Womanpriest

Peterfeso, Jill

Published by Fordham University Press

Peterfeso, Jill.
Womanpriest: Tradition and Transgression in the Contemporary Roman Catholic Church.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/75860

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2629373
NOTES

Introduction

1 Therese of Divine Peace, Mass and baptism, St. Louis, MO, field notes, December 27, 2009.
2 Therese Mass, St. Louis, MO, field notes, July 13, 2008.
3 I interviewed Marybeth McBryan again about four years after Chloe’s baptism. When I asked her about Chloe’s receiving Communion, she did not remember anything out of the ordinary. I relayed to her my memory of events, which she confirmed: “We had made it a policy that anyone who was at that Mass, child or Catholic or not, we welcome anyone to the table.” She even remarked that Chloe had probably received Communion at Therese before. (Marybeth McBryan, telephone interview with author, February 19, 2014.) I want to emphasize that Therese’s policy on giving Communion to children is not official RCWP policy but rather represents the community’s freedom to make decisions that make sense for them. Later in the book I will talk about another community, Church of the Holy Spirit in Manchester, New Hampshire, where womanpriest Theresa Novak Chabot upheld Rome’s typical ages for first Communion.
4 On May 29, 2008, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a general decree titled “Regarding the Crime of Attempting Sacred Ordination of a Woman.” The decree reads, “Both he who has attempted to confer holy orders on a woman, and the woman who has attempted to receive the said sacrament, incur in latae sententiae excommunication, reserved to the Apostolic See.” The decree is highlighted in the preface of RCWP’s 2008 book Women Find a Way: The Movement and Stories of Roman Catholic Womenpriests, edited by Elsie Hainz McGrath, Bridget Mary Meehan, and Ida Raming (College Station, TX: Virtualbookworm.com Publishing Inc., 2008), 1–2.
IECs are “small faith communities, rooted in the Catholic tradition, which gather to celebrate Eucharist on a regular basis.” They use shared governance and describe themselves in post-Vatican II era “church of the people” language. Some IECs remain closely tied to the institutional church, and some are independent. Worship communities that are part of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion retain Western Christian tradition with respect to Jesus’s life and ministry, the sacraments, and apostolic succession but do not consider themselves “Roman” or bound by papal authority.

8 Halter, *The Papal “No,”* 144–145. Ramerman’s ordination was performed by Bishop Peter Hickman, who himself was ordained in the Diocese of Ecumenical and Old Catholic Communities and who was a leader in the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. Significantly, Ramerman was ordained by Hickman, the Spiritus Christi community, and international interfaith clergy—it was not only Hickman who had power to call and ordain. See also “The Apostolic Succession of Peter E. Hickman,” Ecumenical Catholic Communion, accessed December 18, 2018, www.ecumenical-catholic-communion.org/eccpdf/apostolic_succession.pdf.

9 The two bishops involved in the Danube ordination—Romulo Braschi and Rafael Regelsberger—had questionable credentials, which I’ll examine later in this book. Other bishops who were in good standing participated in ordaining RCWP’s first generation of deacons and priests, but RCWP is protecting these men from reprisal and will not reveal their identities while they are living. Many womenpriests have told me that the bishops’ names are contained in notarized documents being kept in a European safe-deposit box, to be revealed when the bishops die.


11 The RCWP website was updated in summer 2019. The website shows 19 bishops (13 active, 6 retired), 191 priests (1 retired, 9 catacomb), and 20 deacons. It lists 13 support members (1 retired) and 15 total deceased. This brings a total of 229 ordained persons (active and retired) in the worldwide RCWP movement; this number grows to 242 if we count unordained support members; this gives a total of 257 including deceased persons.

The vast majority of ordained are in the United States. Canada has 16; Colombia has 9; South Africa, Germany, and Austria each have 4; and Norway, Scotland, France, Spain, Venezuela, and Taiwan each have 1.


12 At a keynote speech at the Southeast Women’s Ordination Conference in 2005, Bishop Patricia Fresen said of the growing RCWP movement, “We believe we need to reform the church structures from within. By staying outside of official church structures,


15 Verónica Giménez Béliveau, “Why the Catholic Church Is ‘Hemorrhaging’ Priests,” The Conversation, May 25, 2018, https://theconversation.com/why-the-catholic-church-is-hemorrhaging-priests-97198. The issue of whether Roman Catholicism is facing a vocational crisis is a murky one. First, the numbers do not tell a clear story: Should observers pay attention to the number of priests or to the ratio of priests to parishioners? Second, there is disagreement about what story the numbers tell. Progressive groups (including RCWP, CORPUS, and the Women’s Ordination Conference) look at declining numbers of priests and argue that the ordination of women and married men would address the problem. More conservative Catholics look at the decline and blame the negative impact of liberal policies and secular cultures. (See, for example, Marco Tosatti, “Return of the Vocations Crisis,” First Things, August 10, 2017, https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2017/08/return-of-the-vocations-crisis.) Finally, and further complicating the question, in 2013, some news sources began reporting that more men were entering seminaries, suggesting a possible increase in vocations: Cathy Lynn Grossman, “After Years of Decline, Catholics See Rise in Number of Future Priests,” Religion News Service, September 24, 2013, http://www.religionnews.com/2013/09/24/years-decline-catholics-see-rise-number-future-priests/.


17 Pew Research Center, “Chapter 4: Expectations of the Church,” U.S. Catholics Open to Nontraditional Families, September 2, 2015, https://www.pewforum.org/2015/09/02/chapter-4-expectations-of-the-church/. In this Pew study, the category “Catholic” describes people who claim Catholicism as their primary religious affiliation. “Cultural Catholics” identify with a faith other than Catholicism (Protestantism or “none”) but

18 Benjamin R. Knoll and Cammie Jo Bolin, She Preached the Word: Women’s Ordination in Modern America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 40. Knoll and Bolin created the Gender and Religious Representation Survey for She Preached the Word, drawing on “a combined series of four nationally representative telephone and internet public opinion polls” (31).


22 In “Women’s Ordination: Is it Still an Issue?,” Sara Butler talks about a late-fourth-century bishop, Epiphanius of Salamis, who viewed women’s ordination as a heresy. Also, in 2018, German cardinal Walter Brandmüller said that anyone supporting women’s ordination has “left the foundation of the Catholic faith” and “fulfils the elements of heresy which has, as its consequence, the exclusion from the Church—excommunication.” See Nick Hallett, “Cardinal Brandmuller: Those Who Call for Women Priests Are ‘Heretics’ and ‘Excommunicated,’” Catholic Herald, May 22, 2018, https://catholic herald.co.uk/news/2018/05/22/cardinal-brandmuller-those-who-call-for-women-priests-are-heretics-and-excommunicated/. Additionally, in the original documents warning and then excommunicating the Danube Seven, Roman officials invoked the term schismatic to describe Romulo Braschi and his community. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Warning Regarding the Attempted Priestly Ordination of Some Catholic Women”; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Decree of Excommunion Regarding the Attempted Priestly Ordination of Some Catholic Women,” August 5, 2002, in Halter, The Papal “No,” 236. When St. Louis archbishop Raymond Burke excommunicated Patricia Fresen, Rose Hudson, and Elsie
McGrath in March 2008, he frequently used the word *schism*. He said that Fresen had acted “in the manner of the leader of a schism” and that all three women “by the commission of the most grave delict of schism [had] lost membership in, good standing in, and full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.” Raymond L. Burke and Henry J. Breier, “Declaration of Excommunication of Patricia Fresen, Rose Hudson, and Elsie McGrath,” *St. Louis Review*, March 14, 2008, 10. Finally, in a much decried juxtaposition in 2010, the church published revisions to Vatican law that said, in the same breath, that the sexual abuse of minors *and* the attempt to ordain women were crimes, or “grave delicts.” See Richard McBrien, “Linking Sexual Abuse and the Ordination of Women,” *National Catholic Reporter*, September 13, 2010, https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/essays-theology/linking-sexual-abuse-and-ordination-women.

23 A group called the Federation of Christian Ministries (FCM) legally certifies the sacraments for American womenpriests, since the Roman Catholic Church will not. FCM will be taken up later in the book.


26 Reading American Catholic women in dualistic and dialectical terms—as I do here with RCWP—has a long history in Catholic historical scholarship. In his study of women’s devotions to St. Jude, Robert A. Orsi places St. Jude’s devoted women “in an oscillating dialectic between ‘fantasy and reality,’ self and other, objective and subjective, past and present, submission and resistance.” Julie Byrne characterizes the Immaculata Mighty Macs—a little-known powerhouse Catholic women’s basketball team—as “hidden in plain view, affirming and subverting Catholicism.” Mary J. Henold shows how women can be simultaneously “Catholic and feminist” by carving out positions of “sustained ambivalence” within their church. Henold notes that this language of “both/and” characterizes other studies: Mary Jo Weaver viewed women religious as “inside outsiders,” Sheila Pew Albert described 1990s Catholic feminists as “revolutionary loyalists,” and Miriam Therese Winter talked about Catholic women as “defecting in place.”


30 In fall 2007, the CDF had not yet issued a standing decree that any woman attempting ordination, or anyone attempting to ordain a woman, would be excommunicated *latae sententiae*. Burke’s threats of excommunication, then, stand out as an approach for addressing RCWP’s actions before the May 2008 general decree automatically excommunicating all of RCWP’s women.

31 I should say, though, that I have had some conservative Catholic friends express concern for me because of my proximity to RCWP. One could argue that by attending ordination ceremonies and Masses led by womenpriests, concelebrating the Eucharist with womenpriests, and praying with womenpriest-led communities, I put my soul—or at the very least my relationship to Catholicism—in peril.

32 In other words, as an ethnographer, I kept in view how struggles around justice and power shaped the womenpriests’ lives. One challenge I faced was reminding myself to treat my subjects with as much thoughtful care as I would give to subjects who appear inherently more vulnerable—like the subjects Madison studies in Sub-Saharan Africa who face challenges around human rights, economic viability, and access to natural resources. D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012), 5.

33 “Roman Catholic Womenpriests Program of Preparation for Ordination,” emailed to me by womanpriest May Kay Kusner on September 22, 2009. These are specifically the units Kusner used for her discernment process toward ordination, as each region uses a somewhat modified program.

34 RCWP-USA redesigned its website in the summer of 2019, leading to the removal
or relocation of many documents. Throughout this book, I cite the newest versions of RCWP’s and ARCWP’s websites unless content has changed or been deleted.

35 Because of my difficulty finding conservative Catholic critics to speak about RCWP and women’s ordination, I am all the more grateful for Jules Hart’s documentary, as she did interview a handful of dissenters. Yet I understand that she, too, had difficulty getting dissenters to speak on camera.

36 Elsie McGrath, email to author, January 5, 2011.

37 I do not use the term womanpriest to make claims about the authenticity or inauthenticity of the women’s ordained status as Catholic priests, nor do I use womanpriest to essentialize the women as gendered beings or to argue for a simple definition of what makes someone a “woman.”

