to myself: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace...the way you did of Francis."

When I attended The Catholic University of America for my undergraduate and graduate studies in Social Work, I learned mountains about what it means to be a Catholic woman in the context of the Church and the secular arena. Through my studies and personal research, I grew in knowledge of myself—Catholic and female. I read about the sacred feminine through the faith journey of Sue Monk Kidd. I went on to read *The DaVinci Code* (I know, I know), that infamous novel by Dan Brown, which I have to admit, was a powerful catalyst for me, and led me to foster a deep relationship with St. Mary Magdalene. Through Mary's role in the Gospels and her own written Gospel

message, I came to recognize and embrace the feminine side of God and reawakened a sense of the divine within my femininity.

God's house, the Church, continues to fall into ruins through scandal and exclusion. With Francis and Mary at my side, I feel called to be a voice of restoration in this marvelous institution of the Roman Catholic Church. I am a woman, but more important, I am a Child of God, loved unconditionally by my Creator. The good news that Mary brought to the apostles from Christ has made its way into the hearts of so many men and women today, calling them to be leaders in spreading this message and being a living example of Christ. As a Catholic woman who happens to be a Social Worker, advocacy is a large part of who I am and what I do. My love for Christ has led me to feel called to make a life out of being a voice for the voiceless. We are all created in the image and likeness of God, holding the Kingdom of God within each of us and we are all called to lead the way with the Good News, man and woman alike. If God calls, who are we to deny or ignore that Divine Love calling to men and women? Who are we to decide who God chooses? We are a grain of sand out of trillions. God is everything in everyone.

More recently, the flame of my call to the cause of women's ordination has burned stronger than ever. With the release of the document on *Delicta Graviora*, reiterating the stance of the Holy See, that women have no place at the altar and they take away from the sanctity of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the volume of my voice has grown even louder. Through conversations with many friends who are, at the very least, disgruntled Catholics, I hear a desire

to be a part of a Church but a refusal to be a party to exclusion and discrimination. Through all of this, I feel I could not have been elected to the WOC board at a better time. There is a restlessness that needs to be addressed. Sitting here, I know I am called to be a voice for disgruntled Catholics, and younger Catholics, fostering their awareness that there are women out there bravely answering the call. I tell them, there are women who refuse to be forgotten by the institutional arm of the church and will continue to break the unjust "laws" until they are changed. It is my hope that through my example, others will see that the Spirit of Truth is moving in the Catholic Church, and those who have turned away will return. There is a Catholic Church out there with arms wide open ready to embrace and love. This is the church I know and believe in. This is what I am here to be a part of and an example of. I give thanks to God, Mother and Father, for creating me, as woman, and calling me, as woman. I end with the words from Romans 12:2: "I urge you therefore, sisters and brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect." Amen.

Aileen Hayes is member of the WOC Board of Directors and currently resides in New Jersey.



Aileen Hayes

Meet WOC Intern ...continued from page 4

While at SU, I was able to continue justice and advocacy work that I had been doing since high school.

However, and of course, I discovered new areas of fascination and conviction, and began to work more intensely within and for issues of gender inclusion and equality in the Catholic Church and other communities. There was not one single moment when this became my determination. Rather, it was made up of countless moments, conversations, and experiences that became tangled up together in such a way that to ignore this work was impossible. I gathered with other women who have become my sisters and allies. We stole away to our sanctuary spaces and compared experi-

ences, shared in prayer, lit candles, and broke bread. I enter this new experience with them at my side and the wisdom of so many women who have, in an irreplaceable way, shaped my spirit.

As I sit in the WOC office, I am recalling one of these moments and my memory is transporting me to a cafe in Seattle four years ago when I sat across from a mentor and friend with a kettle of spicy, herbal tea between us. We spent a gentle afternoon exploring our shared tugs and pulls toward a vocation that seemed not to exist in a tangible way in our community or culture. We knew it was spiritual, we knew it had something to do with healing work, and we knew it was a calling to deep community.

We had a suspicion it was ancient. This relationship opened for me an exploration into the ever-expanding forms of priesthood, community, and dissent. Since that time I have been imagining and re-imagining the Divine and actively exploring the ways in which I might boldly walk the line of participation and resistance within the context of community and institution.

As I live-out my year with the Loretto Volunteer Program, I find myself filled with gratitude and openness to the unfolding shape of saying yes to something new, something unknown, and something good.

Making History Again: The First Woman Ordained in Latin America by the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests

By Judy Lee, RCWP and Bridget Mary Meehan, RCWP

On March 20, 2011, Martha Lulita Soto was ordained by Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan. This historic ordination took place in an ecumenical center for justice and peace in a poor neighborhood. When we entered the small rooms with old classroom chairs and wooden tables, it appeared to be a place like any other. We greeted the people assembled and formed a procession where neighborhood leaders, nuns, children, a Roman Catholic priest, and a Presbyterian pastor joined us. Those gathered welcomed us with warmth, enthusiasm, and joyful anticipation of the historic event.

Then the director of the center, a priest, stepped forward to greet us and explained the artifacts in the room. The chairs are labeled with the names of people who became martyrs. The large painting behind the makeshift altar, covered with a cloth made by indigenous people, revealed haunting faces of "los desaparecidos," the many women and men who were taken during a time of holocaust in war zones as farmers protected their land. The priest showed us a large rock that was used to murder those who resisted oppression and those who stood with them. Many nuns, priests, missionaries, and lay ministers were among them. He showed relics and shared stories of the modern-day martyrs and saints.

Silence and emotion encircled us as we realized that we were encompassed by a large cloud of witnesses who continue to support equality and justice for all. We were reminded of the statement from the Conference of Latin American Bishops held in Medellin, Colombia in 1968 that justice is a constitutive dimension of the Gospel:

The Christian quest for justice is a demand arising from biblical teaching.... We have faith that our love for Christ and our brothers and sisters will not only be the great force liberating us from injustice and oppression, but also the inspiration for social justice, understood as a whole of life and as an impulse toward the integral growth of our countries.



