

# My Journey from Silence to Solidarity

Second Edition

Fr. Roy Bourgeois

Edited by Margaret Knapke



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Front cover photos: (top) Fr. Roy Bourgeois, SOA Watch file  
photo; (bottom) 2008 ordination of Roman Catholic woman  
priest Janice Sevre-Duszynska (right) with Bishop Dana  
Reynolds (center) and Fr. Roy Bourgeois. Photo: Bob Watkins

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**T**his booklet is dedicated, with love, to my dear parents, who brought me into the world, walked with me on my journey, and through their love made it all possible.

**I**t is dedicated also to the memory of Sophie Scholl, a university student in Munich during the Third Reich, and her brother and friends, all of whom refused to be silent. Sophie, her older brother, Hans, fellow students, and a professor were members of the White Rose resistance community. They were found “guilty” of distributing leaflets denouncing the crimes of Hitler and the Nazis. Sophie, Hans, and four colleagues were executed in 1943 for speaking truth to power. Sophie was 21 years old.





## Preface

This booklet, first published in May of 2012, is Fr. Roy Bourgeois' narrative account of how he came to be a Catholic priest and how his ministry came to include a clearly expressed conviction that Catholic women are being called to the priesthood.

In November of 2008, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ordered Bourgeois to recant his public support of women priests and refrain from further advocacy. For four years, he responded that to recant would be a betrayal of his conscience, and he continued building solidarity with the movement for women's ordination.

In November of 2012, Bourgeois was informed by the Vatican that he had been expelled from his Maryknoll community of 46 years and the priesthood. The Vatican and Maryknoll said their decision to dismiss him from the priesthood and from his religious community "dispenses (him) from his sacred bonds."

Bourgeois responds with a reminder from Hebrews 7:17: "Thou art a priest forever."

With the subsequent publishing of this, the second edition of *My Journey from Silence to Solidarity*, Fr. Bourgeois continues to follow the call of his conscience by working for gender equality within the Catholic Church and its priesthood. This second edition updates his story with an epilogue containing documents regarding his expulsion from Maryknoll and the priesthood, as well as a closing statement for this edition. The booklet is available in German now; soon it will be available in Spanish.

Also since the first edition of this book: Fr. Roy's father, Roy L. Bourgeois, Sr., died on November 30, 2012.

Margaret Knapke, editor  
May 2013



**A**s I look back on my life journey, I regret the many times I was silent when others around me were suffering from discrimination and violence. At the same time, I am grateful to so many people who taught me that silence is the voice of complicity. They awakened and empowered me to break my silence and walk in solidarity with them.

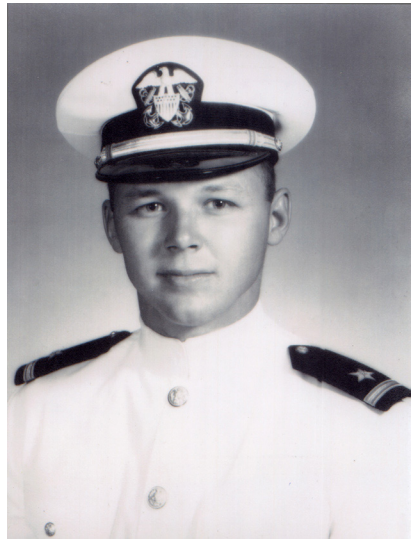
Growing up in a small town in Louisiana, I went to segregated public schools for twelve years. Even our little Catholic church was segregated—with the last five pews reserved for the Black Catholics.

I graduated from high school in 1956. Looking back, I cannot remember one White person in our town—a teacher, our macho football coaches, a priest, a parent, or myself—who had the courage to say: “We have a problem here, and it is called racism.” Rather, what I do remember are the mantras: “Segregation is our tradition,” and “Blacks are separate but equal.”

After high school I went off to college and studied geology with the hope of getting rich in the oil fields of Texas. Then, as a very patriotic college graduate, I decided to join the military. I went to the Navy Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island. This would be my ticket out of Louisiana—an opportunity to explore the world.

After spending two years aboard ship and a year at a NATO base in Athens, Greece, I volunteered for shore duty in Vietnam. It was 1965, and our country’s leaders said that we had to go to Vietnam to stop the spread of communism. I believed that our cause was noble; we were going to be the liberators. I joined the large chorus of voices that said, “We have to fight them in Vietnam or on the shores of California.”

So I went to Vietnam, not knowing it would become a turning point in my life. Never before had I experienced such violence, suffering, and fear. Death was always near. God and my faith became much more important during my year in Vietnam.



In the midst of all the madness of war, I met a peacemaker, a healer who would have a tremendous influence in my life. He was Father Lucien Olivier, a Catholic missionary who was running an orphanage for over 300 children. Their parents had been killed in the war, most by our guns and bombs. Life at the orphanage was a real struggle for survival, and my buddies and I would go and help Father Olivier whenever we could.

Spending time at the orphanage brought meaning and joy to my life. At the same time, it brought conflict and sleepless nights. Seeing the suffering of the children at the orphanage forced me to question our presence in Vietnam, and I started to discuss this with my fellow officers.

One day I was called in by our commanding officer and told, "Lieutenant, your job in the military is to implement our country's foreign policy, not to question or discuss it." I remember feeling angry because I was being told to do something I knew in my heart to be wrong. When I asked my commanding officer how he felt about the kids at the orphanage, he yelled at me and walked out.

While I had considered making the military a career, I began to realize this was not my vocation. My faith grew



stronger during my year in Vietnam, and I felt God calling me to be a missionary priest. I talked to a Catholic Army chaplain about my calling, and he recommended that I join the Maryknoll Missionary Order—headquartered in Ossining, New York—who, then and now, works with the poorest of the poor in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

My year in Vietnam came to an end, and I returned to my family and friends in Louisiana, grateful to be alive. Much had changed in my little town since I left for college and the military. Our public schools and Catholic church were now integrated, but racism was still alive.

Being the first from our town to serve in Vietnam and return with the Purple Heart, I received a very warm welcome. The local chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) asked me to become a member, mentioning that the Black veterans in town had their own separate chapter and meetings. I declined their invitation and told them to let me know when the VFW was integrated—only then would I consider joining.



Visiting children at Fr. Olivier's orphanage



**Receiving the Purple Heart from Admiral N. G. Ward**

I applied to enter the seminary of the Maryknoll Missionary Order and (being male) was accepted. The next six years of study for the priesthood were good years filled with prayer, reflection, hope, and great joy.

But while my experience in Vietnam had begun to change me from warrior to peacemaker, I still had a long way to go. When a well-known resister of the Vietnam War, Father Dan Berrigan, S.J., spoke at our seminary, I did not attend his lecture. I felt conflicted. I wondered: how could Berrigan and others be such strong opponents of the war when they hadn't served in the military? I also felt that attending his antiwar presentation would somehow betray my good friend Ray Ellis, who had been killed in Vietnam. Even so, another part of me sensed that Berrigan might speak on behalf of the kids at

Fr. Olivier's orphanage, as well as other victims of war. Years later I told Dan how I had boycotted his lecture. He laughed, understanding my conflict well. Becoming a true peacemaker is a process; it takes time to work through many issues.

