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On the Excommunication of Kate Kelly

At 6:30 pm on June 22, I joined over 100 Mormons, mostly women, on the lawn of the Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) in Oakton, Virginia. Inside the church were three men deciding the fate of Kate Kelly, founder of the organization, **Ordain Women**, launched in 2013, working for equality for women in the LDS church.



Erin Saiz Hanna and Kate Kelly in Washington, D.C. August 2013

and decided to excommunicate her, which, like for Catholics, is considered the most serious punishment levied by the institutional hierarchy of the church.

*Kate followed her conscience and heart when she started **Ordain Women**, building a groundswell of feminist voices within the Mormon Church.*

and the doctrine of the priesthood. You must be truthful in your communications with others regarding matters that involve your priesthood leaders, including the administration of Church discipline, and you must stop trying to gain a following for yourself or your cause and taking actions that could lead others away from the Church.

Kelly responded to the news, "the decision to force me outside my congregation and

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For three hours, we sat vigil as we waited to hear if Kate would be excommunicated for her advocacy so similar to our work at WOC. We prayed. We sang. We gave testimonies. And we waited some more only to learn that the outcome would not be announced until the following day. On Monday, Kate's former ecclesiastical leader in Virginia, Bishop Mark Harrison, contacted her by email to inform her that the all-male panel of judges who tried her in absentia convicted her on the charge of apostasy

The letter to Kate stated:

Our determination is that you be excommunicated for conduct contrary to the laws and order of the Church. This means that you may not wear temple garments or contribute tithes and offerings. You may not take the sacrament, hold a Church calling, give a talk in Church, offer a public prayer in behalf of the class or congregation in a Church meeting, or vote in the sustaining of Church officers. These conditions almost always last at least one year. If you show true repentance and satisfy

the conditions imposed below while you are no longer a member, you may be readmitted by baptism and confirmation. In order to be considered for readmission to the Church, you will need to demonstrate over a period of time that you have stopped teachings and actions that undermine the Church, its leaders,



Vigil for Kate Kelly in Oakton, VA, June 2014: (L-R) Ciara Chivers, Cathy Jaskey, Kate McElwee, Erin Saiz Hanna, Jeannette Mulherin, Katie Breslin

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Save the Date
Gender, Gospel & Global Justice
Philadelphia
Sept. 18-20, 2015

From the Executive Director



Erin Saiz Hanna



Dear WOC membership,

Hope this letter finds you enjoying your summer.

I have some new, exciting, and important changes to report. Earlier this month, WOC's physical office moved a few blocks away to a space within Dignity Washington's office building. Dignity is a community of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Catholics who also work for justice and peace in our church and we are delighted to share space with them. Our postal address will still be PO Box 15057, Washington, DC 20003.

In addition to this physical move, I am pleased to announce that Dorothea Schurr has joined the WOC staff as our new, part-time administrative assistant. Dorothea is a part-time graduate student at George Mason University's School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution. In her free time she fences, travels, and tries to keep up her Chinese language skills. Dorothea brings a great deal of expertise and joy, and we are happy that she will be able to assist WOC in our mission. Welcome, Dorothea! Feel free to reach out and say hello to her at dschurr@womensordination.org.

As Dorothea joins us in DC, we also say arrivederci to Kate McElwee (Conny). Kate will be working for WOC full-time from Rome. As you may recall, Kate spent several months in Italy last winter organizing, blogging, and networking for us. Kate will continue to serve as our Associate Director, strengthening and growing our campaigns on both national and international levels. Make sure to follow Kate's adventures on the WOC blog, The Table.

Kate also got married this summer and will be using her new name, Kate McElwee, kmcelwee@womensordination.org.

This newsletter is filled with one amazing story after the next. I hope that you find it both informative and inspiring. Our cover story tells a story close to my heart. Kate Kelly, my friend and amazing feminist activist, was recently excommunicated from the Mormon Church for advocating for women's ordination in her faith tradition. Her story is continued with a powerful theological perspective told by Rev. Jane Via on page 7.

Kate Kelly is just one of many women of inspiration highlighted in this edition of *NewWomen, NewChurch*. One page 2 you will meet Sister Vivian Ivantic who, on her 100th birthday, made a special wish for women's ordination. On page 6, you will read about Nancy Meyer's call of prophetic obedience. Then on page 10, Tracy Garrison-Feinburg shares with us her story, aptly referred to as "what to do with closed doors."

On page 7, Kate McElwee recalls our recent events in Rome during the anniversary of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. Thank you to the hundreds of WOC members who sent their letters. Your letters were received by a representative of the Vatican's CDF (the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith), and you helped make this action a success by actively participating—sharing your stories, and voicing your opinions on this topic so near and dear to our hearts.

While in Rome we also filmed our upcoming video project, "Vatican: It's a Man's World." Thank you to all who donated to this feminist, educational project. We are in the final stages and look forward to sharing it with you.

In closing, thank you your prayers, activism, and contributions to WOC Your feedback is critical in making *NewWomen, NewChurch* a forum for public discussion about the women's ordination movement and the church and world we envision. Send your thoughts and suggestions to me at ehanna@womensordination.org

Blessings,

Erin

P.S. Save-the-date for Gender, Gospel & Global Justice in September 2015. You won't want to miss this fantastic conference and WOC's 40th anniversary celebration (see page 3 for more details).

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

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

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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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Centenarian Benedictine Woman Religious is Honored at Her Jubilee

Benedictines are known for valuing humility. After spending eight decades in the monastery, Sister Vivian Ivantic has perfected the art of humility.

In honor of her 80th Jubilee and 100th birthday, Sister Vivian Ivantic's Benedictine community gave a donation to WOC recognizing her passion for women's equality in the Roman Catholic Church. When the *Chicago Tribune* sent a reporter to cover the story of her birthday last August, she chose to deflect the attention. Instead of sharing her own story, she focused her remarks on the need for women's equality in church and society.

Sister Vivian recently shared her passion for women's equality with *New Women, New Church*. "It is long overdue that women have a place in the church's leadership," she remarked.

"Mary Magdalen was the first apostle," she said. She hopes that women will someday again be

permitted to preach like Mary Magdalen did and as priests are permitted to do so now.

"I feel strongly that Pope Francis will start the diaconate for women and that we will have women deaconess in a short time."

"We are so short of ordained male priests," she reflected. "I feel that because of the edict of Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis will probably not try to ordain women to the priesthood, but the next pope's hands may not be so tied."

She sees the lack of women's leadership in both church and society as an impediment to justice for women and girls throughout the globe. "Half the population of the world is female and we are deprived," she decried.

Despite the challenges, she believes firmly that justice will come for women. "I believe that very, very sincerely. It means much to me and it has to come."



Benedictine Sister Vivian Ivantic on her 100th birthday

Save-the-date: Gender, Gospel & Global Justice Philadelphia, Sept. 18 – 20, 2015

WOC is excited to announce that we are hosting Women's Ordination Worldwide's (WOW) Third International Conference in conjunction with WOC's 40th anniversary in Philadelphia in September 2015. Advocates for women's ordination from around the world will gather to explore the essential links between the equality of women in the Roman Catholic Church and creating a just society in the light of the gospel message. We will celebrate, be inspired and demonstrate our commitment to challenging unjust discrimination.