From left to right: Olga Alvarado, Judy Lee, Bridget Mary, Marta Soto

The Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP) affirm this prophetic vision and dedicate our lives of service to justice for all, justice for the poor, and justice for women, including women in the Roman Catholic Church, which mandates the ordination of women in a renewing priestly ministry united with the people we serve. Judy Lee, RCWP, program coordinator for Latin America, moved to tears, responded in Spanish that we were deeply grateful to share this holy space, and we join them in solidarity on this sacred ground. We will include these saints in our Litany of Saints in our ordinations. The priest responded that the issue of women in the church is a prime example of injustice, and expressed solidarity with women who are called to be priests. He needed to return to his work and was not able to stay for the ordination.

Another male priest was with us. He is a prominent theologian and educator who, in fact, taught theology to our ordinand and other women who were present. He assisted throughout the ceremony.

Here, embraced by those who suffered and gave everything, we stepped forward to ordain the second South American woman priest. The first, Olga Alvarado, was ordained in December in Sarasota, Florida. Before the Liturgy of the Word, as Olga presented the reasons Martha should be ordained, all present nodded in assent and affirmation. Martha was surrounded by two of her adult children and many friends and supporters. After an impassioned homily delivered by Bridget Mary and translated

by Olga, people were emotional, responding with tears and applause as Martha Lulita Soto was ordained. All present came forward to bless her with the laying on of hands. During the time of giving thanks for supporters, a pastor of a local Christian Church stepped forward, welcomed Martha into the ecumenical community, and strongly affirmed support for our women priests. Martha ended the time of giving thanks with a poem she wrote that speaks of realizing the dream of equality and justice through

active resistance. After the final blessing given by Bridget Mary and Martha, all embraced, dancing with one another in compassion and solidarity.

Later in the evening, we met with five applicants and their supporters. We were excited and moved to learn how their justice and compassion-oriented ministries are in solidarity with the poor and outcast. We also noted that the theological preparation of these women was outstanding. The local Catholic university is progressive and there are many other learning opportunities available to these women.

It was stated that a local archbishop answered a young woman's question regarding ordination by saying that the ground is prepared and the acceptance of women's ordination to the priesthood may take ten years but it will come in the young woman's lifetime!

The harvest is ready and the women are stepping forward as Roman Catholic Women Priests!

Judy Lee, RCWP is author of *Come By Here*, a book about her ministry to the poor and homeless community in Ft. Myers, Florida. She is circle leader of *The Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests*. Bridget Mary Meehan, RCWP is author of *Living Gospel Equality Now*, and serves *Mary, Mother of Jesus Catholic Community* in Sarasota, Florida. She is bishop of the *Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests*. www.associationofromancatholicwomenpriests.org.

Leaving A Legacy

By Gerry Rauch

With my 60th birthday looming, and a dear friend just having died suddenly, denial of my mortality is getting harder to achieve. Thoughts of what I want to accomplish in my lifetime are coming to mind. What is most important in my life and how can I continue to make a difference?

I decided that by making a bequest to WOC in my will, I could continue to make a difference in the lives of those I love.

Women in St. Louis made a difference in 1999 when Pope John Paul II arrived in St. Louis. We gifted him with a vigil on the steps of the St. Louis Cathedral Basilica, where 500 voices called for full equality for women in the church. A WOC representative came to that event and invited me to join WOC. I was hooked.

Six years serving on the WOC Board of Directors gave me a bird's eye view of change in the wind not only here, but around the world. That sight energized me to work hard on the Board and emboldened me in my own parish and diocese.

I want there to be a Catholic Church that my children, and perhaps grandchildren, will be able to look to for comfort and wisdom as I have. Who knows what this new and wiser church might look like? But what I do know is that it will be women who will lead the way, and I want to do my part to see that WOC continues to be a strong voice of leadership long after my voice has ceased.

When you make a legacy gift, you are ensuring that the mission you care so deeply about—the ordination of women as priests, deacons, and bishops into an inclusive and accountable Catholic Church—will continue to be fulfilled.

One of the most flexible and popular ways to make a legacy gift is through a bequest, or an amount left to WOC in your will. You can leave a dollar amount or a percentage of your estate. You can even leave a percentage of the "residue" of your estate, which is the amount that remains after other specific bequests, taxes and expenses have been paid.

Another option is to name WOC as a beneficiary of your retirement plan or investment account. To do this, request a "change of beneficiary" form from your plan/account administrator, complete it and return it to the administrator.

An advantage of bequests and gifts of retirement plans and investments is that they're revocable — you can change your bequest or the beneficiary on your account(s) at any time.

Whatever option you choose, you will be supporting women's leadership in the church for years to come.

If you are interested in making a legacy gift, please contact us for more information.

Contact WOC at (202) 675-1006 or email at woc@womensordination.org.



Gerry Rauch

That's why I will be leaving a bequest with the Women's Ordination Conference as the beneficiary. I'd like to see you consider this as well. A bequest allows us to leave either a dollar amount or a percentage of our estate to WOC. It doesn't matter how much or how little.

Many of us have given years of our lives to bettering conditions for women in the church and in the world. Now it is time, and the torch is being passed. I watch with great pride and admiration as younger women are leading the Board. Our last three executive directors have been fabulous and have been in their 20s and early 30s.

I want to support WOC, and I want to make a point to our children. By leaving a bequest to WOC, they will know how important it is to continue to speak up for what you believe in, to never give up, and to put your money where your mouth is.

I know that I cannot last forever, but by arranging a bequest for WOC, I may still be able to have the last word.

Fr. Roy to Marknoll ...continued from page 3

ture of clericalism many Catholic priests see the ordination of women as a threat to their power.

Our Church is in a crisis today because of the sexual abuse scandal and the closing of hundreds of churches because of a shortage of priests. When I entered Maryknoll we had over 300 seminarians. Today we have ten. For years we have been praying for more vocations to the priesthood. Our prayers have been answered. God is sending us women priests. Half the population are women. If we are to have a vibrant and healthy Church, we need the wisdom, experience and voices of women in the priesthood.