38 Some of these men were ordained through the movement, and some were ordained through the Roman Catholic Church and have since left the institutional church. This points to one of the challenges posed by the very name “Roman Catholic Womenpriests.” RCWP’s website simply calls these men “deacons” and “priests.”

39 When I first started studying RCWP, the group promoted itself as an alternative path to ordination for men who were disabled or otherwise barred from Roman Catholic priesthood. They use this argument less nowadays. The question of whether men who are “disabled” (or differently abled) can become priests is a murky one with no uniform practices. Canon 1029 states, “Only those are to be promoted to orders who, in the prudent judgment of their own bishop or of the competent major superior, all things considered, have integral faith, are moved by the right intention, have the requisite knowledge, possess a good reputation, and are endowed with integral morals and proven virtues and the other physical and psychic qualities in keeping with the order to be received” (emphasis mine). This canon, combined with informal conversations I have had with ordained men, suggests that orders and dioceses can make a determination on a case-by-case basis.


41 A WOW (Women’s Ordination Worldwide) 2015 conference panel titled “Inclusive and Empowered: The Women Priests Movement, Renewing the Church Now” included both RCWP and ARCWP priests speaking about their ministries and renewal efforts. I found it difficult to discern a difference between the two branches of the movement in terms of the womenpriests’ motivations for ordination, ministerial actions, and experiences of priesthood. WOW 2015, Philadelphia, PA, field notes, September 19, 2015.

43 Pamela Schaeffer, “WOC Gathers to Promote Women’s Ordination amid Conflicting Visions, Goals,” *National Catholic Reporter*, December 1, 1995. Theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza said “ordination is subordination” at this WOC event. I take up Schüssler Fiorenza’s criticisms of women’s ordination in Chapter 4.

Chapter 1. Called

1 Kathryn Poethig, interview, April 19, 2006, unused documentary footage from *Pink Smoke over the Vatican*, directed by Jules Hart (2011; Eye Goddess Films, 2013), DVD.


4 Victoria Rue, response to “Womenpriests” survey created by the author, SurveyMonkey (web), May 29, 2014.


8 Janice Sevre-Duszynska, telephone interview with author, January 23, 2011.


11 Bouclin, “Call to Ministry,” 51. Bouclin in no way underplays the severity of child
sex abuse when she draws attention to the lesser-studied problems of adult clerical abuse. She concedes that adult female victims often manifest codependency, lack self-esteem, do not maintain healthy personal boundaries, and are people pleasers. While she acknowledges that only a small minority of priests take advantage of women like this, she aims to show how patriarchal dominance is especially damaging for these vulnerable women, who are more likely to believe they need a male mediating force in their lives.


15 Although women and women religious in Catholic dioceses and archdioceses have also been accused of victimizing children, this happens in far smaller numbers—and with much less publicity. Still, we know that women do sexually abuse children, and this is as yet an understudied topic. In a 2006 book, *Women Who Sexually Abuse Children*, author Hannah Ford says it is very difficult to know how many perpetrators of sexual violence against children are women; some studies say less than 1 percent; others say 1–4 percent. Of those convicted of sexual assault of children, some studies say, roughly 15–2 percent are women. Ford points out that these low numbers could reflect cultural disbelief about women as perpetrators more than actual rates of abuse. Hannah Ford, *Women Who Sexually Abuse Children* (West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons, 2006).


17 Bouclin cites the Protestant example as instructive: not until Protestant churches began ordaining women did accusations of clergy sex abuse receive more serious attention and support. She credits Dr. Marie Fortune of the FaithTrust Institute for providing this information. Bouclin, “Call to Ministry,” 50.

18 Bouclin, “Call to Ministry,” 52.

19 Marie Bouclin, email interview with author, April 26 and 27, 2011.


21 On this point, Bouclin critiqued the Roman church’s “subtle ploy” to “[overvalue] symbolic womanhood (in the form of Mary) and at the same time [refuse] to grant women full human status.” Bouclin, *Seeking Wholeness*, 47.

22 Bouclin, interview. Bouclin is not alone in her work with abuse victims or in discovering that her female ministerial priesthood is helping fallen-away Catholics reconnect with their faith. Like Bouclin, Gabriella Velardi Ward has long worked with
trauma and abuse victims, including those harmed by priests. When discerning a call to ordination, Ward envisioned leading a reconciliation service for survivors of trauma and thus playing a role in the mediation of God’s grace that happens through sacraments. The sacrament of reconciliation takes on additional meaning for survivors. Ward wrote, “Reconciliation with self, the world and God happens when survivors take steps toward empowerment, justice and the re-creation of self as they work against suffering. Reconciliation happens when survivors can begin to feel authentically, truthfully, the feelings that may include anger and the pain of becoming visible. Reconciliation happens when they begin to break the conspiracy of silence and reclaim their truth.” Now a womanpriest, Ward built on her history as a spiritual director for survivors of child abuse, and the reconciliation she does now has sacramental elements. Ward, “Draw Me, We Shall Run,” 73.


26 The poem “Hound of Heaven” was written in 1893 by Francis Thompson, a Roman Catholic English poet.


28 Cordero, “Doors Closed and Doors Open,” 140–143.

29 Lauren [pseudonym created by author], interview with author, July 17, 2009.

30 In September 2009, womanpriest Mary Kay Kusner sent me the program of preparation for ordination that she used. Her process is representative of but not identical to that of the other ordained women. In her program, unit one emphasized personal autobiography and reflection. Unit two focused on baptism. Unit three explored anointing with oils. Unit four analyzed the Holy Spirit and the fire of Pentecost. Unit five centered upon the Eucharist, while unit six looked at penance. Unit seven unpacked human sexuality in light of RCWP’s rejection of mandatory celibacy. Unit eight looked at ministry broadly. Unit nine required the candidate to examine, personally and rigorously, her call to ordination. Unit ten had the candidate receive practical training for preaching and celebrating the sacraments.

31 Kathleen Kautzer refers to RCWP as a “feminist seminary,” noting that the movement sponsors “a formation program that prepared women and men for ordination as deacons and priests.” Insofar as a seminary is a centralized location for both shared study and community formation, I disagree with this characterization. Kautzer is correct that RCWP and ARCWP help prepare Catholic women for ordination, but this formation program is too diverse to merit the term “feminist seminary,” which implies unity and similarity. Womenpriests do not study together in one geographical location and thus
do not have a seminary experience in any way akin to that of Catholic male seminarians or even Catholic or Protestant divinity school students. Kathleen Kautzer, *The Underground Church: Nonviolent Resistance to the Vatican Empire* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 261.

32 A handful of my interviews included discussion of the formation program and the lack of uniformity in its requirements. Because this was (and, in some regions, remains) a delicate issue, I will not cite these interview subjects by name.

33 This pattern of well-educated womenpriests started with the Danube Seven—Gisela Förster, Iris Müller, and Ida Raming, three of the seven, held doctorates—and continued into the early wave of North American ordinands; Gloria Carpeneto, Michele Birch-Conery, Suzanne Dunn, Kathleen Kunster, Judy Lee, Roberta Mechan, and Jane Via all have PhDs. Many women have master of divinity degrees from Catholic schools—a credential shared by male priests—including Joan Houk, Alice Iaquinta, Kathleen Kunster, Toni Tortorilla, and Kathy Vandenberg. Other women have advanced degrees in fields (ostensibly) unrelated to ministry, such as Judith McClosky’s master of library science and Monique Venne’s master of science in meteorology. A number of women with graduate degrees directed their thesis or dissertation work toward questions surrounding Catholic women and feminist theology, including Gloria Carpeneto, Michele Birch-Conery, Mary Ann Schoettly, Mary Frances Smith, and, of course, Ida Raming, whose dissertation “The Exclusion of Women from Priesthood: Divine Law or Gender Discrimination?” has inspired much women’s ordination activism since the 1970s.

Each of the thirty-four ordained individuals connected to RCWP (thirty-three women, one man) who responded to my 2014 survey had a college degree. Three women had BAs alone, three women were working toward additional graduate degrees, and eight women had doctorates. The survey revealed fifty-one completed advanced degrees (master’s, doctor, and juris doctor) among the thirty-four respondents. The names and statistics I offer here are a mere snapshot of RCWP’s cumulative educational background.

34 Michele Birch-Conery and Juanita Cordero were with the Sisters of the Holy Names; Patricia Fresen was a Dominican sister for decades until her ordination required her departure; Jeannette Love was a religious sister for nineteen years. Marie Bouclin and Olivia Doko are former sisters who later married. Suzanne Dunn and Bridget Mary Meehan still identify as Sisters of Christian Charity (a consecrated order committed to the spirit of Vatican II) in their RCWP biographies. Kathy Redig and Christine Myer-Lumetzberger entered convents as teenagers but later left and married. In addition to these consecrated women, scores of womenpriests worked within the church. Elsie McGrath worked for the St. Louis archdiocese, and she and her husband ran marriage preparation courses; Pat Sandall served the Los Angeles archdiocese for over twenty-five years as a catechist, pastoral associate, and religious education director. Mary Meyer-Gad worked for archdiocesan offices in Chicago and Detroit.
Chapter 2. Rome’s Mixed Messages

2 Mary Frances Smith, email interview with author, March 4, 2011.
3 Monique Venne, email interview with author, March 27, 2011.
4 Eileen DiFranco, email interview with author, January 13, 2011.
5 Several such stories have made it to print: Kaya Oakes’s memoir, *Radical Reinvention: An Unlikely Return to the Catholic Church*, traced the author’s return to Roman Catholicism after a foray into atheism; she discovered that she could not abandon the faith that keeps pulling her back, and she found Catholic kinship with other progressives. In *Sister Trouble: The Vatican, Bishops, and Nuns*, Marian Ronan not only investigated the faith-filled activism of the American church’s beleaguered sisters but candidly disclosed her own spiritual location as a critically engaged Catholic scholar inexorably located within the church. The expression “defecting in place” comes from a 1994 study of the same name, which looked at both Catholic and Protestant women and concluded, “Many feminists of faith, however alienated or angry, are not pulling out of the churches, but instead are ‘defecting in place.’” Kaya Oakes, *Radical Reinvention: An Unlikely Return to the Catholic Church* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2012); Marian Ronan, *Sister Trouble: The Vatican, Bishops, and Nuns* (North Charleston, SC: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2013); Miriam Therese Winter, Adair T. Lummis, and Allison Stokes, eds., *Defecting in Place: Women Claiming Responsibility for Their Own Spiritual Lives* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 196.
8 Pope Paul VI wrote, “Through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase. Not only, then, is the people of God made up of different peoples but in its inner structure also it is composed of various ranks. This diversity among its members arises either by reason of their duties, as is the case with those who exercise the sacred ministry for the good of their brethren, or by reason of their condition and state of life, as is the case with those many who enter the religious state and, tending toward holiness by a narrower path, stimulate their brethren by their example. ... Between all the parts of the Church there remains a bond of close communion whereby they share spiritual riches, apostolic workers and temporal resources. For the members of the people of God are called to share these goods in common.” Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution

9 It is important—and historically correct—to note that progressive Catholics are not the first to use the “people of God” theme to argue against decisions and doctrines with which they disagree. See, for example, Leslie Woodcock Tentler’s research on racial initiatives in the Detroit archdiocese in the 1960s: Leslie Woodcock Tentler, “The American Reception and the Legacy of the Second Vatican Council,” in The Long Shadow of Vatican II: Living Faith and Negotiating Authority since the Second Vatican Council, ed. Lucas Van Rompay, Sam Miglarese, and David Morgan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 37–57.


