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# New Women New Church

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A Voice for Women in the Catholic Church

## LCWR: A Radical Obedience to the Voice of God in Our Time

By *Jamie L. Manson*

In his Holy Thursday sermon, Pope Benedict XVI made headlines for criticizing those who refuse to obey the church's position on the ordination of celibate men. He traced his argument back to Christ's obedience to the will of God.

"His concern was for true obedience," Benedict said, "as opposed to human caprice."

Of course, the pontiff fails to point out that Jesus was obeying God while also radically disobeying the religious leaders and laws of his time. Like so many archconservative Roman Catholics, he is confusing God with the institutional church and its doctrine.

I suppose the pope is using some of this same logic in his treatment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. He views the sisters' unwillingness to condemn gays and lesbians or contraception or women who feel called to ordained ministry as an act of "caprice."

But the basis on which the sisters focus their ministries is anything but shallow and whimsical. Their devotion is founded on a radical obedience to the voice of God as it emerges from the voices of the poor, the sick, the abandoned and the broken.

Most sisters spend their lives immersed in the deepest sufferings of our world. They don't just stop by the soup kitchen on Ash Wednesday for a photo op. Some actually live in shelters with homeless women, orphans or the addicted.

Their unwillingness to condemn gays and lesbians probably stems from the work they did with AIDS patients in the early 1980s. Back then, the disease affected mostly gay men, and no one was sure how it was con-

tracted. Women religious were among one of the few groups who were unafraid to touch those dying from this unknown, frightening disease.

Is there any doubt that, as the sisters bathed and fed these deteriorating bodies, they also noticed the deep and authentic love that these men shared with partners and friends? The sisters also saw anguish suffered by men whose parents would not visit them and the sacramental power of those who reconciled with family before they died.

Any disagreements on contraception likely stem from the sisters' work with poor, homeless and battered women. They harbor girls enslaved in the sex trade, women trapped in abusive relationships and mothers abandoned to poverty.

Many sisters still run hospitals and are medical professionals. They have seen firsthand the price that so many women pay for husbands and boyfriends who refuse to wear condoms yet still demand sex. Every day, they see patients who have been date raped or women who bear life-threatening pregnancies.

Many sisters are theologians, ethicists, spiritual directors and teachers. They engage students and directees in their metaphysical and existential questions. They spend hours listening to stories and struggles and aid in discerning ethical dilemmas and spiritual crises. And though technically they cannot confer absolution, they have heard countless confessions.

Some women religious do support the ordination of women. They have dedicated their entire lives to being a sacrament in the

world, yet they have been told that their bodies are not worthy of consecrating the Eucharist or giving last rites to an ailing patient whom they have shepherded through sickness unto death.



*Jamie Manson*

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Erin Saiz Hanna



Dear Friends,

I hope this edition of *NewWomen, NewChurch*, finds you well. Over the past few months, our Church leaders' animosity toward women has truly kept Kate and me busy! By now, I am sure you've read about Pope Benedict's statements: against women's ordination, delivered during his Holy Thursday homily; the Bishops' official investigation of the Girl Scouts of America; and the crackdown on LCWR.

Over the past decade as a feminist activist, I have made several protest signs—signs for women's ordination; to support anti-domestic violence legislation; to close the SOA; ending wars; support marriage equality; women's health, immigrants' rights; and Fr. Roy. But if you told me I would need to make signs to save nuns from the wrath of the Vatican, I would have thought you'd have been fooling me.

But here we are, fighting a ridiculous crackdown on the women who, for centuries, have been the backbone of the church. Women whose median age is seventy-seven, work tirelessly for the poor, dedicate their lives to service and being the Gospel message, and die with their boots on for justice. These women are in hot water for spending *too* much time working to end poverty, and not enough time speaking out against women's ordination, reproductive healthcare, and same-sex marriage.

From pre-K through college, I attended Catholic schools and, in many ways, am unlike my peers because I grew up with women religious in my life. Now, I know what you're thinking. The executive director of the Women's Ordination Conference was educated by nuns. There you have Vatican's case and point. So let's take a moment to discuss what these crazy, wild, radical, feminist nuns actually taught me.

The sisters I had in school taught us to be compassionate, strong women and to stand up against injustice. They ingrained 'love

our neighbor' and the *Beatitudes* into the core of our very beings. They didn't just make us read the Gospel, they made us live the Gospel by taking us on field trips to work beside them in shelters, in soup kitchens, and in ministries that supported the poor, women, children, and the earth. These ministries were also run by other sisters.

They demanded we study hard in school. They cheered us on in our sports games and our plays. In prayer services, they actually shared stories of biblical women so we could relate to our faith. In every aspect of our lives, they rooted for us and were our role models.

I see classmates on Facebook now—they are mothers, teachers, nurses, doctors, researchers, volunteers, lawyers, leaders, and community activists. I am proud to know them because they are living lives of service and compassion. It is not a coincidence we each grew up to work for a world that is merciful and just.

On May 8th, WOC participated in a vigil outside the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to support women religious. We told folks to meet near the USCCB sign in front of their building. When we arrived on location, the bishops had covered their sign with "garbage bags" (no pun intended) so we could not find them nor have the sign seen in our photographs. This was confirmed by a USCCB representative who was standing outside watching us.

I stared at the garbage bag covered sign for some time to take it all in. This childish act spoke volumes – they were trying to hide their garbage and shame. The Vatican's mandate against LCWR, which threatens sisters' works of charity, is reportedly backed by the USCCB. How many bishops were educated by nuns? Work alongside these very sisters they are threatening? What would the churches in their diocese be without the work of sisters? Since I have yet to hear one bishop shout from the rooftop that this crackdown on women religious is completely outrageous, I suppose behind garbage bags makes sense. But the trash is smelling to high heaven.

Despite the garbage bags, there was hope. Over seventy-five people gathered at the vigil to show their support for the sisters—all affected by women religious in some way. I met many for the first time and felt their holy anger. We talked, prayed, and joined in solidarity. Several USCCB employees honked and gave us 'thumbs-up'

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## Letter to the Editors

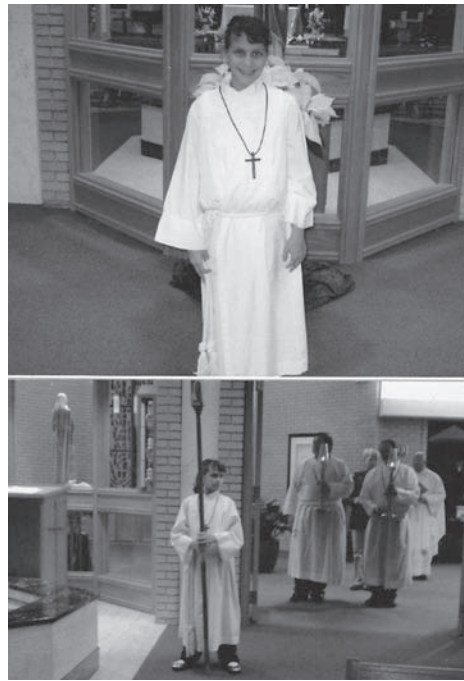
I just received the latest New Women New Church newsletter and felt compelled to tell you about my wonderful granddaughter, Samantha.

Sam is a twin, the smaller of the two. She aspired to and finally was old enough to become an altar server at our parish, a little over a year ago. To date she has more liturgies under her belt than any other server, willing to serve for anyone at anytime. While waiting for the liturgy to begin she often banters with both priests and deacons, and all of them have had something to say about her! We love watching this tiny girly-girl as she leads the liturgy as cross-bearer, or stands with a server over a foot taller as candle-bearer during the reading of the Gospel. Our pastor is 6' 5", and watching Sam hold the binder or *Sacramentary* as he reads from it always makes us smile. Some of the attendees at our liturgy of choice on Sundays, including the presiders (!) call Sam "the stalker," as she can be found hovering outside of the sacristy, just waiting to see if there is a shortage of servers! She told me at the beginning of her ministry, "Grandma, I live to serve!"

About 6 months ago, Sam informed me that she has decided to become a priest. A few months later, she learned that only boys are given this privilege, but, undaunted, she has now decided to write to the Pope and ask for his indulgence in this endeavor. We are very fortunate to have dinner with our children and grandchildren every week, and this past week the dinner conversation concerned when each child thought he or she would marry. When I asked Sam what she thought she looked at me with surprise and responded, "You know I won't be getting married, because priests cannot be married."

