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# New Women New Church

Summer/Fall 2011

A Voice for Women in the Catholic Church

## Critical Mass: Join Fr. Roy and WOC in Rome

By Kate Conmy, Emily Cohen

The Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers issued a second canonical warning to Fr. Roy Bourgeois stating he will be dismissed from the order and his priesthood if he does not recant his support for women priests within fifteen days. This final warning comes nearly four months after his first canonical warning (March 29, 2011) and over two years after his letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith resulting in his excommunication *Latae Sententiae* reserved to the Holy See.

Since Fr. Roy's declaration outside the Vatican's Apostolic Nunciature in Washington, D.C. on April 8, 2011, where he announced his firm stance: "I will not recant," he has continued his public advocacy for gender equality in the Church. Perhaps Rev. Edward Dougherty, Superior General of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, said it best, "In the wake of continuing efforts over the last couple of months ... you have remained unmoved."

In solidarity with Fr. Roy and coalition partners, the Women's Ordination Conference will travel to Rome with Fr. Roy October 16-20, 2011 to bring the voice of Catholics worldwide who support women's ordination to the forefront of the world's media. In addition to press conferences, daily vigils and demonstrations in Vatican City, Fr. Roy will deliver a lecture to seminarians and request a meeting with Cardinal Levada.

Inspired by Fr. Roy's unwavering resolve to call out sexism in the Catholic Church, Catholics around the world have responded to the call of conscience. An online petition in support of Fr. Roy, circulated by WOC, Call To Action (CTA), and Roman



Fr. Roy Bourgeois

Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP)/Association of Roman Catholic Womenpriests (ARCWP), has garnered over 12,000 signatures. Sixteen vigils held across the country brought greater visibility to the movement, as well as criticism of the Maryknoll leadership for not standing by their brother, as Sr. Joan Chittister's order did when she publicly supported women's ordination in 2001. However, in an unprecedented move, over 200 Catholic priests have signed onto a letter in support of their fellow embattled priest and his right to speak his conscience.

This stance of priests from the United States follows a series of recent actions where priests have collectively taken a stand for justice in the Church. Last year, priests in Ireland formed a union aimed at organizing the country's 6,500 priests in response to the clergy abuse crisis. In May of this year, the National Council of Priests of Australia released a statement in support of a bishop forced to resign because he mentioned women's ordination as one possible solution to the priest shortage. In July, the Austrian-based Initiative of Parish Priests launched a campaign with 300 priests signing a call for resistance that encourages,

among other things, the inclusion of women and married men to the priesthood.

This initiative has found public support, with a total 71.7 per cent of Austrians describing the effort "fair and adequate," with 64.7 per cent saying they would even sign a "call for in-subordination," according to the Oekonsult polling institute.

*continued on page 3*

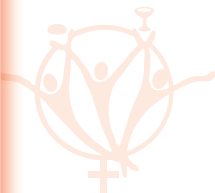
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**Join Us in Rome!**  
**October 16-20, 2011**  
Contact WOC Office for More Info!



Erin Saiz Hanna



Dear WOC Members,

I hope this letter finds you well.

I want to thank my WOC family for the countless moments of sacredness you have bestowed upon my family. It was with great joy that my husband and I welcomed our baby boy, Nico, into our family at 8:03 PM on the 25th of April 2011. We received so many letters and notes from our WOC community, and we are incredibly blessed to have you in our lives. Nico was a healthy 9 lbs and about 22 inches and has been growing like a weed since then! He will be attending the annual Call to Action conference and will no doubt enjoy meeting his progressive Catholic family.

As summer comes to end and the wind blows in the season of Fall, changes are quickly happening here at the WOC action center as we gear up for an exciting few months. In October we will be leading a delegation to Rome with Fr. Roy Bourgeois. From October 16-20th, we will call on the Vatican to break the silence on women's ordination. Advocates for women's ordination will join together for an opening press conference followed by an inclusive liturgy and daily vigils at St. Peter's. If you are interested in joining us on our delegation, contact the WOC office.

On September 17th, WOC's anti-racism team will join together with our National Board of Directors in Cleveland, Ohio for

an intensive day of anti-racism training and will begin the steps of realizing an anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion plan for all levels within WOC. Once the anti-racism strategic plan with suggested actions is approved, it will be included in WOC's overall strategic plan to ensure that anti-racism and anti-oppression are integral parts of WOC.

Throughout the next several months, Kate Conmy, WOC's Membership Coordinator, will be meeting with young feminists around the country to discuss women's equality in the Church. First stop is Fordham University where WOC will co-host "Found! Young Catholics in the Church," followed by a reception. This year, WOC is especially committed to strengthening our programming for our Young Feminist Network (YFN). With the action center, four of our National Board of Directors (all under 30!) have formed a sub-committee to enhance YFN and seeks your input. If you are interested in helping our YFN program grow, let us know. We'd love to have you on board.

Your passion for women's ordination matters to me. Never hesitate to email or pick up the phone to let me know how we're doing. Your participation is crucial to building our movement—it's all about the power of acting together. Together, we are creating a church that is transparent, accountable, and welcoming to all people of God.

Thank you for being a member of the Women's Ordination Conference.

Blessings,

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.