***L*iberation theology recognizes and responds to a loving God who wants no one to suffer from oppression, poverty, violence, or discrimination.**

I was ordained a Catholic priest in 1972 and assigned to Maryknoll's mission work in La Paz, Bolivia. A slum on the outskirts of La Paz became my home for the next five years, and the poor, my teachers, introduced me to their "theology of liberation" and a God who empowers and gives hope to the poor.



My Maryknoll ordination class of 1972 with Cardinal Terence Cooke

Liberation theology recognizes and responds to a loving God who wants no one to suffer from oppression, poverty, violence, or discrimination. This theology teaches us that God calls everyone to the table as equals. No one is superior to others; the faith community is a discipleship of equals. This model of church is circular and horizontal—quite different from the top-down, patriarchal model emanating from Rome, where men dominate and claim ownership of the Church and the truth.



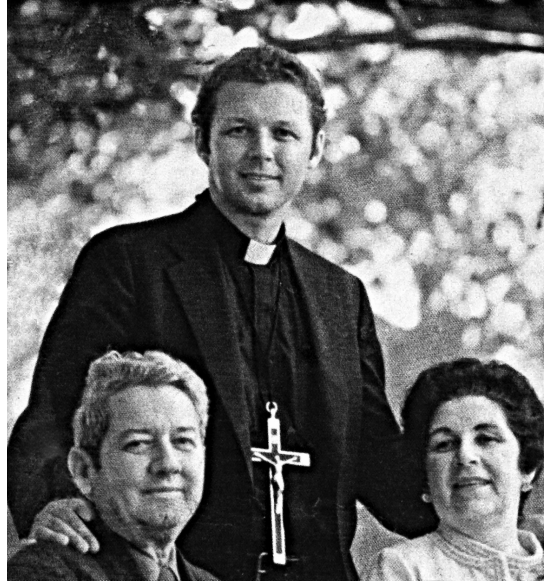
**With Aymara women in their cooperative near La Paz**

The poor also introduced me to the importance and meaning of the word “solidarity” in the faith community. In Bolivia, it meant “to accompany” and “to walk with.” To be in solidarity meant to

make another’s struggle for justice, peace, and equality *your* struggle.

It angered me to see my own country, the United States, supporting the brutal Bolivian dictator, General Hugo Banzer, and his military as they oppressed the poor majority of the country. It saddened me to see my country exploiting Bolivia’s cheap labor and vast natural resources, as the *conquistadores* had done centuries ago.

People who are oppressed and exploited, who see their children go to bed hungry and die before their time, do what we would do if we lived under such conditions. They organize, they walk in solidarity with each other, and they speak out for justice. But all too often, when the oppressed break their silence, those with the power and wealth retaliate swiftly



**Sharing a moment with my parents, Roy, Sr., and Grace**

and harshly. In Bolivia many were killed or imprisoned for breaking their silence. During my fifth year in the slum, I was among the many arrested by the military, and I was forced to leave the country.

**C**oming back to the United States (in the late 1970s) was a big, difficult adjustment. I tried to return to Bolivia, but was denied a visa and told I was *persona non grata* there. Unable to return to my mission work in Bolivia, I turned my attention to El Salvador, where another military dictatorship was repressing another impoverished population.

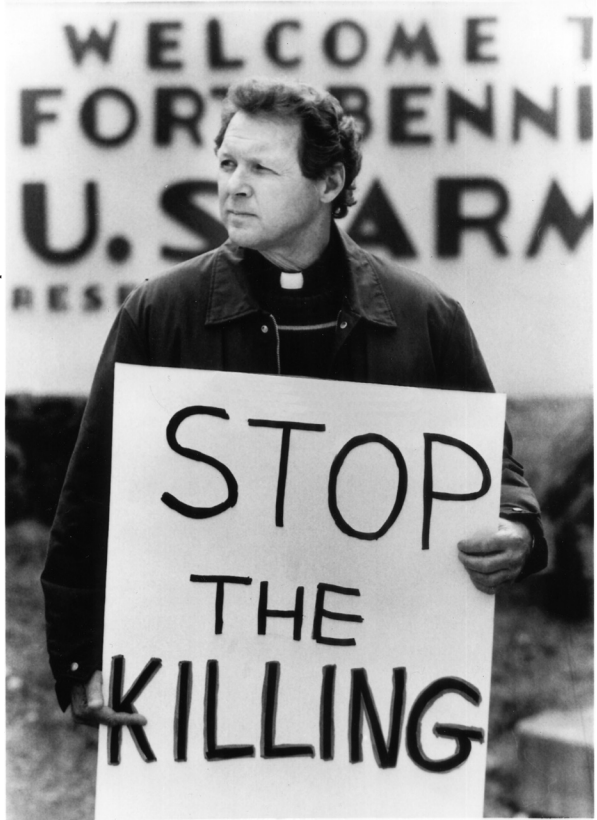
Before long, on March 24, 1980, Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated in this small country of five million, because of his love for and defense of the poor. Months later, four U.S. churchwomen who had gone to El Salvador to work with the poor—at the invitation of Bishop Romero—were raped and killed by the Salvadoran military. Two of the women, Maryknoll Sisters

Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, were friends of mine. The other two women were Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay missionary Jean Donovan.

The brutal death of these four courageous, faith-filled women drew many of us to El Salvador. Once again, we found the United States was deeply involved, giving weapons and training to

those doing the killing. I have never seen anything like El Salvador: the poor of this country were being slaughtered—all in our name and with our U.S. tax dollars.

So when 525 Salvadoran soldiers arrived at Fort Benning, Georgia, to be trained in combat, a small group of us said, “Not in our name will you do this!” We protested in front of Fort Benning’s main entrance, then decided to go onto Fort Benning for a more creative and serious action. Three of us—Linda Ventimiglia, the late Father Larry Rosebaugh, O.M.I., and I—dressed as high-ranking Army officers and entered the base at night “armed” with a powerful tape player. We had a tape of the last sermon of Bishop Romero, given at the cathedral in San Salvador when he made his special plea to the military to stop their killing. It was the



very next day that the brave, beloved *monseñor* was killed by a sniper while saying Mass.

Once Linda, Larry, and I had entered Fort Benning, we went near the barracks that housed the Salvadoran soldiers, climbed a tall pine tree, and waited. When the last lights went out in the barracks, we said, “Bishop Romero, this is for you.” Once again the words of this prophet and martyr rang out to the Salvadoran military: “Stop the killing! Lay down your weapons! Disobey the orders of your superiors telling you to kill your fellow *campesinos* [peasant farmers] . . . and obey a higher law, the law of God that says ‘Thou shalt not kill.’”