As Catholics, we believe in the primacy and sacredness of conscience. Our conscience is sacred because it gives us a sense of right and wrong and urges us to do the right thing. Conscience is what compelled Franz Jagerstatter, a humble Austrian farmer, husband and father of four young children, to refuse to join Hitler's army, which led to his execution. Conscience is what compelled Rosa Parks to say she could no longer sit in the back of the bus. Conscience is what compels women in our Church to say they cannot be silent and deny their call from God to the priesthood. And it is my conscience that compels me to say publicly that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is a grave injustice against women, against our Church and against our God who calls both men and women to the priesthood.

In his 1968 commentary on the Second Vatican Council's document, *Gaudium et Spes*, Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, said: "Over the pope ... there still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, if necessary, even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority."

What you are requiring of me is not possible without betraying my conscience. In essence, you are telling me to lie and say I do not believe that God calls both men and women to the priesthood. This I cannot do, therefore I will not recant.

Like the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement and the right of women to vote, the ordination of women is inevitable because it is rooted in justice. Wherever there is an injustice, silence is the voice of consent. I respectfully ask that my fellow priests, bishops, Church leaders in the Vatican and Catholics in the pews speak out and affirm God's call of women to the priesthood.

Your Brother in Christ,

Roy Bourgeois, M.M.
P.O. Box 3330
Columbus, GA 31903

Interview with Dr. Mary Mikhael

by Eda Uca-Dorn

January 2011 marked one year since the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC) voted unanimously on a historical statement in support of women's ordination during their Sixth General Assembly. Dr. Mary Mikhael, who had been instrumental in leading the process to pass the statement, agreed to speak with me about this pivotal moment in women's liberation in the Middle East and the world. Dr. Mikhael is a Presbyterian Elder in the Presbyterian Church in Beirut, Lebanon and President of the Near East School of Theology, the oldest Christian Seminary in the Middle East. It was an honor to speak with her and I'm thrilled to bring you her thoughts and prayers.

Uca-Dorn: Tell us a bit about your personal and professional background and how you came to work on the issue of women's ordination.

Dr Mikhael: Working in women's issues was a natural thing. In fact I have directed the women's program of the Middle East Council of Churches for almost six years. Anything that is related to women has been my concern all my life.

Uca-Dorn: Dr Mikhael, tell us about the context of the dialogue on women's ordination in the FMEEC and the work you and others did to make the statement on women's ordination from the Sixth General Assembly possible.

Dr Mikhael: I have been involved in the theological and executive committees of the Fellowship for several long years. We were in charge of planning activities, conferences, and seminars for people from our churches that belonged to the fellowship. Several times women's issues were topics for those seminars. I was involved in both planning and making presentations. We had not seen much success in those seminars that involved many people from many churches. There have been painful experiences for us women who were involved. So the dialogue ... has not always been welcomed. Nevertheless, we were determined to hold seminars and raise the issue of women's role in the church.... And then about a year and a half ago, the theological committee was asked to make a study on the issue of women's ordination in particular. You see, the churches that belong to the Fellowship belong to the reformed tradition and many sister churches have already ordained women for the past fifty or sixty years. So for some of us women in the Fel-

lowship this was not a foreign topic and whenever we were able to raise it, we have ... As a theological committee ... we produced papers and looked at them from biblical, theological, and societal points of views and came out with, not a recommendation, but a statement for us as a committee ... that we have found no reasons biblical, theological, or societal that prevent women's participation in the ordained ministry.

Uca-Dorn: Wherever women's ordination is in question, there are both theological and cultural barriers to overcome. Has anything made the process of overcoming theological and cultural barriers to women's ordination in the FMEEC a uniquely Middle Eastern process?

Dr Mikhael: In the Middle East, there is not a single woman that is ordained in any Christian tradition... I can speak about the Presbyterians in Syria and Lebanon. We have four women who have preaching licenses. If they were men, this would have been the first step toward ordination ... One of our women is in fact in charge of a large church. She does everything except administer sacraments dsvt... I have heard comments from elders in her church that say "We have discovered that she is better than many men." (Laughs) I know there are women ... who are theologically trained and eligible for ordination in other churches. It is very hard here to be vocal about it because we have many other problems in this part of the world. Due to the political upheaval, social difficulties, the fact that the context is not that easy, we try to go about it from an educational point of view ... and work with the children and youth and women and hope for the best. There are women in every church who have the sense of call but there is not a movement as such ... to request women's ordination. No, we do not do that. That is not our style ... because our churches have many other problems and we do not want to cause problems for them but we believe that not ordaining women is one of those problems. ... We will not revolt but we will work steadily and surely to achieve it.

It was much easier [in the statement] to say from the biblical and theological perspective there is no reason to prevent [ordination] despite the fact that people carry in their pockets the verses that say that women are not allowed to speak in the church and they have to remain silent and submissive [1 Tim 2]. The bigger issue is the societal perspective because we live in a pa-



Back row, left to right: Erin Saiz Hanna, Tracy Robison, Regina Bannan, Eda Uca-Dorn
Front row, left to right: Aisha Taylor, Christine Haider, Joanne Bray, Yong Ja Kim

triarchal society. The older Christian traditions are very patriarchal in their systems and we are in an ocean in non-Christian religious traditions that ... also discriminate against women. So we came out with the stand that the church must correct what is not right in the society, rather than submit to all the norms in the society. It was a long process, it was a comprehensive study, and all members of executive committee participated. And fortunately it was accepted!

Uca-Dorn: Wow. Amazing! How have some denominational members of the FMEEC responded to the statement?

Dr Mikhael: We think it is amazing but it will be more amazing when it is put into actualization. We consider the statement a historical statement and we expect a greater point in history when the first woman is ordained. I was in the General Assembly and I want to say that there was decency on every side... Our churches... even though they have raised questions, none have rejected our studies or the result of our studies, that is to say, the truth... [Among] other denominations ... for example the patriarchal churches. ... I do not know of one objection or criticism. It was printed in local newspapers and websites so everybody knew about it. Nevertheless, I personally do not know of any denomination that has made a statement against it, criticized it, or rejected it.

Uca-Dorn: Understanding the diversity of Christianity in the Middle East, how are women located in the church in the Middle East, and how might the issuing of such a statement shift that location?

