Teresa Forcades i Vila reflects on Medieval Feminist Monasticism: Did it exist and is it relevant today?
Excerpts from a WATER teleconference
December 6, 2017

Mary E. Hunt: We are delighted to have all of you with us on the Feast of St. Nicholas!
Like all of WATER’s efforts, our purpose is not simply theoretical. Rather, we are focused on changing the cultural and intellectual assumptions that ground discrimination, exclusion, and destruction. Just this week in the U.S. we have witnessed the shrinking of national parks, a tax plan that will disproportionately disadvantage those who are poor while rewarding the rich, and a continued wave of sexual violence perpetrators exposing just how widespread that problem is in a coarsening culture, not to mention presidential meddling in the Middle East with regard to Jerusalem.

Let me introduce Teresa Forcades i Vila who is a Benedictine nun from the monastery of Montserrat in Catalonia. She is a uniquely qualified colleague who brings a contemplative’s heart and a feminist activist’s feet to her work.

Teresa grew up in a family that was not religious, but went to a Catholic school where she encountered the Christian Gospels.

She studied medicine at the University of Barcelona with a residency at University of Buffalo where she learned to deal with snow! She went on to earn a Master of Divinity degree at Harvard Divinity School, a Ph.D. in Public Health from University of Barcelona, and later a doctorate in theology from the School of Theology of Catalonia.

Her amazing career, both as a medical doctor, which has brought her into conflict with Big Pharma which make enormous profits off vaccines, and her practice of feminist theology, which has raised some eyebrows in Catholic circles, would be more than enough for any one person. On top of all that, she is also a dedicated activist for democracy and Catalanian independence.

So she combines four elements—medicine, theology, monasticism, and politics—into a busy and fruitful life that she outlines in her new book Faith and Freedom that I highly recommend, published by Polity Books.

Here is what we at WATER said about it in our “What We’re Reading” publication: “The daily prayer schedule of her Benedictine community provides Teresa Forcades with a fitting framework for her insights. Medicine, politics, feminism, and spirituality are grounded in deep appreciation of human freedom and divine love. Courageous, relentless explorations of basic human experiences, especially

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Dear WOC Member,

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Sr. Joan Chittister and have extended conversations together over two days. We spoke about our movement, the spiritual and physical violence the institutional Church perpetuates against women, and most importantly: our work of holding the light. She thanked me — WOC and members like you — for this vital (“too often, thankless”) task of shining justice and truth through our works. So today, I am passing on Joan’s thanks and my thanks to you, the resplendent WOC community.

Indeed there has been a glow at WOC this season, particularly as well welcomed our new staff member, Katie Lacz, and had a fabulous intern, Caroline Condon (p. 12). We hosted a conversation, “Francis After Five: A Feminist Review” in Manhattan at a Jesuit high school, offering a panel conversation on topics of climate change, pastoral care, clergy sex abuse, and LGBT and women’s equality in the Church. Two of the speakers at the event were our own Jamie Manson, a new WOC Advisory Board member and Marian Ronan, who contributed a book review of Elizabeth Johnson’s latest book (p. 13). We collaborated on Vocations Sunday (April 29th) with WOW to organize with a new WOW Advisory Board, like you — 100% WOC women to complete the sentence: “What I want the world to know about my call to priesthood.” (See our launch video at www.youtube.com/ordainwomen)

And not to bury the lead on this issue, but the collaborative article from Mary E. Hunt, Marianne Duddy-Burke and me, “The Movement for Women’s Equality in the Church Cannot Be Stopped” (p. 9), is a feminist dive into Mary McAleese’s landmark International Women’s Day keynote address, Intersectionality, prophetic witness, and feminist ministries are our guiding lights as we commit to dismantling patriarchal structures that oppress and suppress the Holy Spirit.

Enjoy this issue and the updates from the unstoppable movement for women’s equality. Whether in these pages, in front of a cathedral, or in your prayers, thank you for holding a light to gender justice in our Church.

Gratefully,

Kate McElwee

"The same misogyny that excludes women from ministerial and decision-making roles within the Roman Catholic Church is at the root of injustice around the world."