12 By emphasizing feminist activism after Vatican II, I am in no way attempting to dismiss decades of women’s social action before Vatican II. Many groups then were explicitly Catholic and socially concerned; these groups did not self-identify as “feminist.” Kathleen Sprows Cummings shows that socially active Catholic women during the Progressive Era found solidarity in their Catholic identity and not their female identity. They opposed women’s suffrage and affirmed the ideal role for women was in private, domestic spheres. In contrast, St. Joan’s International Alliance (founded in London in 1911 as the Catholic Women’s Suffrage Society) began amid the women’s suffrage movement and worked against traditional teachings on gender roles. Other examples of groups that merged Catholicism with women’s social concerns include the Sister Formation Conference, which argued for greater education and professionalization for women religious; the Grail Movement, wherein women became, rather than consecrated sisters or nuns, “lay apostles” serving the church; and the Christian Family Movement, which served the family, emphasized social justice, and saw women as its primary leaders. Kathleen Sprows Cummings, New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive Era (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Mary J. Henold, Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Anne Marie Pelzer, “St. Joan’s International Alliance, a Short History 1911–1977,” Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, accessed November 11, 2011, Womenpriests.org, www.womenpriests.org/interact/pelzer.asp.

13 Henold, Catholic and Feminist, 21. Mary Fainsod Katzenstein echoes Henold’s arguments about the importance of Vatican II on Catholic women’s activism and self-understanding. Katzenstein, Faithful and Fearless, 158.
Pacem in Terris was a 1963 encyclical written by Pope John XXIII and was not one of the sixteen conciliar documents of Vatican II. Still, it gets swept up in discussions of the spirit of Vatican II and further elevates John XXIII’s status in the minds of progressive Catholics. Both Gaudium et Spes and Pacem in Terris spoke of “conscience,” suggesting that God had imbued humankind with the ability to distinguish right from wrong. In Pacem in Terris, Pope John XXIII wrote, “The world’s Creator has stamped man’s innermost being with an order revealed to man by his conscience; and his conscience insists on his preserving it. Men ‘show the work of the law written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness to them.’ And how could it be otherwise? All created being reflects the infinite wisdom of God.” Today, RCWP cites Joseph Ratzinger (the future Pope Benedict XVI)—who as cardinal and pope never gave any indication that he would entertain discussion of women’s ordination—because of a particular statement he made on conscience in 1967: “Over the Pope as expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority, there stands one’s own conscience which must be obeyed before all else, even if necessary against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority.” Not surprisingly, Catholic feminists from the 1970s onward cite the importance of following their conscience. See Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris (“Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty”), April 11, 1963, Vatican Archive (web), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html; “Roman Catholic Womenpriests’ Response to Vatican Decrees of Excommunication” (press release), June 1, 2008, Roman Catholic Womenpriests, accessed April 23, 2014, http://romancatholicwomenpriests.org/archivepressreleases.htm. RCWP’s website no longer contains this press release, but it can be found here: http://www.bishop-accountability.org/news2008/05_06/2008_06_01_VoiceFromTheDesert_RomanCatholic.htm. Some sources citing Ratzinger indicate that he was writing in the Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, but do not give specific publication information.

Raming and Müller’s petition was published in a 1964 book titled We Shall Keep Quiet No More! Women Speak to the Second Vatican Council, compiled by Gertrud Heinzelmann. Heinzelmann self-published this book because, it has been said, publishers were uneasy about such a controversial topic. The book is incredibly difficult to locate, and my knowledge of it comes from secondary sources, which give this citation: Wir schweigen nicht langer! Frauen aussern sich zum II Vatikanischen Konzil, ed. Gertrud Heinzelmann (Zürich: Interfeminas-Verlag, 1964).

To be very clear, Vatican II did not structurally include or empower women. Very few women were even allowed to attend council sessions. Countless women clamored for a participatory voice yet felt overlooked on the eve of monumental reforms. For more on the history of women and Vatican II, see Angela Bonavoglia, Good Catholic Girls: How Women Are Leading the Fight to Change the Church (New York: Harper Collins, 2005); Kenneth A. Briggs, Double Crossed: Uncovering the Catholic Church’s Betrayal of American Nuns (New York: Doubleday, 2006); Henold, Catholic and Feminist; Carmel McEnroy, Guests in Their Own House: The Women of Vatican II (New York: Crossroad,
Notes


22 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Inter Insighiores*.

23 Pope John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (“On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone”), May 22, 1994, Vatican Archive (web), http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html. Scholars have debated whether this was the pope’s way of claiming infallibility without speaking *ex cathedra*, which had been in the past the formal way of conveying infallible doctrine. Certainly, Archbishop Raymond Burke viewed *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* as infallible and said as much when he formally excommunicated Patricia Fresen, Rose Hudson, and Elsie McGrath: “Noting that the three women have publicly affirmed, by word and deed, the validity of the ordination of women to the priesthood, in contradiction to the perennial, constant and infallible teaching of the Catholic Church...” Raymond L. Burke and Henry J. Breier, “Declaration of Excommunication of Patricia Fresen, Rose Hudson, and Elsie McGrath,” *St. Louis Review*, March 14, 2008, 10.

24 Questions surrounding the infallibility of the Vatican’s position have been raised in the *National Catholic Reporter*: John L. Allen, “Infallibility Debate Intensifies:


26 Halter, The Papal “No,” 79, footnote 315. Certainly, the Catholic Church’s current emphasis on gender complementarity is a notable departure from centuries of church-endorsed subordinationism, which says that because women were created after men (in the second creation story, Genesis 2:4ff), women are subordinate and inferior to men. This way of distinguishing men and women has a long history in the church and in Western thought, owing to philosophers like Aristotle and theologians like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Some examples: St. Irenaeus argued that nature and the law make women subordinate to men; Tertullian intimated that only men—and not women—are made in the image of God, and he cast women as dangerous sources of lust and sexual temptation; Augustine wrote that the order of nature dictates that men rule over women; Thomas Aquinas suggested that women lack intellect and reason; and Bonaventure argued that women cannot be ordained because they do not bear the image of God (“imago Dei”). These arguments are often cited in Catholic feminist literature as evidence of the kinds of harmful female subordinationism that has characterized some patriarchs’ thinking throughout Roman Catholic history. A wealth of resources about the discussion of women in early and medieval church texts can be found at www.womenpriests.org/index/, under “Fathers of the Church.”


28 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Inter Insigniores.

29 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Inter Insigniores.


Bernardin’s letter touched on themes of theology, discussion, and progress—all of which tie into women’s ordination. Bernardin called the question of women’s ordination “a serious theological issue,” albeit one that had generated lively discussion and could “contribute to a better understanding of ministry, priesthood, and the role of women in the Church.” Saying that “candor and a sense of responsibility” impelled him to address this women’s ordination question, Bernardin stated, “Honesty and concern for the Catholic community, including those of its members who advocate the ordination of women, also require that Church leaders not seem to encourage unreasonable hopes and expectations, even by their silence.” Bernardin went on to say that the church “must make sure that people are truly convinced of women’s dignity and equality,” and acknowledged, “The Church will suffer, indeed it will be betrayed, if women are given only a secondary place in its life and mission.” He concluded with a call for “charity and mutual respect” between the two sides of this debate, “in order to be as certain as is humanly possible that we are indeed at all times seeking to know and do the will of Jesus Christ.” See Gardiner, Women and Catholic Priesthood, 195, 197.

34 Patricia Hughes Baumer, interview with author, August 17, 2009.

35 Baumer, interview.

36 Of course the Humane Vitae birth control issue shows that American bishops can strongly voice one view and still be overruled by Rome. A connection between WOC and the NCCB prior to Inter Insigniores would not have guaranteed a different outcome.

37 Hughes came to see Inter Insigniores as perhaps a positive indication that WOC was pushing the right patriarchal buttons. She recalled a January morning in 1977, just after the release of the Inter Insigniores English translation, when one of her seminary professors greeted her with a big hug. “Congratulations,” he said. “You got the bear to growl.” Hughes interpreted the professor’s remarks to mean that WOC had caught Rome’s attention. Now that the CDF had laid out theological reasons barring women’s ordination, feminist theologians could dismantle those arguments and offer alternatives.

38 Information about Judmilla Javorova comes from Miriam Therese Winter, Out of the Depths: The Story of Ludmilla Javorova, Ordained Roman Catholic Priest (New York: Crossroad, 2001), as well as Halter, The Papal “No,” 9–11. Javorova says that seven other women were ordained in Czechoslovakia and Slovakia, by Davidek and other bishops, but these women priests left the church because of the pressure and difficulties of remaining secret. Ludmilla is unique because she remained a priest.
39 Clandestine Catholicism didn’t originate in mid-twentieth-century Czechoslovakia: the church had implemented similar survival tactics, with Pope Pius XI’s approval, in Mexico (1920s) and Moscow (1926). Rome then saw a need for similar actions in late-1940s Romania.

40 Winter, *Out of the Depths*.

41 Winter, *Out of the Depths*.


44 Pope Leo XIII established the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1902. The group’s intended purpose was to facilitate and regulate Catholic studies of the Bible. While it was originally an independent group within the Vatican’s structures, in 1971 Pope Paul VI amended the group’s rules, and one result was that the PBC became a subgroup of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The PBC no longer made its own declarations; rather, its conclusions were issued through the CDF. This may explain why the CDF did not publicize the PBC’s findings on women’s ordination. See Leonard Swidler and Arlene Swidler, eds., *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977); John R. Donahue, “A Tale of Two Documents,” in Swidler and Swidler, eds., *Women Priests*, 25–34; Halter, *The Papal “No,”* 37–41.

45 In American religious parlance, Episcopalians are often grouped with Protestants, yet here, as I emphasize the unique connections between Catholicism and the Anglican Communion, a distinction is valuable: the Episcopal Church is a direct descendant of the Church of England, also known as the Anglican Church. When the US earned its independence from Great Britain, what had been the Anglican Church in the British colonies became known as the Episcopal Church. Anglicans—and, thus, Episcopalians—are born of both Catholicism and Protestant Reform traditions. They have described themselves as “Protestant, yet Catholic.”