This 11-year-old's call to ministry is strong and brings me to tears. I am a member of our lector-leadership (we call them proclaimers in our parish), and Sam has asked me who specific proclaimers are, as a couple of them move her to remark on their readings. How many children this age are aware of this? Samantha is a very special, talented, and dedicated minister in our parish. My daughter believes that if Sam continues to desire priesthood, and if nothing in our Church changes by the time she approaches adulthood, they will most likely move to a denomination that *will* accommodate Sam. I guess we will all cross that bridge in time.

One of our strongest desires is for the success of our children, and our grandchildren, also. Although I came to the realization that women should be able to be



*"Sam's light at liturgy can be seen throughout our church. There is no doubt in my mind that she is responding to God's call."*

priests some time ago, knowing that this is presently Samantha's desire has taken me to a different level. Sam's light at liturgy can be seen throughout our church. There is no doubt in my mind that she is responding to God's call.

You know, all of this makes me think of the Phoenix diocese which has taken altar serving away from girls, because it will only make them want to be priests. And doesn't God often call us through baby-steps like this? Do members of the hierarchy really believe that God approves of placing people in boxes to thwart their response to the Holy One?

Thank you for letting me share Samantha's story with you!

- Cherie Gaiser, Libertyville, IL

### *From the Executive Director...continued*

as they left their offices for the day, and you could feel the tide-turning. A few sisters came by to say thanks for supporting them. One sister I had never met told me she loved me – and I felt it. Another, not realizing the one-year-old attached to my hip was mine – asked if I had ever considered religious life. This question, I have received more than once in my life, but for the first time my answer was very clear. "Sister, in my heart, I am a woman religious."

## What Happens to a Dream Deferred?

Langton Hughes

Only Say the Word

He raises his, her hands reach up  
mimicking his every move.  
A cup of glinting gold no one can see  
weighs heavy in her grasp.  
Lips in sync mouth mumbled prayers,  
she's mesmerized.  
Mother's piercing whisper breaks  
the trance:  
"People are staring, put your  
hands down."

Learned to say, "I'll be a teacher  
or a nurse."

Broke bread for dolls, not  
neighbors, aunts  
or uncles, talked to God only when alone.  
Longed to ask the voice behind  
the dark confessional screen:  
How did it feel?  
How did you know  
when you were called?

Now hands that once reached high  
are buried in her lap; head bowed,  
lips still.

Seeking serenity, acceptance  
of the things she cannot change.  
"Lord I am not worthy to receive you,  
only say the word and I shall be healed."  
A young girl's voice breaks through  
her quiet mind:  
I was called. I was called. I was.

*Anne Dowling is an active WOC  
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As one of the sponsors of The Nun Justice Project, WOC is organizing several vigils and actions to support women religious. To get involved, visit: [www.nunjustice.org](http://www.nunjustice.org).

Blessings,

*Erin*

Erin, Executive Director



# What Do You Think of the Newly Revised Roman Missal?

By Gloria Ulterino

As of this writing, Christmas is yet to come. But Catholic parishioners have experienced all four weekends of Advent at this point in time. How does the new Roman Missal land on you?

Of course, each person is entitled to her or his opinion. But I suspect that many are having some difficulty with it. So allow me to ask several questions. And then, to offer some answers that will differ from the official teaching of the bishops, I *urge* you to check out an informative web site, [www.misguidedmissal.com](http://www.misguidedmissal.com), for more details.

Why do we need a new Missal, as the bishops claim? First, it is true, that the original translation, dating from 1973, needed improvement. It needed more elegant language, big enough to point to the Mystery we celebrate and worship. Those who produced the original translation, ICEL (International Commission on English in the Liturgy—experts who were given authority by Rome to translate the liturgy) had already recognized this. In 1982 they had set out on this major task. It took fifteen years of truly collaborative and dedicated work. In 1998 the new Missal was readily approved by all eleven conferences of English speaking bishops. So, what happened? Rome sat on it for three years before saying no, then ordered a new translation by new rules, that included formal, nearly word-for-word and phrase-for-phrase translating, from the Latin. The poetry, the often stunning beauty of the 1998 prayers, was taken away. In its place we find clumsy, awkward prayers, sprinkled here and there with words most people likely do not understand.

The following is a sample of the two versions. (On the Web site you will find a number of examples, but here are two, from the 1st Sunday of Advent.)

## 1998 Opening Prayer

Almighty God, Strengthen the resolve of your faithful people to prepare for the coming of your Christ by works of justice and mercy, so that when we go forth to meet him He may call us to sit at his right hand And possess the kingdom of heaven.

We ask this...

## 1998 Prayer after Communion

Lord our God, grant that in our journey through this passing world we may learn from these mysteries to cherish even now the things of heaven and to cling to the treasures that never pass away.

We ask this...

## 2011 Collect, Opening Prayer

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming, so that, gathered at his right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.

We ask this...

## 2011 Prayer after Communion.

May these mysteries, O Lord, in which we have participated, profit us, we pray, for even now, as we walk among passing things, you teach us by them to love the things of heaven, and hold fast to what endures.

We ask this...

What accounts for this difference? It is primarily the process of translation. In the 1973 and 1998 versions, the translators used the process of “dynamic equivalence,” outlined in 1969 by Pope Paul VI. This meant focusing on the meaning of a phrase, in the receptor language (in this case, English). Such a process achieved a principle in the Second Vatican Council’s document on liturgy, #34: “The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity. They should be short, clear, and free from useless repetitions. They should be within the people’s powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation.”

The new rules, on the other hand, proclaimed in 2001 (in *Liturgiam Authenticam*) chose a process called “formal equivalence” instead. The emphasis was then placed on the Latin, both in words and sentence structure. That is why many prayers sound awkward, even confusing.

What else, besides the language, is different? The *process* of translation has changed dramatically, from one of collaboration (between bishops and the Vatican) envisioned by the Second Vatican Council, to one of unyielding control by the Pope and Curia. Nowhere in the documents of Vatican II, which still regulate our church, is the Curia given any authority. And yet, it is the Divine Office of Worship—directly responsible to the Pope—that has dominated this process. Some U.S. bishops, like Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie (himself a liturgical expert), protested the changes to no avail. Some wrote suggestions for improvement, but never received so much as a response. By 2008, many resigned themselves to what was happening.

What, then, are we to do if we are unhappy with the changes? Here are a few options. Direct people to [www.misguidedmissal.com](http://www.misguidedmissal.com).

- First, last, and always, pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit, and for charity in expressing deep truth.
- Talk to your pastors and encourage them to learn more. There are a few pastors who are already inviting responses from their folks, that they might offer these responses to the bishops. A couple of priests are even refusing to use the new Missal, opting instead, in their prayers, for the 1998 Missal. (It can be downloaded; check out [www.misguidedmissal.com](http://www.misguidedmissal.com).)
- Take the survey on another website, [www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org](http://www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org).
- Sign the petition on the [misguidedmissal](http://www.misguidedmissal.com) Web site.
- Watch for more action steps on the above mentioned Web site. You will be urged to write your bishop and the papal nuncio—addresses, and sample letters, will be provided.
- If you cannot say the new words, out of conscience, you might consider “holy disobedience.” As one priest said recently, “be sure that whatever words you use are said prayerfully. That is absolutely essential.”
- Most of all, besides prayer, stand up, and speak up, for what you believe.

*Gloria Ulterino is a longtime WOC activist, a prolific author, and writes to us from Rochester, New York.*

# UK Parliament Answer the Call for Debate on the Question of Women's Ordination

By Miriam Duignan

On November 1st, 2011 the internationally acclaimed Charity and campaign group, *Women Can Be Priests*, held a public presentation in the Houses of Parliament calling for a free and open debate on the question of women's ordination in the Catholic Church and challenged the Vatican ban on discussion of the topic.

**Miriam Duignan, Communications Coordinator for the campaign who chaired the meeting, reports on how the evening unfolded.**

It has been a long-held ambition to present the case for women priests in the Houses of Parliament. We are lucky to have the support of many high profile Catholic politicians and several members of the House of Lords who are patrons of our Charity. In the past year Therese Koturbash and Colette Joyce in our office formed the perfect tag team, keeping in constant contact with our supporters in Parliament, trying to find a way in to hold an event. We finally succeeded in being invited to hold a public meeting when the Catholic MP (Member of Parliament), Siobhain McDonagh, enthusiastically offered to host the event and Baroness Helena Kennedy, QC agreed to be our keynote speaker.