Dr Mikhael: If we want to talk about location, of course when it comes to leadership in the church, the location of women is al-

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ways in the background ... However, in recent years, and I want to say, ever since the decade of the churches in solidarity with women, which was announced by the World Council of Churches between 1988 and 1998, women have been very much activated in the region in all the churches. We had, through the Middle East Council of Churches women's programs, seminars for women where we have discussed the issues of women, in fact the ordination of women was a subject that was prevented from our conversation but we have done a lot in terms of the participation of women in decision making. ... There has been change in all of the churches. We have seen women serve on important committees in churches that make decisions on the level of church society. But I can tell you that the location

of women remains two, three, four, five, ten steps behind in all the churches.

We hope you see the statement only took place in January and so far no ordinations but it did not mean that it didn't affect people and promote thinking ... No doubt, it has been talked about now and we hope it will make a difference. I am very much hoping that the Presbyterian Church will be a pioneer because we do have a woman already taking care of a church. When it happens, the door will be opened, and probably a lot of conversation will be created and hopefully positive change will take place.

Uca-Dorn: How do you imagine that the ordination of women would impact the FMEEC? Would certain issues become

prioritized? Would it change anything about the culture of the Protestant Christian community in the Middle East?

Dr Mikhael: As you know, inclusiveness is the trademark of the church. Any church that excludes half of its population is made poor. It is impoverished. If ordination happens in the churches of the Fellowship, I am sure priorities will change in other churches as well. A church at full capacity is better than a church at half capacity, which is the case now. I'm sure that women who will be ordained will work very hard to prove themselves as faithful servants as capable of building up the church ... not better than men but like men and a little bit more maybe. I hesitate to say it because I care very much for men in the ministry and

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Update from the Antiracism Team

By Eda Uca-Dorn

"I am a Queen," ten women chanted in unison, "and this is our domain!" WOC's Anti-Racism Team met this past summer in Washington, D.C. The weekend training allowed old and new team members to connect, pray, and discern possible steps toward making the commitment to solidarity and accountability with regards to anti-racism—akin to a ribbon pulling through the chain of WOC programming.

As one of the newest members of the team, I was deeply touched by the events of the weekend. Growing up in a racially and ethnically diverse setting, as a Muslim, dual citizen, and child of Middle Eastern descent, I have always felt sympathetic with those singing with one heart, like the poem by Langston Hughes: "O, yes, I say it plain, America never was America to me, And yet I swear this oath— America will be!" When I converted to Christianity in the height of the Bush administration's power, my family and friends worried that I was betraying my commitment to social justice—and even the basic faculties of common sense.

In the years that followed my conversion, I lived and worked with those on the Catholic Left fighting poverty, nuclear war, and the wide-reaching military-industrial complex in all its forms. I worshiped in a radical Catholic housechurch and in other progressive Christian communities. I had the privilege of working alongside felonious nuns, graying hippies, young anarchists, and seminarians—all intent on bringing about Jesus' kin-dom of God on earth through voluntary simplicity, public protest, and the works of mercy. I have learned so much from that work and have been deeply blessed with experiences and friendships.

Yet as a woman of color, I have rarely felt at home in these predominantly white communities and have struggled often with the sense that I am privileging one self over another. I recall one Catholic Mass during the Bush years in which women priests presided. As I excitedly flipped through the program before the service began, I noticed a prayer that blessed the work of the U.S. military without praying for its victims. As a woman of

Middle Eastern and Muslim descent and a dual citizen, I felt that the safety of my family and mother culture—in the United States and abroad—was deeply threatened by the objectives of the "war on terror." I walked out before the service began, feeling that while I as a member of one branch of the Catholic family which does ordain women (Anglican), supported these sisters, these white women, in their liberation struggle, but they were working to erase mine. While I am passionate about the work of the Catholic Left, I have ultimately settled on the outer margin, as it were, participating and supporting where I am able, while trying to cultivate spaces where people of color have as much power in defining the culture and agenda of the movement as white folks.

In light of this struggle, it was a true blessing when my friend, Christine Haider, WOC board and anti-racism team member, invited me to consider joining WOC's anti-racism team. In the past several months I have had the opportunity to enter into this burgeoning WOC program with Aisha Taylor, Erin Saiz Hanna, Joanne Bray, Louise Akers, Regina Bannan, Tracy, Yong Ja Kim, and facilitator, Clarissa Mendez. Conference calls connected us for several months until we were able to gather for our first in-person meeting as a newly formulated team with two new members.

The weekend included an orientation to WOC and anti-racism work, the opportunity to participate in caucuses for white women and women of color, to analyze WOC programs through the lens of white supremacy, and make some initial commitments for the year ahead. One of the commitments I have made is to writing a regular column in *New Women, New Church* with interviews highlighting the work and experiences of those for whom the intersection of women's ordination and ministry, concerns and perspectives of people of color, and anti-racism work is vibrant and essential. I hope this column will serve as a platform for a small part of the ongoing dialogue in WOC. And I welcome your feedback.

Will Women Priests Change the Church?

A new documentary, *Pink Smoke Over the Vatican*, starts the conversation...

By Mary E. Hunt

Catholic women priests are an oxymoron for the Vatican. It considers them automatically excommunicated before the holy oil is dry on their hands. Other Catholics accept them as sacramental ministers and are delighted with the innovation. Still, others, myself included, want far deeper structural changes in the Catholic Church such that priesthood loses its baked-on charm and ministry becomes the expected task of adult members. This is an important theological conversation that the Vatican wishes would go away. Memo to them: it is just starting.

Pink Smoke Over the Vatican is a new documentary that is making the rounds at film festivals (it will debut in New York on February 12 at the Athena Film Festival, hosted by Barnard College). The title refers to protests held at churches around the country during the Conclave in 2005 that elected Pope Benedict XVI where women created pink smoke—instead of the traditional white smoke that heralds the choice of a pope—to draw attention to the fact that the election was a men's club affair. (Only Cardinals under the age of eighty may vote and no women are cardinals yet.)

Catholic women have been working on eradicating sexism from the Church for decades; in this well-made film, director/producer Jules Hart describes some of the history of this struggle, focusing on one aspect in particular. I only wish the film told more of the story—it is a complex and rich one that deserves a fuller airing.