The conference will take place over three days, Friday through Sunday, September 18 – 20, 2015 at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown Hotel and Conference Center.

We are expecting up to 1,000 participants—a combination of WOW delegates and members, other Catholic reform groups, theologians, students, feminists from many faith traditions, and supporters and advocates of women's ordination from around the world. Registration will open **October 2014**.

Our aim is to have a selection of speakers from all corners of the world who will reflect on the theme of gender, gospel and global justice. As well as the headline keynote speakers and panels, we will also host small workshops. A form for workshop proposals will be available September 2014. Consider submitting your workshop plans.

WOC turns 40! There will be a special anniversary party on Friday evening in honor of WOC's 40th anniversary. Were you at the first WOC conference in Detroit 1975? We want to hear from you. Email Erin at ehanna@womensordination.org.

Pope Francis in Philadelphia: Just a few days after this historical gathering, the Vatican's World Meeting of Families will take place in Philadelphia from the 22nd – 27th. Pope Francis is expected to attend. WOW will hold a vigil in preparation for the meeting after Sunday's liturgy (September 20—plan to stay an extra day if you are able).

Financial support: We are currently in the process of submitting grants and looking for donors or corporate sponsors. If you are able to help in this area, contact Erin at ehanna@womensordination.org.

Keep up-to-date: Get the latest updates on womensordinationworldwide.org or on Facebook at bit.ly/wow2015fb

Pray: As we prepare for this monumental and critical conference, we are mindful that Your Spirit, Loving Creator, has awakened in us and in those upon whose shoulders

we stand, an awareness of Your life and voice within and around us. We listen, clothed in the sacred garments of the Good News of Jesus the Christ. We listen, assured that You have formed and gifted our hearts and minds for all that calls us forward. We listen, believing with gratitude, that you have prepared us for this moment in history when women shall stand firmly and fully in any and every dimension of ministry.

Help us, those of us who are planning this important conference, and those who plan to participate in its offerings, to drink deeply of Your wisdom and vision as revealed in the gospel. May the gospel messages assist us as we gather from around the globe to create a conference that will offer ways to seek and proclaim, and thereby reveal a pathway of justice for women and men, their children, people of faith everywhere, and for our living planet that nourishes all life dwelling upon it. Our hope and our belief is that Your justice will arise anew in each person attending this conference, and that this same justice, in the power of love, will fill willing hearts with courage and commitment to carry forth love's light around our planet to wherever and for whomever is in need of light, truth, and justice. Help us and all people whom we serve to immerse ourselves in the gospel. Amen.





Report from Rome

Vatican Official Receives Letters Calling for Discussion of Women's Ordination

Kate McElwee

On the 20th anniversary of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter used to exclude women from the priesthood and close the discussion "definitively," Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW) delegates from the U.S., England, and Poland delivered more than 700 letters to the Vatican's watchdog office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

Personal letters calling for a discussion of women's ordination were received by a top Vatican official, who accepted the letters within the CDF and said, in English: "This is amazing."

At a press conference earlier that day, the following remarks were shared: "Women's Ordination Worldwide encourages Pope Francis to stop making Jesus the Vatican's partner in gender discrimination. *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* is an outdated, fallible and painful document created by his predecessors to diminish the leadership of women. We are asking Pope Francis to open the doors of dialogue to talk with us about women's ordination."

On this anniversary, WOW knocked on the door of the Vatican, and for the first time the door cracked open. Written in various languages, these testimonies offered a clear voice to the stories we know and carry in our hearts. This door opening was a first of what we hope is a full entry into our own home and possibly the welcoming mat to substantive and honest discussion on women's ordination. We have no idea what response we'll get from these letters, and expectations are, of course, low given past experience with Vatican officials on this issue, but we experienced significant excitement actually being received by a CDF prelate. We were left feeling a little less fear circling St. Peter's.

Many who wrote to Pope Francis chose to remain anonymous, likely because they have church jobs and would risk their employment status if they went public, but others gave permission to share their letters. Here are some highlights:

"I have read and listened to theological arguments against women's ordination and nothing can convince me that God really cares about the anatomy of the person representing Jesus' presence among us. Women should be allowed to preside at the altar and proclaim the Good News and bring God's love and grace to all humankind." **Uta Hutnak**

"The exclusion of women has become a scandal to both the faithful and to outsiders. Jesus Christ himself is, in fact, being presented as a misogynist. The credibility of Jesus' message of true equality and of genuine liberation from all human shackles, stands or falls with the Church changing its untenable position." **John Wijngaards**

"A refusal not to dialogue about women's ordination indicates there is no strong theology supporting exclusion. It's a cowardly defense mechanism to avoid the issue." **Robert and Patricia Johnson**

"The truth [that women can and should be ordained] can sustain dialogue. The truth can only be found by listening

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WOW Advocates celebrate the successful delivery of over 700 letters to Pope Francis inside the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF)



Alicja Baranowska, Miriam Diugnan, Kate McElwee, and Erin Saiz Hanna at a WOW press conference in Rome, May 22, 2014.



Prefect to the CDF receives the letters calling for discussion on women's ordination, "This is amazing."



On the Excommunication of Kate Kelly...continued from page 1

community is exceptionally painful. Today is a tragic day for my family and me as we process the many ways this will impact us, both in this life and in the eternities. I love the gospel and the courage of its people. Don't leave. Stay, and make things better."

Over the last year I have gotten to know Kate and watch her organization flourish. Kate followed her conscience and heart when she started **Ordain Women**, building a groundswell of feminist voices within the Mormon Church. She created a safe space for Mormons to speak freely about gender inequality in their religion and to challenge the sexist traditions that exclude women from ordination simply because of their biology.



More than 50 cities in 17 countries held solidarity vigils for Kate Kelly. WOC staff attended a vigil in Virginia.

While our religious traditions and creeds are different, our stories and struggles for equality in our denominations are similar.

While our religious traditions and creeds are different, our stories and struggles for equality in our denominations are similar. Over lunch last summer we dreamt up "Equal in Faith" and on August 26th, National Women's Equality Day, we hosted an interfaith prayer service and fast in solidarity with women of different faiths who challenge the patriarchy that oppress them. It was only the beginning of what would become a great bond between sister organizations.

Excommunication of women's ordination supporters is nothing new to us Catholics. Just this past May, Martha Heizer, the head of the reform international movement We Are Church in Austria, and her husband, Gert Heizer, were excommunicated by the Vatican for celebrating Mass without a

priest present, according to a statement from the diocese of Innsbruck, Austria. This excommunication took place as delegates of Women's Ordination Worldwide were gathered in Rome for the 20th anniversary of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*.