- Marianne Duddy-Burke, Kate McElwee, Mary E. Hunt

From the Executive Director

Kate McElwee

NewWomen, NewChurch

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RAPPORT’s Meetings with Bishops, 1986-2001

By Member Who Must Remain Anonymous to Keep Her Church Job

The RAPPORT group met with U.S. bishops as often as twice a year from 1986 through 2001. A few of us had been meeting with bishops for years before we founded RAPPORT. Bishop Frank Murphy was our initial contact and he suggested we meet with many of his bishop friends. RAPPORT invited the bishops Frank recommended and we eventually developed with us a sense of community with those who accepted our invitation. Key to our meetings was a gracious informality, a profound prayer experience and honest dialogue; we encouraged one another. We grieve as most of those friendly bishops have since died.

We cherish fond memories of collegiality, of easy conversation, and work tackling issues of discrimination, legalism, injustice, the need for structural change and the obstacles to that change. The bishops not only heard our stories of call and service to the church but they deeply respected our calls and the ministries we provided for our churches and people.

Each time RAPPORT met, we also invited a theologian, a research scholar, a sociologist, a canon lawyer or another resource person to engage with both RAPPORT and our brother bishops in order to facilitate rich dialogue on the evolution of the priesthood. Our hope was to adapt to pastoral needs and to representing Christ in community and sacrament and in imaging Christ. Both bishops and RAPPORT greatly appreciated Francis Bernard O’Connor, a Holy Cross sister who had spent twenty years serving in developing countries where her surveys showed the universality of women’s experiences and calls. Another session that the bishops acclaimed was with Ruth Wallace, whose research on women pastoral administrators was done at twenty parishes where she spent several days interviewing, at length, parish council members, other parishioners, and staff. She found acceptance even from the people who had initially opposed the concept of lay pastoral coordinator/administrator/pastoral leader. Her book describing this study is They Call Her Pastor (1992).

Several bishops spoke of finding a safe haven with us where they could each share their feelings and support for women’s ordination with truth and honesty. In 1986 a bishop told us how comfortable he felt meeting with us. A decade later that same bishop was visibly moved by Sr. Mary Aguin O’Neill who gave her personal testimony at a RAPPORT gathering about women’s roles and the inadequacy of the church’s notion of gender complementarity (see http://www.uscatholic.org/church/2008/06/redesigning-women).

RAPPORT recalls several benchmarks with bishops:

• Episcopal Bishops Bob De Witt and George Barrett who ordained the first two groups of Episcopal women priests gave us their compelling witness. The Roman Catholic bishops we gathered to meet them expressed great admiration for these courageous leaders. At RAPPORT’s gatherings with bishops the substantive study of women’s ordination was not the only item on the agenda—we also went together to the Holocaust museum with Bishop Barrett. It was very moving.

• Bishop Bill McManus met with us in January 1989 in Chicago and a few months later he brought meeting the need for women’s ordination to the floor of the next NCCB.

• Bishop Jack Fitzpatrick wept as he listened to our stories of call in Ilchester and Ellicott City, Maryland.

• Bishop Ken Untener opted to climb the hill from the Washington, D.C. Metro to the CED (where we met) on his prosthetic leg to meet with us, play the piano, and listen intently to our stories of call.

• Bishops Frank Murphy and Ray Lucker among others strategized with us many times and they sought our input on the Pastoral Letter on Women.

• Initially RAPPORT supported the United States bishops’ process of developing a pastoral letter on women, especially the listening sessions held to gather women’s voices and experiences. The initial draft of the letter had included information from women heard at diocesan gatherings held around the country. That first draft asked for women deacons and for open discussion of women’s ordination to the priesthood. In April 1988, the U.S. Bishops’ Conference approved this first draft by a large margin and sent it to Rome for affirmation. When the fourth and final draft of the women’s pastoral finally came back it had deleted women’s voices altogether and replaced them with voices from the Vatican. Rather than making room to discuss the future of women’s ministries in the church, U.S. bishops would now be obliged to teach women that Jesus deliberately chose to exclude them by selecting only males to be apostles which flies in the face of the Eastern church who has for centuries called Mary Magdalen, “apostle to the apostles,” a title the Western church did not officially acclaim until 2016.