Apartheid at the Altar

The film tells the tale of women who have chosen to be ordained as part of what is called the Roman Catholic WomenPriests (womenpriests is all one word) movement, whose mission is to create "a new model of ordained ministry in a renewed Roman Catholic Church." But there are many models of women's leadership in Catholicism; I think it is important to frame the film in the context of the larger movement for change that characterizes 21st-century Catholicism, lest viewers are left with an incomplete picture.

Part of the movement is indeed focused on women's ordination, the lack of which is one of the most obvious signs that institutional Catholicism relegates women to second-class citizenship. In the movie, many wonderful women describe their priestly vocations from childhood, their calls to



ministry, and how they have struggled to fulfill them. Patricia Fresan, now a bishop with the RCWP group, speaks matter-of-factly about being a professor of homiletics in a seminary while being barred from preaching on account of her gender. She connects apartheid in her native South Africa with this apartheid at the altar. Alta Jacko draws on Sojourner Truth as part of her inspiration to become what she was forbidden to be by a patriarchal Church. Victoria Rue laughingly tells about distributing Necco Wafers to the children in her neighborhood when they played Mass.

There is a lot of footage of ordination ceremonies with women in colorful vestments laying hands on one another to confer the sacrament—all of the familiar Catholic "smells and bells," but with women in charge. Interspersed throughout the film are comments by Ronald P. Lengwin, priest spokesperson for the Diocese of Pittsburgh who has a weekly radio show called *Amplify*. He repeats and repeats the institution's position that it simply cannot ordain women because Jesus did not do so, that the "deposit of faith" does not include it, that the "unity of the church" will be broken, and various other theologically discredited notions. He does so with the patience and equanimity of someone who has been mouthing these same old ideas for some time, come what may. I can imagine that he might, at a later date, just as easily say, "As we have always and everywhere taught, in the fullness of revelation, women are called to the ordained priesthood" if so instructed by higher-ups.

That hierarchical system is at the heart of the problem. Power is concentrated in the hands of a few (ordained) men, and thinking for oneself is not a criterion for an ecclesial job in Catholicism. Maryknoll priest Roy Bourgeois, excommunicated for preaching the homily at one of the contested women's ordinations, shows that it

can and should be done especially by those who already enjoy clerical privilege.

The film includes some relevant historical matters. Dorothy Irvin's study of catacomb frescoes that contain images of women is of interest. So, too, is the story of Ludmila Javorova, who was ordained a priest in 1970 by Bishop Felix Davidek of the underground Church in Czechoslovakia. With many priests and nuns in prison, that community needed sacramental ministers. The Vatican obviously recognized her ordination enough to ban Ludmila from priestly functions in 1990 when male priests became more plentiful again. What escaped them is contemporary sacramental theology that holds that a community, and not the presence of an ordained person, is what is necessary to celebrate the Eucharist. But that theology would put the Roman officials out of business.

In 2002, seven women were ordained on the Danube (to avoid the jurisdiction of a German or Austrian bishop) by a bishop whose own episcopal status as "valid but illicit" was enough for the women to claim to be in apostolic succession. Two of those women were eventually ordained as bishops by still-unnamed male bishops. The women bishops have gone on to ordain dozens of women priests and bishops in similar ceremonies. This is the beginning of what is referred to in this film as the ordination of Catholic women. However, the movement is so much older and more diverse that such telescoping does not convey the full picture.

The Origins of the Fight for Women's Equality in the Church

St. Joan's International Alliance, a suffrage group founded in London in 1911, was the first to raise the ordination question. According to Belgian writer Anne Marie Pelzer, the Alliance put to the Holy Father its first official request for women to become deacons (1961), then for lay men and women to be present at the Council, as observers and experts (1962). In 1963, it presented a very cautious and respectful resolution to the Pope on the admission of women to the priesthood.

Pioneering feminist scholars—including Mary Daly, Catherina Halkes, Gertrude Heinzelmann, Joan Morris, and Ida Raming—were affiliated with the Alliance. Their writings laid the groundwork for the later movement. American member Mary B.

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Lynch posed the question of women's ordination to her Christmas card list in 1974. Her friends' enthusiastic responses led scholars and activists to plan a national gathering to discuss this idea, then still considered outlandish.

In November of 1975, the Women's Ordination Conference took place in Detroit, Michigan; the eponymous organization arose from that spirited event. WOC sponsored another meeting in 1978 in Baltimore where women were very specific about the kind of renewed priestly ministry they would accept: one without clericalism, without mandatory celibacy, without hierarchy, but with the inclusion of all and a focus on social justice.

WOC became the go-to organization on these matters, holding subsequent meetings and consultations, publishing theological and ministerial resources, and working with women on a range of ministerial options. The Vatican issued various documents against the ordination of women, each one successively more defensive than the last. Bishops' committees met to ponder these matters and blow off steam about how scandalous the whole idea of women priests really was. Women simply went ahead with their ministries. Feminist theologians laid out the intellectual contours of a renewed Church. Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW) emerged as national and regional movements sprang up in many places.

I found it odd that almost none of this history—especially the work of WOC, and very little of the theological spadework—was included in the documentary. Granted it may not make great video, but it is an integral part of the story. And there is more.

Thinking Beyond Ordination

Some Catholic women were so scandalized by the institutional Church's rejection that they got ordained in other traditions. I like to think of them as Catholic priests too. Still others simply left the Catholic Church disgusted. Lots of Catholic women went to seminary and completed graduate programs in theology, discovering along the way that ordination was not a magic bullet, that ministry takes many challenging forms, and that a hierarchical model contradicts Christian claims to equality and mutuality. For many women in canonical religious communities, nuns or sisters, the questions became even more complicated as the contradictions piled up: how to be a member of a group that is connected with a structure that relegates women to inferior status, how to value the Eucharist knowing

women cannot decide where and when to celebrate it licitly, how to feel any allegiance to an institution that shows blatant disdain for women, their talents, insights, and decision-making.