Even with excommunication being all too common for us, hearing the news of Kate's official excommunication filled me with so much sadness and anger all at once. I have gone through this grieving process before — for Rea Hudson and Elsie McGrath who were ordained by Roman Catholic Womenpriests and then both harshly excommunicated by Archbishop Raymond Burke in 2007; for Sr Louise Lears who attended that ordination was put under the penalty of interdiction; for Fr Roy Bourgeois who was dismissed by his Maryknoll community for refusing to recant his support of women's ordination; and for all Roman Catholic Womenpriests who were excommunicated via news in the Vatican newspaper in May 2008.

Despite the attempts to silence those who challenge church law on women, we know from experience that the inappropriate use of excommunication as a means to punish those who challenge sexism cannot and will not stop the call for women's equality in our religious institutions. There is a famous saying in the social justice movement that says "they can crush a few flowers but they cannot hold back the springtime." Whether in the Mormon Church or Roman Catholic Church, movement for women's equality is unstoppable and on the right side of history.

WOC will continue to stand in solidarity with Kate, the members of **Ordain Women**, and all those who bravely challenge sexism in religion. This excommunication affects us all.

Erin Saiz Hanna, WOC executive director.

the
Table

Read WOC's Blog!

WOC's online community where all are included.
All are welcomed to participate.
And where talking religion is always proper etiquette.

www.womensordination.org/blog



Ministry of Prophetic Obedience

By Nancy Meyer



Nancy Meyer

The beginning of this story is not unlike the story of many young women born in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. I was a girl born to a good Catholic family, the fourth child and the second youngest. Like my siblings, I attended a Catholic school that was filled with postwar baby boomers.

I attended a convent boarding school in Indiana and it was a challenging adventure, if not somewhat overwhelming at times. The three and half years as an aspirant went quickly, and soon my eighteen classmates and I took the postulant outfit.

The Second Vatican Council had just ended and most of the teenagers that I was in the novitiate with were looking with eagerness toward a renewal of religious life and liturgy. The new theological articles promoted Eucharistic liturgy in the vernacular, scripture studies, married priests, and even an openness toward ordaining women to the priesthood. The changes as a junior sister were painfully slow, yet we had great hope that we could help change both religious life and the church.

I was formed by my assignment to teach high school biology, physical science, and algebra and it expanded my worldview. At the same time, Sisters created Archdiocesan Religious Associations to discuss the changes and implementations brought on by Vatican II. Workshops abounded on the spirit of the founders, the new liturgy, and the Vatican II documents. Intergenerational discussions were a common occurrence. I became active in these organizations which helped me develop skills in leadership, public speaking, compassionate listening, and ways to work with congregational leadership.

In 1975, I was appointed vocation director for my Franciscan community. I traveled widely, organizing and presenting programs and retreats at parishes, high schools and universities. The college campus team of priests, sisters, and brothers in Indiana where we all preached the homilies were

well received. I was filled with both excitement and a renewed commitment that filled my heart and being to be part of a church that had come alive. During those years, I also studied at Creighton University in Christian Spirituality with a focus in spiritual direction. Those classes and colleagues widened my horizons and formed me in the spirit of a God who is freeing and loving.

With my next move, I embarked on new territory and became the associate vocation director for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. I faced the new challenge of developing and implementing a formation program and then moved from the university to a theo-



Meyer, who will serve as bishop of the Roman Catholic Womenpriests' Midwest region, is succeeding Bishop Regina Nicolosi, who is retiring.

logical setting. This new job allowed me to recognize my call to priesthood and also see the black hole of non-acceptance due to my gender. I found in myself the profound desire to be an ordained priest as well as saw that I had many of the qualities we were looking for in the men who would be ordained. Yet the door was closed to me by the church that I was serving just because I was a woman. I experienced a mixture of emotions to this denial of the church: anger, rejection, and depression.

After my work in Cincinnati came to an end, I attended Washington Theological Seminary for one year in the hopes that ordination would open for women. That was an enriching and challenging time and the depth of the call continued to move deep within me. At the completion of that year I needed to undertake a full-time ministry position.

I was hired as a pastoral associate at a parish in Speedway, Indiana. It provided

me with the opportunities for pastoral ministry and spiritual direction that I felt called to do. The parish was young and growing with a variety of people. I grew to love the people as they shared their lives, their heartaches, their struggles, their commitments and their broken commitments. My creative energies were challenged and thrived in this environment. My priesthood had emerged in this setting.

It was during a Holy Saturday Night Vigil that I was struck by the realization that I had walked with these people through their life struggles, commitments, and faith journeys, and yet I could only be an on-looker as they received the sacraments from someone else. The conflict of joy and emptiness, of completion and absence, was present that evening when we were celebrating Christ's new life. I was still sitting in the agony of the empty tomb!

Following that experience, my only brother, mother, and father all died within a short time of each other. In the midst of all this loss, I was becoming unsettled with my life. My Franciscan community invited me to consider a position on the congregation's Leadership Team. At that same time, I felt unsure of whether or not to stay in religious life, and so my

feelings would not allow me to consider administration, and I discerned the call to leave my congregation. It was a right and good decision.

Several years after I had left that community, I sat in a retreat chapel looking out into the ocean. The gospel of the day was Peter walking on water. I heard the call, "Come." What did that mean? No clue!

A few weeks later, a friend walked into my office and stated emphatically, "You must watch this Nancy. You absolutely must watch this." It was a video of Bishop Patricia Friesen who is an ordained Roman Catholic bishop from South Africa. I was riveted by Patricia's words and her invitation. She would be at the Call to Action conference in Milwaukee the next November. I knew I had to be there!

At Call to Action I was intent only on meeting Bishop Patricia Friesen and going to Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP)

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Our Bodies, Our Blood Feast of Corpus Christi

By Jane Via

Today, WOC invites us to stand with our Mormon sisters. Kate Kelly, Mormon and human rights activist, faces a disciplinary council at which she presents her defense to excommunication before three male judges. As would be the case in Roman Catholic tradition, the outcome is predictable. In solidarity with Kate, we explore a contemporary meaning of body and blood in Christian faith evident in the musical, "The Book of Mormon."

As would be the case in Roman Catholic tradition, the outcome is predictable.

The musical tells the story of two, young (need I say male) missionaries: one tall, blond, handsome, talented, overly confident (we'll call him Mr Good Looking), the hope of his sending ward; the other, short, overweight, wears glasses, average looks, lacking obvious talents, annoying and a reputed liar, even by his parents (we'll call this one Mr Challenger). These two are paired to mission in Africa, not the location for which "Mr Good Looking" prayed. On arrival at their assigned village, they find themselves tired, listless, hopeless villagers. Nearby, they meet other young Mormon missionaries who have been there for some months without a single convert.