*Critical Mass ...continued from page 1*

*The New York Times* reported: "While these disparate acts hardly amount to a clerical uprising and are unlikely to result in change, church scholars note that for the first time in years, groups of priests in several countries are standing with those who are challenging the church to rethink the all-male celibate priesthood." Nevertheless, the swift sanctions faced by Fr. Roy and all ordained women is a sign of just how threatening the Vatican finds this changing face of ministry.

This is a crucial and momentous time for not only Fr. Roy Bourgeois, but for all Catholics who know that God calls men and

women alike to the priesthood. The energy and support for women's ordination is reaching a critical mass; critical for the future of the Catholic Church and the faithful. This October, Fr. Roy Bourgeois, WOC, and Catholics activists from around the world will travel to Rome to proclaim the message of justice and equality inspired by the momentous events of recent times. Join us in body or spirit as we raise a multitude of voices and call on Pope Benedict XVI to ordain women and accept their full and equal participation in the Catholic Church.

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

August 8, 2011

My brothers, I have been a Catholic priest for 39 years and Maryknoll has been my faith community, my family. So it was with great sadness that I received your letter of July 27, 2011 (second Canonical warning), stating I must recant my belief and public statements that support the ordination of women, or I will be dismissed from Maryknoll.

In my ministry over the years I have met many devout women in our Church who believe God is calling them to be priests. Why wouldn't they be called? God created men and women of equal dignity and, as we all know, the call to be a priest comes from God. My brothers, who are we to reject God's call of women to the priesthood? The Holy Scriptures remind us in Galatians 3:28 "There is neither male nor female. In Christ Jesus you are one." How is it possible for us to say that our call from God, as men, is authentic, but God's call of women is not?

After much reflection, study, and prayer, I believe that our Church's teaching that excludes women from the priesthood defies both faith and reason and cannot stand up to scrutiny. This teaching has nothing to do with God, but with men, and is rooted in sexism. 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, but of men who want to hold on to their power. As people of faith we believe in the primacy of conscience. Our conscience connects us to the Divine. Our conscience gives us a sense of right and wrong and urges us to do what is right, what is just.

What you are asking me to do in your letter 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. I firmly believe that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is a grave injustice against women, against our Church, and against our God. As you know, I am not a lone voice crying out in the wilderness for the ordination of women. Polls show that the majority of Catholics support having women priests in the Church. Many fellow priests tell me they believe women should be ordained, but are afraid to break their silence because of the consequences.

Many years ago as a young man in the military in Vietnam, I felt God was calling me to be a priest. I entered Maryknoll and found the happiness, meaning and hope I was seeking in life by following my call. Why should we deny this call from God — this opportunity — to women?

My brothers, in God's eyes there is neither male or female. We are one. Just as you and I were called to be priests by our loving God, women are also being called to serve our Church as priests. Let us welcome them and give thanks to God.

Your Brother in Christ,  
Roy Bourgeois, M.M.  
P.O. Box 3330  
Columbus, GA 31903



# Theological Perspectives: Intergenerational Wisdom and Possibilities

Theresa Yugar

Sunday March 27th, an historic event took place at the annual Academy of Religion Western region conference (WECSOR) in Whittier, California. An estimated sixty graduate students and activists in the Los Angeles area gathered for an intergenerational luncheon and dialogue between second- and third-wave feminists. Participants gathered to celebrate twenty years of The Women Studies in Religion program at Claremont Graduate University and the legacy of feminist scholar, educator and activist, Dr. Patricia Reif, IHM. The following questions, "What is your definition of feminism and how is feminism relevant to a younger generation of women in diverse academic/activist disciplines?" were posed to each panelist and attendee.

Karen Kidd, Women in American Religion historian, began the discussion by giving an historical overview of key moments in the U.S. feminist movement that included "intergenerational conflicts between middle-aged suffragists who believed in working within the system, versus the creative, publicity-seeking young radicals who picketed the White House and went on hunger strikes." Kidd argues tensions have arisen in different decades, starting with the 1920s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s and now. In 1914, Kidd asserted the term "feminist" was coined by a group of women who called themselves "Heterodoxy." Like us, Frances Perkins, Rose Schneiderman, Fola LaFollette, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Floyd Dell gathered to discuss similar questions such as "What is feminism?" and "What does it mean to me?" Envisioning beyond the women's suffrage movement the term feminism was created to advocate for gender-justice while at the same time critiquing root causes of sexism in patriarchal traditions.

In 2011, at Whittier College, self-defined feminists and renowned women scholars in religion Rosemary Radford Ruether, Tammi Schneiders, Sheila Briggs, Anne Eggebrotten, and Karen Kidd served as our conversation partners as we explored similar questions argued by our 1914 foremothers.

Like them, panelists shared in common a resounding "Yes" to the relevance of feminism to women scholars in religion in the twenty-first century. Ruether responded to this question by stating, "To ask this question reflects ignorance, as if the successes of a few privileged groups have somehow carried over to all." Schneiders, a Hebrew Bible scholar, concurred with Ruether, asserting that in her discipline feminist studies in Hebrew Bible is often sidelined resulting in "masculinist studies" and bad scholarship. Eggebrotten further advocated for feminism in the twenty-first century citing ten examples that included the need for a female pope, U.S. president, literacy, and birth control for all women as well as a continued need for women's equal rights with men in politics, economics, and society.