The evening presentation was open to the public and was announced in the Parliamentary magazine as well as on BBC radio and in *The Tablet*, a Catholic paper. After going through security checks, it was a great thrill to get into the Boothroyd room (named after Betty Boothroyd, the first woman to serve as the Speaker of the House of Commons) in Portcullis House and find the room completely full of people who had come to witness our appeal in Parliament. There was a great mix of women and men of all ages and the audience included some of our long-term supporters, veteran campaigners for women's ordination, visitors from Europe, the U.S. and South Africa as well as some newcomers who had read about the event. We were delighted to see so many MPs and Peers from Parliament, as well as several priests, some wearing vestments, some not.

Our host for the evening was the youthful MP Siobhain McDonagh who bounded up to the front of the room to open the meeting, clearly delighted to play a key part in this historic event. Siobhain declared that she had been feeling annoyed about the

ban on women priests for years and was delighted when we made contact with her: "As a proud Catholic and someone who believes that giving women a greater role in our Church will make it stronger, I was only too happy to get involved." Siobhain has now agreed to become a Patron of our Charity.

Another of our patrons, the Labour peer, Baroness Helena Kennedy, delivered the opening speech. Helena is an acclaimed champion of social justice, one of Britain's most distinguished lawyers, author of *Eve was Framed* and a prominent Catholic. She made a rousing call for open debate and said the Catholic Church is using the same old arguments that were used to keep women out of law, politics, and medicine for years. She said the ban on ordaining women is "simply a question of power and those who have it all never let go without a struggle...but once they do, everything gets better." Helena urged us to carry on the debate and has refused to accept that the matter of women's ordination should not be discussed in the public arena. She is confident that speaking out will ultimately bring about change.

Dr John Wijngaards then gave a powerful speech using evidence from scripture, tradition, and theology to present an incontestable case for the admission of Catholic women to the priesthood. Dr Wijngaards is a leading theologian and the author of over twenty books, including his latest controversial novel *Amrutha, the Pope's Man*. He is also the founder of the Web site [www.womenpriests.org](http://www.womenpriests.org), the largest online library dedicated to women's ordination. Dr Wijngaards detailed seven key reasons why women have been prevented from becoming priests and all were then summarily dismissed as having their roots in prejudice and containing no theological case for barring women from holy orders. The lively and engaging presentation was supplemented with documentary evidence and some amusing quotes read by Jackie Clackson and Barbara Paskins from the Women Can Be Priests team. As Dr Wijngaards asserted in the publicity for the presentation: "The Church did ordain women as deacons for 900 years, just as she ordained men. From the fact it has been done, we know it can be done and surely this is the mind of Jesus Christ."

The third and final speaker of the evening was Colette Joyce (Pastoral Outreach Coor-

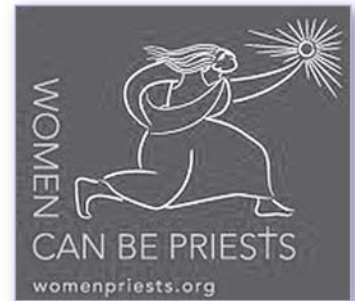
dinator for Womenpriests.org), who delivered a personal and moving account of her vocation to the priesthood. She spoke with a soft voice, which instantly silenced the room. Everyone was transfixed by the strength of her message and courage of conviction. Colette described how it feels to be dismissed and criticized for wanting to be a priest and how sad it is to be repeatedly told that "there are so many other things you can do in the Church as a woman" when what she should be doing is serving as an ordained priest and following her vocation.

We closed the evening with questions from the audience. People were bursting to share stories and ideas and it was hard to keep track of the many hands waving in the air, everyone eager to get his or her turn to speak. We had passionate pleas for action and many spoke of the need to support organizations working for reform and offer help and encouragement to those priests and public figures who are ready to come out in support of women's ordination. To our great surprise, not a single person spoke out against women priests, even though there were opponents present. Perhaps the strength of the presentations in this impressive venue silenced the critics that evening.

The conversation is just getting started in Parliament. Following on from our public presentation, one member of the House of Lords has offered to table a Parliamentary motion about women priests, so the topic will be officially debated. We believe it is time to speak out with courage and are calling upon Catholics in public life to give encouragement to this call for a free debate.

For further information, visit: [www.womenpriests.org](http://www.womenpriests.org). It is now available in twenty-six languages with 1.5 million visitors a year.

Miriam Duignan is the Communications Coordinator for Women Can Be Priests in the U.K.



## Walking With Women Called

By Christine Haider-Winnett

When I was about thirteen years old, a Maryknoll priest visited my church and gave a homily about his recent mission to Central America. As I heard him speak so passionately about dedicating his life to the Body of Christ—both in the bread and wine and among the poor—I felt an overwhelming voice inside of me say, “*this is what you need to do.*”

I’ve heard remarkably similar stories from other women and men who were called to ministry. If I had been a boy, I suspect that my call would have been treated as a “text-book case” and I would have been encouraged to follow that call into the priesthood.

However, because I was born a girl, my calling hasn’t given me such easy answers, but it has led me on a spirit-filled journey that has helped root my ministry in promoting equality, social justice and peacemaking. I was incredibly lucky to have been encouraged by both my family and my church. When I told my priest that I felt called to ministry, he laid his hands on me and gave me the blessing that his priest had prayed over him when he first felt a call to the priesthood. Growing up, I knew that women weren’t officially allowed to be priests, but I assumed that by the time I grew up, my gender would no longer be an issue.

As I got older, I started to suspect that my small-town California parish wasn’t representative of the larger Catholic Church. I felt betrayed and hurt that the religion that had raised me to value equality seemed so unwilling to recognize women’s gifts.

In high school, I left the Catholic Church and spent almost a decade exploring other religious traditions and denominations. I spent most of that time attending a Unitarian Universalist church, and I first met my husband at Unitarian youth and young adult events. The Unitarians taught me that the best communities are the ones that embrace diversity instead of creating a litmus test to determine membership. I was also able to hear women preach from the pulpit, and these women became my first examples of what ordained women’s ministry could look like.

However, in spite of how hard I tried, I had a hard time seeing myself as a Unitarian minister. I was raised to believe that all other parts of the worship service—songs,

prayer, readings, the homily—revolve around the mystery of the Eucharist. Without that mystery my worship experience felt shallow. I discovered that I didn’t want to preach or wear a stole as much as I wanted to engage with the Eucharist on a deeper level, which was something that I couldn’t do at a Unitarian church.

I went to Earlham College, a small school in Indiana that was founded by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Quaker worship is characterized by a community gathering in silent prayer to wait for inspiration from the spirit. In spite of how strange this form of worship can seem to outsiders, I found it deeply powerful and surprisingly familiar. Quakers believe that all of the sacraments can be found in silent worship. Experiencing the sacramental life of the Quakers made me long even more for my root tradition in the Catholic setting.

I spent a semester abroad in Northern Ireland and that summer completed an internship at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker. All the while, I felt myself slowly, timidly, returning to the faith of my childhood.

Sometimes, I tell people that I feel like both a life-long Catholic and a convert. The Catholic Church feels like home for me in a way that no other community could. I am Catholic down to my DNA. At the same time, returning as an adult has given me a wonderful opportunity to rediscover everything that I love about the Catholic Church.

In a culture that tends to value individualism and competitiveness, I am drawn to the Catholic call to community. I’m proud to belong to the most radically diverse Christian denomination on the planet where people of every race, nationality, sexual identity, and political affiliation are united every week as the Body of Christ. That’s why it is so ridiculous when the hierarchy tries to excommunicate women priests, bar people from taking communion, or push LGBT Catholics out of their own parishes. Our Church is so wonderfully expansive that to try to limit it into some sort of homogeneous club seems like the least catholic thing one can do—after all, catholic means universal!

I graduated from college in 2007 unsure about what I wanted to do with my life. Now that I had returned to the Catholic Church, ordained ministry felt more impos-

sible than ever. I spent a number of years exploring different career paths: nonprofit administrator, peace lobbyist, homeless rights activist. Each experience was wonderful in its own way, but I eventually realized that the things that I loved about those careers were the things that reminded me of ministry. It was becoming more and more clear that I could not put off this call forever, but what else could I do?