Then the work begins for Mr Good Looking and Mr Challenger. They try to peddle the *Book of Mormon*, the promise of "Salt Lake City"; eternal life and white, middle class values rooted in Biblical prohibitions (such as racism, homophobia, and implicit male dominance). *The Book*, of course, is in English. When they preach, the villagers drift away in quiet despair. Missionaries come to their village at least once a year, but nothing changes. The villagers suffer from AIDS, the irrational brutality and violence of self-appointed warlords, and cultural mandates such as genital mutilation of women. The people still experience daily threats to life and health in their environment: ants that invade their bodies, eating them alive from inside out; predators, like lions, snakes, and mosquitos; lack of meaningful work, clean water and inadequate food. At one point, the two men ex-

press their despair in irreverent song, rejecting the western God in derision, vulgarity, and humor. This God has done nothing for them.

Mr Good Looking is quickly overwhelmed. This is *not* how he envisioned missionary work. He begins to doubt his faith, everything he was taught, and soon decides to leave Africa, despite the strict rule prohibiting separation of mission partners. Meanwhile, Mr Challenger grieves. Hoping for friendship, he has again experienced rejection.

An even greater crisis looms. The [Mormon] powers that be are coming to assess how the mission is going; and not it is most definitely not going well.

That is, until one young female villager decides to try out the Mormon faith. She convinces the villagers to listen to Challenger's preaching. And, for the first time, Challenger listens to what he is saying. He realizes, for example, that he is promoting a book that says dark skinned people are of the devil. He begins to reinterpret *The Book of Mormon* in light of the villagers' experience. He offers a political strategy to the village: if they come together and act as one to resist warlord abuses, they might be able to free themselves of terror and violence. The analogies Challenger uses to reinterpret *The Book of Mormon* are drawn from his own personal theologically untrained, sheltered North American life, along with cultural analogies such as Star Wars and *The Hobbit*. The analogies he comes up with are in fact ridiculous. But they enable the villagers to find meaning from *The Book* which actually *The Book* itself could not provide.

When we live the words to their ultimate consequences, in body and blood, then the words have meaning and we have integrity.

Challenger is empowered. What had been characterized by his literalist minded Mormon community as lying was, in fact, a capacity to experience a different level of meaning, one at which many of the existing rules required revision. He was able to

rearticulate core Mormon faith and preserve basic benefits of Mormon life. Challenger learns that one has to put *one's body and blood* on the line.

After a hellish dream which inspires him to return to mission, Good Looking meets a community of converts created by the co-worker whom he could not tolerate. Good Looking, too, learns to put his body and blood on the line. He goes to the warlord camp to preach the *Book of Mormon*. He suffers but survives their brutality which included the insertion of the *Book of Mormon* into his anal cavity. Later, when the warlords arrive at the village in order to kill everyone unless they have mutilated the genitals of their women, Challenger faces machine guns with words, and responds by terrorizing the terrorists—he threatens that they will turn into frogs if they kill the villagers. What he said was a lie but it was in the context of local folklore, it had meaning to the terrorists and they depart in fear.

The villagers are thus empowered. They begin to be baptized, first the young woman, and eventually the entire village, even the warlord. The villagers still have AIDS, ants in their private parts, issues with cultural mandates and basic survival issues but they also have community, hope, and energy to live into the future.

The villagers are thus empowered. They begin to be baptized, first the young woman, and eventually the entire village, even the warlord. The villagers still have AIDS, ants in their private parts, issues with cultural mandates and basic survival issues but they also have community, hope, and energy to live into the future.

A poignant moment is the young woman's realization that she, herself, will not be taken to the New Jerusalem of Salt Lake City as she had understood. Devastated, this realization undercuts her faith in everything until one villager explains that

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Theological Perspectives

Reflections on Pope Francis' First Year

This was originally presented on March 23, 2014 at Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society, Madison, Wisc.

I am grateful, and a bit daunted, to have been invited to share my thoughts on the first year of Pope Francis's papacy. Francis' image in the secular media has been that of a pope of the people, a radical reformer, and a little bit of a cuddly, household "pet" in a white cassock who kisses babies. When I was asked me to share my reflections I agreed to do so with the warning that this is decidedly not my take on Francis. As someone who has been actively involved in church reform movements for most of my adult life, I would describe myself as contrarian to the common opinion on our current pope.

For those who are not familiar with my background, I have spent the majority of my life engaged with the Catholic Church in one way or another. I was baptized as an infant at St. Joan of Arc Church (which seems a bit prophetic). I received all my sacraments in the Catholic Church as I grew up and served alternately as an altar server and cantor. When it came time for college, I chose the College of Saint Benedict in Minnesota, a Catholic women's college sponsored by the Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict, where I received a solid in education in theology, feminism, and the importance of conscience. Following graduation, I spent a year volunteering with the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet, a progressive order of women religious in the Twin Cities. They gave me my formal introduction to the church reform movement, bringing me to my first Call to Action conference in Milwaukee and sending me to my first WOC event. I eventually spent a year studying at Washington Theological Union in Washington, DC, focusing on spirituality studies before moving to Madison.

From my perspective, there are two competing narratives about Pope Francis: that of the rock star, new world pope shaking things up in the Vatican – and that of a new friendly face who protects church orthodoxy on issues of gender, sexual identity, and reproduction.

The world's obsession with Pope Francis calls to mind two things for me – one, a serious misunderstanding of the role of the pope in the Catholic Church, and two, a longing for healing, reconciliation, and the example of someone who authentically embraces the radical message of Jesus of Nazareth.

I think it is natural to want a hero – but as charming as Pope Francis is, he is not that hero. Paul Baumann, the editor of the Catholic magazine *Commonweal*, writes for *Slate*, that the obsession with Francis "encourages the illusion that what ails the church can be cured by one man, especially by a new man. In truth no pope possesses that kind of power, thank God." The rock star status of Francis and declarations of "radical" statements that should be simply a baseline for Christianity removes the responsibility of the people in the pews to critically engage the institution to which they claim loyalty. It also minimizes the struggles of many reformers who work tirelessly against the continued marginalization of women and the LGBTQ community.

For instance, there was much ado about his statement, "If someone is gay and seeks the Lord, who am I to judge?" But in the same interview, he also said, "On the ordination of women, the church has spoken and said no. John Paul II, in a definitive formulation said that door is closed." And we should also keep in mind that even such a

The real struggle in speaking adequately about Pope Francis, his role in the church and the world, is that while I would describe myself as critical to the point of cynicism, perhaps the eagerness to embrace him illustrates the hunger and hurt felt by many liberal, former, or otherwise exiled Catholics.

bold statement as "who am I to judge?" does absolutely nothing to change the teachings of the Catholic Church, which is that any sexual identity beyond heterosexual is "intrinsically disordered." I will never forget how it felt to be told – by a self-proclaimed atheist and feminist – that I needed to be patient, these things take time, and eventually (she was sure of it!) that a good Jesuit pope would allow women to be ordained, allow families to make their own