Moving beyond the language of equality to define feminism, Ruether argued each generation is given the task of redefining feminism in terms that respond to those social, economic, political, and cultural markers that impede both men and women's full humanity. In a U.S. context, what does that mean, not only for the movement, but also for a new generation of feminists?

Ruether's observation that the task of each generation is to redefine feminism resonates with me. In our times it is critical to translate feminism and a feminist agenda in our respective communities in such a way that individuals see how patriarchal structures and ideologies inhibit their full liberation as persons and that of humanity. To be effective, it is essential to resituate feminism more broadly than a "woman's issue." It is necessary to simplify and creatively nuance a feminist agenda in our curricular educational practices and praxis, without sacrificing its authentic agenda. Accordingly, seasoned feminists and a new generation of feminists need to move beyond diverging feminist perspectives and subsequent "intergenerational conflicts" and unite on the

basic principle that seeks the full humanity of all living species. "Is feminism needed in our times?" Yes, I wholeheartedly agree with our foremothers.

Today it pleases me that the dialogue on this issue continues but now in cyber space. This is where a twenty-first century feminism grassroots movement is emerging. Posting our intergenerational dialogue, co-collaborators Cynthia Bond, Gina Messina, Caroline Kline, and Xochitl Alvizo created a medium for the conversation to continue at [www.feminismandreligion.com](http://www.feminismandreligion.com). Since its inception in early June of this year, bloggers have ranged from scholars such as Rosemary Ruether, Margaret Miles, Mary Hunt, and Renny Golden. Additionally, each week the four contributors cited above post engaging feminist concerns surfacing from their own scholarship and lived experiences. Their hope is to encourage women and men from all social locations, be it scholars, activists, or any and all concerned with the intersection between feminism and religion to participate as contributors or commenters.

In our respective ministries you may use the word or not. The most important aspect is that the concept of the full humanity of all persons is the central goal.

*Theresa Yugar is a Ph.D. candidate in women studies in religion at Claremont Graduate University.*



Theresa Yugar



Ann Wertman, Theresa Yugar, Diane Ward, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Anne Eggebrotten

# The Dream is Freedom: An Interview with Sarah Azaransky on Rev. Pauli Murray

Interview by Eda Uca-Dorn

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Professor Sarah Azaransky, postdoctoral teaching fellow in the Theology and Religious Studies Department at the University of San Diego. Professor Azaransky's research and teaching focus is on religious and public life, and her book, *The Dream is Freedom: Pauli Murray and American Democratic Faith*, details the career of Pauli Murray, the first African American woman priest in the Episcopal Church. Murray, who was incredibly prolific in her work to end racial and gender discrimination, counted being one of the earliest activists to use nonviolent civil action against segregation (as early as the 1940s) and co-founding NOW, as among her many achievements.



Eda Uca-Dorn

**Tell us about your book *The Dream is Freedom: Pauli Murray and American Democratic Faith*.**

I present the case that Murray is a democratic thinker and she gives us particular ways of thinking about American democracy which is useful today. I traced Murray's theological and democratic thinking from the 1930s to the 1980s and discussed her particular ways of talking about American democracy as partially present and yet to come. She often used what I called an eschatological way of thinking about democracy—this notion that democracy is like the Kingdom of God, that it's promised and partially here but that we need to work to make it more present.

**Can you tell us how Murray saw the intersection between racial and gender justice?**

One of the arguments she always made was for the interrelation of all human rights, that it didn't quite make sense for her as a black woman to be talking discretely about rights for African Americans or just rights for women. In 1947 that she wrote an article where she developed the category "Jane Crow" where she writes that a black woman's experience is different from that of black men and white women, and she also wrote about black women's multiple consciousnesses. She recognizes the indivisibility of human rights—that one cannot separate sex and race discrimination—and understands that her rights will only be protected when her experience is recognized as it is. As early as the 1940s, she understood the need for coalition work on the left because no single group is going to effectively represent all of her interests. This also affected her theological vision because as early as the 1970s she realized the holes in both black liberation theology and feminist theology in so far as they were unable to speak to the experience of black women.

**How did Murray experience herself as a woman of color in NOW (which she helped co-found) and in the broader context of North American feminism?**

That's a great question. She was always a proto feminist, who, early in her career, even before there was the word "feminist" understood herself as someone concerned with women's issues and women's liberation.

She was very careful to include in her archives herself as a male-identified woman who was attracted to women. Her sense of herself as a "feminist" was that the women's movement must involve and represent women as they are, according to their race, class, profession, and unique gifts.

In the early 60s the Kennedy Commission on the Status of Women invited her [as a well known lawyer in the area of employment rights] to work through how women were going to go forward creating opportunities in employment. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was the standard answer but the ERA was very limiting in that many women wanted protection in their special role as women and as mothers and the ERA couldn't do that. Murray was the one who theorized an alternative. She proposed the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and said that that this had been successful in the decade before to protect the rights of African Americans and so women should use it too, which, doesn't seem revolutionary to us now but it was at that time because the courts had viewed sex as a category which was a reasonable basis for legislative classification, which meant that women could be discriminated against. That was two years before the Civil Rights Act.