For me, being a woman who experiences a call to ordination has been like being a tool that’s not allowed to be used for its intended purpose. I have other things that I enjoy doing, but I can’t do the thing I love the most. I have things I’m good at, but I’ve been prevented from doing the one thing that I was really born to do.

At the time, I belonged to a wonderful faith-sharing community made up of other young women and men who were struggling with similar questions. One of the women in our community was on the WOC board and encouraged me to get more involved. Since then, I have served on WOC’s groundbreaking Anti-Racism Team and on the Board of Directors. At WOC, I found a place where my call has been taken seriously. Each woman priest, woman religious, and laywoman I have met through WOC has embodied a different form of ministry, and they have each played an important role in helping me discern my own calling. Knowing firsthand how alienating it can feel to be a woman called to ordained ministry, I feel blessed to be surrounded by so many sisters and role models.

This fall, I began taking classes at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. I’m pursuing a Masters of Divinity and a certificate in Women’s Studies and Religion. I hope to continue developing feminist liturgies and provide ministerial support for homeless communities.

During one of my first weeks of class, I spoke to an Episcopal priest about whether I should remain in the Catholic Church or convert to another denomination where I could more easily pursue ordination. She



Christine Haider-Winnett

*continued on next page*



# Discovering a Call To Ordination

By Donna Rougeux, ARCWP

I am a Roman Catholic woman, married with three teenage children. My roots in the United Church of Christ gave me a strong foundation of Christian beliefs and practices. With this background, one would not expect that I would be on a path to ordained ministry as a Roman Catholic priest. I was the last to know that this could even be possible much less that God would be calling me to this vocation.

As a young Protestant girl I remember asking a neighbor who was Catholic what a nun was. "She is someone who gives her life to God," she answered. Moved by her response, I wanted to know if I, too, could become a nun. Her answer disappointed me because I wasn't Catholic. Yet, the idea of giving my life to God never left me.

Years later I became Catholic when I discovered how much I loved the liturgy and the opportunity to receive Communion every day. I called myself a Vatican II Catholic, and I struggled with those who thought the pre-Vatican II church superior. In looking back over the events that led to discovering my call to priesthood I can see that God was preparing me as each chapter of my life unfolded. Right after I became Catholic, I was hired to teach first grade in a parochial school. Along with this position came the requirement of becoming a certified catechist. The certification process involved taking classes. This was my first taste of religious education as an adult. I discovered an unknown longing within myself for this type of education. I am sure this was preparing me to later think about becoming a seminary student.

## *Walking with Women Called...continued*

told me that when discerning your ministry the most important thing to consider is not "what am I good at?" or even "what do I love?" The most important question is "who do I want to serve? Who are my people?" I remain committed to the Catholic Church and WOC because I know that these are "my people." I am so grateful to be a part of this community.

*Christine Haider-Winnett is a student at Pacific School of Religion and works at a faith-based Central American solidarity organization. She is the Vice President of WOC's Board of Directors and also serves on the Anti-Racism Team. She lives in Oakland, California with her husband, Alex, and two cats.*



*Donna Rougeux, ARCWP; Rea Hudson, RCWP, Fr. Roy Bourgeois, M.M., Janice Sevre-Duszynska, ARCWP.*

During my seventh year of teaching I got married and moved to Lexington, Kentucky. I was fortunate that I didn't have to work outside of the home when I became a parent. God blessed my husband and me with three children, Matthew, Elizabeth and Sarah. My experience as a mother and a volunteer in my children's Catholic school and in our church then prepared me for the next chapters of my life.

One day, a friend of mine talked with me about becoming a part-time seminary student. I felt a light go on inside of me as she spoke. I found myself enrolling in seminary without knowing where it would lead. There were two programs to choose from: Educational Ministry and Pastoral Studies. Without thinking too deeply about it I chose the Educational Ministry program unaware of the change that would come with that decision. About halfway through the program I realized that teaching was really not the right fit for me. As I went through a period of soul searching, I volunteered with hospice and as a hospital Eucharistic Minister. Little by little I discovered that I was being drawn to pastoral care. So I switched my program and finished seminary with a masters degree in pastoral studies which led to a residency with hospice. After completing four units of Clinical Pastoral Education, I was hired as a full-time chaplain. Life was very good and I told everyone that I had finally figured out "what I want to be when I grow up." I could not foresee that both a crisis and a profound discovery lay ahead.

The blow that was almost fatal to my life as a convert to Catholicism came after I finished my hospice residency. In the summer of 2010, the Vatican issued a document stating how the church would deal with pedophile priests. In the very last paragraph,

ordaining women was compared to the criminal act of pedophilia and both were called "grave offenses against the faith." I could not believe what I read! How could ordaining women called by God to priesthood be compared to the act of pedophilia that caused immeasurable suffering to innocent children. As I reflected on the male hierarchy's attack against women, I found myself in a crisis. My life experience had led me to hear God's call to ministry as a hospice chaplain. I pondered, "Should I become an Episcopalian?" However, I knew running away was not the answer: I needed to stay and work for reform.

I talked with a friend who is an Anglican priest. I shared with her my struggle with the hierarchy and this current statement from the Vatican. In the midst of this conversation she said, "It sounds like God is calling you to be ordained." Hearing her say these words awakened me into consciousness. At that moment, I realized that I had been working very hard to suppress my longing to be ordained. But in hearing her words, I could no longer deny the truth of God's call. I seriously had to come to terms with my situation. I was living in a "religious" culture whose idolatry of maleness oppressed women and denied their call from God to ordination. I had suppressed what I knew to be true about myself and what God was calling me to be! On a whim I googled "women priests" and was astounded to find the website for Roman Catholic Women Priests. They were not only ordaining women in this movement, many of the women were just like me, married with children. After attending liturgies led by women priests, Katy Zatsick and Janice Sevre-Duszynska, I learned that this movement uses inclusive language, invites the community to extend their hands and say the words of consecration, and welcomes everyone. I was convinced that I was being called by God to join them.

On September 10, 2011, I was ordained a deacon by Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan of the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests (ARCWP). On June 9, 2012, I will become what God has always intended for me: a priest. I'll be ordained at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Lexington, the same place where Fr. Roy Bourgeois gave his prophetic homily and participated in Sevre-Duszynska's ordination.

From the first moment of stepping into this movement as a candidate I have experienced one mountain top experience after

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# The Wooing of We

An excerpt from *at the Roundtable: Building Missions of Mutual Solidarity*

By Eda Uca-Dorn

Written under the advisement of The Rev. Dr. Christopher Duraisingh, Professor Emeritus of Applied Theology Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass.

In *Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective* C.S. Song turns on its head pre-Communist era missionaries' complaints against some Chinese converts being more interested in feeding their stomachs than their souls. The hungry suspects were accused of being "rice Christians." He writes "we celebrate Christ's divine presence in the [E]ucharist ... [because] in Christ the divine future," a Kin-dom of God wherein all stomachs will be fed, "becomes the human present." He writes of the hungry suspects:

*Rice determined their present and their future. Rice brings a concrete content to all talk about the future, about the world to come, and about the kingdom of God. For those who subsist on rice, can there be a future without rice? Can there be a world to come where they must struggle again for rice?... Understanding rice in this way, Christians in China should have been proud to be "rice Christians." They should have represented this kind of "rice Christianity" to their rice-hungry compatriots. Preachers should have preached "rice sermons" to their famished audiences... theology must serve the God of the present—a God whose pockets are full of rice.<sup>1</sup>*

Here among the rice Christians and all our third world kin is a theology that is intimately concerned with the re/distribution of power at the table: the grass-roots and indeed *grass-basket* theologians seeking freedom from subjugation under the systems of oppression built into their own societies.<sup>2</sup>

While Kwok writes from the location of third wave and third world feminist theologians, it can be said that all whose bodies and souls are crossed by the true borders of holy diversity and false borders of *kyriarchy* (which is to say, all, though not the same) find themselves in decentered, multi-centered contexts and frequently criss-cross borders.<sup>3</sup> *What does this mean for us who gather at the table? How shall we strive toward roundtable missions of mutual solidarity?*

On a personal level within each of us are hungry "stomachs" that God fills with good things. There are, however, also "stomachs" full to the brim with the unearned bread of privilege that are sent away empty or *emptied* as it must be the case in a re/distribution of power (see Luke 1:46-55). Both of

these parts are ultimately healed and integrated by the grace of God's action in the world in Christ Jesus.