Johanna Hatch

reproductive decisions, and would finally treat LGBTQ folks with true dignity. Please also keep in mind that I was already president of the oldest and largest organization dedicated to women's equality in the Catholic Church. And now we are a year out. I'm still waiting.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that Francis has brought a radically different posture to the papacy than either of the previous popes of my lifetime. His first acts as pope were simple, yet authentic, rejecting much of the wealth and majesty his predecessors embraced in favor of a simpler way. In his first Holy Week as pope, I watched in wonder as he washed the feet of a girl – a Muslim girl, who was also a prisoner – while churches around the world (including right here in Madison, Wisconsin) continue to deny women the ability to participate in this traditional Holy Thursday remembrance. His rejection of much of the finery embraced by his predecessors shows what I believe to be an authentic and refreshing attempt to more closely embrace the roots of Christianity. His style has been lauded as "pastoral over political," with which for the most part I agree. But even while I embrace the words of a pope who places a high priority of what Catholics call the Corporal Works of Mercy – feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, visit the imprisoned – over the orthodoxy of the faithful on the old "pelvic zone" issues, he has heartily and forcefully closed discussion on those very issues. Even

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Reflections on Pope Francis' First Year...continued from page 8

though 98% of Catholics in the U.S. have used a method of birth control not approved by the church and the church's immovable stance against even the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV has contributed to unknown amounts of suffering, Francis has gone so far as to call the divisive decision to ban all methods of artificial contraception by Pope Paul VI as "courageous."

The real struggle in speaking adequately about Pope Francis, his role in the church and the world, is that while I would describe myself as critical to the point of cynicism, perhaps the eagerness to embrace him illustrates the hunger and hurt felt by many liberal, former, or otherwise exiled Catholics. But when I'm honest with myself, it's not hard to understand why. This is where I will take a more personally reflective turn.

With great frustration, I have watched self-identified feminists and progressives gush over Pope Francis' words and actions. In a particularly exasperating turn, an internet hoax last December reported that Pope Francis had declared hell to be a heresy, all religions to be true, and full equality for women in the church. That story has circulated through my Facebook feed over and over again from self-proclaimed atheists, former Catholics, and usually credulous social justice advocates. No one seemed to notice that it only appeared on one blog and wasn't covered by any major news source. And I end up feeling terrible when I have to break the news to them that, no, the church actually hasn't radically changed and that, in fact, Pope Francis stands strong against these reforms. This eagerness to embrace a pope whose introduction to the world was a shy wave and the name of saint who was noted for his rejection of worldly glory so vividly demonstrates a deep ache I think many of us carry.

Is it perhaps because so many of us want the Roman Catholic Church to actually welcome us back into the fold? For me, dissociating with the church is similar to leaving a family of origin or being a refugee in a new land. Yes, it can be and is at times an abusive, dysfunctional structure, and it has purposefully excluded women and LGBT people and called those exclusions the "will of God." But it is the language I am fluent in, a culture that still influences who I am and it frames many of my views of the world.

If we believe that the church's problems can be solved by one charismatic man, we are not acknowledging the depth of the problems. One figurehead is not enough to reform an institution that leads one billion people. At the same time, expecting him to do so, and that if we get a "good pope" the work will be done, also denies the real power of Catholics around the world.

As I have become an increasingly vocal critic of the Catholic Church, I have been exhorted many times to repent and "come home." But what those who ask this of me don't seem to realize is that in order to "come home," I must reject my most basic beliefs about my dignity and worth as a person. In fact, until I reject the notion that women and LGBTQ people are worthy of full equality, "home" does not want me back. And if I'm being honest, that still hurts. Pope Francis probably can't fix that – no one person can instantly heal the brokenness of this institution. Nor do I expect him to. But to gloss over the fact that Pope Francis continues to stand strong against women's ordination, reproductive justice, and the full equality of LGBTQ people in the Catholic church and society at large, and promotes these as sacred teachings, he minimizes the serious harm that continues unabated.

If we believe that the church's problems can be solved by one charismatic man, we are not acknowledging the depth of the problems. One figurehead is not enough to reform an institution that leads one billion people. At the same time, expecting him to do so, and that if we get a "good pope" the work will be done, also denies the real power of Catholics around the world. Even as those outside the Catholic Church, if you place these high expectations on Pope Francis, you deny the conscience and humanity of each person who must choose to remain complacent or challenge the status quo. Every day, there are Catholics actively rejecting the belief that women are less than men or that to be gay is to be "disordered."

Students at Eastside Catholic High School in Seattle walked out in protest after their beloved vice principal, Mr. Z, was fired for marrying his male partner. Fr. Roy Bourgeois, a Maryknoll priest for forty years and founder of the movement to close the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, GA, was stripped of his priestly ministry and excommunicated for refusing to repent of the belief that God equally calls women and men to serve as priests. Around the country, Catholic lay people have been at the forefront of movements for marriage equality, even while their bishops seek to silence them. While none of them have been on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine, they are rock stars to me. Call them prophetic or delusional, they do not accept that division or oppression are the will of the Divine. They don't need permission from any pope to do what they know to be right. This, in my opinion, is the only real way that change will take place in the Catholic church, and I would encourage those outside of it, especially those of who have left the church and chosen a different path, to stand with these allies. If there is a key to changing this institution, it will not come from the top down, but from the people in the pews whose consciences have been formed by the radical notion that Jesus of Nazareth was serious when he followed his Jewish faith and continued the teaching to

My hope, however slim, is that in Pope Francis's next year, he will truly, as the Benedictines say, "listen with the ear of his heart" to the people of his flock.

love our neighbor. My hope, however slim, is that in Pope Francis's next year, he will truly, as the Benedictines say, "listen with the ear of his heart" to the people of his flock. If that occurs, we might in fact see radical change. And even if it doesn't happen, I hope even more that as people of good will, we will continue to extend a hand of friendship and solidarity to all those anonymous saints who give of themselves every day to create a more just church and world.

Johanna Hatch is a former co-president of WOC. She currently lives in Madison, Wisc. with her family.



Diversity and Inclusion

What Do We Do With a Closed Door?

By Tracy Garrison-Feinburg

This past Easter I found myself standing before the beautiful new altar of the church where I spent my college years. My hand was on the slender shoulder of my amazing niece, McKenzie, as she joined other high school and college students to be confirmed at the Easter Vigil. I was so proud of her, and so honored that she asked me to stand with her that night as she declared her commitment to the Catholic Church. I also found myself thinking about my own confirmation, more than thirty years before, and all the years since, as I've been challenged and strengthened in my own faith many times. And I thought about my daughter, now nine, not a Catholic, not quite Jewish, and just beginning to ponder her own spirituality in a more serious way. What example do I set for each of these young women, and my nephew, who is considering confirmation in the Church as well? What is my role as their aunt, and her mother, as I continue my own questioning and struggle with the Church? How do I help each of them in their own spiritual journeys, which I know may involve pain and hurt and confusion? Because I love them, I want to spare them some of the hurt and anger I've experienced over the years as a Catholic woman struggling with church doctrine and hierarchy. But I also know that the Catholic woman I am today is because of that hurt and anger, and forgiveness, and yes, joy. Standing there, in that over air-conditioned church, trying to keep my niece steady, I did what I usually do when thoughts like these swim through my head: I took a breath, said a quick prayer, and asked God for guidance.