• To their everlasting credit, on November 19, 1992 by a substantial majority and for the first time in its history, the U.S. Bishops’ Conference voted against the final draft of a pastoral letter. This would not have happened without the activism of bishops with whom RAPPORT had met regularly for prayer, discussion, and mutual support. RAPPORT helped several bishops realize it will take some women bishops to be part of the process of developing a bishop’s pastoral letter on sexism because sexism is the issue. It is helpful to recall that it took eleven black African American bishops to be part of the process of developing the bishops’ pastoral letter on racism.

• Bishop Ray Lucker invited us to his 25th anniversary as Bishop of New Ulm. At the Mass during a weekend of celebrations, many women pastoral administrators were in the entrance procession and served as Eucharistic ministers. Protestant and Catholic pastors and lay people spoke of his exemplary witness one on one, not just at the official ceremonies but in day in day out conversations and work together on many justice and community issues. With RAPPORT, Ray often quietly spoke of his fear; he felt he would be cast out of the church we love were he to ordain women. Over many years with us he humbly spoke of diocesan initiatives in social justice, his living in community, gardening as meditation and empowering lay people.

• The bishops present with us when we met with Ludmila Javaraova said they were deeply moved by her experience of being ordained by a Roman Catholic bishop in Czechoslovakia in 1970 when some of the church went underground continued on page 4
Some Herstory

RAPPORT Call Story
By Nancy DeRycke

A 19th-century French Carmelite nun and Doctor of the Church, St. Therese wrote in her journals and confided in her sister Celine of her deep desire to be a priest. She wrote: “I feel in me the vocation of priest.” I never really thought I had much in common with Therese, the “little flower”—until I read this.

From early on, I felt a gnawing inside of me for “something more.” Since my mother, Lois, had instilled in me that I could be anything I wanted or felt called to be, I assumed that, with hard work and ability to stick to a goal, that she was right. I entered the Sisters of St. Joseph after college and found wonderful women who were doing so many meaningful occupations to further God’s work in the world. And I also had the love of working in parish ministry that continued to grow and develop over the years as I ministered with so many wonderful church ministry people and parishioners. I discovered more and more the yearning to be involved in liturgy, and in celebrating the joys and sorrows of life with people. I was privileged to give homilies regularly at weekend liturgies, lead retreats, be one of the first in our diocese to bring the RCIA to be used in parishes, along with many other women and men who wanted to help make the Word of God as close and meaningful to people as possible—and to prove that Church and God was so much more than rules and formality—that it was alive and important in helping people to connect with God and each other. From the beginning of my church career, I connected with other women from around the country and beyond who were committed to the ordination of women in the Catholic Church. We went to WOC meetings from the 1970’s onward, and even were in the grassroots of what is now called RAPPORT—a wonderful community of women called to priesthood and dedicated to supporting others who are and praying with each other for our church.

As the years went on, I discovered that there was still a gnawing of “something more.” With the help of my bishop, I finally realized clearly that what I thought was a call to the SSJ’s and religious life was really even more a call to Church ministry and ordination. So, thinking that women would soon be ordained in the Catholic Church, I left the SSJ’s (although I treasured the twenty-four years and am still connected with them regularly) so I would be able to move quickly when that long awaited time came.

I am still waiting. I am still working full time in church. Praying, believing in the deep call that I and many others have heard from God, from other parishioners, and from their heart, we continue to be faithful to the Church such as it is. My husband, Ron and I still have a heart for church. How important it is for people in the church to respect various ways of living their faith—whether they are labeled liberals or conservatives—God is a big God, big enough for all of us and our perspectives. And Church can be big enough for all of us too.

Church vocation is not simply about “me,” but about God and what and how God calls each of us to live our lives as fully as possible building the kin-dom in whatever ways we can best.

God still calls...you...me...many, in many different ways. It’s up to us to help each other be able to respond as fully as possible. One day I believe our Church may more fully support and encourage all to more fully be able to respond to God and to God’s people and do the work of the church.