Broadcasting Bishop Romero’s words was like poking a large beehive. While Linda, Larry, and I saw our action as a humble expression of solidarity with Romero and the suffering people of El Salvador, those on Fort Benning did not see it this way. Soldiers with rifles and German shepherds came running out of the barracks and ordered us down from the tree, or they would shoot us down. It was time for us to descend, but we left the boom box high up in the tree, loudly repeating Romero’s last sermon.

Once we were on the ground, very angry soldiers roughed us up and threatened to turn the dogs loose on us. They then took us to the military-police headquarters for questioning. From there we were held in the county jail, and finally we went to trial, charged with criminal trespassing and impersonating Army officers.

Our federal judge was Robert Elliott, well known in Georgia as “Maximum Bob.” The courtroom was filled with our family members and friends. We wanted so much to explain during the trial what was going on in

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El Salvador and why we did what we did. We tried to talk about Bishop Romero, the four churchwomen, and U.S. foreign policy in El Salvador, but it just wasn't possible. Judge Elliott declared our testimony irrelevant and sentenced us to a year and a half in prison.

Our prison time was hard, certainly, but Linda, Larry, and I did well because we never forgot why we were there. It was all about solidarity. In prison we learned the truth cannot be silenced. Each of us wrote many letters to the media which got published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other major newspapers. And letters and visits from loved ones kept our morale high.

**A**fter our release from prison, we went back to work and joined the tens of thousands in the United States trying to stop military aid to El Salvador, which by then had reached a million dollars a day. But our voices were not strong enough to stop the bloodshed. In the very early morning of November 16, 1989, the Salvadoran military entered the Jesuit university in San Salvador—known as the University of Central America or UCA—and murdered six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her teen-aged daughter.

This massacre made the front pages of newspapers around the world, and a U.S. congressional task force was sent to investigate. The task force returned and reported that those responsible for the slayings had been trained at the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, Georgia. With the support of my Maryknoll community, I returned to Georgia and moved into a small apartment right outside the main gate of Fort Benning.

Friends joined me—Kathy Kelly from Chicago; Charlie Liteky, a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor in Vietnam, came from California; a Jesuit priest from Boston; two Dominican priests; two Salvadorans who had had to leave





**The fasters (from left to right): Fr. Brian Pierce, O.P.; Fr. Jack Seery, S.J.; René Hurtado; Miguel Cruz; Kathy Kelly; Fr. Bourgeois, M.M.; Fr. Jim Barnett, O.P.; Charlie Liteky; and Peter Eaves**

their country because of death threats; and one more U.S. veteran. Together we camped out in front of the main entrance of Fort Benning and went on a 35-day water-only fast. Our bodies grew weak but our spirits remained strong, because each day we reminded each other why we were there. It was all about solidarity.

When our fast ended, food never tasted so good. Then we began the SOA Watch and went to work researching the School of the Americas. We discovered a military school, specializing in counterinsurgency and combat training, connected to untold suffering and death throughout Latin America. U.S. taxpayers were (and still are) footing the bill for the SOA, at millions of dollars per year.

We found that, since 1946, the SOA had trained over 50,000 soldiers from 18 different countries and was well known throughout Latin America as the “School of Assassins,” “School for Dictators,” and “School of Coups.” (As of January 2001, the SOA is called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation or WHINSEC. As of 2012, the number of SOA/WHINSEC graduates is 64,000.) Then and now, graduating soldiers return to their home countries and

**We discovered a military school, specializing in counterinsurgency and combat training, connected to untold suffering and death throughout Latin America.**

provide “the muscle” for defending U.S. exploitation of cheap labor and natural resources. We were not surprised, in 1996, when *The Washington Post* reported that techniques in torture had been part of the SOA curriculum from 1982 to 1991.

When *From Madness to Hope: The Twelve-Year*

*War in El Salvador* (the UN Truth Commission report on El Salvador) revealed that those who had assassinated Bishop Romero, raped and killed the four U.S. churchwomen, and massacred the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter were trained at the School of the Americas, our SOA Watch movement really grew. While I continued to live in the small apartment just outside of Fort Benning, we opened an SOA Watch national office in Washington, D.C.

Organizing through our SOA Watch website ([www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org)), spreading the word through our newsletter *¡Presente!*, and giving many talks around the country enabled our movement to blossom. From the very beginning, we would gather at the main gate of Fort Benning the weekend before Thanksgiving—always close to the anniversary of the UCA massacre—to call for the closing of the SOA and to keep alive the memories of the thousands killed by the School’s graduates. It has always been about solidarity.

Beginning with those nine fasters in 1990, our numbers have grown to over 15,000. Among the people who come to the November vigil are college and high school students; nuns, priests, and people of many faiths; pacifists and military veterans; union workers; senior citizens; parents with their children; and many others. For many, whenever we gather

in the name of solidarity, the experience is deeply spiritual. To date, 245 activists in our SOA Watch movement have committed nonviolent acts of civil disobedience at the November vigil and served time in federal prison—most with a six-month sentence. They are our “Prisoners of Conscience.”

It has been 22 years since we began the SOA Watch. During these years I have spoken at hundreds of churches, colleges, and high schools, and to peace groups all over the country. And as I addressed the injustice of the SOA and U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, I was introduced to an injustice much closer to home—in my own faith community.

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Addressing the Saturday rally at the annual November vigil. Photo courtesy of Linda Panetta ([www.opticalrealities.org](http://www.opticalrealities.org))



Above, top: Each cross bears the name of a Latin American victim of militarism (*Linda Panetta*). Middle: SOA Watch file photo of Maryknoll Sisters. Bottom: SOA Watch file photo of procession toward SOA (*Linda Panetta*). Opposite, top: SOA Watch file photo (*Mike Haskey*). Middle: SOA Watch file photo of mourners representing hundreds of thousands of Latin American victims. Bottom: Leading solemn procession (*Linda Panetta*)



I met many devout women in the Catholic Church who shared with me their deep faith and their call by God to the priesthood. What I kept hearing was the same experience I had had years ago in Vietnam, when I felt God was calling me to the priesthood. And what I kept hearing began to keep me awake at night as I asked myself a few basic questions: Didn't God create men and women as equals? Doesn't the call to the priesthood come from God? Who are we, as men, to reject God's call to women? Isn't our all-powerful God who created the universe capable of empowering a woman to be a priest?

I found it amazing that, throughout my six years in the seminary and the many years that followed, I could not recall ever discussing with fellow priests why women could not be priests. Whenever it came up, which was rare, there was really no discussion. It was simply stated that ordaining only baptized males was "our tradition" in the Catholic Church.

The more I heard stories of women being called by God to the priesthood but rejected by the hierarchy because of their gender, the more I reflected upon my experience of attending all-White segregated schools in Louisiana. Back then we were taught that segregation was "our tradition." Blacks, we said, were separate but equal. The language used to justify racism, I find, is very similar to the language used to justify sexism in the Church. In the Catholic Church we are taught that the all-male priesthood is our tradition and that men and women are equal but have different roles.