47 Carter Heyward, *A Priest Forever: One Woman’s Controversial Ordination in the*

48 Other women were ordained irregularly between the Philadelphia Eleven’s ordination in 1974 and the 1976 change. Although Episcopal women can now be ordained deacons, priests, and bishops, there is still a struggle for equality in the Episcopal Church and its Anglican counterpart. Three US dioceses refuse to ordain women, and the issues of women bishops and openly gay clergy divide the Anglican Communion today.


Chapter 3. Conflict and Creativity


4 Tom Roberts, “The ‘Had It’ Catholics,” National Catholic Reporter, October 11, 2010, http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/had-it-catholics. Roberts writes, “The adult population of the United States was 228.1 million in 2008. So if one in 10 U.S. adults were former Catholics, that 22.8 million would make ex-Catholics, if one considered them a denomination, the second largest in the country behind Catholics, who list 68.1 million members, according to the National Council of Churches’ 2010 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches. The ex-Catholics would far outnumber the next largest denomination, Southern Baptists, who claim 16.2 million adherents.” Note that as of 2019, surveys of American religiosity showed that the number of “nones”—people citing “no religious affiliation”—was basically equivalent to the number of Catholics and evangelicals (the latter being a group that cuts across denominational boundaries). Jack Jenkins, “‘Nones’ Now as Big as Catholics, Evangelicals in the U.S.,” Religion News Service, March 21, 2019, https://religionnews.com/2019/03/21/nones-now-as-big-as-evangelicals-catholics-in-the-us/.


232

Notes


8 Of course, not everyone believes that a smaller Roman Catholic Church would be a weaker church. Pope Benedict XVI is often claimed to have said that he wanted “a smaller but purer church.” Many have debated what Benedict meant by this: Was he calling for a more exclusive church, intolerant of dissent, or was he underscoring the need for Catholicism to make some unpopular moves in order to hold and model Christian values? I have heard RCWP’s women cite Benedict and assume the former to prove the importance of contra legem ordinations to keep the church open and inclusive. See Joseph A. Komonchak, “‘A Smaller but Purer Church’?,” Commonweal, October 21, 2010, https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/smaller-purer-church.

9 Stephanie Yeagle, “Survey Shows a Divided Global Church,” National Catholic Reporter, February 28–March 13, 2014, 17. While not directly related to the question of women’s ordination, abortion is always a valuable touchpoint for Catholic surveys: the Univision study Yeagle cites found that 60 percent of Catholics in the US, Europe, and Latin America believed abortion should be allowed in some cases, while 60 percent of Catholics in Africa and the Philippines believed abortion should never be allowed.

10 There are, of course, millions of Catholics who remain uncritical of these problems. I have spoken informally with American Catholics who are either surprised or angered to hear of my research on womenpriests. They do not see gender inequality as a problem in their church. Neither do many Catholics believe the sex-abuse crisis is reason to question the church’s foundations. I acknowledge that these perspectives exist, and in abundance.


13 Kautzer, The Underground Church, 1.

14 “RAPPORT,” Women’s Ordination Conference, accessed January 3, 2015, http://www.womensordination.org/programs/rapport/. The only American among the Danube Seven, Dagmar Celeste, was a former WOC board member. RCWP bishop Andrea Johnson served as WOC’s executive director from 1996 to 2000; she was also a member of RAPPORT. Kathy Vandenberg attended the 1978 national WOC meeting; Bishop
Olivia Doko joined WOC in the 1980s; Janice Severe-Duszynska worked as a leader for WOC’s Ministry of Irritation (another name for what WOC calls a “ministry of witnessing and prayerful protest” that seeks to keep women’s ordination on the minds of the people in the pews—and the prelates at the altar). Other women learned about RCWP movement through WOC: Eileen DiFranco learned of RCWP and met Patricia Fresen at a local WOC chapter meeting; Mary Ellen Robertson also heard about RCWP through her membership in WOC. Judith McClosky was long involved in WOC. Such connections work internationally as well. RCWP Canada bishop Marie Bouclin served as a coordinator for WOW from 2002 to 2006. Morag Liebert, a Scottish womanpriest, worked for fifteen years with a UK group committed to women’s ordination.


17 Kautzer, The Underground Church. Kautzer sees RCWP and independent Catholic groups as having “severed their connections to the Roman Catholic Church and emphasizing their divergence from the institutional church in their literature and religious education programs” (226). Importantly, however, RCWP does not want to sever its connections nor diverge from the Roman church; RCWP believes it can best reform the church by remaining connected in important historical, traditional, sacramental ways. Byrne, for her part, knows and acknowledges some womenpriests’ discontent with being categorized as independent Catholics. Julie Byrne, The Other Catholics: Remaking America’s Largest Religion (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 35.

18 Email to author, July 5, 2016. I do not have permission to connect this email’s author with its content, so this womanpriest will remain anonymous.

19 See appendix C for demographic data on womanpriest communities.

20 RCWP communities do include Protestant worshippers, often from the churches renting or gifting liturgical space to the womenpriests, but RCWP appeals to Roman Catholics first and foremost.


22 No name given, response to “RCWP Communities” survey created by the author, SurveyMonkey (web), May 27, 2014.


24 “Jan,” a vowed woman religious in her late sixties, long felt like “a nervous wreck” at her parish Mass; for example, she struggled to adjust her own vocal proclamations of the church’s formal creeds to match what she personally believed. At Therese, though, she could “live the faith I profess without being judged, without being weird or standing out.” Gaskell, “All Are Welcome,” 89.
38 Of course, sometimes womenpriests inspire their parishioners to seek ordination. This happens not infrequently. Two of my twenty-eight survey respondents—Kathleen Gibbons Schuck and Joanna Truelson—discerned a call to ordination after being RCWP parishioners. Womenpriests embody possibilities few have considered, and RCWP offers paths to ordination few have considered. Seeing womenpriests in action plants a seed, extends an invitation, and allows Catholic women to hear what they believe to be a vocational call from God, for perhaps the first time in their lives.
39 Theologian Elisabeth Schüessler Fiorenza is credited with coining the term “discipleship of equals” in her 1983 book, In Memory of Her, and expounding upon it in future works. Her idea is one in which there is no hierarchy (or patriarchy or—in Schüessler Fiorenza’s most familiar parlance—kyriarchy) within Christian communities, but rather, all persons are equal. This equality comes not from any social standing (or lack thereof) but from following Jesus as faithful disciples.
40 Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006).
41 This characterization of the early Christian church(es) and hierarchical development is within the (current) scholarly mainstream and can be found in the majority of textbooks covering New Testament history and early Christendom. Some scholars have taken this information and drawn more political conclusions about women’s roles in the early church and Jesus’s desires for a reformed Judaism. For two examples of feminist arguments, see Schüessler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, now a classic in this area, as well as Karen Jo Torjesen, When Women Were Priests: Women’s Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in Early Christianity (San Francisco: Harper,
1993). See also Gary Wills, Why Priests? A Failed Tradition (New York: Viking, 2013); Wills’s approach is not feminist, but he does argue against the necessity of hierarchical priesthood, considering his own understanding of its early Christian origins. On the other hand, some scholars are starting to challenge this historical narrative: for example, Benjamin L. White, “The Traditional and Ecclesial Paul of 1 Corinthians,” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 79, no. 4 (October 2017): 651–669.


48 Angela Bonavoglia, interview, July 23, 2005, unused documentary footage from Pink Smoke over the Vatican, directed by Jules Hart (2011; Eye Goddess Films, 2013), DVD.


51 Mary Kay Kusner, telephone interview with author, September 17, 2009.

52 Mary Kay Kusner, email to author, September 17, 2009.


Chapter 4. Ordination

1 Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, Faithful and Fearless: Moving Feminist Protest inside the Church and Military (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). Katzenstein writes of feminists agitating for change within patriarchal organizations: “Sometimes by their mere presence, but more often by claiming specific rights, and by demanding in certain facets the transformation of the institutions of which they are a part, feminists have reinvented the protests of the 1960s inside the institutional mainstream of the 1990s” (7).

2 Katzenstein, Faithful and Fearless, 7.

3 The ceremony was filmed for Pink Smoke over the Vatican, directed by Jules Hart (2011; Eye Goddess Films, 2013), DVD. While this was the first public RCWP ordination in North America, a private diaconate ordination had taken place in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, earlier the same year.


4 St. Lawrence Seaway Ordination, ceremony filming, July 25, 2005, unused documentary footage from Pink Smoke over the Vatican, dir. Jules Hart.

5 Mayr-Lumetzberger celebrated this liturgy with Spiritus Christi’s Jim Callahan, Mary Ramerman, and Denise Donato. In 1999, when it was still a Roman Catholic church called Corpus Christi Church, the congregation elected to leave the Rochester diocese over conflicts on gay and lesbian weddings, an open table Eucharist, and

6 St. Lawrence Seaway Ordination, ceremony filming, July 25, 2005, unused documentary footage from Pink Smoke over the Vatican, dir. Jules Hart.

7 The Danube River boat both offered symbolism and met practical needs. As with the St. Lawrence ceremony three years later, the boat evoked images of Jesus, who fished with his apostles and calmed stormy waters. The boat also suggested motion, smooth progress forward, gliding through waters teeming with life. Pragmatically, the boat provided a worship space for the ceremony, for the ordinands held no hope for an ordination in a Roman Catholic church. By sailing in the Danube’s international waters between Austria and Germany, the women did not break canon law in any particular Catholic diocese and thus could avoid messy jurisdictional issues. The boat also allowed organizers to control attendance and ensure that protesters did not disrupt the ceremony. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had already threatened anyone who attended the ordination—even journalists—with excommunication. Ordinand Gisela Forster claimed that Rome sought unsuccessfully to stop the ceremony by suing to rent out the Passau pleasure boat on which the ordination was to take place. But the ceremony would not be stopped. The ordination took place as planned, and on the feast day of apostles Peter and Paul—a day historically known for ordinations of men—the cadre later known as the Danube Seven became priests.

Technically this was not RCWP’s first ordination. In order to be ordained priests at the very public Danube ceremony, the women had to already be deacons. Three months prior, on Palm Sunday, March 24, 2002, in a private residence, six women had been ordained to the diaconate: Gisela Forster, Iris Müller, Ida Raming, and Viktora Sperrer of Germany and Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger and Adelinde Roitlinger of Austria. Sperrer did not go on to priesthood ordination; apparently her local bishop put great pressure on her, and she decided to withdraw. Then at the Danube ceremony, just before the priesthood ordinations, two women were ordained deacons: Pia Bruner of Germany and Angela White (a pseudonym for Austrian-born Dagmar Celeste) of the United States. The women made certain to follow the correct order toward ordination, starting with the office of deacon and moving to priest; to skip over any step would have been, in the organizers’ view, to proceed incorrectly.