As my niece's confirmation sponsor, and as an educator by nature and training, I was compelled to tell her and her brother my own confirmation story, which was an important turning point in my development as a Catholic woman. I've realized over the years that my identity as a woman and as a Catholic are intertwined, as is my racial identity, but the latter is another story. My relationship to the church has always been shaped by how I see myself as a woman, and perhaps more significantly, how the church has seen and not seen me as a full member of the Catholic community. In the weeks before my confirmation, our class met with the pastor of our church. He was a funny, kind man, and I remember his homilies often held my interest. Each stu-

dent had been invited to ask the priest a question when he met with us, and another girl in the class and I were chosen to go first, because we had the same question: why couldn't we have female altar servers in our church? This was a time when American bishops had left the decision up to individual parishes, and ours, a small Catholic community on a military base in northern Alabama, hadn't yet opened up altar service to girls. The pastor's answer to our question was the moment I began to seriously struggle with what it meant to be a woman in the Catholic Church. He began by saying that since altar service was a traditional path to the priesthood, he didn't think it appropriate for girls to serve at our church, so they wouldn't be disappointed later. So of course our follow up question was why can't women be priests? I truly believe he was trying to be kind, but his response

When I told my niece and nephew this story, some thirty years later, I wanted them to understand that the church they are committing to is not perfect, and that the best thing they can do as adult Catholics is to continue to question and hold the institution of the Catholic Church accountable to its members.

jolted me with the realization that this priest, and other priests like him, this church, really didn't see me as I thought it should. His answer to our question was that men are so morally weak, that the temptation of a woman on the altar, consecrating bread and wine, would impede their ability to fully participate in the mass without sinful thoughts. I think he forgot he was speaking to thirteen and fourteen year-old teenagers. To their credit, the boys in our class, who were often more goofy and inappropriate than we could stand, were as equally taken aback and offended as the girls were. I don't remember any of us actually challenging the priest further, but my relationship to the church was



WOC Vice President, Tracy Garrison-Feinburg (R) and her niece McKenzie (L).

changed for good. When I got home that afternoon, I told my mother that I would go through with confirmation for her, and I would attend church as long as I was living at home, but after high school I was done. I had no intention in staying part of a church that thought so little of me, and of men for that matter.

When I told my niece and nephew this story, some thirty years later, I wanted them to understand that the church they are committing to is not perfect, and that the best thing they can do as adult Catholics is to continue to question and hold the institution of the Catholic Church accountable to its members. Joining the WOC board has reignited my passion to speak up for all members of the body of Christ, especially women. I have listened to the many welcoming statements of Pope Francis over the past year, and have allowed myself glimmers of hope for a more open and more accountable Roman Catholic Church. The frustrations of my thirteen-year-old self, and my twenty-something self, rise to the surface whenever I hear Francis or other church officials remind us of the "closed door" when it comes to women's ordination. And yet when I stood with my niece at her confirmation, when my daughter asks me about what I believe and why I go to church, and when I am in communion

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Review of *Band of Sisters*, film directed by Mary Fishman (2012)

Review by *Melissa Pucci*

Push aside any pre-conceived cinematic impressions of nuns when taking in a showing of *Band of Sisters*. The women religious chronicled in this 2012 film by director Mary Fishman are definitely not Fraulein Maria, Sister Mary Clarence or even Sally Fields' precocious Sister Bertrille. The women in this film represent eleven different orders. They enjoy a pint and a cuppa; they have been arrested; taken on the Vatican; the School of the Americas; and even the U.S. Congress, but throughout the day they are engaged in long-time ministries and through all this, they show the strengths of their communities.

The women profiled come across genuinely: loyal, courageous, risk takers called to service and action in the truest examples of servant leadership. The women speak candidly, stories told in their own words, and real time of examples of their ministries in their communities.

The eighty-eight-minute film is presented in documentary style with a comfortable narrative, conversations with the sisters; historical images juxtaposed with modern day depictions of their ministries. All this welcomes the viewer into their world—literally and figuratively opening the convent doors to us.

Filmed over eight years, the documentary is successful in providing an overview of the major impacts of the Second Vatican Council, chronicling the papacies of John XXIII through Benedict XVI, while providing snapshots into the more recent challenges faced by women religious today, most notably the recent LCWR investigations.

The womens' own stories speak of humble beginnings: first nights in the convent and letters from home, to traditional ministries in teaching, nursing, and congregational leadership evolving into thoroughly modern ministries—environmentalists, organic farmers, affordable housing directors, theologians, lobbyists, and social justice advocates.

Framing the film is the work of two Chicago area Sisters of Mercy, Pat Murphy (83-years old) and Joann Persch (78-years old). These women had served on a parish social justice committee with the filmmaker. Sisters Pat and Joann spearhead a venture

to explore and expose the goings-on at Broadview Immigrant Detention Center and the nearby McHenry County Jail. What began as prayer vigils on the margins of the detention center property, shown to be strictly enforcement by the local police, quickly escalates to lobbying immigrant rights before the Illinois State House and what unfolds is a series of small victories. While the storyline does not overshadow the historical content, or the candid interviews with various women, including notable women religious such as Srs Theresa Kane, Margaret Brennan, and Lillian Murphy, CEO of Mercy Housing, it helps to provide a living example of the good works juxtaposed with the struggles these sisters are facing in their works for the people. The viewer just cannot help but root for them.

The overarching theme seems to be that of overcoming challenges: from cloister to habit to traditional gender roles long preordained by the church, grappling with the changes of the Second Vatican Council, and in some instances mass exoduses or religious women. The result is a small but strong band of women religious shown to be the stalwart leaders and people of faith they have always been. Thus, the revolutionary ministries the modern day sisters are shown engaging in since the Second Vatican Council, honestly are extensions of the primary missions of most apostolic orders: answering the needs of God's people, often those in their own neighborhoods. It begs the question: how does the role of these sisters working as organic farmers differ from the call of the Corporal Works of Mercy to feed the hungry?

The obstacles women religious continue to encounter are real. During the film's production and initial screenings the Vatican investigation into the LCWR was just beginning and the report had not been published in its entirety. But fortunately for us (not to mention the archival record), the



film provides an explanation of the founding of both the LCWR and Network shared by some of their early leaders. The conversations about the investigations shed light on the long-time missions of the sisters being not only in the trenches, but working side by side with the voiceless and the powerless, truly the least of God's people who have routinely been overlooked, even by the hierarchy of the church.

While many see the election of Pope Francis as a glimmer of hope, a pontiff who some see as one who will emphasize the plight of the poor and marginalized while downplaying the power and patriarchy of the church, this film vividly chronicles that there is still much to be done in terms of recognizing and respecting women's roles in the church. The current pontiff has no record thus far of correcting these injustices.

On the whole this film is quite accessible. The take-away is real for individuals working alongside today's women religious to those who had a strict, but fair nun in the third grade to those whose lives and ministries were shaped by a woman religious as young adults. Without a doubt this film highlights the gift women religious are to the church and its social justice and human service ministries, as well as to the people of God. The film also adequately sets the historical record straight and might well be used for educational as well as ecclesial purposes when the People of God get a chance to weigh in on the Vatican's rulings toward the LCWR.