Where the satisfied once bent to feed the hungry in soup lines with uncrossable boundaries between heavy ladled servers and hungry guests, a newly articulated community may now feed one another in roundtable missions. It is in the breaking of bread in such roundtable missions that the "they" of "they the poor who seek freedom from subjugation" loses three letters and grows inestimably larger by the wooing of a "w," that is, *We*. When the community of God moves from "they" theology to "*we*" theology its members become participants in emancipation from the multiple oppressions that ultimately subjugate everyone; then all who hunger for bread and justice will be fed.

The task therefore is to locate ourselves and "discern theology in a true multiplicity"<sup>4</sup> at the table. This will illumine what would make for roundtable missions of mutual exchange and inevitably lead to the discernment of how power is to be re/distributed in the community of God, that is, how each one will feed and be fed according to her unique gifts and personal need and the unique gifts and needs of those others at the table. Lutheran womanist theologian Rev Dr. Beverly Wallace writes, "Only in the inclusion of multiple perspectives can we know more fully the picture of humankind, the [hungers] ... of God's people."<sup>5</sup> We will learn to build roundtable ministries only by building a shared understanding of what would feed all of God's people from the unique, embodied experiences and theologies of all God's people.

This is no doubt a deeply challenging task: to hear this multiplicity of voices, the gnawing and belching of our bellies in balance, when unequal power dynamics continue to silence and amplify the hunger of some in the circle.<sup>6</sup> There are several steps Christian communities can take to mitigate the acute recreation of systems of oppression in our midst.<sup>7</sup>

We must first acknowledge that the main event in the life of our communities will never be what we do for ourselves nor what we do for God, but rather, what God does for us.<sup>8</sup> This should be a matter of great relief to us, while our own mortal faithfulness is deeply vulnerable, God's grace is perfect and invulnerable. While we will inevitably fail in perfecting our own hearts and minds, *God's grace will never fail a*

*community open to being transformed by it. Therefore our most fervent*

*prayers must be directed in pre-emptive gratitude for the knowledge of God's transformative grace, certain to create, redeem, and sanctify our communities in ways we cannot fathom or anticipate. This kind of prayer will help break us of self-righteousness, self-satisfaction, and self-reliance. We cannot do without this first step.*

Next we must become students and practitioners of practical, systematic approaches to building roundtable missions. Indeed, many models for uprooting oppression are possible in our communities. To offer one of many, the Hosanna! People's Seminary approach is to discern particular areas of privilege and poverty within a community through a three part process: *awareness* of privilege and oppression in the community; *accountability* in the community to the oppressed party and to the continued education and development of the privileged party in the area of ally training; and *solidarity* in relationship with the oppressed party or those allying with the oppressed party outside of the community.

Of course, most communities will find themselves in a few of these stages at once, circling continually in the process of *becoming*. Thus, we must gather at the roundtable in turns as representatives of the ruling class and the underdogs: ever aware that the seat of true and false power shifts easily with the sudden interjection of a new idea. When approaching this journey, the community must recognize this work as not a fight against any particular people but rather always as a fight against the powers and principalities that bind everyone to oppression in all its forms. In this light, those most intimately impacted by an issue at hand, their supportive friends, as well as those who have not come to understand the value of addressing the issue, are all held in love and concern by those doing anti-oppression/liberation work in the circle.

In order to build roundtable ministries it is equally important to create a table that provides a sacred space for those who do believe in the importance of anti-oppression/liberation work. For those who are ready to feast together may do so undeterred by organizational dynamics of denial or delay,



Eda Uca-Dorn

*continued on next page*



*The Wooing of We...continued*

and no one turns away from the table hungry. A table built of mutual solidarity against oppression allows all people to learn to articulate the stories of their own sacred hunger (and sacrilegious glut) without being told they are distracting from more important issues or divisive to the community.

After a community has earnestly prayed in gratitude for the grace that will transform them and taken practical steps toward building a roundtable mission of mutual solidarity only then is the community ready for step three. *Start again.* The *unfinalizable* work of theological praxis for radical community building is just that—unfinalizable.<sup>9</sup> If a community perseveres in prayer, as they begin to uproot one injustice, their vision will expand just enough to reveal the incompleteness of their efforts. To start again, and again, and again, a community must grow in humility and humor and build sustaining friendships with those outside of the community who can offer encouragement, guidance, and fresh inspiration.

Most importantly, those of us doing this work must not do it in the hopes of building perfect roundtable missions. We work with the ingredients (ideas, prayers, resources) we have acquired by gift or harvest at any one given time. We cook and eat with whoever comes to the table. We cannot go “shopping” for the Spirit nor can we fix the menu at her table. Let us therefore cook and feed and be fed by one another simply for the joy of making room for one more, and one more again, all around the roundtable.

*Eda Uca Dorn is a student at the Episcopal Divinity School and currently serves on WOC's Anti-Racism Team. She lives in Cambridge, Mass.*

**Notes**

- 1 C.S. Song, *Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 19.
- 2 The “grass-basket” theologians are those whose daily toil results in little or no “extra” time or income for formal theological or political training. Where possible, their formal and informal study and their work along with their family lives, neighborhood participation, faith communities, personal experiences and communal memories make up the ground for their theological and ethical reflection.

3 That is, *lordship* or the interlocking system of oppressions based on gender, race, nationality, class, ability, and other factors. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 190.

4 Pui Lan Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (London: Westminster, 2004), 60.

5 Beverly Wallace, “Hush No More! Constructing an African American Lutheran Womanist Ethic,” in *Transformative Lutheran Theologies*, ed. Mary J. Streufert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 180.

6 Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination* (ref. 4), 42, 43.

7 It is unlikely that any community could be completely free of the systems of oppression; perhaps that “perfection” is waiting for us in the kingdom of Heaven. Yet it is important to root out structural injustice and interpersonal dynamics severe enough to prevent a community from moving forward toward being a *more* just body.

8 James Cone, “God is Black,” in *Lift Every Voice. Constructing Christian Theologies From the Underside*, ed. Susan B. Thistlethwaite and Mary P. Engel (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1998), 108.

9 Christopher. Duraisingh, class lecture, “Introduction to Theology,” Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA, 8 Sept 2011.

*Discovering a Call to Ordination...continued from page 7*

another. I continue to find myself in the presence of prophets and spiritual sisters who are kindred spirits. The contrast between the reception I received from the institutional church as a lay leader and a seminary student compared to the affirmation of my call that I have received since I have been part of this movement is like night and day. My life as I journey toward priesthood in this movement has been filled with transformational experiences.

Before being ordained as a deacon I saw the documentary, “Pink Smoke Over the Vatican” three times each in different settings. One of these viewings was in a Cincinnati theater with 200 people who, like me, were noticeably moved by it. I left that film debut and found myself on a spontaneously planned trip to Pittsburg to meet Fr. Roy Bourgeois for the first time and hear him speak. I was moved to tears when he passionately supported women’s ordination. Hearing a male priest be that openly supportive of women’s ordination touched my heart deeply.

Since becoming a deacon Sophia has continued to catapult my life’s journey. In October I traveled with Janice Sevre-



Duszynska to Rome representing ARCWP in support of Fr. Roy at the Vatican. Here I was walking toward the Vatican for the very first time in my life, dressed in an alb and a deacon’s stole, holding on to the WOC banner that read “Ordain Catholic Women.” I would never have predicted that my first trip to Europe would have been as an activist in a movement for women’s ordination in the church. I went to Rome with a Rosa Parks of our women priest movement, Janice Sevre-Duszynska. I was in Rome to support the prophetic male priest of our movement, Fr. Roy Bourgeois. Catholic theologian and archeologist,

Dorothy Irvin accompanied us. With her at our side, we visited the Basilica of St. Praxedis and St. Pricilla’s catacomb in Rome as well as other places. What a joy I felt to see for myself the evidence of women’s leadership in early Christianity! I was surrounded by great people from CTA, WOC, and womenpriests.org. This was more than I could have ever dreamed. During the many moments on this trip when my emotions stirred, I felt overcome with thankfulness for the experiences I encountered.

One of my favorite songs is “Requiem,” sung by Eliza Gilkyson from “Pink Smoke Over the Vatican.” It is a mystical song about finding hope in the struggle of daily life. One phrase I am particularly fond of is “Mary fill the glass to overflowing, illuminate the path where we are going.” These words and music express what has stirred and given birth inside of me since I said “yes” to ordination and to this movement. Indeed, my glass has been filled to overflowing; with great joy my path has been illuminated by its kindred spirits.