Over time and after much reflection, prayer, and study, I have come to the clear conclusion that our Church's teaching that excludes women from

***Doesn't the call to the priesthood come from God? Who are we, as men, to reject God's call to women?***

the priesthood simply cannot stand up to scrutiny. And

***“Prejudice in liturgical clothing is still prejudice.”***

I wonder: could this be the reason so many Church leaders and priests refuse to even discuss the issue? Sexism, like racism, is a sin. And no matter how hard we may try to justify discrimination against others, it is not the way of our loving Creator who made us all equal. (This, of course, extends as well to our many sisters and brothers who experience the pain of discrimination because of their sexual orientation.) As Reverend Nancy Taylor of Boston has put it, “Prejudice in liturgical clothing is still prejudice.”

Hearing the experiences of many women in the Catholic Church made me realize that excluding women from the priesthood is a grave injustice against women, against our Church, and against our God who calls both men and women to be priests. Realizing that silence is the voice of complicity, in May of 1995, I decided to take a number of my concerns directly to Pope John Paul II. Here are some excerpts from that letter.

*I am writing to you out of love and a growing concern for our Church and my Maryknoll community.... After much prayer and reflection, I now feel I must address certain policies in our Church which are causing so much suffering and division.*

*I firmly believe that the policy of our Church that does not allow priests to marry is wrong. So many of my friends have been forced to leave the priesthood because they fell in love and chose to marry. I personally believe they would have made better priests and more effective ministers as married people. I have heard all the arguments for the current policy of priests not being allowed to marry, and can only say that these arguments are not based on the teachings of Jesus or the law of God....*

*I firmly believe that your policy of excluding women from ordination is wrong. I do not see this policy as rooted in the Scriptures or in the teachings of Jesus, but rather in the sin of sexism and the quest for power.*

*I do not understand how you can say that this is a closed issue and not to be debated or discussed. You, the bishops, and the cardinals in our Church—all men—do not have a monopoly on the truth or the Scriptures. Our loving God calls us to equality and speaks through everyone, through men and women of every race and culture....*

*Jesus was a person of compassion. He went about healing the suffering of others and excluded no one. I pray that you, as our Pope, will have the courage to follow in his footsteps. I appeal to you to please change these policies which are causing so much needless suffering and division in our Church today....*

*In peace and justice,  
Fr. Roy Bourgeois, M.M.*

I never received a response to my letter.

When I received an invitation from Maryknoll to attend the 1997 celebration of our 25th anniversary of ordination, I found myself compelled once again to avoid giving tacit approval to the exclusion of women from the priesthood. I sent a letter to my classmates and to the head of Maryknoll, saying: "When women also can be ordained, I will attend and celebrate with you."

Then I was invited to speak at a large religious conference in Rome, Italy, about the School of the Americas and U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. Hundreds of priests and nuns attended and were very supportive of our efforts to close the SOA. The day before returning to the United States, I was invited by Vatican Radio to have a 15-minute live interview about the SOA and U.S. foreign policy. All went



well with the interview, and I had another two minutes to go. Moved by the spirit, I recognized that this was a sacred moment, an opportunity to express my solidarity with women in the Church. So I said, “We have been discussing the injustice of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. As a Catholic priest, in closing I want to say that there will never be justice in our Church until women can be ordained.”

I had about another minute remaining in the interview and wanted to say a little more about women priests, but the manager of Vatican Radio angrily came in, cut me off the air, and started playing Gregorian chant. The interview was over! But I slept very well that night, knowing I had not let a sacred moment pass by in silence.

I continued my travels throughout the United States, giving talks about the SOA, and I met more women called by God to serve the Church as priests. Then came an invitation from Janice Sevre-Duszynska to attend her ordination in Lexington, Kentucky. Janice, a devout Catholic, was very active in the SOA Watch movement.

I wrote Janice saying it would be a great honor to attend her ordination, knowing that I would be poking another beehive—first the military and now the Church patriarchy. Hundreds attended Janice’s ordination on August 9, 2008, and Bishop Dana Reynolds performed the moving ceremony. I gave the homily; some excerpts follow.

*When I met Janice Sevre-Duszynska years ago in the SOA Watch movement, she spoke about her journey of faith and her call to be ordained in the Catholic Church. That day has arrived. And we are here to share in her joy and to support Janice in her call to the priesthood.*

*A high school teacher, Janice participated in a nonviolent protest against the SOA in 2001 and was sent to prison for three months. Janice—as well as 230 others in our*



With Janice Sevre-Duszynska before her ordination as a Roman Catholic woman priest, August 9, 2008, in Lexington, KY

*movement who have gone to prison—is called a “Prisoner of Conscience.”*

*In prison one has a lot of time for long thoughts and long prayers. Among my own thoughts, while a Prisoner of Conscience, was the issue of the*

*ordination of women in the Catholic Church .... It is my belief that we need the wisdom, sensitivity, experiences, compassion, and courage of women in the priesthood, if our Church is to be healthy and complete.*

*Sexism is a sin. However, following an idea from Sister Joan Chittister, perhaps the problem is not so much with sexism as it is with the perception of God by those who oppose the ordination of women. As people of faith, we profess that God is all-powerful and the source of life. Yet, when it comes to women being ordained, it seems that our opponents are saying that this same God—who is all-powerful and created the heavens and the earth and can bring the dead back to life—somehow cannot empower a woman to be a priest. Suddenly we, as men, believe that God becomes powerless when women approach the altar to celebrate Mass.*

*In fact, we can go to the Scriptures and find numerous passages that support the ordination of women in the*

*Church. In Romans 16:7, we read that in the early Church of Rome a woman named Junias was described by Paul as “an apostle” who was imprisoned for spreading the faith. In Galatians 3:26-28, we read, “It is through faith that you are God’s sons and daughters.... There is neither male nor female. In Christ Jesus you are all one.” And in the Gospels we read that after Jesus was crucified, he chose to appear first to Mary Magdalene and other women. Jesus told the women to go bring the news of his resurrection to the men who, out of fear, were hiding behind locked doors.*

*Conscience is very sacred. It gives us a sense of right and wrong and urges us to do the right thing.... Conscience is what compels Janice Sevre-Duszynska and other women to say, “No, we cannot deny our call from God to the priesthood.” And it is our conscience that compels us to be here today. For we know that to not be here would be to participate in discrimination, which is wrong. How can we speak out against the injustice of our country’s foreign policy in Latin America and Iraq, if we are silent about the injustice of our Church here at home?*

*Janice, all of us present in this church today, and many who cannot be here, support you and walk in solidarity with you in the struggle for peace, justice, and equality.*

*May our loving God bless you in your ministry and journey of faith.*

The ordination of Janice was a wonderful celebration of hope and joy. We gave thanks to God for calling Janice to the priesthood, and we thanked Janice for saying, “Yes, I will serve you and your Church for the rest of my life.”

Church leaders at the Vatican did not share our hope and joy. Seeing the ordination of women as a threat to their power, their response was swift and severe. Less than 90 days after the ordination, I received a letter from Cardinal William Levada at the Vatican stating that I had caused grave scandal in the Church by participating in

the ordination of a woman. I had 30 days to recant my belief and public statements supporting the ordination of women—or I would be excommunicated *latae sententiae* (automatically).