11 Raming and Müller, “Statement Regarding the Ordination of Women.”

12 Raming and Müller, “Statement Regarding the Ordination of Women.”


14 Ida Raming, email interview with author, January 9, 2011. I believe this bishop is the one named in Raming and Müller’s book: “We also took part in this search [for a Roman Catholic bishop willing to violate existing church law by ordaining women], which led us to ask the so-called ‘women’s bishop’ Auxiliary Bishop Ernst Gutting of the Diocese of Speyer, who both orally and in writing had advocated ending patriarchy in the church, whether he would be willing to ordain women, at least to the diaconate. To this modest request, he replied: ‘You are aware that I have always felt free in certain cases to think otherwise than the Vatican; however, to act in such a way would cause such a scandal that it would only make the situation of women in the Church worse.’ This was a disappointing rejection of our request.” Raming and Müller, “Contra Legem,” 75–76.

15 The website for Braschi’s church is at http://jesustheking.zfr.com/ (accessed November 19, 2010). It seems Braschi was made a bishop not once but twice: in 1998 by Roberto Padin from the Catholic-Apostolic Church of Brasil, and in 1999 by Jeronimo
Podesta, who’d been a bishop in Argentina until his social and reform activism put him on the outs with the hierarchical church. It is unclear why Braschi felt the need to be ordained twice, though the practice is not uncommon: *sub conditione* (“subject to condition”) ordinations are the church’s way of ensuring that, if the first ordination didn’t “work,” the second would amend the error. For information on Braschi and the Danube ordinations, see Allen, “Seven Women ‘Ordained,’” and Allen, “Ordinations Ignite Debate.” For a letter Forster wrote to the press in the days surrounding the Danube ordination, in which she specifically addresses Braschi’s qualifications, see Gisela Forster, “Statement on the Bishop’s Ordination and Ordination of Women Priests,” trans. John Wijngaards, Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, accessed November 19, 2010, http://www.womenpriests.org/called/forster3.asp.

16 Of course the church would not publicly agree with this hairsplitting: as the *National Catholic Reporter*’s John Allen explained of the 2002 Danube ordination, “In reality, Braschi’s episcopal status makes no theological difference, since official Catholic doctrine holds that it is impossible to ordain a woman no matter who performs the ritual. Politically, however, the challenge to that doctrine would be more dramatic if it came from a legitimate bishop.” Allen, “Seven Women ‘Ordained’”; Allen, “Ordinations Ignite Debate over Tactics.”

17 RCWP’s female bishops have expressed different views on Braschi’s legitimacy. Prior to the ordination, Forster released a letter quoting Braschi’s explanations and defending his qualifications and ministerial sensibilities. She further explained that he had rigorously vetted the candidates to ensure their suitability for priesthood. When I asked Ida Raming about Braschi, she was also quick to defend him. She pointed out that he had parted ways with the Roman church because, unlike most other hierarchs in Argentina at the time, he’d gone underground to support the people over the government. She asserted that his “ordination as bishop is in the line of apostolic succession although he was no longer under the jurisdiction of the [Roman Catholic Church] when he ordained us in 2002.”

Bishop Patricia Fresen felt differently about Braschi. When the opportunity arose for her to be ordained a bishop in 2005, she fervidly wanted a bishop whose history would not raise questions, as Braschi’s did. Though she acknowledged Braschi was a Roman Catholic bishop, the fact that he was outside the church—Fresen referred to him as “excommunicated”—meant, to her, that he should not perform sacraments. Fresen desired to stay “in the church”—her willingness to be ordained depended on it—and so she agreed to become a bishop only after speaking with Bishop X, an unnamed male bishop allegedly in “good standing” with the Vatican, who had participated in earlier ordinations. Fresen did not refer to this man as “Bishop X” in her interviews; the RCWP-published book *Here I Am, I Am Ready* identifies Fresen’s consecrating bishop as Bishop X.

Gisela Forster, “Statement”; Raming, email interview; Patricia Fresen, interview, August 1, 2006, unused documentary footage from *Pink Smoke over the Vatican*, dir. Jules Hart.
18 Bishop X’s identity may not be such a well-kept secret. Though RCWP will not confirm or deny the claim, several sources have identified Bishop X as Dusan Spiner. Like Ludmilla Javarova, Spiner was secretly ordained a bishop by Felix Daveidek in Communist-era Czechoslovakia, and the Vatican ruled his ordination valid. If Spiner is Bishop X, his apostolic lineage would raise far fewer questions than Braschi’s and Regelsberger’s. National Catholic Reporter’s John Allen is a well-respected, neutral source who alleged that Dusan Spiner was Bishop X in his article, “Ordinations Ignite Debate over Tactics.” I emailed Allen asking for confirmation, as I noticed that a number of sources naming Spiner got their information from Allen’s reporting (e.g., Halter, The Papal “No,” 147). Allen was not able to consult his specific notes from the story identifying Spiner but said, “In general, I can tell you that I’m not in the habit of printing something if I’m not sure.” John Allen, email to author, March 24, 2011.

19 Cordero and Thiel, Here I Am, I Am Ready. This book identifies the man as Bishop X and includes a photograph, taken mostly from behind, of him presenting the Gospels to the newly ordained deacons.


21 Halter, The Papal “No,” 147; Allen, “Ordinations Ignite Debate.” The quote from Braschi comes from Halter’s book, and she in turn cites Allen as her source. Allen does say Braschi “acknowledged that he has no authority to perform an ordination for the Roman Catholic Church,” but it is unclear where the exact words Halter uses come from.

22 Allen, “Seven Women ‘Ordained.’” It’s worth noting that in Here I Am, I Am Ready, the authors indicated Braschi said “Brüder,” German for “brothers,” and not hermanos, as Allen reported.


24 To again emphasize this point: the church saw the Danube ordinations as “invalid” regardless. The ordinands, for their part, believed it possible for women to be validly ordained. Thus, what could invalidate their ordinations would be the questionable validity and standing of the ordaining bishop(s). Hence, a sub conditione ordination was a way to protect the validity of the Danube Seven’s ordinations, given the Seven’s understanding of the possible validity of their ordinations.

25 I asked Ida Raming about the sub conditione ordination, but she declined to comment. In an interview with Jules Hart in Pink Smoke over the Vatican, however, Patricia Fresen revealed that some of the Seven—though she did not know how many—did go through an “extended ordination ceremony with some validly ordained bishops in full communion with Rome,” to be quite certain of their ordained status should Braschi’s
ordination be deemed invalid. This extra ceremony was done privately, in what RCWP calls a “catacomb ordination.” Allen, “Ordinations Ignite Debate,” National Catholic Reporter, July 19, 2002; Raming, email interview; Patricia Fresen, interview, August 1, 2006, Jules Hart, Pink Smoke, Documentary Footage.

According to Here I Am, I Am Ready, the first ordained womenbishops—Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger and Gisela Forster—were made bishops by Bishop M (yet another unnamed male bishop) on October 20, 2002, in a private ceremony. But “since there had been questions regarding the previous ordinations, both Christine and Gisela were ordained bishops sub conditione during an episcopal ordination on 19 May 2003 in Europe, at which Bishop X presided.” Cordero and Avison Thiel, Here I Am, I Am Ready.

26 As mentioned previously in these notes, the 2014 publication Here I Am, I Am Ready named two secret bishops, X and M, and Patricia Fresen described a small group of bishops in Europe who support women’s ordination. Thus there were at least two male bishop advocates, possibly more.


28 Patricia Fresen, interview, August 1, 2006, unused documentary footage from Pink Smoke over the Vatican, dir. Jules Hart.

29 Patricia Fresen, interview, July 20, 2005, unused documentary footage from Pink Smoke over the Vatican, dir. Jules Hart. Fresen did not refer to this man as “Bishop X” in her interviews, but the RCWP-published book Here I Am, I Am Ready identifies Fresen’s consecrating bishop as Bishop X.


32 For example, see Helena Moon, “Womenpriests: Radical Change or More of the Same?,” Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 24, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 115–134.

33 I focus here on the 1995 WOC meeting because of its proximity to the first Danube ordination and because this is where Schüssler Fiorenza’s “ordination is subordination” phrase gained a wide audience. To be sure, the WOC membership had never been in total agreement about tactics and goals, and Mary J. Henold documents some of the tensions at the second WOC meeting in 1978 in her book Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 197–232.

late 2014, I could no longer access Schaeffer’s article on ncronline.org but did find it here: http://www.thefreelibrary.com/WOC+gathers+to+promote+women%27s+ordination+amid+conflicting+visions,...-a017839236.


35 Schaeffer, “WOC Gathers.”
36 Schaeffer, “WOC Gathers.”
37 Mary Hunt’s keynote speech, “Different Voices / Different Choices,” addressed the actions of the growing RCWP movement most directly. Hunt was a primary mover behind Women-Church (now Women-Church Convergence), a movement that started in 1983 and combined Catholic theology and secular feminism, creating a community for worship, discussion, and social action. In her keynote, Hunt began by listing four ways that the thinking on women’s ordination had changed and why this thinking had to continue to evolve. Hunt’s driving concerns were that womenpriests would be co-opted by institutional power and that kyriarchy would be reinscribed on ordained women. Hunt summoned women to participate ministerially as laity, in keeping with the call of Vatican II. She offered a different vision: women’s ministries must be “feminist, global, interreligiously connected, and justice-seeking.” Only then would any Catholic feminist movement be adhering to its own values and to twenty-first-century challenges. Mary E. Hunt, “Different Voices / Different Choices: Feminist Perspectives on Ministry—A Contribution from the United States” (keynote speech, Women’s Ordination Worldwide conference, Ottawa, Ontario, July 23, 2005), transcript, Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, www.womenpriests.org/wow/hunt.asp.
38 Ruether, speaking on “The Church as Liberation Community from Patriarchy,” called for the dismantling of clericalism. She lamented how the early, egalitarian Christian movement became institutionalized through a linking of clergy and power. The sacrament of Eucharist, she said, had become a “clerical power tool,” separating the laity from the clergy and thus from the church. Rosemary Radford Ruether, “The Church as Liberation Community from Patriarchy: The Praxis of Ministry as Discipleship of Equals” (keynote speech, Women’s Ordination Worldwide conference, Ottawa, Ontario, July 23, 2005), transcript, Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, http://www.womenpriests.org/wow/ruether.asp. This website says Ruether’s keynote was in 2006; this is an error.
40 I found Equal wRites (a periodical from a local WOC chapter in southeastern
Pennsylvania) to be an invaluable resource for seeing these debates unfold: http://sepa-woc.org/NewsLetter.htm.


42 Laura Singer, telephone interview with author, November 17, 2010. Singer explained to me that WOC had decided to exist in a state of “ambiguity” with RCWP, supporting the group while continuing to push for church reforms and other models of women in ordained ministry. WOC made a conscious decision to move away from the heady academic and theological focuses spelled out by WOW’s 2005 keynote speakers and focus instead on the “people in the pews.” The group expends considerable energy trying to discern the best ways to reach Catholics who love their faith tradition, who love the sacraments, and who may advocate women’s ordination—but who are not necessarily well versed in feminist theological writing. WOC is, in Singer’s words, the “big tent” where conversations about church reform and visions for the future can take place—even if not everyone agrees on the best next steps.