*Donna Rougeux writes to us from Lexington, Kent.*

With such an intensely sacramental life, it should be no wonder that sisters have deep intellectual curiosity and spiritual longings. With hearts so regularly broken open, why wouldn't they ask deeper questions of this mysterious world that brims with the power of a wounded God? With all that they've witnessed, how could they not entertain the possibility that holiness can be present in same-sex love or in the body of a woman priest?

Their ideas, interests and programs are not the product of an obstinate disobedience of power. Rather, their commitments come from a deep obedience to the God who appears in the faces of the powerless and the vulnerable. They see the crucified Christ in places most clergy and laypeople dare not go. They are not wayward, but wise enough not to place limits on how and where God works God's grace.

The sisters' experiences tell them that hiding behind the false fortress of religious laws simply does not do justice to a God who reaches out to us in ways that far exceed even the most active Catholic imagination. The sisters have learned well Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees who "disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." They are obeying their calling to be, what Sandra Schneiders recently called, a "prophetic life form."

But the Vatican is telling these women, as it has told many groundbreaking theologians, ministers and saints before, that a prophet is not welcome in her own native place. They are commanding the sisters to shut down their minds and hearts even at the price of shutting out the very voice of God.

Sure, the Vatican is thanking the sisters for their hard work and devotion on behalf of

the church. But they are also telling them that they have become too empowered and that they must now be carefully watched and tightly controlled. They must halt the practice of asking theological questions, they must stop reading the signs of the times and they must cease exploring the ways in which God's presence is unfolding in our present reality. Essentially, the hierarchy is reducing them to the equivalent of spiritual enslavement.

This latest development in the U.S. church poses a challenge not only for sisters, but for all Catholics who believe that the Catholic tradition is much richer and deeper than absolute subservience to man-made doctrines on issues related to the pelvic zone.

It is a moment that demands we read the writing on the wall: There is no safe place within the institutional church for intellectually based, pastorally grounded interpretation of or questioning of doctrine. There is no space in this institution for prophets to dwell.

With each new crackdown on a priest, nun or layperson of integrity, the institutional church seems to be begging a schism. Their goal is either to coerce or force out anyone who won't toe the line on marriage equality, contraception and women's ordination. Without absolute conformity on these issues, the bishops cannot make their far more profitable alliances with right-wing religious and political groups.

As NCR reported last week, if the sisters do not comply, they will likely "face ouster as a Vatican-recognized representative of sisters in the United States." If the LCWR isn't the representative of sisters in the United States, wouldn't that position necessarily fall on the Council of Major Superiors of

Women Religious (CMSWR), a highly orthodox group representing less than 20 percent of sisters in United States? This would surely help the Vatican in fulfilling its vision of a leaner, meaner Roman Catholic Church.

This attack on the sisters is an attack on everyone who believes in their ministries and who has benefited from their ministries. There has never been a more crucial moment for us to stand in solidarity. It is time particularly for men religious in this country to take a courageous stand. They, too, must use their privilege to speak out and risk their own well-being for the good of their sisters.

The very life of the prophetic life form is in peril. If the sisters are ejected from the church, we must create church around them. If they are evicted from their properties, those with the means must take them in. The sisters, who have dedicated their lives to ensuring that no one is abandoned, cannot be abandoned.

Because to abandon them would be to abandon one of the last vestiges of the spirit of God at work in the church.

*Jamie L. Manson received her Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, where she studied Catholic theology and sexual ethics. Her columns for NCR earned her a first prize Catholic Press Association award for Best Column/Regular Commentary in 2010. Originally Posted in the National Catholic Reporter on April 23, 2012. Reprinted with Permission.*

## 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](mailto:ehanna@womensordination.org) and note in the subject: "Go Green." You can also receive membership notices and donation acknowledgments electronically.

If you're not a member, see page 15 for a membership form.

# World Day of Prayer Liturgy 2012: For Women of Courage and Vision

(1) One: Come, Holy Spirit, breath divine  
All: Open us for your presence

(1) One: Refresh and give life to what is exhausted and tired

All: Drive away fear out of our hearts

(1) One: Come, Holy Spirit, Wind Divine

All: Wake up our longing, create new beginning among us

(2) One: God, our mother and father, creator of women in your own image, loving foundation and heart of all beings, we are gathered here before you. Let us pray for all women around the world so that they may be blessed with:

All:

The strength to persevere,  
The courage to speak out,  
The vision to seek a renewed ministry,  
The faith to believe in you beyond  
All systems and institutions, so that your face on earth may be seen in all its beauty. [i]

(3) One:

We call on the holy and courageous women who went before us, to intercede for us so that we might be given the grace and vision to follow in their footsteps as we work together in solidarity for the ordination of women as priests, deacons, and bishops into an inclusive and accountable Catholic Church.

One (in turns):

Saint Esther, who pleaded against power for the liberation of the people, Pray for us.

Saint Deborah, lawwoman and judge, who led the people of God, Pray for us.

Saint Mary Magdalene, minister of Jesus, apostle to the Apostles, Pray for us.

Saint Clara of Assisi, who confronted the pope with the image of woman as equal, Pray for us.

Saint Julian of Norwich, who proclaimed for all of us, the motherhood of God, Pray for us.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, who felt God's call to become priest, prophet, and king, Pray for us.

Saint Catherine of Siena, to whom two popes listened, Pray for us.

Saint Teresa of Avila, who brought women's gifts to the reform of the church, Pray for us.



WOC Members gather outside of St. Matthew's Cathedral during the Chrism Mass in Downtown Washington, DC.

Saint Edith Stein, who brought fearlessness to faith, Pray for us.

Saint Dorothy Day, who led the church to a new sense of justice, Pray for us.

Saint Rosa Venerini, whose entire educational mission was to announce the love of God, Pray for us.

Saint Theodore Guérin, who abandoned herself to the will of God in generous service to others, Pray for us.

Saint Hildegard of Bingen, who sought creativity to express her visions of women's leadership in our Church, Pray for us.

Mary, mother of Jesus, who heard the call of God and answered, Mary, mother of Jesus, who drew strength from the woman Elizabeth, Mary, mother of Jesus, filled with God's Spirit, Pray for us. Amen. [ii]

(4) One:

Today to especially honor those women whose gifts are best suited to serve your Church as ordained deacons and priests we gather with our sisters and brothers from around the world, seeking justice and an end to discrimination.

Loving God, empower these women with courage as they answer your call and strengthen them for humble service, great compassion, and insightful wisdom. Support them through their ministries and enlighten the leadership of your Church to practice the equality that Jesus modeled to embrace all women and men whom you have gifted for sacramental service.

(5) One:

Strengthen your Holy Spirit within those you have chosen for ordained ministry. May they answer your call and follow you

with generous hearts, knowing they are supported in the arms and hearts of those who believe in the justice of your work. May they find hope in the prophetic work of those who speak from conscience.

(All: Offer your intentions here)

(6) One:

We ask this in the name of Jesus, who called Mary Magdalene and Phoebe - as well as Peter and Paul - to be ministers in the early Christian communities.

All: Amen.

All: May the fire of God's love warm our hearts. May the courageous and visionary women on whose shoulders we stand continue to inspire us in our work.

May God grant our prayers for justice and equality in our church and world. May the love of Christ fill us and radiate through us forever. Amen. [iii]

One (7): Let us go in the peace of Christ. Let our service for justice and equality continue.