Because of the seriousness of the letter, I withdrew into solitude, prayer, and reflection for two weeks, and then sent my response to the Vatican. It said, in part:

*November 7, 2008*

**TO THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, THE VATICAN**

*I was very saddened by your letter dated October 21, 2008, giving me 30 days to recant my belief and public statements that support the ordination of women in our Church, or I will be excommunicated....*

*Over the years I have met a number of women in our Church who, like me, feel called by God to the priesthood. You, our Church leaders at the Vatican, tell us that women cannot be ordained.*

*With all due respect, I believe our Catholic Church's teaching on this issue is wrong and does not stand up to scrutiny. A 1976 report by the Pontifical Biblical Commission supports the research of Scripture scholars, canon lawyers, and many faithful Catholics who have studied and pondered the Scriptures and have concluded that there is no justification in the Bible for excluding women from the priesthood....*

*Women in our Church are telling us that God is calling them to the priesthood. Who are we, as men, to say to women, "Our call is valid, but yours is not"? Who are we to tamper with God's call?...*

*Hundreds of Catholic churches in the U.S. are closing because of a shortage of priests. Yet there are hundreds of committed and prophetic women telling us that God is calling them to serve our Church as priests.*

*If we are to have a vibrant, healthy Church rooted in the teachings of our Savior, we need the faith, wisdom, experience, compassion, and courage of women in the priesthood.*

*Conscience is very sacred.... Conscience is what compelled Franz Jagerstatter, a humble Austrian farmer, husband, and father of four young children, to refuse to join Hitler's army, which led to his execution. Conscience is what compelled Rosa Parks to say she could no longer sit in the back of the bus. Conscience is what compels women in our Church to say they cannot be silent and deny their call from God to the priesthood.... And after much prayer, reflection, and discernment, it is my conscience that compels me to do the right thing. I cannot recant my belief and public statements that support the ordination of women in our Church....*

*Having an all-male clergy implies that men are worthy to be Catholic priests but women are not.*

*According to USA TODAY (February 28, 2008), in the United States alone, nearly 5,000 Catholic priests have sexually abused more than 12,000 children. Many bishops, aware of the abuse, remained silent. These priests and bishops were not excommunicated. Yet the women in our Church*



Mrs. Rosa Parks (February 4, 1913 – October 24, 2005) – mug shot after her arrest on December 1, 1955, for sitting in the front of a segregated public bus in Montgomery, AL

*who are called by God and ordained to serve God's people, as well as the priests and bishops who support them, are excommunicated.*

*Silence is the voice of complicity. Therefore I call upon all Catholics, fellow priests, bishops, Pope Benedict XVI, and all Church leaders at the Vatican to speak out loudly on this grave injustice of excluding women from the priesthood.*

*Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador was assassinated because of his defense of the oppressed. He said, "Let those who have a voice, speak out for the voiceless."*

*Our loving God has given us a voice. Let us speak clearly and boldly and walk in solidarity, as Jesus would, with the women in our Church who are being called by God to the priesthood.*

*In Peace and Justice,  
Roy Bourgeois, M.M.*

After mailing my letter to the Vatican, I drove seven hours to Louisiana to inform my close-knit, traditional Catholic family about what was happening. Before meeting all together with my father and siblings, I spoke first with

my brother and two sisters. They were very upset by what they heard and said, "You are going to break Daddy's heart."

It was a long, sleepless night.

The next day we all gathered for our little family meeting in the old house that we all grew up in and

***Silence is the voice of complicity. Therefore I call upon all Catholics, fellow priests, bishops, Pope Benedict XVI, and all Church leaders at the Vatican to speak out loudly on this grave injustice of excluding women from the priesthood.***



**Bishop Oscar Romero (August 15, 1917 – March 24, 1980) visiting a Salvadoran community. Having received many death threats for his advocacy for the poor, he said of his possible assassination: “A bishop will die, but the Church of God, which is the people, will never perish.”**

where my elderly father still lives. I began with a short prayer and then gave each family member a copy of the letter I had sent to the Vatican. I then went outside while they read the letter, and I prayed that, somehow, they would understand what I was doing.

Like most families I know, we have been through a lot together. Over the years I have always felt grateful for all the love and support I have received from my parents and siblings. When I volunteered to go to war in Vietnam, they were upset, yet they wrote loving letters to me often and sent hundreds of packages for the children at the orphanage. When I was ordained and went to work with the poor of Bolivia, they wondered why I didn't prefer to work with the poor in the United States. Yet, during my five years in Bolivia, they wrote often and they organized many football pools and raffles in our little town that raised lots of money for the poor of La Paz. (My mom, who died in 2005, was a great organizer.) And, like most people I know, they had a hard time understanding “civil



**A visit from my family at the federal prison in Tallahassee, FL, during a 16-month sentence for protesting the SOA. Left to right: my sister Janet, father Roy, Sr., sister Ann, brother Dan, and mother Grace**

disobedience” and going off to prison for one’s beliefs. Yet they wrote supportive letters and visited me in prison.

Waiting outside on my dad’s porch, I realized that my going against a Catholic Church teaching was going to be the biggest challenge ever for my family, and I was preparing myself for the worst.

I went back inside the house and asked what they thought of my letter to the Vatican. I was hoping that my two sisters or brother would offer me a little support, which would help bring my dad on board. Instead, my younger sister asked my dad what he thought about my letter to the Vatican.

My father is a very religious, soft-hearted, and loving person. He didn’t say anything and began to cry. Then he regained his composure and said, “God brought Roy back from Vietnam. God took care of him in Bolivia and in prison. God is going to take care of him now. Roy is doing the right thing, and I support him.” He then stood up, came over, and



gave me a hug. I wept. Then my brother and two sisters joined in with hugs and tears.

Having worried so much about my family, it was hard to believe what was happening. I felt as if this huge boulder had been lifted off my back, and I was filled with indescribable joy. Getting the blessing from my father brought my siblings and a number of my nieces and nephews into the issue of women priests in the Catholic Church. As one of my nieces put it, “Uncle Roy, how can the Vatican tell you to go against your conscience? Don’t they know that this would be a lie, and lying is a sin?”

I returned to Georgia feeling a deep inner peace that continues today. The Vatican never did respond to my November 7, 2008 letter explaining why, in good conscience, I could not recant. As the months unfolded, I continued my travels, giving talks around the country about both the School of the Americas and gender inequality in the Catholic Church. My Maryknoll community, a bishop friend, and canon lawyers I consulted all said that I remained a priest and a member of Maryknoll. Therefore I continued in my ministry.

Then, on March 18, 2011, a little more than two years after I had received the Vatican letter insisting that I recant my support for women priests, I received a certified letter from Father Edward Dougherty, Superior General of Maryknoll. Evidently under pressure from the Vatican, Fr. Dougherty wrote that since I had refused to recant and continued in my support for the ordination of women, Maryknoll would dismiss me if I did not recant within 15 days. Fr. Dougherty also noted my participation in a panel discussion at Barnard College in New York City, following the screening of the documentary film *Pink Smoke Over the Vatican*. His letter stated that I was causing “grave scandal to the people of God, the Church, especially in the United States, and many of the Maryknoll priests and brothers.”