Melissa Pucci holds an M.A.R. in Religious Studies from Yale Divinity School.



Book Review

**Jimmy Carter, *A Call To Action: Women, Religion, Violence and Power*,
New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014. 213 pp. ISBN 978-1-4767-7395-7. \$28.
Reviewed by Jeannette Mulherin**

Pope Francis would do well to put Jimmy Carter's new book, *A Call To Action: Women, Religion, Violence and Power*, on the top of his reading list.

Although Francis has expressed a deep concern for worldwide economic inequality, he has yet to demonstrate an appreciation for the fundamental role of female oppression in the cause and continuation of such disparity. Were he to peruse the pages of *A Call To Action*, the Pope would encounter overwhelming evidence of this crucial link.

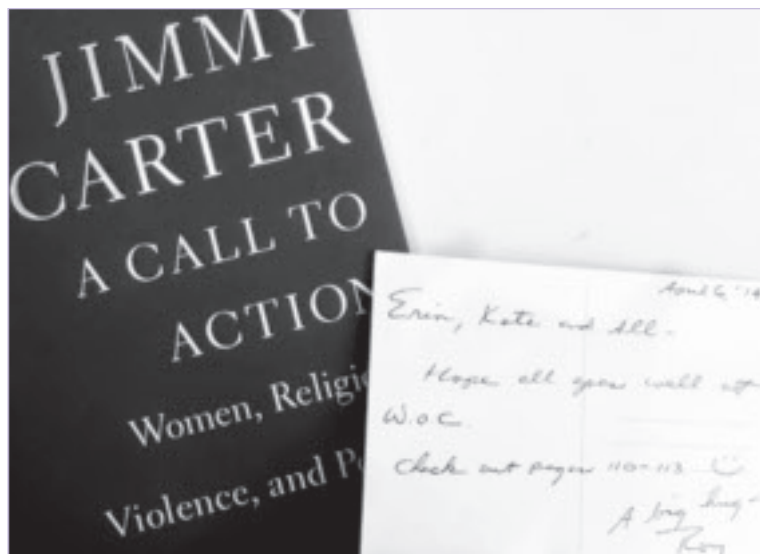
In his latest book, Carter argues that "the deprivation and abuse of women and girls, largely caused by a false interpretation of carefully selected religious texts" (emphasis mine) has a "devastating effect on economic prosperity caused by the loss of contributions of at least half the human beings on earth." It's time to make this linkage common knowledge. *A Call To Action* does that in spades.

Drawing on the Carter Center's impressive record of humanitarian work as well as his personal involvement in human rights issues, the former U.S. president recounts the horrors routinely meted out to women.

In chapters that examine crimes ranging from sexual assault, spousal abuse, slavery and prostitution, to honor killings, genital cutting, and genocide, Carter argues that the immense suffering disproportionately inflicted on women is our "most serious and unaddressed world-wide problem." The litany of tragedies and numbing statistics might cause a reader to wonder if life as a woman is really worth the trouble after all.

In a chapter titled, "Learning from Human Rights Heroes," Carter highlights the efforts of WOC, the Leadership Council of Women Religious (LCWR), and Fr Roy Bourgeois to establish gender justice in the Catholic Church. His examination of the Vatican backlash against these efforts is a stark reminder of the hierarchy's continuing commitment to "a false interpretation of carefully selected religious texts," to ensure the status quo.

If readers are expecting Christianity to come out looking better than other major world religions, they will be disap-



Roy Bourgeois gifted a copy of *A Call to Action* to WOC staff

pointed. However, while Carter holds all major faiths accountable for perpetuating the problem, he also insists that people of faith have the power to create lasting change.

Carter suggests that while many men disagree with women's treatment, they "remain quiet in order to enjoy the benefits of their status." Hopefully, this essential point is not lost on readers who are more comfortable decrying the brutality of others than accepting personal responsibility to make positive change.

Carter's book makes clear that the stakes are high. If Pope Francis is truly committed to addressing the root causes of economic inequality, he'll heed our former president's *Call To Action* and address the culpability of his own church in this continuing scourge.

Jeannette Mulherin serves at the President of WOC's Board of Directors.

What Do We Do With a Closed Door?...continued from page 10

with others in the Catholic reform movement, I am far less discouraged than the younger me was. I don't know if it's maturity or stubbornness, but I see options for opening that door, whether or not the Vatican intends for me to find the key. Robert McClory captured it in this way:

Note, finally, that all this talk is about a door, a closed door — not a brick wall, not a barbed wire fence, not a concrete barrier. It's just a door. Any-

one can open the door with the right key. And in the tradition of Catholicism, who holds the keys? [*National Catholic Reporter*, Sept 16, 2013; <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/pope-francis-and-womens-ordination>]

This reminds me of the Canaanite woman from the gospel of Matthew (15: 21-28) as well, who I often recall when the voice of women in the Church is muted or even

muzzled. When Jesus ignored her, and even insulted her as she asked for help for her daughter, she stood her ground and answered back. And Jesus' response was to reward her for her faith. That's the message I intend to keep giving to my niece and my daughter and my nephew—keep knocking, keep looking for the right key.

Tracy Garrison-Feinburg serves as vice-president of WOC. She currently lives in Brooklyn, NY with her husband and daughter.



Upcoming Events

The Catholic Tipping Point Fall Tour

Fr. Tony Flannery is a native of Galway, and member of the Redemptorist Congregation for more than 50 years. He is the founding member of the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP) in Ireland.

Fr. Tony has been ordered to remain silent and forbidden to minister as a priest because of his refusal to sign a document that violates his conscience: namely that women cannot be priests and that he accepts all Church stances on contraception, homosexuality, and refusal of the sacraments to people in second relationships. After a year during which he attempted to come to some accommodation with the Vatican without success, he has decided to take a public stance on the need for reform in the Church.

Fr. Tony will tour the U.S. this fall, from October 22 – November 18, 2014, visiting 18 cities and speaking with Catholic laity and leadership on topics of women in the Church, the future of ministry, the problem with infallibility, and the sexual teachings of the Catholic Church.

Rather than remain silent, Fr. Tony and all people of conscience are ready to dialogue.

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Ministry of Prophetic Obedience...continued from page 6

liturgy. We talked briefly and then, with friends, I celebrated my first Roman Catholic Womanpriest liturgy. I could not stop crying. This is what I had been waiting for all my life. Women priests were here in the U.S., and I was invited to join them.

After completing the admission process, I was accepted as a member of the RCWP Midwest Region. I would be a candidate for two years as I continued working in a parish and completed the requirements for diaconate ordination. Subsequently I retired from active parish ministry and was ordained a deacon in catacomb. Less than a year later I was ordained a Roman Catholic womanpriest. The grace that had begun in me so many years earlier was finally realized. For many reasons I needed to remain as a catacomb priest, yet after two- and-a-half years I was able to openly celebrate my priesthood with the community.