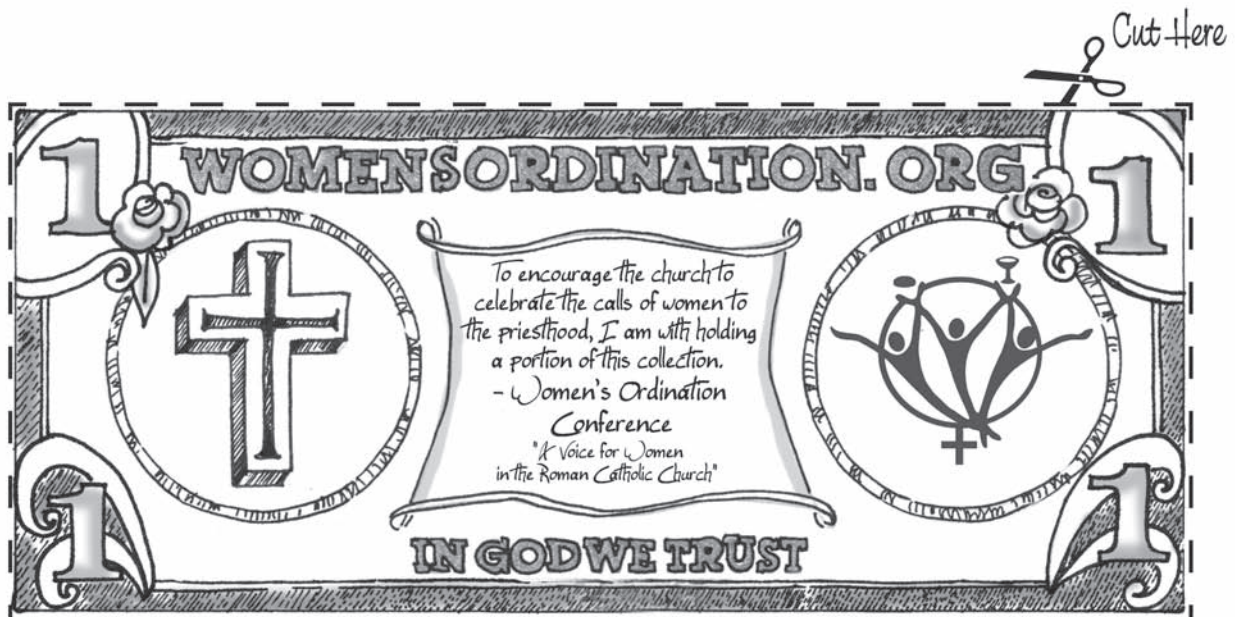
All: Thanks be to God.

[i] Source: Adapted from the Women's Ordination Worldwide opening prayer July 2011, Irmgard Kampmann, Germany.

[ii] Source: Excerpted from: "A Litany of Women for the Church," by Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, Benetvision <http://www.msjc.net/Lists/Praying%20for%20Social%20Justice/DispForm.aspx?ID=22>

[iii] Source: Adapted from Living Gospel Equality Now, Liturgy to Celebrate Justice, Partnership and Equality for Women in Church and Society. Bridget Mary Meehan, ARWCP, Association of Roman Catholic Womenpriests.





## Inclusive Worship Aids

A resource created by priests in the Association of Roman Catholic Womenpriests (ARCWP) for all inclusive communities who worship in spirit and truth. The prayers and rituals can easily be adapted to the specific needs of any group, for any season. Worship Aids are provided on a CD in Word Doc and PDF formats.

Included liturgies: ~ Liturgy for Advent/Christmas ~ Liturgy for Lent ~ Liturgy for Water, Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Third Sunday of Lent, Easter Season, Baptismal Celebration Liturgy, Earth or Renewal Themes ~ Liturgy for Fire, Easter Season, Pentecost, Earth Day, Social Justice ~ Liturgy for Ordinary Time ~ Liturgy to Celebrate Creation, New Life, Creativity, New Begin-

nings, Spring or Summer ~ Liturgy for Marian Feast ~ Liturgy to Celebrate Justice, Partnership and Equality for Women in Church and Society ~ Liturgy of Good News to the Poor, For Anytime ~ Liturgy for All Saints' and/or All Souls' Day, Funerals/ Memorials.

A suggested donation of \$25.00 will defray the cost and help to support the growth of ARCWP and our ministry. Donate online at [www.arcwp.org](http://www.arcwp.org) or send a check to:

ARCWP  
18520 Eastshore Drive  
Ft. Myers, Florida 33967



# Just as Sexism is a Sin, It is Also a Sign: The Church Must Change

## Action Center Report from Rome, Italy

Kate Conmy

### Sign of Peace

Just minutes after touching ground in Rome, Erin and I spotted a familiar face behind a handwritten "Ordain Women!" sign near the baggage claim of the Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport—Fr. Roy Bourgeois welcomed us with his huge grin and his famously embracing energy, seemingly untouched by jetlag. For the next week (October 15-20, 2011) WOC would lead an international convergence of twenty church-justice activists and scholars to Vatican City to challenge the "grave scandal" of women's ordination in the Roman Catholic Church. Although perhaps unusual circumstances for my first trip to Rome, I knew I was traveling in good company.

### Sign of Protest

Following the Italian premier of the documentary film, "Pink Smoke Over the Vatican," and an international press conference, we traveled to Via della Conciliazione where our group marched, singing, "Here I am Lord..." toward the Vatican, and the Basilica of St. Peter. Although WOC has held vigils in Rome many times before, joined by vested women priests Ree Hudson and Janice Sevre-Duszynska, and deacon Donna Rougeux, we attracted new attention this year. As we approached the gates of St. Peter's, the security presence quickly outnumbered us and we were relegated to the corner across the street. The Vatican officials claimed that the women priests' vestments were "a sign of protest" that would not be allowed past the gates. During our ad hoc negotiation with the fairly friendly but stubborn Vatican security officers, we explained our peaceful intentions to deliver our petition in support of women's ordination, garnered by over 15,000 signatures. The head of Vatican security hit the nail on the head when he conceded that Fr. Roy, as a male priest, could go wherever he wanted, but no one else would be permitted to do so. Naturally, in the face of a familiar foe, sexism, Fr. Roy refused to go alone.



*International Delegation for Women's Ordination in Rome, October, 2011.*

### Sign of Things to Come

In the shuffle, one reporter asked Fr. Roy and the women priests to unfold their banner and pose for a photograph. The sign, in English and Italian read: "God is Calling Women to be Priests." A plain-clothed Italian police officer shifted the tone of our delegation when he grabbed the sign from the hands of the priests and in a sweeping gesture grabbed our beloved WOC banner, reading "Ordain Catholic Women" and a small Call to Action banner, both folded on the sidewalk. For organizing this scandalous demonstration, Erin and Miriam Duignan of womenpriest.org were put into a police car and with blue lights blazing sped to the police station in Piazza Cavour. With a little less fanfare, Fr. Roy was directed to a second police car to meet Erin, Miriam, and lawyer Bill Quigley and his wife Debbie at the station shortly afterward.

### Sign of the Cross

After several hours' detention inside the Rome police station, the three were released after they signed statements promising to return to Italy if the investigating magistrate decided to try them on the charges of protesting without a permit, reported Bill Quigley. The banners were seized as evidence and not returned. However, the following day Fr. Roy, Bill Quigley,



*Kate Conmy*

and Therese Koturbosh of Women's Ordination Worldwide met with a top Vatican official and delivered our petition, and the signatures of over 200 priests who signed the CTA sponsored "Clergy for Conscience" statement.

### Sign of the Times

While this private meeting took place, some of the group gathered inside the Vatican City gates, watching the pomp of the Papal blessing to crowds of people. I have never felt so connected to my Catholicism, surrounded by "trouble-makers," grimacing at the Pope, than at that moment. With tears in my eyes, I could clearly see the true distance between the hierarchy and the people of the church, as the trio met us and shared the highlights of their meeting. The Pope's words, just a murmur evaporating into the warm air while the consequence of conscience, the treatment of a priest standing for justice just about sank my heart. Suddenly all of my months working at WOC clicked into place. The Vatican is a vestige of power, filled with fading symbolism and wealth that is desperately trying to rule an empire that no longer exists. We are a threat to this massive power structure because we are still here. We are here because we know at the heart of Catholicism is social justice, community, and Eucharistic nourishment; and moreover, because we know the heart of Catholicism is beating strongly within the trouble-makers, the women priests and their communities, and especially in the tiny WOC office. If being a Catholic means being detained with those who stand up for human rights, sign me up.

*Kate Conmy is WOC's Membership Coordinator. She lives in Washington, DC.*



**Ida Raming, Iris Müller. *Contra Legem, a Matter of Conscience: Our Lifelong Struggle for Human Rights for Women in the Roman Catholic Church*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010. ISBN: 978-3-643-10986-9**

*A review by Kate Conmy*

"The international women's ordination movement leaves us breathless," writes Ida Raming in her joint autobiography with Iris Müller (1930-2011), *Contra Legem, a Matter of Conscience: Our Lifelong Struggle for Human Rights for Women in the Roman Catholic Church*. Both taken by the divine and exhausting, breathless aptly captures the beauty and relentless passion for justice these two women have devoted their lives to pursuing. This rare collection uniquely traces each woman's separate path from adolescent to theologian, converging in a way that demonstrates the woven integrity of the international women's rights movement. In their own voices Raming and Müller describe emerging from the isolated, so-called paradoxical path of a Catholic feminist theologian to finding a friendship and community that would sustain their minds and souls through their ordinations as Roman Catholic women priests.