Once again, I refused to recant.

On July 27, 2011, the Superior General of Maryknoll sent me a Second and Final Canonical Warning, giving me 15 days to recant and retract my support for the ordination of women or he would proceed with the process of my dismissal from Maryknoll and expulsion from the priesthood. Again, he brought up the “grave scandal” I was causing to the Church and Maryknoll. The letter closed by saying: “You have a right under the law to self-defense, including a canonical counsel, and we are aware that you have engaged the services of Thomas P. Doyle, J.C.D., C.A.D.C. as your counsel. You have a right to present to the Superior General, in person or in writing, your defense against the second canonical warning and the proposed dismissal within fifteen days of receipt of this warning. All your communications and responses will be given due consideration in the process.”

In response, I sent a letter to the Superior General and my Maryknoll community, which is excerpted here:

*August 8, 2011*

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

*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.*



Sophie Scholl (May 9, 1921 – February 22, 1943) held fast to the primacy of her conscience over Third Reich law during her interrogation. Just before execution by the Nazis, she wrote, "They offered me a way out if I abandoned my belief. I couldn't."

*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 these brothers 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 nor 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.*

Months have passed and, as with the letter I sent to the Vatican, I have not received any response.

Father Tom  
Doyle, a well-known

***I firmly believe that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is a grave injustice against women, against our Church, and against our God.***

and highly respected canon lawyer, is my legal counsel. It is my hope that Maryknoll and the Vatican will be open to discussing the important issues that Fr. Doyle has presented in my defense, including: the primacy of conscience, the question of papal infallibility, one's right to due process, and the freedom to discuss matters of faith.

In October of 2011, I joined an international delegation of women's ordination leaders going to the Vatican. There we met with Church leaders, delivering a petition signed by 15,000 supporters of women's ordination. We showed the documentary film *Pink Smoke Over the Vatican* at a nearby theater, and we maintained a vigil in St. Peter's Square, holding banners that said: "ORDAIN CATHOLIC WOMEN" and "GOD IS CALLING WOMEN TO BE PRIESTS." Once again, the beehive of patriarchy was poked. Erin Saiz Hanna (of Women's Ordination Conference in the United States) and Miriam Duignan (from England, and representing Womenpriests.org) and I were removed from St. Peter's Square



**Women's ordination delegation in Rome — back row, L-R: Therese Koturbash; Nicole Sotelo; Mike Toner; Bob Heineman; Miriam Duignan; Jeanette Mulherin; Bill Quigley; Debbie Dupre Quigley; Kate Conmy; Fr. Bourgeois, M.M.; Dorothy Irvin; Pat McSweeney. Front row: Erin Saiz Hanna; Donna Rougeux; Janice Sevre-Duszynska; Ree Hudson**

by Rome police. We were detained for three hours and our banners were confiscated. Once again, it was all about solidarity.

Since breaking my silence and calling for the ordination of women, I have received thousands of letters, e-mails, and phone calls from people in the United States and overseas. One issue that has stirred up a lot of anger in many Catholics is having the Vatican and Maryknoll Superior General refer to the ordination of women as “a grave scandal in the Church.” When most Catholics hear the word “scandal,” they think of the thousands of priests who sexually abused children and of the many bishops who covered up their crimes against children. Most Catholics do not consider the ordination of women to be a scandal.

On the contrary, surveys and polls by the following have reported that more than 60% of Catholics in the United States support the ordination of women:

***The Associated Press-Ipsos Poll, 2005***

***Gallup Organization Survey, 2005***

***The New York Times/CBS News Poll, 2010***

***Georgetown University Poll, 2011***

***Catholic University of America Poll, 2011***

Anger reached an all-time high in 2010, when the Vatican announced that ordaining a woman is one of the gravest canonical crimes in the Church, on a par with sexually abusing a child. For many Catholics, this statement demonstrates how sexist and out-of-touch our hierarchy has become.

According to many of the letters I received, another development that evoked a lot of anger among Catholics



International delegation advocating women's ordination in St. Peter's Square, Vatican City, October 2011

was being told, as adults, that they were not allowed to even discuss the issue of ordaining women. One longtime Catholic said, "The last time I was told I could not discuss something, I was five years old." Others asked, "Hasn't the Pope heard of freedom of speech?"

Often I think of my commanding officer in Vietnam, years ago, who told me, "Lieutenant, your job in the military is to implement our country's foreign policy, not to question or discuss it." Today I hear our Church leaders saying something very similar when they tell priests and Catholics: "Your job in the Church is to implement our Church's teachings, not to question or discuss them."

Blind obedience to authority, whether in the military, the Church, or any other institution, is dangerous. And as we saw so clearly during the Nuremberg trials, "I was only following orders" is no defense. I agree with the theologian Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger—now Pope Benedict—who, in his 1968 commentary on a key Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes*, said: "Over the pope...there



still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, if necessary even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority."

Fundamentally, the ordination of women is a matter of justice. At the same time, there are practical benefits to having women priests. As we know, our Church is in a serious crisis. Hundreds of churches are closing because

**Pope Benedict XVI. Vatican photo**

of a shortage of priests. When I entered Maryknoll, we had over 300 seminarians; today we have 10 men preparing for the priesthood. For years we have been praying that God would send us more vocations to the priesthood. Our prayers have been answered: God is sending us women as well as men to serve our Church as priests.

The following is a sampling of letters I have received:

***“Over the pope ... there still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, if necessary even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority.”***



## **From a Catholic mother of four**

“Many of our churches are closing because of a shortage of priests. Considering half the planet is female, the solution is quite obvious. But no, we would rather close churches than even discuss the ordination of women.

“Christ surrounded himself with both faithful men and women, but the women were simply written out of history by those who recorded it all: the men.

“One by one, I had to explain to my three daughters why they could not be considered for the priesthood. Ludicrous but true, they were missing body parts with which their brother had been bestowed. This is ignorance at its worst.”

## **From a father of four daughters**

“I am writing to you as a lifetime Catholic. My wife and I have raised four bright, sensitive, and compassionate daughters, none of whom attend the Catholic Church any longer.

“I have seen first-hand, through my daughters, how they have been discriminated against by sexist language, an all-male clergy, and being excluded from the diaconate and priesthood.

“I am a dad who is hurting because I see how my daughters have suffered because of sexism in our Church.”

## **From a Catholic priest**

“I pray that you take the heroic step and recant your statements that support the ordination of women. The Catholic Church has spoken and it is your duty to obey and submit. This is what every Catholic, and especially every priest, must do. Our conscience can never go against the official teaching of the Catholic Church. Put your conscience aside and submit to the Pope.”