When the Civil Rights Act was going through the House, someone in the House, stuck in Title 7 (which is about restricting discrimination in employment) and added to race, color, and national origin, the category of sex. Historically it is up for debate whether or not he meant that seriously but it was assumed that this category [of sex] would be taken off the bill. Murray was

tapped as someone who could write a memo to circulate to important senators and forwarded, hopefully, to Lady Bird Johnson, who might pass it onto President Johnson. In it, Murray writes about the parallels between race discrimination and sex discrimination—the race discrimination, which the senators were ready to address and the sex discrimination, which they were not—and she explains that as an African American woman, these two things are not parallel but that they intersect. This of course is an argument that Kimberle Crenshaw would make in 1989 and from the emergent movement called critical race feminism. Murray was prescient that way.

[Eventually] the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was created to enforce Title 7, but it was reluctant at first to take on sex discrimination cases. This really upset Murray and she gave a speech in which she said, if the EEOC isn't going to take those cases, then women need to have their own march on Washington. Betty Friedan read this speech the next day in *The New York Times* and was struck by this call for a women's civil rights movement. Just a few months later, Murray, Friedan, and others would form NOW.

Murray as a co-founder of NOW anticipated that NOW would do the kind of work that the EEOC wouldn't do—in the early years it didn't turn out that way. She was frustrated that one of the first things that NOW took on was support for the ERA, which historically speaking in feminist history we can kind of map, that ERA supporters tended to be white and middle class and Murray saw this as the death knell of NOW because then the organiza-



Sarah Azaransky

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*The Dream is Freedom ...continued from page 5*

tion wasn't taking into consideration women of color and poor women. Murray then left the leadership of NOW. She moved on to the board of the ACLU and turned her attention there, which in the early years took on more women's rights cases than any other women's rights organization.

**Even though she was someone who brought to light intersectionality, she was also outside of either category of blackness or womanhood in terms of how others perceived her in that people had a hard time putting her in a box. How do you think the difficulty we have in categorizing her has led to us not really knowing her very important story?**

I think that she remains relatively unknown for several reasons. She is someone who was prescient in her understanding of the interrelation of all human rights but also I think because of that is someone who doesn't neatly fit into historical categories because she was on the vanguard. I think too that in her career, she was always calling on people to do what they weren't ready for, whether it was for male leaders of the civil rights movement to recognize their own sexism or the white women of the women's movement to recognize their racism. Most people weren't ready to do that. In that way, she didn't have a lot of allies.

Historiographically speaking, when we talk about waves of feminism that Murray was doing important work in the late 40s and early 50s. That tends to be a time that scholars aren't as interested in. And when we look at the civil rights movement, Murray is also sitting in the 40s, so again when we're looking at clean and common ways of looking at the history.

When you're talking about her from the perspective of the history of the Church, she was one of the first women to be officially ordained in January 1977 but she was 67 when she was ordained and died eight years later. She pastored two churches, one in Baltimore and one in Washington but most of her church life involved serving as a guest speaker in different places and she was elderly at that point. She had a brief career as an ordained minister, and there was a sense that her heyday was in the 40s and 50s as if her time had passed.

**And yet you speak in your book of the incredible homiletic voice she had during her brief career.**

Murray's identity was an important category in her writing and we can see her working through that from her poetry in the 30s all the way to her final sermons in

the 1980s. She was trying to make sense of what it meant to be who she was, and that she was a product of a multi-racial history and of racial violence. She says in her family memoir that her grandmother was born from the result of a rape from the white slave owners and that her grandmother was born enslaved and she had to reckon with that history and how to make sense of that racially.

We see this in one of the first sermons she gave after she was ordained. She was invited to give her first Eucharist at the church in North Carolina where her grandmother had been baptized—baptized as an enslaved person but baptized into freedom in Christ. She spoke about herself as *Ishmaelite*, referring to this Old Testament story of the enslaved Hagar who was forced to serve as a sexual surrogate for Abraham and Sarah and from that surrogacy emerged Ishmael. Murray used this as a way to understand our national community, our democratic community, that it's one, certainly multi-racial but that it's also one that's forged in racial violence and that certainly white people don't understand that. One of the things that Murray said was only when we understand that does reconciliation become possible and she hoped that integration and reconciliation is possible because she sees herself as an example of that. Throughout Murray's writing she has this interesting habit of using her own experience and the experience of her family as kind of a microcosm of the larger American identity, which is fascinating because I feel like in our own history when we talk about black people, we talk about them as a problem or as an exception and she is saying "No, I'm the subject. I'm what it's about."

So it's in her first sermon in North Carolina in this now integrated church where her enslaved grandmother was baptized that she discusses what she calls the two American Revolutions. She talks about the work from July 4, 1776 to January 1, 1977 (the date of the first official Episcopal women's ordination). She calls this the work of the first American Revolution to make justice more available and more possible for Americans. And that the second Revolution beginning January 1, 1977 needs to carry on the work of the first. She really sees that what women's ordination is going to provide for the Church and model for the larger community the possibility of justice being available to more people here-and-now.