Many women, myself included, began to think beyond ordination to new forms of Church that approximated what theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza so aptly named "a discipleship of equals." These women-church groups, as they are known, form loose networks of small base communities (in the U.S., the Women-Church Convergence). They function quite nicely without benefit of clergy and with broad participation by their members. There are many other house churches, unaffiliated parishes, even the occasional creative affiliated parish that are gathering places for postmodern Catholics. Many see ourselves as much in "catholic," small-'c' terms, as part of widespread religiously motivated efforts to love and do justice, as we do in "Catholic" terms. Catholicism is changing.

There are many issue-specific Catholic groups. The coalition that is called the Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR) includes Dignity (with a focus on LGBTIQ people), Catholics for Choice (reproductive justice workers), Call to Action (working for justice and equality), WOC, Women-Church Convergence, among others. No doubt the Vatican has cause to be worried by more than women priests. The whole Roman house of cards is collapsing as the extent of sexual abuses becomes clear, with fingers pointing upward to the top officials who were complicit. There is another movie to be made here in which the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) will play a starring role.

Ministry as Community Challenge

It is important to see women priests in the company of these many colleagues who love the Catholic community enough to challenge and change it. Otherwise, despite their admirable intentions and their determination to change a sexist system, I worry that women priests risk being reduced to the 21st-century answer to a shortage of male priests (as their fore-sister was in Czechoslovakia). I fear they will be co-opted by the same officials who now denounce them. Already the churchmen use them. Instead of ignoring the women and letting the chips fall where they may, Roman officials have found that by excommunicating women priests they have a convenient way to distract from the criminal activity of priest pedophiles and bishops who covered up their crimes.

Note that while every woman priest has been excommunicated, not one of those men has been.

Contemporary understandings of priesthood are changing. Outmoded biologicistic understandings of apostolic succession—the hands that laid the hands that laid the hands—are giving way to fuller understandings of the whole community following in the spirit of the Jesus movement. Eucharist belongs to everyone, not just to the priests who confect the sacred mysteries. Liturgical leadership is but one component of ministry. Teaching, preaching, organizing, even lobbying and social change work are part of the job description. No one person can do it all; ministry is a community challenge.

Symbols are changing too. Individual ordinals prostrating themselves are hard to square with this new theology. Priesthood in the old model—with vestments, clerical collars, and claims to special status—is rapidly going the way of the dodo. Women do not need to resurrect or reinforce it.

The crying needs of a multi-religious world, not the narrow needs of any one religious group, now set the agenda for ministers. Many feminists work as chaplains for more than Catholics in hospitals and hospices. They minister in universities and prisons with all who need their attention. This is the new "priesthood of all believers" that has a far broader mission than ever before.

A lot of the same people involved in the struggle for Catholic women's equality are also part of other movements for justice and peace. School of the Americas Watch, reproductive justice, LGBTIQ issues, anti-poverty and anti-war efforts count on their leadership. Shelters for the homeless, safe houses for abused women and children, and meal programs are just a few of the places where these people work. This is the new face of Catholicism—it is not ringed by a clerical collar.

So do enjoy the movie—but please stay tuned for the sequels.

Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., is a feminist theologian who is co-founder and co-director of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) in Silver Spring, Maryland. A Roman Catholic active in the women-church movement, she lectures and writes on theology and ethics with particular attention to liberation issues.

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their role. I want to strengthen that. I want to work beside them and not behind them, if possible. It is okay if I'm not ahead; I want to work side-by-side. It is very hard to predict what can happen. Safely I can say the church that is including all its population in the ministry is better than one that is using half the capacity or the talents of its people.

Uca-Dorn: Christians in the Middle East are heirs to some of the oldest expressions of Christianity in the world. How do you hope the churches there can lead the global community with regards to the full participation of women in the Church?

Dr Mikhael: It's very hard because we don't yet have a woman who is ordained. And when you live in a multi-religious society, in a multi-traditional faith, it is much more difficult to move. It will take more time, of course. But surely, surely, it will set a great example to follow, most particularly, when ordained women show that they are free to respond to the call of God and are as faithful as others.... I think when a church has full capacity in its ministry and services in a community, it will attract other churches to follow suit.... It could also be negative because of the very patriarchal traditions that we have. It may take a long time, before we can even be reconciled once we ordain women.... You remember when women were ordained in the Anglican Church how in the context of the World Council of Churches, some churches started to withdraw. I don't expect that we will have it easier but I pray that a lesson has already been learned in the world context.

Uca-Dorn: How does the uplift of Christian women impact, if at all, the uplift of women of different faiths in the Middle East?

Dr Mikhael: There is where my hope lies: Women of all faith have been denied full participation. Women drink of the same sacramental cup and from the same cup of discrimination. So whatever women gain Christian or Protestant women gain it can be shared by all women. So from that point of view, I think it will be wonderful for all women of all faiths. We have been in communion together, women of all faiths, who are concerned about the same issues, and we all know that religion in one way or another no matter what religion we belong to has been the cause of discrimination. Whatever gain for women in the church is a gain for all other women in the society. I can assure you of that.

Uca-Dorn: Are you working in collaboration with women (and men) from other regions with regards to the full inclusion of women in the Church?

Dr Mikhael: As I said, we have not made a movement but we are in touch with other women in sister churches in the West and hope to be visited by women who are ordained. We request their support and solidarity. We invited them to come and visit and announce that they are ordained to give example to our churches and our societies that women who have been ordained have not harmed the church and the society, so that we can take courage and follow other churches, other societies. While we work very quietly but steadily to create the needed change, we are always in touch with other women, wherever, to support and gain support from them. But it is not as a movement, neither locally nor internationally, because we know that may harm us. You see, very often we are accused of importing issues from the West that do not suit our society and culture. So we have to work very carefully. But we always, whenever possible, invite women who are ordained to come and visit ... and show our

churches and our society that women who are active are not destructive but rather they are leaders of the community, of society, and of the church.

Uca-Dorn: Is there anything else you would like to say to our readers?

Dr Mikhael: Women's support from outside is essential for any success. We request ... their solidarity, their supporting activities, and their prayers. That's all we ask. They must always know that we are in great need of that. It is not a luxury to have their solidarity and prayers—it is a need. To all the women of the United States who have worked for women along history and I know many women have, I want to convey that what they have done has benefited women all over the world, including myself. To every sister in the U.S. and the world, I give my love, my support, and my prayers. Thank you!