## From a deacon in the Catholic Church

"I was called in by the bishop because of my sermon that expressed support for women priests in our Church. During the discussion I told the bishop I had two daughters, and if God calls them to be priests, I will support them in their call. The bishop looked at me and said, 'Don't worry, God will not call them.' I left the meeting thinking, 'What arrogance!'"

***"I've always seen Mary as the first priest. Who is more qualified to say the words that male priests say at Mass: 'This is My Body. This is My Blood'?"***

## From a college student

"The Pope tells us that women cannot be priests because Jesus chose only male apostles. Doesn't he realize that a woman was chosen to bring Jesus into the world, and that without Mary there wouldn't be Jesus? As a Catholic, I've always seen Mary as the first priest. Who is more qualified to say the words that male priests say at Mass: 'This is My Body. This is My Blood'?"

## From a long-time Catholic

"As a young girl I was really looking forward to being an altar server in our Church. But when this new priest became the pastor, he stopped girls from being altar servers. My brother, who was an altar server, resigned the next day. This was my first experience of solidarity."

**F**or me, breaking my silence and supporting the ordination of women in our Church is all about solidarity. As the poor in Bolivia taught me years ago, solidarity means "to accompany and to make another's struggle for justice and equality *your struggle*."

In trying to accompany women in our Church who are called by God to the priesthood, I have learned a lot.

First, we men in an all-male priesthood need to acknowledge that many women, especially those who have been abused or hurt by men, do not feel comfortable confessing to a man. Many women choose neither to discuss deeply personal issues with a man nor to go to a man for spiritual direction. Those women and many more in the Catholic Church long to hear the voices of women from the pulpit and to have women priests in whom they can confide.

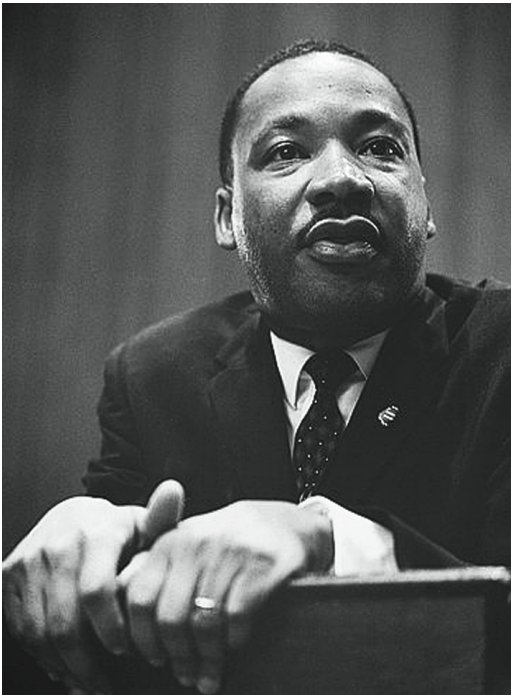
Second, I did not realize how deeply sexism and power permeate the priesthood. Somehow we have lost our way and evolved into a very powerful and privileged clerical culture. As men, we claim that we, and we alone, can interpret the Holy Scriptures and know the will of God. We claim ownership of the Church and of the truth. And we claim, as the Vatican has told our American nuns, that only men can be “the Church’s authentic teachers of faith and morals.”

And there is great fear. I did not realize how many of my fellow priests see women as a threat to our priestly powers and privileges. Some—including longtime friends—have cut off all contact with me, letting me know that I have joined the enemy.

In an effort to make the issue more personal, I have asked many of my fellow priests what they would say if their sister or niece came to them and said, “I want to share my good news. I feel convinced that God is calling me to the priesthood.” About half told me that they would be supportive of their sisters’ or nieces’ vocations. The other half said they would instruct their sisters or nieces that the Church could not and would not recognize their calls, *and neither would they*. For them, tradition and blind obedience to authority must prevail.

It saddens me to see how fear has taken over and dominates our Church. Many priests tell me that they support the ordination of women and my advocacy for it, but are afraid to take a public stand. When I speak about women's ordination to audiences around the country or show the documentary *Pink Smoke Over the Vatican*, most priests will not attend. They are afraid they might be reported to their bishops or the Vatican. So we meet separately, behind the locked doors of their rectories.

We have all experienced fear in our lives; it is a terrible thing. I experienced it in Vietnam, Bolivia, El Salvador, and in prison. But what a scandal and sacrilege to experience fear in one's Church. How un-Christian of Church leaders to act like bullies—using the threat of excommunication or taking away one's pension to enforce a Church teaching. This is spiritual violence that has no place in a faith community.



**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968). Library of Congress photo**

Bullying is widely discussed in the United States today. Only two states, Montana and South Dakota, lack anti-bullying laws. I believe it is time that we confront and stop bullying in the Catholic Church. A new pastor at a church in Arlington, Virginia—who announced that girls in the parish could no longer be altar servers—is but one example of many bullies in the Church today.

In response to bullying in so many forms, let us remind ourselves that Sophie Scholl, Rosa Parks, the Freedom Riders of the civil rights movement, Bishop Oscar Romero, and so many others refused to let fear paralyze or silence them.

***The ordination of women in the Catholic Church is inevitable, because it is rooted in love, justice, and equality.***

Traditions die hard, perhaps especially unjust ones. But I am convinced that injustices can be reversed, even those that are centuries old. There were those, including Catholic Church leaders, who tried to stop the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement, and the right of women to vote. They failed. They failed because these movements were rooted in love, equality, and justice. These movements, including the ordination of women, are of God and are unstoppable.

During the civil rights struggle, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., addressed the issue of liberation. He said that Whites were enslaved by their racism and fear toward Blacks, and that Whites would be liberated by the Black Americans they oppressed. As a Catholic priest, I see how our all-male priesthood is similarly enslaved by our sexism and fear toward women in the Church. I also see how we will be liberated and made free by the women we oppress.

To date, I have not received any further correspondence from the Vatican or the Superior General of Maryknoll.

Like many people, I do not know what the future holds for me. What I do know is that I've been very happy as a priest for 40 years and as a member of my Maryknoll community for 46 years, and I want to continue in my ministry.

What I do know is that the exclusion of women from ordination is a grave injustice against women and against

our all-loving God, who calls both men and women to the priesthood.

What I do know is that silence is the voice of complicity, and my conscience will not allow me to be silent about this injustice in our Church—no matter the consequences.

And lastly, what I do know is that the ordination of women in the Catholic Church is inevitable, because it is rooted in love, justice, and equality.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Bourgeois, M.M." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roy Bourgeois, M. M.  
May 2012

# Epilogue



Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers  
P.O. Box 303  
Maryknoll, NY 10545

## **For Immediate Release:**

### **The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Canonically Dismisses Roy Bourgeois**

Maryknoll, New York – November 19, 2012 – The Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on October 4, 2012, canonically dismissed Roy Bourgeois from the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, also known as the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. The decision dispenses the Maryknoll priest from his sacred bonds.

As a priest during 2008, Mr. Bourgeois participated in the invalid ordination of a woman and a simulated Mass in Lexington, Kentucky. With patience, the Holy See and the Maryknoll Society have encouraged his reconciliation with the Catholic Church.