Rev. Pauli Murray

And it is in this sermon that she presented herself as evidence that reconciliation is possible:

*It was my destiny to be the descendant of slave owners as well as slaves, to be of mixed ancestry, to be biologically and psychologically integrated in a world where the separation of the races was upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States as the fundamental law of the Southland. My entire life's quest has led me ultimately to Christ in whom there is not East or West, no North or South, no Black or White, no Red or Yellow, no Jew or Gentile, no Islam or Buddha, no Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, or Roman Catholic, no male or female. There is not Black Christ nor White Christ nor Red Christ—although these images may have transitory cultural value. There is only Christ, the Spirit of love and reconciliation, the Healer of deep psychic wounds, drawing us closer to that Goal of perfection which links us to God our creator and to eternity.*

**Among the central values of WOC is to help bring about an inclusive Church and a renewing priesthood which will rebirth the church and transform unjust structures in the world community. How did the ordination of Rev. Murray (as an activist and as a woman of color) help do this in the Episcopal Church or in the North American Church in general?**

After she was ordained, some people were not happy with her ordination or with any woman's ordination. There was an organization called the Coalition for Apostolic Ministry that was formed to fight women's ordination. They wrote to the standing committee of her diocese saying that they objected to her ordination. Murray said that she welcomed [the letter] saying that it gave her the chance to respond in the Martin Luther King tradition. The Coalition for Apostolic Ministry claimed that this issue of women's ordination was going to prompt a schism in the Church and she wrote back to them:

*continued on next page*

# An Ecumenical and Catholic Experience

By Rev. Sandhya Rani Jha

Two things you should know about me. One, I'm not a crier, and two, I'm a passionate advocate of ecumenism and interfaith work. I have been blessed by worshipping other communities' religious experiences for decades. That's why it puzzled me a little, when I was in college, that every time I would go to Mass with my boyfriend at the time, tears would begin to spill down my face at some point in the service.

It puzzled me until I thought about the message I experienced every time I went to Mass. While I could ignore messages about the role of women in religious ceremonies of other traditions, Catholicism and my own Protestant tradition were, to me, one tradition, and the messages I heard in Mass were about my God, my savior, and therefore directly about me. Knowing that at some point I was going to become a minister had been challenging enough within the Protestant tradition, which has some ambivalence on the subject. Walking into Mass, I was reminded of two things. This church that I considered a sister in faith provided me with an explanation at the front of the missal about why I wasn't allowed to receive the Eucharist. And as I watched the Mass unfold, the priest at the front said without words that I was in the only place I should be: the pew, not the pulpit, and not the table. And so the tears continued, despite my boyfriend's reminders that this was the tradition of liberation theology and of social justice teachings far in advance of my own denomination's

and of priests and nuns who laid down their lives for the cause of freedom and dignity for oppressed people around the world. And I knew he was right, which is why I embraced my sister church. But still the tears came, until I finally said we would have to go to our own churches. (He eventually gave up on Protestantism when a pastor, mid-sermon, pulled out a guitar and began to sing a folk song to illustrate a point. The cheesiness was just too much for him.)

Fortunately, my inability to make it through Mass dry-eyed did not preclude my relationship with amazing people in the Catholic church, including dynamic young feminist women.

I eventually went to seminary in Chicago and was ordained in a denomination called the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a tradition that emerged during the American revival movement of the early 1800s because the founders watched Christians come together across traditions to celebrate and worship and then separate to receive communion. The Disciples movement proclaimed "No Creed but Christ" to say that all of God's children were welcome at the banquet of God. (They also ordained women straight out of the box, although this was largely because pastors got to ride the rails for half-price, and ordaining women meant they could save money—our founders were Scottish, which made them both passionate and frugal.)

My ordination took place in Washington, DC, and several friends drove out to participate.

A friend of a friend, a Catholic woman in her 20s, asked my friend if she could take time off of work and drive out with her. "I've never seen a woman ordained," she explained. (She was even more moved as she watched the laying on of hands, when I was blessed by women and men in ministry from multiple generations, nations, denominations, and religions, and then the interfaith communion that allowed me to serve communion to my Hindu father, at the behest of my "bishop.")

As we processed in, I led the congregation in a South African call and response song: "Our God is High Above the Heavens." The first time through, we sang, "and He dwells upon the nations." The second time, I led us in singing "and She dwells upon the nations," and this friend of a friend, who had come to support my ordination although we had only met twice, also began to weep. When my friend leaned over to ask what was wrong, she shook her head and said, "I've never heard God called She in church before." She continued to weep, but very different tears than the ones I had shed ten years earlier.

I continue to be blessed by my work with radical, world-changing Catholics, lay and ordained. And I continue to celebrate my sister church because I know that with every generation there are more women (and men) who are moved and empowered by their experience of the power of the female Divine and by their interactions with those of us who are women claiming our role in the priesthood of all believers. What a gift for me to be a sister with all of you in this journey of God's justice.

Rev. Sandhya Rani Jha is a Disciples of Christ pastor in Oakland, Calif. She serves with New Women NewChurch editor, Diana Wear on the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (ICWJ) for the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE).