Eda Uca-Dorn is a member of the WOC anti-racism team. She is the director of Hosanna! People's Seminary, a project concerned with anti-oppressive and scholarly Christian education. She resides in New York City with her husband Mike.

Gendered Rhetoric in the Early Church

Gendered Preaching in Colonial Mexico

By Charles Witschorik

I'm honored to share with readers in this forum some of the research that I do on Mexican history. In my current project, I'm studying gendered discourses, especially in printed sermons, in order to explore how the Catholic Church in colonial and early-independent Mexico dealt with a long series of challenges to its cultural and ideological authority. My research began several years ago as I was doing some initial reading of sermons preserved from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

As I read the sermons, I was struck by how frequently the preachers came back to what seemed to me unusual, even unorthodox images of men and women. For example, preachers might invoke the image of St. Agnes as a model for an especially pious nun, wondering aloud how the saint could have summoned the "virile" resolve to face martyrdom rather than renounce her virginity. Likewise, other nuns, despite their gender, might be likened to "roosters," while still other women could be said to

serve as "warriors" or "generals" of the spirit. For men, an archbishop in death might be compared to St. Joseph, who managed to serve both as Christ's mother and father, while others were to be commended for their resemblance to pious virgins and in their service as spiritual midwives through their religious devotion.

As these examples suggest, for many preachers a way to drive home to listeners the exceptional nature of those being honored was to emphasize how they and the saints that they resembled seemed to transcend the customary limits of their gender as part of their sacred mission. Displaying "manly courage" if they were women or sometimes serving as spiritual "mothers" if they were men, the implicit message of many sermons from this period was that the boundaries of gender roles and their expectations were flexible and that sometimes it was necessary to transcend the limits of one's own gender in order to fulfill a higher calling.

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Obituary:

Dr. Iris Müller, RCWP, a Grandmother of the Women Priests Movement Died on Jan. 30, 2011

By Bridget Mary Meehan, RCWP

Long time advocate of women's equality and women's ordination in the Roman Catholic Church, Iris Müller died peacefully on January 30, 2011 in Stuttgart, Germany after suffering from a long illness related to a previous stroke. Her lifetime friend, Bishop Dr. Ida Raming was at her side. Both women were part of the original seven women ordained in 2002 on the Danube River and were the foremothers of the women's ordination movement in the Catholic Church. In 1963, they were the first to write a petition to the Vatican Council II calling for the ordination of women.

Müller was the first woman to speak out openly in favor of women's ordination in the Roman Catholic Church, despite the fact that she had no existential security whatever at the time. The consequences of her courageous stance on this issue were serious: she was threatened that even the small stipend she received and so desperately needed because she was a refugee would be withdrawn and there was, of course, no possibility of any official appointment within the official church. On the other hand, she was able to influence other Catholic women who, because of their upbringing, were conformed in their thinking and also timid. Through Iris' guidance, some of them woke up to the reality of discrimination against women in the Roman Catholic Church and in this way, Iris Müller fulfilled a real prophetic role and became known as one of the foremothers of the Roman Catholic Women Priest Movement.

Iris Müller: Her Story

Iris Müller was born in 1930 in Magdeburg (mid-eastern part of Germany). After her final high school examination in 1950 she studied Protestant theology in Naumburg/Halle. In 1955 she continued her theological studies at the Martin Luther-University in Halle/Saale and received a diploma in theology from this university in 1958. After this examination which qualified her to serve as a pastor in the Protestant church, she converted to the Roman Catholic Church – a church, which she found, expressed its “following of Christ not just in words but in full sacramental reality.” The consequences of this religious decision were extremely hard for Iris and as a woman she now came under the restrictions of Catholic Canon law.

Müller said, “I had become a creature incapable of receiving Holy Orders (cf. c. 1024 CIC). As a Catholic woman I was expected to accept the status of women in the Catholic Church. A further consequence of my conversion to this Church was that there was no prospect of any employment for me as a Catholic theologian in the communist regime of the DDR (East German Republic), since I refused to become a member of the communist party SED. My situation became so critical that I had to leave the DDR illegally and find refuge in the Western part of Germany (BRD) in 1959.

After many problems I succeeded in continuing my theological studies at the faculty of Catholic theology in Münster. As in the DDR my Catholic surroundings, the profes-

sors and most of the students, expected of me that I should accept the position of women in the Catholic Church

without further question. But I decided to be faithful to my conviction and to my call to priesthood. So (as a former Protestant theologian) I was the first woman in the Catholic faculty to give witness that women are discriminated against in the Catholic Church and that their inferior status had to be reformed. On my path as a pioneer for women's equality and women's ordination at the Catholic faculty in Münster, I found solidarity and support from Ida Raming. In 1963, during Vatican Council II, together we wrote a petition to the Council, calling for women's ordination. In 1970 I completed my doctorate in theology. During the following years I remained a member of the faculty in Münster, as a scientific assistant. I was involved in building up a special library on the status of women in the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), entitled “Women in Religion.”

After a lifelong struggle for women's equality and women's ordination in the Catholic Church I decided to follow my call to priesthood. Together with my friend and colleague, Ida Raming, I was ordained a priest in 2002 as one of the original seven women on the Danube River.” Müller resided in Stuttgart following her ordination.”



Iris Müller

Gendered Preaching in Colonial Mexico ...continued from page 12

Still, this unusual flexibility was not necessarily an indication of much openness on the part of preachers to substantially changing accepted gender roles. Instead, these images were part of a larger Baroque aesthetic where opposites and excesses were celebrated and the unusual and the miraculous were an expected part of everyday life. Thus, in the same context in which audiences might have witnessed elaborate fireworks displays, participated in extended processions, heard sumptuous music, and marveled at ornate church interiors, gen-

dered language provided a way for preachers to enthrall their audiences rhetorically—offering them visions not otherwise acceptable within church belief.

With the advent of the reforms of the Enlightenment many of these unusual rhetorical displays ended, giving way to stricter adherence to classical form and convention. Still, when considered in the context of the Baroque displays that surrounded them they offer us an intriguing glimpse into ways in which notions of gender functioned during another era in church his-

tory. The remarkable colorfulness, playfulness, and flexibility of these discourses might just have something to say to us in our own approaches to gender in the contemporary church.