Raming and Müller both frame their stories through their respective vocational timelines, allowing the merits of their academic work to truly shine in the substantial Appendix. The Appendix alone should be required reading of all Catholics. In addition to their original petition to the Vatican Council on the exclusion of women in 1963,

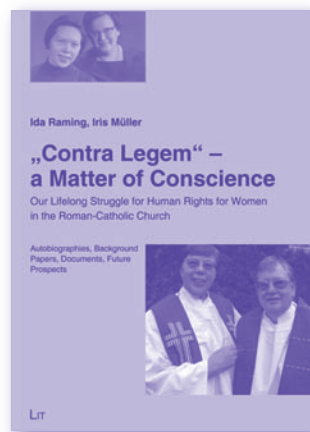
an exchange of letters between Ida Raming and Prof. Dr. Joseph Ratzinger in 1964 is not only noteworthy but utterly intriguing as Prof. Dr. Ratzinger coolly, but personally responds to Raming's inquiries. Shamelessly taken out of context, it could not be truer of the hierarchy that they, "[t]he faithful, around the world will have a hard time recognizing the identity of the Church in Her changing forms" (p. 150).

Following the admirable but fruitless attempts at dialogue via correspondence, a collection of documents from 1985-2006 accessibly discusses the theological and socio-political arguments surrounding sacramental ordination. From the vocational prospects of feminist Catholic theologians ("problematical"), to the formation and development of the Women's Ordination Movement in the Roman Catholic Church in Europe, to a thorough exegesis of Galatians 3:27-28 and its interpretation in Vatican documents, these essays serve as a tool box for women's ordination advocates. In particular, " 'Equal in Christ!' Not: Women Excluded in the Name of God" raises a critical objection to John Paul II's twisted interest in the nature, dignity, and duties of women—an oft neglected narrative of the late pope.

It is the life-long struggle of Raming and Müller that must attest to the power of the Holy Spirit, for their endurance for justice on an otherwise unyielding journey could be fueled by nothing less than God. This work speaks to not only the academic rigor, but more importantly the "spiritual security," and the "religious refuge," within the international women's ordination movement that must be upheld. Just as Raming and Müller found themselves breathless, we must continue to honor their marathon so that those of us holding our breath on the Catholic Church can finally, gloriously exhale.

To order the English translation of this work contact Transaction Publishers Orders@transactionpub.com or 732-445-2280.

*Kate Conmy is WOC's Membership Coordinator.*



## Upcoming Events

### May

**May 5, 2012:** 6-9 PM: Cherry Hill, NJ: Sacred Heart's Peace and Justice Group welcomes Fr. Roy Bourgeois. More details forthcoming. Contact the WOC office for more information.

**May 9, 2012:** 1-2 PM EST: WATER teleconference with Melanie Morrison and Julia Watts Belser "What No Longer Serves Us." To register send "register me" to waterstaff@hers.com to receive dial-in information.

**May 12, 2012:** Cleveland, OH: Celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Ordination of the Danube Seven. RCWP and WOC host "Supporting the Formation of Women Priests" with Dagmar Celeste. Contact the WOC office for more information.

### June

**June 13, 2012:** 1-2 PM EST: WATER teleconference with Marjorie Procter-Smith "The Ones Who've Gone Before Us." To register send "register me" to waterstaff@hers.com to receive dial-in information.

**June 22-24, 2012:** Fort Worth, TX: CORPUS Annual Conference, opening with a screening of "Pink Smoke Over the Vatican," and featuring Keynote speakers Jamie Manson, Rev. Scott Jenkins and Teri Thompson of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. American Airlines Conference Center. For information contact: corpus-reports@gmail.com

### August

**August 27-31, 2012:** Myrtle Beach, SC: New Perspectives: New Me - Join the 2012 Convocation of the Catholic Diocese of One Spirit for a workshop/vacation renewal. Contact Rev. Jim Burch for more information, jim@jamesHBurch.com or 703-818-8080

### October

**October 6, 2012:** Ware, MA: Agape Foundation celebrates 30 years, with Fr. Roy Bourgeois and Arum Gandhi- Grandson of Mahatma Gandhi. www.Agapefoundation.org for more information.

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



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

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Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Type of Membership

**Individual:**  \$45 Regular (\$25 Student/Limited Income)  \$50 International (USD)

**I am also enclosing an additional gift of:**  \$20  \$35  \$50  \$75  \$100  \$250 Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**I am paying by:**  Check (payable to WOC)  Credit Card  US Money Order

**Card:**  Visa  MasterCard

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

### Monthly Pledge Program

Instead of sending my membership dues in one payment, I would like to provide WOC with steady and reliable income by making monthly donations:

 \$10/month  \$25/month  \$50/month  \$100/month  \$\_\_ monthly

#### Payment Options

 Automatic Bank Withdrawal (I am sending an endorsed and voided check) \*

 Credit Card (Charge my credit card every month)

**\* This payment option saves WOC time and credit card fees**

*Contributions to WOC are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

Send to:

**Women's Ordination Conference**  
 P.O. Box 15057  
 Washington, DC 20003

*Make checks payable to WOC*

## Support the Sisters!

### On April 18, 2012, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

(CDF) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) launched a crackdown on the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), an umbrella group that represents more than 80 percent of the 57,000 women religious in the United States.

We stand in solidarity with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). We are shocked by the Roman Catholic hierarchy's recent crackdown on nuns in the United States. The mandate forced upon LCWR, which threatens their works of justice, is a prime example of how the hierarchy in the Roman Catholic Church misuses its power to diminish the voice of women. We value the prophetic witness of women religious and appreciate their commitment to social justice. We are asking that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith respectfully withdraw the mandate forced upon LCWR.

*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.change.org/support-the-sisters](http://www.change.org/support-the-sisters)**



**Women's Ordination Conference**  
P.O. Box 15057  
Washington, DC 20003  
USA

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## WOC Merchandise

### Give the gift of women's leadership in the church this summer

**Gift membership \$45.00** \*denotes required field

Recipient's name\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Recipient's address\* \_\_\_\_\_  
City\* \_\_\_\_\_ State\* \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Message: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Good Catholic Girls" T-shirt – On Sale Now

"Good Catholic Girls Support Women's Ordination"  
Available in black and pink. Adult sizes. 100% sweatshop-free.

Item Ts2  
Was \$15 **Now only \$8**



### Liturgical Purple Stoles – New

Long Purple Pastoral Stoles handmade by Grupo Mana, a group of women who live in the outskirts of Lima and with their sewing cooperative support their families. This Fair Trade product is made of the versatile manta cloth, traditionally used by indigenous women to carry their children on their backs, and is reversible, washable, and doesn't fade or shrink. **\$35**



### "Women Priests: Answering the Call"

Enjoy Catherine Cavanagh's succinct and well researched booklet on the theological and socio-political history of women's ordination in the Catholic Church. **\$5 each**

### Buttons

Great for raising awareness. Choose from "Ordain Women" Item Bt1 or "Priestly People Come in All Genders" Item Bt2 or "Equal Rites—Ordain Women" Item Bt3 **\$2 each**

Quantity	Item #	Description	T-Shirt Size: S, M, L, XL, XXL	Color: Pink, Black or Purple	Price	Total
	Ts1	"Ordain women" t-shirt			\$10	\$
	Ts2	"Good Catholic Girls" t-shirt			\$8	\$
	Bt1	"Ordain Women" button			\$2	\$
	Bt2	"Priestly People Come in All Genders" button			\$2	\$
	Bt3	"Equal Rites—Ordain Women" button			\$2	\$
	Bk1	"Women Priests: Answering the Call"			\$5	\$
	S1	Liturgical Purple Stoles			\$35	\$
					Shipping and Handling	\$3.00
					Merchandise Total	\$

### Payment Information

Check  Visa  Mastercard Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_  
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To place your order, call (202) 675-1006, email [woc@womensordination.org](mailto:woc@womensordination.org), or visit our website to print an order form.  
Standard shipping and handling costs (\$3 for most orders) are not included in the listed prices.

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