43 Ruether, “Should Women Want Women Priests or Women-Church?,” 71.


50 Rose Marie Hudson, interview with author, July 17, 2009.


52 “Roman Catholic Womenpriests to Be Ordained in St. Louis.”


55 During the 2004 presidential election, for instance, Burke announced that any Catholic politician who publicly supported legalizing abortion must be denied Communion—and he named Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry specifically. Burke further decreed that any Catholic voter supporting a pro-choice candidate because of his or her pro-choice stance should be refused Communion. The archbishop also demanded that a local Catholic hospital, Cardinal Glennon Children’s Hospital, withdraw an invitation to singer Sheryl Crow to perform at a benefit concert because she supported embryonic stem cell research; when the hospital refused, he resigned from its board of directors. He also got entangled in a public and prolonged dispute with St. Stanislaus Kostka, a Polish Catholic parish in St. Louis, over whether the archdiocese or the St. Stanislaus board controlled church property and assets. When the conflict could not be resolved,


57 Elsie McGrath, interview with author, July 17, 2009.

58 Hudson, interview with author, July 17, 2009.


60 McGrath, interview; Hudson, interview.

61 Mechan, email to author.


63 McAdam, “The Framing Function of Movement Tactics.”


68 Daphne Hampson, “Feminism and Christology,” in Feminism and Theology, eds. Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 287.

69 Schaeffer, “WOC Gathers.” Schaeffer does note that Schüssler Fiorenza deliberately located her arguments in and alongside the biblical Jesus, which seemed to herald a forthcoming strategy for ordination activists like RCWP.

70 The Wijngaard Institute for Catholic Research website (headlined “Women Can
Be Priests”) at womenpriests.org has a list of Catholic scholars who do and do not favor the ordination of women. The list is a valuable starting place but does not include the nuances of different authors’ visions for the future of women’s ordination. “Catholic Scholars,” Wijngaard Institute for Catholic Research, accessed May 25, 2015, http://www.womenpriests.org/scholars.asp.


72 Macy, *The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination*, 5. Macy’s scholarship built upon a foundation that most scholars agree on: in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Western Christianity’s ideas about ordination and what it meant to be ordained shifted. Leading up to the eleventh century, a person holding an ordained office was not viewed as having special powers to perform sacred, sacramental acts. Rather, someone who was ordained was special because a particular community had called this individual to service. Furthermore, before the eleventh century, ordination was not a way of moving up a hierarchical ladder. Instead, a deacon could be ordained a bishop without ever having been a priest; a priest need not have been a deacon. In fact, a number of popes were never ordained priests (Macy 25).

But times were changing. The church consolidated papal—and thus patriarchal—authority as Catholicism’s influence extended into secular realms. What is more, the church had to distinguish itself from groups it deemed heretical, and altering the church’s ordination and sacramental foundations allowed leaders to distinguish “legitimate” authority from its more “heretical” brand. Canonical records show that between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, theologians began to differentiate between “nonsacramental consecration” for women and “sacramental ordination” for men. With this change came a newfound emphasis on a priest’s Eucharistic role: now, only a properly “ordained” priest could make Christ present in the Eucharist. As such, ordination became a way of separating clergy from laity (Macy 41–42). Using the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 as a point of demarcation, Macy argued that, once this change took place, the offices women held—such as deaconess, abbess, presbyter (the ancient term for “elder” and the precursor to modern notions of “priest”), and bishop—ceased to be considered ordained offices. A distinction emerged among the terms *ordinare*, *consecreare*, and *benedicere*, when before there had been none. Now, an “ordained” priest possessed a sacramental authority that a “consecrated” woman religious did not. The ceremony for ordination also changed during this time, and the laying on of hands became a requirement for an authentic conferring of holy orders. Being called to ordination was no longer about ministering to a particular community but about celebrating the sacraments.

73 Macy, *The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination*, 86.

74 Macy, *The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination*, 86.

75 Macy himself remained agnostic on whether his findings on ancient and medieval women’s ordination should impact the question of ordained women in the twenty-first century.

76 “Resources,” Roman Catholic Womenpriests, https://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org/resources/. RCWP calls Macy’s book a “must read” and says of the book,
“One of the most comprehensive and scholarly surveys of the history of women’s ordinations in the Roman Catholic Church—a very thorough study with over 130 pages of notes and cited bibliography.”


78 Dorothy Irvin, interview, July 23, 2005, unused documentary footage from Pink Smoke over the Vatican, dir. Jules Hart.

79 Dorothy Irvin, interview. In her conversations with me, Irvin credited Joan Morris’s book The Lady Was a Bishop: The Hidden History of Women with Clerical Ordination and the Jurisdiction of Bishops (New York: Macmillan, 1973) for turning her on to this material. Irvin noticed that Morris’s book referenced frescoes and mosaics but contained no photographs. Morris told Irvin that the publisher had found the photographs too expensive to print. Irvin thus made it her mission to circulate images of these women. Dorothy Irvin, interview with author, March 17, 2010.

80 RCWP’s efforts to equate their ordinations with reclaiming a lost history came some years after the original 2002 Danube ordination. In the Danube Seven’s preordination arguments, they did not allude to Phoebe or Junia, nor did they invoke the latest scholarship (academic or historical) on women in early Christianity. As the movement has grown, it has found new ways to argue its legitimacy.


Chapter 5. Sacraments

1 Chava Redonnet, telephone interview with author, January 6, 2011.

2 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 1131.

3 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 1131.

4 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1129. Rome has softened this rhetoric since Vatican II yet still asserts that salvation comes through the Roman church alone. As an example of Rome’s continuing insistence on Catholicism as the one church that Christ instituted and its continuing reluctance to see Protestant churches as equivalent to Catholic churches, see Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church,” June 29, 2007, Vatican Archive (web), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html.

Even in antiquity, the words *sacrament* and *mystery* were closely connected, for both implied rites of initiation. Church father Tertullian seems to have been, in the early third century, the first to use the word *sacrament* (or *sacramentum*, in Latin) to describe rites of initiation into the Christian faith and to distinguish Christian practices from pagan ones (known as *mysterion* after the Greek word). It was Augustine of Hippo who connected sacraments to efficacy, ushering in the idea of sacraments as “an outward sign of inward grace.” A simple, readable document explaining Catholic sacraments can be found on the website for the Diocese of Westminster (UK), http://rcdow.org.uk/att/files/faith/catechesis/baptism/sacraments.pdf.

6 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1076.


10 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1257.

11 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1256.


13 Theresa Novak Chabot, telephone interview with author, January 20, 2011; Bishop of Manchester John McCormack to Theresa Novak Chabot, 30 September 2010, in the author’s possession.


15 Wood, interview. For another take on this story, see: Sarah M. Earle, “Don’t Deny Me Your Prayers,” *Concord Monitor* (Manchester, NH), March 20, 2011.

16 Wood, interview.


18 This quote comes from the “Statement from the Rev. Robert Gorski, Moderator of the Curia on the Organization ‘Roman Catholic Womenpriests,’” which the Diocese of Manchester (NH) placed in church bulletins in 2010. I received a copy of this statement from Theresa Novak Chabot.

19 Dorothy Irvin, “But They Have No Community!,” in *The Rebound 2003, 2004,*
2005, 2006, 2007: The Archaeology of Women’s Traditional Ministries in the Church, 28–29 (unnumbered pages). “The Rebound” is a collection of images, maps, documents, letters, speeches, and essays, all connected to issues of women’s ordination from ancient times to the present, which Dorothy Irvin assembled, printed, spiral bound, and sold. In addition to Irvin’s article on this practice of local parishes recording the names of RCWP-baptized children, I have had several womenpriests tell me that they have had male priests do the same for them. Each of these women, however, asked to remain anonymous around this issue, lest the male priests be identified and punished.


22 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1223.


26 Gloria Carpeneto, telephone interview with author, February 16, 2011.


28 Redonnet, interview. Redonnet is correct that Spiritus Christi is not currently getting the kind of attention RCWP is drawing from church officials, but Spiritus Christi—when it was still known as Corpus Christi—had its share of diocesan trouble in the late 1990s. In 1998, Rochester bishop Matthew Clark removed Father Jim Callan from leadership; Clark was likely feeling Vatican pressure because Rome frowned upon the parish’s willingness to allow women on the altar, bless gay unions, and invite non-Catholics to Communion. Many members of the Corpus Christi parish broke away and formed Spiritus Christi. In February 1999, the Rochester diocese declared that the new parish’s members had excommunicated themselves. This latae sententiae excommunication is the same that applies to RCWP’s women. I found a brief history of Spiritus Christi, told by Spiritus Christi, at “About Us: Our History: History of Spiritus Christi Church,” Spiritus Christi, accessed February 11, 2011, http://spirituschristi.org.
29 Victoria Rue, interview, April 19, 2006, unused documentary footage from *Pink Smoke over the Vatican*, directed by Jules Hart (2011; Eye Goddess Films, 2013), DVD.


31 “Priests in the Early Church and in Vatican II.”

32 Redonnet, interview.


35 Mary Frances Smith, email interview with author, March 4, 2011.


38 Monique Venne, email interview with author, March 27, 2011.

39 Monica Kilburn-Smith, telephone interview with author, April 20, 2011.

40 Roberta Meehan, telephone interview with author, April 10 and 14, 2011.


44 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1353.


49 Church of the Beatitudes, Mass, Santa Barbara, CA, field notes, June 15, 2013.

When I checked the publicly searchable directory of IEC communities in July 2015, a dozen of the communities listed—just about 10 percent—were RCWP communities.


52 Womanpriest Mary Ellen Robertson explained that she encountered Bernier’s book during a course called “The Sacrament of Eucharist,” and his ideas helped her think about incorporating the entire community into a liturgical celebration. Mary Ellen Robertson, “My Story,” in Women Find a Way, 119.

53 Michele Birch-Conery, telephone interview with the author, April 11, 2011.

54 Birch-Conery, interview.

55 Andrea Johnson, telephone interview with the author, May 11, 2011.


57 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1399–1400.

58 Mary Frances Smith, “An Interview with Regina Nicolosi,” in Women Find a Way, 137.

59 DiFranco, email interview. DiFranco went on to tell me about her return visit to her parish for a funeral, two years after her priest asked her not to receive Communion. Enacting what she believed to be her assigned role as an unwanted guest, she sat in the back of the church and did not come forward to take Communion. But some parishioners acted on her behalf: some sat with DiFranco in the back pews, using their presence and physical proximity to signal acceptance of her, and some brought her Communion, thereby including her in the community celebration of Christ’s saving action. Significantly, DiFranco’s parishioners felt empowered to follow their conscience and their own understanding of Christ, rather than adhere strictly to church-made rules.

60 Marybeth McBryan, interview with author, July 17, 2009; Redonnet, interview; Schoettly, email interview; Schoettly, telephone interview; Dagmar Braun Celeste, We Can Do Together: Impressions of a Recovering Feminist First Lady (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2002).