Rev. Sandhya Rani Jha

*The Dream is Freedom ...continued from page 6*

*I'm sure you cannot seriously expect one who is the descendant of slave owning European white ... fathers and African Amer-Indian bondwoman mothers and who represents the American counterpart of the Old Testament Ishmaelite to be persuaded by your statement. The Church lived relatively comfortably with chattel slavery for two centuries or more and survived that "scandal" without splitting apart. I predict it will survive the ordination of women.*

We see in her homiletic voice, as she says what the Church is doing in this transition is reflecting the egalitarianism that Jesus himself taught—one of the things that Murray said is that all we have to do is look to the Gospel [for example the story of Mary and Martha] to see that this is in fact what Jesus wants and the community that Jesus promised and that it was the Church's job

to remind us of these ancient commitments. This isn't anything new, this is the Good News, but it isn't anything new.

*Note to Readers: It is impossible to summarize here the incredible life and accomplishments of Pauli Murray, as related to me by Sarah Azaransky, who graciously allowed me to interview her twice for this article. I encourage you all to check out The Pauli Murray Project to learn more about her ([www.paulimurrayproject.org](http://www.paulimurrayproject.org)) and to seek out Sarah Azaransky's fantastic and vital book, The Dream is Freedom: Pauli Murray and American Democratic Faith.*

*Eda Uca Dorn is the director of Hosanna! People's Seminary and she serves on WOC's Anti-Racism Team. She lives in Cambridge, Mass.*



# Priesthood, Patience, and Prophetic Action

Kathleen Pinard, MA

“I don’t understand why you Catholic women are so patient,” a grandmotherly Lutheran woman spoke to me. Her voice was gentle, agitated, baffled. We were engaged in a discussion during a symposium held at Seattle University in 2002 honoring the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s opening session. This memory returned to me recently when I learned that the new iPhone Confession app delivers the message “sex and vocation are incompatible” to female users who have the nerve to select “priest” as their vocation. My patience is running out.

## The logic of misogyny

It has been fifteen years since my heart first whispered the forbidden suggestion that I am called to ordained ministry. It was a radical act, to do the thing I was specifically told not to do: dare to imagine—or worse, believe—that I might be a priest. I am thirty-one years old. That means I have denied, wrestled with and embraced my priestly calling in a fairly constant cycle for nearly half of my young life.

As an undergraduate theology student, I took my senior seminar in liberation theologies. The feminist theologians broke me open. Out spilled rage, pain, shame and despair: emotions that belong to me and also to the millennia of women who have walked before me, repressed and abused in a thousand different ways by patriarchal social, religious, and political structures.

I felt haunted by my inability to discern a calling to sacramental ministry within the Catholic Church because of my gender. I felt betrayed by the Church, my spiritual home, whom I had faithfully served as an altar server, lector, choir member, youth leader and retreat facilitator. And though I couldn’t name it at the time, I also felt betrayed by God and Jesus—personified as white men—as if they were ultimately to blame for the world’s deplorable treatment of women.

I would have laughed when I first read *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* (Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1976) if I were not so deeply offended by its logic of misogyny. How dare this Church say that women are not capable of representing Christ because we do not anatomically “resemble” the historical Jesus? This was the man who broke through barriers to bless those on the margins with fullness of life and was executed for his radical, inclu-

sive acts of love; it felt to me like the Church was spitting on his empty tomb.

## Embracing vocation, embracing loss

I would have dropped the whole issue as a lost cause if it weren’t for a steady stream of professors, friends, colleagues, family members, and complete strangers who continually called me out. One after the other used the word “priest” to describe me. They named my call to sacramental ministry in a steady drumbeat until I had the courage to come out of denial and the strength to hold the tension within myself – the tension of knowing I couldn’t be, and yet I had to be, who I truly am.

As a graduate student, I had the opportunity to preside at ecumenical prayer services. A faculty member passionately and graciously announced, “For this, dear one, you were born!” Though I regret it now, I stopped attending morning prayer shortly after she made this comment because I couldn’t stand the conflict that came up within myself when I presided. I knew she was right; I could feel an abiding Presence within pulling, drawing, calling, waiting. I believed that embracing my vocational call would force my hand: am I staying or am I leaving? Yes, no, both, neither; I deferred the question, knowing that each choice meant embracing a different kind of loss.

## Revising priesthood

The gift of not having easy access to sacramental ministry within my religion of origin is having the creative space to re-envision the possibilities of how to define and experience priesthood in the world. Priesthood is more than a collar, a stole, a title. It is for me a sacred way of life that embraces service and healing, the alleviation of suffering, the celebration of life, and the manifestation, reflection or co-creation of the Divine in the world.

I admit I deeply wish to be publicly recognized and fully embodied as a sacramental minister, and yearn to handle holy objects at the Eucharistic table. Yet I’ve moved away from a place of victimhood and self-pity about what the Church “won’t let me” do. The institutional Church may not be willing to concede that my calling is valid; however, I choose to live in a priestly way in the world. A dear mentor of mine spoke these true words shortly before passing away with cancer: “Spirit has already ordained you, and no one can ever take that away.” By right of my birth, my baptism

and an anointing by Spirit within me, I am prepared to bring a sacramental presence into my family, community, and professional work. I choose to compassionately and joyfully respond to the needs of all beings in this beautiful and broken world, and allow myself to be hollow bone for Holy Mystery.