The Midwest Region's first bishop, Maria Regina Nicolosi, blessed the region with five years of service and notified us in 2013 that it was time for her to retire. The process of selecting a new bishop began. Others shared their insights with me and encouraged me to allow my name to be placed on the ballot. My own spiritual movement affirmed that allowing my name to be considered was just part of the discernment process. And so it began. After several months of regional planning, the election took place, and I was elected bishop for our region.

I am writing this article several weeks before my ordination as a bishop. How will my life change? It will be an unfolding process. The RCWP constitution stipulates that bishops "are to provide pastoral and prayerful support" for the members in the region. The small house church of Women at the Well will continue to meet once a

month. My spiritual direction practice will be maintained and new ventures will develop as this new ministry unfolds.

One of my favorite theologians, Ilia Delio, writes: "To be divinized means to have the grace of Christ within you... God needs human skin in the universe, vessels of passionate love.... We can be and are called to be co-lovers and co-creators of the universe." My call is to be a co-creator and co-lover as I live out the fullness of my priesthood. This grace of priesthood is a living stream within me that touches everything that I am and do.

Nancy Meyer is a bishop for Roman Catholic Women Priests for the mid-west Region. She currently lives in Brownsburg, Indiana.

Vatican Official Receives Letters Calling for Discussion of Women's Ordination...continued from page 4

On this anniversary, WOW knocked on the door of the Vatican, and for the first time the door cracked open. Written in various languages, these testimonies offered a clear voice to the stories we know and carry in our own hearts. This door opening to a WOW request was a first of what we hope is a full entry into our own home and possibly the welcoming mat to substantive and honest discussion on women's ordination.

to every voice through which the Spirit speaks. Biblical scholars have taught that the disciples who were present at the Last Supper included women. God's call is not dependent on gender, any more than God is defined by gender. It is patriarchy that continues this inappropriate definition of God as "He" and it is the same patriarchy that keeps women from their call to ordained priesthood." **Sr. Imelda Maurer**

"Cutting off discussion is a reprehensible act. It closes down the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It says that there is nothing new to be discovered in the understanding of creation and God's presence and action in it." **Mary Jane Pelletier**

"Jesus of Nazareth treated women equally. Church leaders should do the same." **Bruce Krawisz**

"Take away the pain that women feel every time they attend Mass and feel the exclusion." **Mary Lou Hamilton**

"[Pope] Francis, please heal the wound of exclusion felt by women worldwide due to being barred from priesthood. We will not experience ourselves as the entire Body of Christ until this injustice is corrected and women's gifts are made central to our community. May God bless you as move forward to bring together the People of God." **Joanne Bray**

"While the church excludes half the world's population from the sacrament of ordination it endorses the misogynist view that

women are inferior. It is a flawed and dangerous theology to say that to be like Jesus you have to have male genitalia." **Pat Brown**

"Please help me to show my daughters that the church is fair and an institution to be proud of, not ashamed of [due to its discriminatory practice toward women]." **Aleta Galusha**

"Should we not be focusing on our loving and just relationships with one another rather than on our bodily or physical characteristics?" **Sr. Beth Rindler**

"My daughter cannot bring herself to bring her daughter for baptism in a church that denies full equality to all." **Christine Falcone**

"I left the Catholic faith because my (then) 8-year old son asked a question I could not answer. My son tugged on my sleeve during his first reconciliation Mass. I leaned down and he whispered in my ear, "Mommy, why aren't there any lady priests?" I stared at the altar, with a row of males priests waiting to hear the children's first confession, and I had no idea how to begin to answer." **Teri Goggin-Roberts**

"I would like to encourage you to meet with women who experience a call to priesthood and with male priests and other religious who have supported us in the discernment process." **Katharine Salmon**

"I believe that the church cannot decide in advance who is or is not called to the priesthood, based on biological features. I believe that *Gaudium et Spes* par. 29 about equality for all applies as much inside the church as out in the rest of the world. We are denying the will of God by denying women access to ordination." **Catherine Cavanagh**

"I believe God has created me with equality in dignity, rights and spirit in the image of God; it is also because God calls every person individually and there is no control of any human person on this individual vocation or call." **Rosaline Costa**

Our Bodies, Our Blood...continued from page 7

Salt Lake City is just a metaphor. They can have Salt Lake City right there at home.

There are many ways to tell the story of this powerful, challenging musical. On the feast of Corpus Christi, we focus on body and blood. It's not until our two missionaries put their bodies and blood at risk for the people, that the people are transformed. The missionaries are also transformed. They understand *The Book of Mormon* differently, see themselves differently, understand the meaning of the sacred in human life differently. And when the three North American white guys in suits show up to assess the success of their mission, condemning it as *not* Mormon, Good Looking and Nerd stand up to them too, insisting that the faith of the villagers is authentically Mormon. Faith survives the intransigency of institutionalized religion.

This musical easily could have been shaped around Roman Catholic experience. Therein lies the message for us. It's only when the words in the sacred book become embodied in real people that the words

gain transformational power. When we live the words to their ultimate consequences, in body and blood, then the words have meaning and we have integrity. Jesus spent his body and blood for his love for God. He chose death in integrity rather than recant his radical understandings of equality, justice, and care for all people. His body and blood, as well as his integrity, had untold implications for the life of the world.

We, too, are called to use our bodies and our blood in love and with integrity. In those moments in which we achieve this challenge, we are transformed and others are set free. It all comes down to body and blood. It all comes down to integrity. Have courage, Kate! We stand with you. Thank you for putting your body and blood on the line for equal rights for women.

Jane Via, RCWP serves on the WOC board and currently lives in Jamal, Calif. She is the co-founder and co-paster of the Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community in San Diego, Calif.

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I am called to ordination. Yes No Maybe I have included names and addresses of friends who might be interested in WOC.
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Consider Automatic Bank Withdrawal! This payment option saves WOC time and credit card fees, allowing us to put your entire donation to its most efficient use.*

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_____ (Signature and Date)

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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

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.

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

Give the gift of women's leadership in the church this Christmas

Gift membership \$45.00 *denotes required field

Recipient's name* _____

Recipient's address* _____

City* _____

State* _____ ZIP* _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Message: _____

Mommy for Pope – New

Baby onsies.... \$10



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. \$45



Buttons

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

Quantity	Item #	Description	TShirt Size: S, M, L, XL, XXL	Color: Pink, Black or Purple	Price	Total
		"Mommy for Pope" Baby onsies			\$10	\$
	Bt1	"Ordain Women" button			\$2	\$
	Bt2	"Priestly People Come in All Genders" button			\$2	\$
	S1	Liturgical Purple Stoles			\$45	\$
					Shipping and Handling	\$3.00
					Merchandise Total	\$

Payment Information

Check Visa Mastercard Name on card: _____

Card No: _____ Exp Date: _____ 3-Digit Security Code: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

To view WOC's merchandise online, visit www.womensordination.org under "WOC Store"
 To place your order, call (202) 675-1006, email 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.