62 No name given, response to “RCWP Communities” survey created by author, SurveyMonkey (web), May 27, 2014.

63 In the official Catholic understanding of marriage, it is not the officiant who
does the marrying; rather, the couple marries each other. The priest presides and facilitates, and of course makes celebrating the Eucharist possible in weddings that include a full Mass.


65 Schoettly, email interview.
66 Carpeneto, telephone interview.
67 Kilburn-Smith, telephone interview.
68 DiFranco, email interview.
71 Marie Bouclin, email interview with author, April 16 and 27, 2011. Other women-priests report similar incidents.
72 DiFranco, interview.
73 Schoettly, email interview.
75 Rochester ordination, Rochester, NY, field notes, May 1, 2010.
76 “Pastoral Team,” Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community, accessed June 19, 2015, http://www.mmacc.org/#/about-us/pastoral-team. Corran was a Presbyterian woman in her midthirties with an extensive background in ministry and theology who took a profession of faith into the Catholic Church “as embodied by MMACC” at Easter 2010. MMACC copastors at the time were Jane Via, a Roman Catholic woman-priest since 2006, and Rod Stephens, an openly gay Roman Catholic priest who no longer served the institutional church and who had become affiliated with RCWP through Via.
78 Years before Corran’s ordination, RCWP had posed the possibility of ordaining women through a new mode of apostolic succession. Bishop Patricia Fresen wrote in 2008 that RCWP might in the future use another apostolic tradition to ordain Catholic priests:

It is possible that, once women’s right to be ordained equally with men, and in the same way, is more firmly established, there may be some new developments. . . . I suggest that our whole understanding of apostolic succession could be considerably broadened. Apostolic succession rightly means that the tradition of laying-on of hands for community ministry comes down to us through the centuries from the time of the early Church, and in fact goes back even beyond that. When we trace what we call apostolic succession, it usually goes back, in its written form, to some time during the Middle Ages. This is a hierarchical form of apostolic succession, passed down from one bishop to the next. It could still be accepted as apostolic succession, I propose, if the community—not the bishop—were to lay on hands. That would fit the communitarian model.


79 The women I talked to did not feel comfortable speaking about the MMACC ordination without anonymity. Reynolds did not speak about the controversy, but she did mention having attended Corran’s ordination. She felt it was one of the most “exquisite, powerful experiences” she had ever had, and she championed the idea of a community calling someone to ordination—as was the case in Jesus’s time, she said. Dana Reynolds, telephone interview with author, December 14, 2010.

80 Cadelago, “Congregation Ordains Catholic Female Priest.”
81 Jane Via, telephone interview with author, November 22, 2010.

Chapter 6. Ministries on the Margins

1 Bridget Mary Meehan, response to “Womenpriests” survey created by author, SurveyMonkey (web), July 6, 2014.

2 This language of “a new model of priestly ministry” occurs in Bridget Mary Meehan’s 2006 video, which I analyze shortly. The phrase “a new model of ordained ministry in a renewed Roman Catholic Church” is the banner subtitle on RCWP-USA’s website as of the summer of 2019. ARCWP’s banner as of late 2019 now reads “a renewed priestly ministry in a community of equals.”

7 Good Shepherd Ministries of Southwest Florida was a nonprofit [501(c)3] started in 2003 and related to the Good Shepherd Inclusive Catholic Community, started in 2008 when Lee was ordained. Beaumont was ordained a priest in 2012. Under Lee and Beaumont’s leadership, these entities worked in conjunction with the Lamb of God Lutheran-Episcopal Congregation, the progressive Catholic organization Call to Action, local Roman Catholic parishes, and other “interfaith friends,” as Lee called them. In January 2020, there was no information online about Good Shepherd Ministries of Southwest Florida or the Good Shepherd Inclusive Catholic Community, possibly because Beaumont died in 2018.


9 Lee holds a doctor of social work degree from Yeshiva University, a master’s degree from Columbia University School of Social Work, and a doctor of ministry degree from Global Ministries University.


11 Dena O’Callaghan, response to “RCWP Communities” survey created by author, SurveyMonkey (web), May 28, 2014.


17 Suzanne Thiel, telephone interview with author, May 25, 2011.


22 “Constitution/Constitución,” Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests, accessed June 27, 2015, http://www.arcwp.org/constitution.html. I suspect that much of this language of serving people on the margins came from Meehan, who articulated it in the YouTube video and who is now a bishop with ARCWP. ARCWP’s constitution has since been rewritten and is now more closely aligned with RCWP-USA’s: “The Association of Roman Catholic women priests, therefore, responds to this call from the Holy Spirit, in our time, by preparing, ordaining and supporting qualified women and men, from all states of life, who are committed to a model of Church grounded in Jesus’ vision of an open table, where all are welcome.” See “Constitution,” Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests, accessed January 8, 2020, https://arcwp.org/constitution/.


24 Not surprisingly, worker priests in twentieth-century Europe drew concerns from Rome because of their proximity to the labor cause and unions, which were connected to Marxist ideas, which in turn exacerbated Vatican fears about Communist threats. Andreas Freund, “The Worker-Priest Movement in France Has Received New Papal Encouragement,” New York Times, May 27, 1979, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/05/27/archives/some-clerics-also-wear-a-blue-collar.html.


27 Significantly, Ronan was one of two keynote speakers at this anniversary event; the other was RCWP womanbishop Patricia Fresen. RCWP would have its first North American ordination four months later on the St. Lawrence Seaway, and Fresen was then in the early stages of articulating the young group’s vision for American audiences. Contrary to Fresen’s summons to stand up for justice in honor of “prophetic obedience,” Ronan’s speech issued cautionary advice, asking her audience to consider the people who might be excluded from this nascent brand of ordained ministry.


30 Of course, no singular type of man (in terms of age, ethnicity, or background) is drawn to the Catholic priesthood. A book that explores the United States’ largest seminary for second-career priests, Sacred Heart, outside of Milwaukee, is Jonathan Englert’s The Collar: A Year inside a Catholic Seminary (New York: Houghton Mifflin,
For an accessible overview of priesthood formation since the Reformation, see Charles M. Murphy, *Models of Priestly Formation: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Crossroad, 2006).

31 Some examples: Victoria Rue taught women’s studies and comparative religion at San Jose State University; Debra Meyers and Rosemary Smead are university professors; Jane Via taught college courses in early Christianity before going to law school and becoming a prosecutor for San Diego County; Roberta Meehan taught biology for many years; Janice Sevrc-Duszyńska worked with ESL students as a high school teacher; Alice Iaquinta taught college for over thirty-five years and wrote, simply, “I am a teacher.” Some women have training in health care, and some have backgrounds in body care. Mary Frances Smith, Mary Ellen Robertson, Morag Liebert, and Eileen DiFranco had long careers in nursing. Marie David, Gloria Carpeneto, and Monica Kilburn-Smith were trained as Reiki masters. Kathy Vandenberg, Kathleen Kunster, Suzanne Dunn, Toni Tortorilla, Christine Fahrenbach, and Mary Bergan Blanchard all have extensive backgrounds in counseling; Marie Boucin and Gabriella Velardi Ward have counseled abuse victims, including those abused by priests. The wider category of pastoral ministry characterizes other women’s work: Rose Marie Hudson worked in prison ministry, and Regina Nicolosi served as a chaplain in long-term care and worked with young men in a corrections facility.

39 Sentilles, *A Church of Her Own*, 4. In fact, Sentilles credited Catholic women for helping her realize “how devastating Protestant sexism is.” She discussed this further in chapter 11, which is dedicated to “Catholic Womenpriests” (249–267).
40 Typically, the adjective *ecumenical* characterizes exchanges between Christian churches, while *interfaith* extends to non-Christian groups. Throughout this section, I use *ecumenical* to refer specifically to intra-Christian work, and I use *interfaith* to describe efforts that may include Christianity but extend beyond it.


45 Rose Marie Dunn Hudson, “I Think I See a Priest,” in Women Find a Way, 104.

46 Mary Grace Crowley-Koch, Juanita Cordero, Marie David, Gisela Forster, Jean Marchant, Dena O’Callaghan, and Mary Theresa Streck are some examples of ordained women who are or were married to Catholic priests.


49 Juanita Cordero, “Doors Closed and Doors Open,” in Women Find a Way, 140–143.


54 Various respondents, “Womenpriests” survey.

55 Monica Kilburn-Smith, telephone interview with author, April 20, 2011.


57 Edward Cachia, “Fr. Cachia’s Response to Excommunication,” Women’s Ordination Conference, accessed July 6, 2015, http://www.womensordination.org/archive/pages/art_pages/art_FrCachiaApr06.htm. Note that, in the wake of his excommunication, Cachia and others set up a small faith community called Christ the Servant Catholic Community. Cachia said he felt called to “minister to those who are disillusioned with the current dysfunctionality of the Roman Catholic Church,” a goal that resonates with those of RCWP. Unfortunately, this document is no longer available at this link, and I could not find it elsewhere.
58 Bourgeois’s participation in Sevre-Duszynska’s ordination seemingly would not automatically render him excommunicated *latae sententiae* because the CDF’s May 2008 decree specifies excommunication for the women who attempt ordination and anyone who attempts to confer ordination upon them. Bourgeois can be said to have been excommunicated *ferendae sententiae*, however, because he received formal notice from the CDF after Sevre-Duszynska’s ordination that he had incurred this penalty. Joshua J. McElwee, “Maryknoll: Vatican Has Dismissed Roy Bourgeois from Order,” *National Catholic Reporter*, November 19, 2012, http://ncronline.org/news/people/maryknoll-vatican-has-dismissed-roy-bourgeois-order.


60 Reprinted in McElwee, “Maryknoll: Vatican Has Dismissed Roy Bourgeois.”

61 Cachia, “Fr. Cachia’s Response to Excommunication.”


66 Sentilles, *A Church of Her Own*.

67 In 2003, a sister from the National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN) compared Fresen to Rosa Parks. Thanking Fresen for following God’s call and risking excommunication, this NCAN sister wrote, “Like Rosa Parks, your action speaks loudly to our Church and the world. Like Rosa Parks, you will nudge our Church in changing an unjust law that restrains women and ignores their full personhood. With ordination, we as women can claim the same position as men in the Church’s social structure much like Rosa Parks did in the civil society in the United States.” See Sister Beth Rindler, SFP, to Patricia Fresen, *Equal wRites* (Ivyland, PA), June–August 2004, 11.

Notes


70 Ronan, “Living It Out,” 164.

Chapter 7. Womenpriests’ Bodies in Persona Christi


3 Monica Kilburn-Smith, telephone interview with author, April 20, 2011. Kilburn-Smith’s critique struck out at the legacy of medieval theology. Invoking Thomas Aquinas’s description of sacraments as a balance of matter and form—the matter being the tangible vehicle for the sacrament, such as water for baptism or bread and wine for Eucharist, and the form being the invocative words—Kilburn-Smith criticized the church for being fixated on matter, and specifically the gendered body as matter.