Kathleen Pinard, MA

## Coming out of the vocational closet

I sing in a community chorus that rehearses in the sanctuary of a Catholic church. As I was flipping through the church bulletin one evening I noticed a “Vocations” note that said to contact Fr. Bob at the diocese if you feel a call to priesthood. I sat down and wrote him this email:

*I wanted to let you know that I have felt a calling to the priesthood for nearly half of my life. It is a great sadness to me, and a great loss to the Church, that I am unable to answer God’s call because of my gender. I have grieved this for years.*

*Pope John Paul II wrote that, “Christ was and remains a man,” but my understanding is that the Christ spirit is a nongendered reality that illuminates the hearts of both women and men equally. I cannot imagine that the Jesus I know from the Gospels would desire for women to be excluded from Church leadership and sacramental ministry.*

*I studied theology as an undergraduate student, and spiritual direction as a graduate student. I am a spiritual director and retreat director. But my heart yearns to be a sacramental minister; it’s a fire within me that won’t be put out. I know that lay ministry is a valid and meaningful vocation, but I cannot (have never been able to, and do not want to) turn off my vocation to priesthood.*

*continued on next page*



*I don't know what I will do. Some women have waited their whole lives (and are still waiting) for the Church to have a conversion of heart and a change in Canon law around this issue. I could go to a different denomination, or be ordained as an interfaith minister, or join the Roman Catholic Womanpriest movement. There are no easy choices.*

*If there is anything you can do in your own way to help create equality for women in the Church, I would deeply appreciate it. Thank you.*

When I hit the “send” button, I felt a sense of empowerment and peace. Though I have received no response from Fr. Bob, I am grateful that I managed to speak my truth with clarity and without anger or manipulation. As you each consider your right actions regarding this justice issue, I encourage you to also consider writing a clear, simple, and nonviolent letter to the vocations director of your choice. They may not listen, but they will hear our collective voice carrying on the song of the strong, proud women—both patient and impatient who have walked this path before us.

*Kathleen Pinard, MA is a spiritual director and retreat director who graduated from Seattle University with a Master of Arts in Transforming Spirituality and a specialization in Spiritual Direction. She supports ecological justice through her work with LightHawk, an international environmental conservation organization. Her website is [www.hiddenwholeness.abmp.com](http://www.hiddenwholeness.abmp.com).*

## Membership Report

By Kate Conmy

As a recent resident of Washington, DC I find myself describing my work at least once a day to a new face, a new friend, a dinner guest, and while I might sprinkle various words such as “feminist,” “religious,” “advocacy,” I find the most resonance with WOC’s self-definition: “A Voice for Women in the Catholic Church.” As Membership Coordinator I am empowered to listen, amplify, and share the voices that sing for women’s ordination. I’ve learned so much in my first few months at WOC and mostly through listening to the songs and stories of justice-seeking Catholics; these are songs of love and prayer, heartbreak and betrayal—spirituals in every sense.

Returning from the Women’s Ordination Worldwide Steering Committee gathering in Bingen, Germany, I am ever conscious of Hildegard von Bingen as a remarkable visionary, writer, and composer. Hildegard often walked the grounds of her Abbey, singing aloud soaring melodies to herself. Scholars such as Margot Fassler and Marianna Richert Pfau note that her songs are open for rhythmic interpretation because of the use of neumes without a staff. At the same time, her lyrics reflect a strong relationship between music and text,

revealing a deep reverence for the Virgin Mary and the Saints. With a scriptural base and a call for creative interpretation, Hildegard’s liturgical songs require praise that resonates within one’s self. This call to find one’s voice and moreover, harmony within a prayerful community is precisely the art of justice-seeking Catholics today. Just as Hildegard’s compositions and visions inspired the “living light” of God, as WOC members we must renew our love and traditions through the work of the Holy Spirit.

In both song and conversation, I was also able to join WOC members and supporters at the American Catholic Council (ACC) convention in Detroit, Michigan in June. Admittedly, this was one of my first Catholic conventions, and though with beginner’s eyes I could see gaps in approach, priorities, and intersectional diversities among Catholics, I left feeling quite moved by the faith and intention behind such a gathering. In particular, the ACC organizers conducted Listening Sessions prior to the convention, polling over 4,000 Catholics on current issues in the Church. These Listening Sessions provide a model of Church governance and decision-making that many have longed for from their bishops.

The ACC highlighted the many ways, big and small, loud and soft that Catholics in good conscience make their voices heard. In a session on “The Primacy of a Well-Formed Conscience,” with Jeannine Gramick SL, volunteers offered examples of their colorful ways of being heard: writing letters of thanks and critique, organizing email blasts, engaging young people in conversation on issues of gender and sexuality, even sending copies of *New Women, New Church* to “friends and

enemies.” WOC and Call to Action members in Pittsburgh, PA recently revived a tradition started by Chicago

WOC years ago when they rented a highly visible billboard along the highway calling out to drivers: “Looking for a Sign from God? Ordain Women!”

While the weekend provided a forum for discussion and solidarity for those of us on “the long haul,” disillusioned by what is happening in the name of a Church we love, it also carried a sense of beautiful inertia for more conversations beyond the Listening Sessions. Even as a conference novice, I found renewal and a needed affirmation that we are part of a community of justice-seekers, not alone on this path, not alone in our prayers for an inclusive Church.