Charles Witschorik is a Ph.D. candidate in Latin American History at the University of California, Berkeley. A former Roman Catholic priest, he remains active in ministry through the Lutheran congregation (ELCA) that he attends.

Upcoming Events

April

April 2, 2011, 3 PM: RCWP Ordination: Diane Dougherty of Newnan, Georgia; Dr. Adele Decker Jones of San Antonio, Texas; Miriam (Mary Ann) Picconi and Wanda Y. Russell of Palm Coast, Florida will be ordained deacons. The presiding bishop will be Bridget Mary Meehan. The ceremony will take place at St. Andrew UCC at 6908 Beneva Rd., Sarasota, FL 34238.

April 9, 2011, 4PM: Dr. Patricia Fresen, a Roman Catholic Woman Bishop will give a talk "Transformed by Compassion," St. Andrew UCC at 6908 Beneva Rd., Sarasota, FL 34238. Contact Bridget Mary 941-955-2313, 703-505-0004, sofiabmm@aol.com.

April 4-11, 2011, 7-9 PM: SOA Watch Days of Action, including a Panel Discussion with Fr. Roy Bourgeois, Rev. Grayland Hagler, Judith Kelly, Padre Vidal Rivas, and Sister Marge Clark (Network) about Faith-Based Action in the Anti-Militarization Movement, at the Elliot School for International Affairs, George Washington University, 1957 E St. NW, Washington, DC, 20052. For more information and schedule of events visit: www.soaw.org

April 13, 2011, 7 PM: Call To Action PA welcomes Bishop Patricia Fresen to speak on the "Apartheid and Ordination of Women," at Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church, 416 West North Ave, North Side, Pittsburg, PA. Open to the public.

April 13, 2011, 1-2 PM: WATER New Feminist Christianity Teleconference with Patrick Cheng: "What Does Queerness Have to Do With Feminism?: A Conversation on Queer and Feminist Theologies." To register send "register me" to waterstaff@hers.com to receive dial-in information.

April 15, 2011, 7:30 PM: Bishop Patricia Fresen will speak on the topic of *Transformation by Compassion* at Collenbrook United Church, 5290 Township Line Road, Drexel Hill, PA, 19026. Suggested fee: \$15 at the door. For more information contact Eileen DiFranco at emdifranco@aol.com.

April 21, 2011, 11 AM: South Eastern (SEPAWOC) Pennsylvania WOC's Annual Holy Thursday Witness at the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. Contact Regina Bannan at bannan@temple.edu for more information.

April 30, 2011, 3:30 PM: "Pink Smoke Over the Vatican," the award winning documentary film about women's ordination, will be shown at St. Andrew UCC at 6908 Beneva Rd., Sarasota, FL 34238. Contact Bridget Mary sofiabmm@aol.com for more information.

May

May 11, 2011, 1-2 PM: WATER New Feminist Christianity Teleconference with Nancy Pineda-Madrid. To register send "register me" to waterstaff@hers.com to receive dial-in information.

May 21, 2011, 9:30 AM: SEPA WOC Annual Ordination Day Eucharistic Liturgy held across from the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. Contact Regina Bannan at Bannan@temple.edu for more information.

June

June 10-12, 2011: American Catholic Council (ACC) Conference: Celebrating the Spirit of Vatican II, to celebrate the eve of the 50th Anniversary of Vatican II in Detroit, MI. For more information or to register, visit <http://americancatholiccouncil.org>.

July

July 1-4, 2011: DignityUSA 20th National Convention: "Love Hopes All Things," to be held in Washington, DC. For more information or to register visit <http://conv2011.dignityusa.org/> or call (800) 977- 8797.

July 24, 2011, 11 AM: Call To Action PA will honor Father Roy Bourgeois, Founder of SOA WATCH and advocate for the ordination of women in the Grand Hall at the Priory, 614 Pressley Street, Pittsburg, PA.

September

September 16, 2011: Learning to Listen: Voices of Sexual Diversity and the Catholic Church, at Fordham University, Lincoln Center Campus, New York, NY. This is the first discussion of the *More Than a Monologue: Sexual Diversity and the Catholic Church* conference series taking place throughout the fall. For more information on this event and others: <http://blog.fairfield.edu/morethanamonologue>.

November

November 4-6, 2011: Call to Action Annual Conference, Faithful Prophets: God Alive in Every Generation, Milwaukee, WI. Contact: Kim Ziyavo at (773) 404-0004 x265 or www.cta-usa.org/conference.

For more information, contact woc@womensordination.org or 202.675.1006.

Quotable Quote

"I hope they'll do what is just as a Christian community. But I see this with such clarity that rather than recant, I'd rather eat at a soup kitchen and live under a bridge, and do that with deep inner peace and a clear conscience."

- Fr. Roy Bourgeois

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Petition in Support of Fr. Roy Bourgeois

The petition reads:

We, the undersigned, support Fr. Roy Bourgeois, who faces possible dismissal from the priesthood by his Maryknoll superiors for speaking out in support of women's ordination in the Roman Catholic Church.

We applaud Fr. Bourgeois' dedication to justice, including justice for women in the Church. We echo his words, "I cannot possibly speak out about injustice in society and at the same time be silent about this injustice in my church."

The Vatican's stance on ordination is based on arguments that have been refuted time and again. In 1976, the Vatican's own Pontifical Biblical Commission determined that there is no scriptural reason to prohibit women's ordination.

Our Catholic tradition teaches that sexism is a sin and excluding women from the priesthood is sinful. We urge Maryknoll superiors to support Roy and the majority of faithful Catholics who yearn for women's equality in the church.

Sponsored by Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests, Call to Action, Roman Catholic Womenpriests, and Women's Ordination Conference

To sign the petition, send your name, address, email and any comments to: Women's Ordination Conference, P.O. Box 15057, Washington, DC, 20001, or sign the petition online at www.womensordination.org.



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For women considering ordination outside official Roman Catholic structures. In nine essays, authors address the different elements women should include as preparation for ordained ministry. A project of the National Catholic Ministries Alliance. 23 pages.
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