4 Gloria Carpeneto, telephone interview with author, February 16, 2011.


7 McGrath’s shirt was a play on the well-known expression, often found on shirts, “This is what a feminist looks like.”
8 Mary Byrne, “To Ordain or Not to Ordain...,” Equal wRites (Ivyland, PA), September–November 2006: 9–10.


17 Mary Ann Schoettly, email interview with author, January 8, 2011.


23 It is certainly true that many legally ordained Catholic male priests support gay and lesbian rights. The official Roman church position, however, remains staunchly opposed to homosexuality and same-sex marriage.


26 Kilburn-Smith, telephone interview.


29 St. Lawrence Seaway Ordination, ceremony, July 25, 2005, unused documentary footage from Pink Smoke over the Vatican, dir. Jules Hart.

30 Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger, interview, July 25, 2005, unused documentary footage from Pink Smoke over the Vatican, dir. Jules Hart. Mayr-Lumetzberger was speaking not in her native German tongue but in English, and perhaps struggled to express her ideas fully.


32 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Inter Insigniores (“Declaration on the

34 Pope John Paul II, “Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women.”
36 I have noticed this pattern in RCWP’s biographies—online, in interviews, and in publications like Women Find a Way—since I began studying the movement in 2007, and thus this tendency is neither a recent development nor a choice being phased out over time. The womenpriests’ practice reminds me of similar patterns in professional and academic biographies, where women are more likely to talk about families (husbands, children, grandchildren, and even pets), whereas men are more focused on professional accomplishments.
40 “Biographies,” Association of Roman Catholic Womenpriests, accessed December 13, 2015, http://arcwp.org/biographies/. In January 2020, Cheryl Bristol no longer appeared as a member of RCWP or ARCWP.
41 Cheryl Bristol, email interview with author, June 1, 2011.
44 “Ordained,” Roman Catholic Womenpriests, accessed December 13, 2015, http://romancatholicwomenpriests.org/ordained.htm. For this note, I am citing the older version of the RCWP website, since in the newest version, Rue and O’Malley have modified their biographies, though still mention “spouse of twenty eight years...Kathryn Poethig”
and “wife, Elizabeth Carlin,” respectively. I take it as significant that in these new iterations of their biographies, both womenpriests emphasize that, since the legalization of same-sex marriage, their partners are now spouses.

45 Janine Denomme was ordained to priesthood in May 2010, just about a month before she passed away, and the RCWP website honors her “in memoriam” as, among other qualities and accomplishments, the “cherished partner of Hon. Nancy Katz.” Judy Lee and Judy Beaumont were RCWP’s first ordained lesbian pair, as Lee was ordained (a deacon and priest) in 2008 and Beaumont was ordained to the diaconate in 2011 and the priesthood in 2012. The women are partners “in ministry and life since 1989.” “Ordained,” Roman Catholic Womenpriests.

46 Roman Catholicism’s position on homosexuality has long been paraphrased as “love the sinner, hate the sin.” Some argue that this is a more benign position than that of some Protestant denominations, for the Catholic Church says gay and lesbian people are welcome to be full participants in Catholic life—they just cannot act on their sexual desires (as sex must only happen within marriage, and the Roman Catholic Church bars same-sex marriages). Others contend that this position is not loving. One book tackling the “love the sinner, hate the sin” rhetoric so prevalent in Roman Catholicism (though not focused exclusively on Roman Catholicism) is Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

47 “Statement of Position and Purpose,” DignityUSA, https://www.dignityusa.org/purpose. Womanpriest Eileen DiFranco’s biography announces her heterosexuality—specifically, by saying that she and her husband Larry have four children and two grandchildren—and tells readers that she was “the first woman priest to preside at Dignity, Philadelphia.” Similarly, Bishop Regina Nicolosi’s biography referenced her husband, Charles, the “love of [her] life,” and says that she “celebrates Eucharist with Dignity and other small faith communities.” Both straight women allied with gay communities. Canadian womanpriest Linda Spear does not mention a spouse or partner, and an article about her on the RCWP Canada website says that she once served as “President of Dignity, Montréal.” “Stories: A Roman Catholic Priest at Sutton,” RCWP Canada, accessed December 13, 2015, http://rcwpcanada.x10.mx/docs/Herstory.html; “Meet the Ordained,” Roman Catholic Womenpriests, accessed January 7, 2020, https://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org/meet-the-ordained/.


49 Kwok, “Touching the Taboo,” 122.


51 These male-female binaries are often discussed in feminist theology, including in Anne M. Clifford, Introducing Feminist Theology (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 19.

God and His Female Complements,” in *Feminism and Theology*, eds. Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

53 Meehan developed what she calls the “polydimensional-continuum theory.” Historically, an individual’s sexual identity was determined based on “gross observation of the external genitalia.” Instead, Meehan contends that the physical expression of sex is just one part of the polydimensional continuum and is not enough to determine whether one is “male” or “female.” What must also be taken into consideration are internal gonadal structure, chromosomal identity, genetic expression, nervous system response, and hormonal response. Meehan explained that sometimes, a person appears male based on external genitalia but has a female internal gonadal structure; the converse also occurs. Roberta Meehan, telephone interview with author, April 10 and 14, 2011; Roberta Meehan, “Biology for Theologians: A Scientific Look at Male-Only Ordination,” Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, accessed November 20, 2011, http://www.womenpriests.org/body/meehan2.asp. It strikes me that, with her arguments, Meehan anticipates much of the discourse around trans identities that have characterized discussions of gender in the 2010s, though she does not remark upon trans (or intersex) identities specifically.

54 Meehan, telephone interview; Meehan, “Biology for Theologians.”


56 Meehan is not the only scholar challenging gender essentialism and its implications for Christianity. Ethicist Christine E. Gudorf analyzed the challenges that arise for religion as sexual dimorphism erodes: Christine E. Gudorf, “The Erosion of Sexual Dimorphism,” in *Sexuality and the Sacred*, 141–164. Abrahamic religions distinguish men from women “in terms of social function, worth, and relation to each other and to God” (144). Twentieth-century studies of sex and sexuality, however, undercut dimorphism, and biology has found chromosomal patterns that go beyond the simple XX and XY forms. “Polymorphous sexuality” is a more apt description of sexual realities—and Gudorf recommends that religions transition from dimorphous to polymorphous sexualities in order to make sense of these new, complex ways of understanding sex and gender. Meehan would agree and would add that one way religions like Catholicism must adjust to changing biological understandings of sex and gender is to “welcome everyone to discern a vocation to the priesthood.” Meehan, telephone interview.


58 Gudorf, “The Erosion of Sexual Dimorphism.”


60 Rebecca Johnson, response to “RCWP Communities” survey created by author, SurveyMonkey (web), May 23, 2014.

62 No name given, “RCWP Communities” survey, July 2, 2014.
64 Linda Nie, “RCWP Communities” survey, May 24, 2014.

Conclusion

2 Knoll and Bolin, She Preached the Word, 13–14.


12 I want to acknowledge that in August 2018, Russell M. Nelson, president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, made a statement requesting that the terms *Mormon* and *LDS Church* no longer be used to refer to the church. Church members are working to comply with this; it is as yet unclear what Nelson’s request will mean for academics in the field of Mormon studies.


14 Sally Priesand, the first American woman rabbi, was ordained in 1972 by Hebrew Union College and her Reform congregation. In 1974, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso was ordained by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. The first woman ordained within Conservative Judaism was Amy Eilberg, in 1985. Of the three women, Eilberg’s ordination was the hardest won, as Conservative women had begun talking about ordination in the early 1970s but faced barriers not unlike those Christian women faced. See Malka Drucker, *Women and Judaism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009); Pamela Susan Nadell, *Women Who Would be Rabbis: A History of Women’s Ordination, 1889–1985* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); Riv-Ellen Prell, *Women Remaking American Judaism* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2007).


19 Shayna Weiss, telephone interview with author, June 25, 2017. I extend very special
thanks to Shayna for her willingness to speak to me, academically and personally, about women seeking the rabbinate in Orthodox Judaism.


22 I am thinking here of this quote: “The ‘spirituality’ model focuses on the autonomous subject, who can construct paths of meaning that connect to the transcendent, even if on the edge of the traditional institutions or outside them. This turn from objective truth to subjective authenticity brings with it a specific concern for emotions, feelings, body, individual experiences of life, personal well-being, and self-realization—all of which are not seen in contradiction or in competition with a significant relationship with the sacred.” Giuseppe Giordan and Enzo Pace, eds., *Mapping Religion and Spirituality in a Postsecular World* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 4.


24 “History: Current Operating Structure,” Roman Catholic Womenpriests, accessed August 30, 2011, http://romancatholicwomenpriests.org/NEWhistory.htm. RCWP’s original draft constitution read, “We are living in a time of transition: We are moving from the non-recognition and exclusion of women to service in all church ministries and to the full co-creation and co-operation of women on all levels of the Roman Catholic Church.” The very first goal expressed in the constitution was this: “‘RC Womenpriests’ is to bring about the full equality of women in the Roman Catholic Church. At the same time we are striving for a new model of Priestly Ministry. When these goals are reached and Can. 1024 CIC has been changed, the group ‘RC Womenpriests’ will be dissolved.”


30 Philip Jenkins recounts that “Europe and North America have 35 percent of Catholic believers and 68 percent of priests; Latin America has 42 percent of believers but only 20 percent of the priests. In terms of the ratio of priests to faithful, the Northern world is four times better supplied with clergy than the Global South.” Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 268.
Appendix A. Interview Subjects and Primary Sources


Appendix C. Data and Interview Questions for RCWP Communities

1 My survey aimed to get a sweeping overview of RCWP community members, from all regions, all countries, and including RCWP and ARCWP; its success depended mostly on whether the womenpriests forwarded the survey link to their populations. I received twenty-eight responses with usable data. Delcalzo focused exclusively on the Sophia community in Sussex County, New Jersey, not far from the Drew campus, and she had twenty-one survey respondents. Gaskell focused exclusively on Therese of Divine Peace, in her hometown of St. Louis, and conducted in-person interviews with thirteen members.

2 I do not have specific gender data from my surveys. In what I now recognize as poor design, I put questions that would identify the respondent’s gender identity at the end of the survey. As this was a lengthy questionnaire, many people did not get that far and/or chose to forgo providing any identifying information. Of the people who revealed their gender, there were fourteen women and three men.


4 Gaskell’s study included local university students and members of the St. Louis Catholic Worker—both populations that would skew young (late teens and twenties). Those populations have not been in attendance at Therese when I have been there, but this could be because when I have traveled to St. Louis—Christmas break and summers—are precisely the times when young people may be traveling as well.

5 Michael Lipka, “A Closer Look at Catholic America,” Pew Research Center,


7 I did not ask about racial or ethnic identity in my survey.