I can’t express how many letters, photographs, cartoons, and phone calls I receive from WOC members each week with stories of activism. Often with a flair for humor, these seemingly small acts take wisdom and courage. Never doubt that we are a chorus in harmony with God’s call. May you continue to find strength in knowing you are a member of a powerful, relentless organization; together we shall lift up our prophetic voices and truly be heard.

*Kate Conmy is WOC’s Membership Coordinator.*



Kate Conmy



Kate at the American Catholic Council Meeting in Detroit, Mich.

## William Manseau, Consecrated Bishop

By Evelyn Hunt

One of our staunch members and supporters of WOC, William Manseau, was consecrated a bishop in the Roman Catholic Church, Saturday, June 11, on the weekend of the American Catholic Council in Detroit. The small service was held on the eve of Pentecost, in the St. Barnabas Chapel at the Cathedral of St. Anthony also in Detroit. Many surprising events played themselves out leading up to the service, including getting space for it at the last minute (instead of using a hotel room). Presiding bishops included Archbishops Peter Paul Brennan and Dr. Karl Rodig, ECCC, the Cathedral's pastor, and RCWP Bishops Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger, and Andrea Johnson. As a WOC member, I was honored to be at the ceremony and invited to lay hands on Bill along with about fifteen other FCM members. Bill remarked at the ceremony, "this is the culmination of a multi-year process of discernment and guidance." He did this to be in solidarity with bishops of the RCWP movement, and to support married Catholic priests, Catholic women priests and other faithful and spiritual seekers.

I was privileged to witness and be a part of the next step in Bill's faith journey. Over many years Bill has constantly worked for the good of CORPUS and FCM, and has given continual support to WOC and RCWP. We thank him for his devoted service and continuing support of Catholic women.

*Evelyn Hunt, is a former WOC board president and lives in Cleveland, Ohio.*



Front row (left to right): RCWP Dagmar Celeste, Bishop William Manseau, Evelyn Hunt, RCWP Bishop Andrea Johnson

Back row (left to right): Archbishop Peter Paul Brennan, Karl Usavitz, Michaelita Quinn, Tom Quinn, Bill Wiesniewski, Paul Steubenbort, and Shane McCarthy.

### Upcoming Events

#### September

**September 10, 2011:** Falls Church, VA: Join the Association of Roman Catholic Womenpriests for the ordination ceremony of three women at First Christian Church, 6165 Leesburg Pike, VA. Contact Bridget Mary for more details: [sofiabmm@aol.com](mailto:sofiabmm@aol.com).

**September 14, 2011, 1-2 PM EST:** WATER teleconference with Meg Riley. This is part of WATER's Feminist Conversations in Religion Series. To register for the call, email the words "register me" to [waterstaff@hers.com](mailto:waterstaff@hers.com). For more information, visit WATER's website: [www.hers.com/water](http://www.hers.com/water).

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

**September 17, 2011:** Lansing, MI: Call to Action-Michigan, State Conference, *We May be Seekers, but we are Not Lost*. Join WOC and CTA members at the Plymouth Congregational Church, 2001 E. Grand River Ave. Lansing, MI 48912. Speakers include Chris Schenk (FutureChurch) and Jamie Manson (NCR). Scholarships available. For more information, contact Marianne Bernard: [bernmly@aol.com](mailto:bernmly@aol.com).

**September 30 - October 2, 2011:** Aston, PA: *Next Steps: Developing Catholic Lesbian/Gay Ministry*. Weekend retreat sponsored by NewWaysMinistry.org.

#### October

**October 1, 2011:** St. Paul MN, 10 AM: *Women-Church Convergence*. A coalition of twenty-six organizations working for the empowerment of women in church and society invites you to join them in creating a bold new future at the Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Ave. St. Paul, MN 55105. For more information, contact: [ckellogg2000@yahoo.com](mailto:ckellogg2000@yahoo.com).

**October 16-20, 2011:** Rome, Italy: Join WOC and Fr. Roy Bourgeois in Rome as we stand in solidarity with all those who speak out to support women's ordination. Contact the WOC Office for more details: [woc@womensordination.org](mailto:woc@womensordination.org), 202-675-1006.

#### November

**November 4-6, 2011:** Milwaukee, WI: Call to Action National Conference. This year's conference, *Living the Gospel of Love*, acknowledges that if we are to be faithful to Jesus and to continue our work in bringing justice to our church and world, then everything we do must be grounded in love. This spiritual component is essential if we are to educate, inspire, and activate Catholics to act for justice and build inclusive communities. Visit CTA's website: [www.cta-usa.org](http://www.cta-usa.org).

**November 18-20, 2011:** Fort Benning, GA: Join WOC and thousands of activists at the gates of Fort Benning to create a culture of justice and peace, and to take a stand against the SOA and militarization. [SOAW.org](http://SOAW.org).

**November 18, 2011:** San Francisco, CA: 4-6pm: American Academy of Religion Meeting: Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network annual meeting. Email Mary E. Hunt at WATER: [mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com).

*For more information, contact [woc@womensordination.org](mailto:woc@womensordination.org) or 202.675.1006.*

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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*

## Petition in Support of Fr. Roy Bourgeois

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](http://www.womensordination.org).





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Washington, DC 20003  
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### Give the gift of women's leadership in the church this Christmas

Gift membership \$45.00 \*denotes required field

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### 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
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	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

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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.

Allow up to three weeks for delivery.