Instead, Mr. Bourgeois chose to campaign against the teachings of the Catholic Church in secular and non-Catholic venues. This was done without the permission of the local U.S. Catholic Bishops and while ignoring the sensitivities of the faithful across the country. Disobedience and preaching against the teaching of the Catholic Church about women’s ordination led to his excommunication, dismissal and laicization.

Mr. Bourgeois freely chose his views and actions, and all the members of the Maryknoll Society are saddened at the failure of reconciliation. With this parting, the Maryknoll Society warmly thanks Roy Bourgeois for his service to mission and all members wish him well in his personal life. In the spirit of equity and charity, Maryknoll will assist Mr. Bourgeois with this transition.

November 20, 2012

## **STATEMENT ABOUT MY DISMISSAL FROM MARYKNOLL**

I have been a Catholic priest in the Maryknoll community for 40 years. As a young man I joined Maryknoll because of its work for justice and equality in the world. To be expelled from Maryknoll and the priesthood for believing that women are also called to be priests is very difficult and painful.

The Vatican and Maryknoll can dismiss me, but they cannot dismiss the issue of gender equality in the Catholic Church. The demand for gender equality is rooted in justice and dignity and will not go away.

As Catholics, we profess that God created men and women of equal worth and dignity. As priests, we profess that the call to the priesthood comes from God, only God. Who are we, as men, to say that our call from God is authentic, but God's call to women is not? The exclusion of women from the priesthood is a grave injustice against women, our Church, and our loving God, who calls both men and women to be priests.

When there is an injustice, silence is the voice of complicity. My conscience compelled me to break my silence and address the sin of sexism in my Church. My only regret is that it took me so long to confront the issue of male power and domination in the Catholic Church.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Bourgeois". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roy Bourgeois



## May 2013

Since being expelled, I have come to realize that what I am going through is but a glimpse of what women in the Catholic Church and larger society have experienced for centuries. But in the midst of my disappointment and sadness, I am filled with hope.

First, in our movement to close the School of the Americas/WHINSEC, I have great hope because six countries have withdrawn their troops from this military school that has caused so much suffering and death in Latin America. These countries are Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Bolivia.

Regarding gender equality and the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, in March of 2013, a *New York Times*/CBS poll reported that 70 per cent of Catholics in the United States believe that Pope Francis should allow women to be priests. I am filled with hope because I know that one day soon women in my Church will be ordained—just as those segregated schools and churches in Louisiana are now integrated.

And I am also filled with joyful anticipation when it comes to equality for lesbian and gay people and same-sex marriage. According to a cover story in *TIME* (April 18, 2013), “Exit polls in November showed that 83 per cent of voters believe that same-sex marriage will be legal nationwide in the next five to 10 years.”

I close with words from my op-ed in *The New York Times* (Mar. 20, 2013): “I have but one simple request for Pope Francis. I respectfully ask that he announce to the 1.2 billion Catholics around the world: ‘For many years we have been praying for God to send us more vocations to the priesthood. Our prayers have been answered. Our loving God, who created us equal, is calling women to be priests in our Church. Let us welcome them and give thanks to God.’”

**2008 ordination  
of Roman  
Catholic woman  
priest Janice  
Sevre-Duszynska  
(right) with  
Bishop Dana  
Reynolds  
(center) and  
Fr. Bourgeois.  
Photo: Bob  
Watkins**



## Resources

### Film on Roman Catholic women priests

*Pink Smoke Over the Vatican*, by Jules Hart.  
[www.pinksmokeoverthevatican.com](http://www.pinksmokeoverthevatican.com); available at  
[www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)

### Books on women's ordination

*A History of Women and Ordination, Volume 2: The Priestly Office of Women—God's Gift to a Renewed Church*, by Ida Raming, edited and translated by Bernard Cooke and Gary Macy. 2nd edition, 2004. Lanham, Maryland/Toronto/Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

*Women Find a Way: The Movement and Stories of Roman Catholic Womenpriests*, edited by Elsie Hainz McGrath, Bridget Mary Meehan, and Ida Raming. 2008. College Station, Texas: Virtualbookworm.com Publishing, Inc.

*Women Priests: Answering the Call*, by Catherine Cavanagh. 2010. Brockville, Ontario: Butternut Publishing

*Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History*, edited and translated by Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek. 2005 (paperback 2011). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press

*The Emerging Catholic Church: A Community's Search for Itself*, by Tom Roberts. 2011. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books

*The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West*, by Gary Macy. 2008. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

*Taking Back God: American Women Rising Up For Religious Equality*, by Leora Tanenbaum. 2009. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

*The Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church: Unmasking a Cuckoo's Egg Tradition*, by John Wijngaards. 2001. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group

*The Papal 'No': A Comprehensive Guide to the Vatican's Rejection of Women's Ordination*, by Deborah Halter. 2004. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company

### **Other books and films of interest**

*Disturbing the Peace: The Story of Father Roy Bourgeois and the Movement to Close the School of the Americas*, by James Hodge and Linda Cooper. 2004. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books

*School of Assassins: Guns, Greed, and Globalization*, by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer. 2001 (revised and expanded from 1997 edition). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books

*The School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas*, by Lesley Gill. 2004. Durham, NC: Duke University Press

*Somos Una América: Shut Down the SOA!* 2011 film; see Resources page at [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org).

*Sophie Scholl: the Final Days*. 2005 film; available at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)

*Ultimate Price: Testimonies of Christians Who Resisted the Third Reich*, edited and introduced by Annemarie S. Kidder. 2012. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. (This includes a chapter on Sophie Scholl and the White Rose.)

### **Websites for more information**

Women's Ordination Conference: [www.womensordination.org](http://www.womensordination.org), [www.facebook.com/OrdainWomen](https://www.facebook.com/OrdainWomen)

Roman Catholic Womenpriests: [www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org](http://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org)

Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests: [www.arcwp.org](http://www.arcwp.org)

Women Can Be Priests: [www.womenpriests.org](http://www.womenpriests.org)

Women's Ordination Worldwide:  
[www.womensordinationworldwide.org](http://www.womensordinationworldwide.org)

Call to Action (National): [www.cta-usa.org](http://www.cta-usa.org)

FutureChurch: [www.futurechurch.org](http://www.futurechurch.org)

Catholics Speak Out:  
[www.quixote.org/programs/catholics-speak-out](http://www.quixote.org/programs/catholics-speak-out)

Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP):  
[www.snapnetwork.org](http://www.snapnetwork.org)

National Catholic Reporter: [www.ncronline.org](http://www.ncronline.org)

SOA Watch: [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org)

Linda Panetta's photographic collection, Optical Realities:  
[www.opticalrealities.org](http://www.opticalrealities.org)

*My Journey from Silence to Solidarity* may be read online at  
[www.roybourgeoisjourney.org](http://www.roybourgeoisjourney.org)

Website for information on and ordering of German translation  
of *My Journey from Silence to Solidarity*:  
[www.pater-roy-mein-weg.de](http://www.pater-roy-mein-weg.de)