Nancy DeRycke and her husband, Ron, live in Rochester, NY. Nancy has worked in various parishes for many years and has been with RAPPORT since its founding.

RAPPORT’S last meeting with several bishops was fruitful in that bishops who met with RAPPORT consulted with both RAPPORT women and women in their own dioceses, created more roles for women, wrote their own pastoral letters with women, advocated for the equality of women, encouraged one another to empower women and sought change in their dioceses, at bishop’s conferences and more. The frustration levels of both these encouraging bishops and RAPPORT members to the institutional ban on celebrating women’s call has taken a physical toll on several of us and driven many of us to work even harder, in a variety of ways, to respond to God’s call.

The hierarchy as a body refuses to recognize and affirm God’s call to women to full ministry. Nonetheless RAPPORT’s meetings with bishops were fruitful in that bishops who met with RAPPORT consulted with both RAPPORT women and women in their own dioceses, created more roles for women, wrote their own pastoral letters with women, advocated for the equality of women, encouraged one another to empower women and sought change in their dioceses, at bishop’s conferences and more. The frustration levels of both these encouraging bishops and RAPPORT members to the institutional ban on celebrating women’s call has taken a physical toll on several of us and driven many of us to work even harder, in a variety of ways, to respond to God’s call.

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during Communist oppression. With her were Magdalena Zahorska and Elena Beckorova, deacons ordained during that same traumatic time. Jana Shropshire translated their descriptions of their seminary instruction, synods, ordinations and Masses hidden from the watchful eyes of Communist suppressors. When the faith once again was permitted to be freely practiced (by men) these ordained women’s faculties were removed by Rome.

• RAPPORT’s last meeting with several bishops was quietly paid for by Bishops Charlie Buswell and William Hughes, who covered the cost of the hotel conference room rental and lunch for the eight bishops who met with a few RAPPORT women at a hotel in Washington during the November 2001 bishop’s conference. To that last meeting we invited bishops we had not met with before as well as a few new members to hear RAPPORT member’s presentation on Fundamentalism. We also told our stories of call and they listened with rapt attention. The conversation was engaging.

Almost every bishop we met with advised us to work on opening the diaconate to women as they acknowledged Phoebe, Prisca, and other women leaders in the early church. Each bishop in his own way told us they felt powerless to implement full equality as called for in Galatians 3:28, Pascem in Terris (April 11, 1963) Part 1, #15 and The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World #29 (Abbott, The Documents of Vatican II (New York: 1966) p. 227).
RAPPORT Call Story

By Rene Buchanan

I was born into a good Catholic family and went to Catholic schools through graduate school. While at Boston College in the early 1970s I became involved with the Charismatic renewal and was soon elected pastor (our term) of the prayer group there. I was re-elected in that title and role for many years. As pastor I led the prayer meeting in worship, and as a team with other pastors discerned the gifts of community members and drew out the gifts of members of the community, counseled members of the community who came to me for that ministry, preached, and taught about spiritual gifts and other topics when necessary. As I reflected on the ways I experienced God and the community calling me to minister, I recognized that I was doing many of the same functions the documents of Vatican II described as the functions of a priest.

Reflecting on my prayer life during a retreat I was surprised to recognize that my prayer has evolved in ways I recognize as priestly. I believe God has given me a pastor’s heart.

Then and later, various persons have asked me to be their spiritual director. Active in my home parish as lector, Eucharistic minister, liturgist and catechist, I continue to minister in ways I recognize as priestly, and continue to be called to these ministries by the community.

Rene is married, had her day job career in the public sector, and is active in charismatic prayer groups and a parish. She and her husband Bob live in Allston, Mass.
I Am a Catholic Priest

By Lizzie Berne DeGear

It is the summer of 1998, I am thirty years old, and I am sitting in a parish office on Eastern Long Island, one town over from where I am staying with my 89-year-old grandfather for a few weeks. My grandfather, like everyone in my family, is Jewish and he knows nothing about my conversion to Catholicism three years earlier. My presence here is on the sly. The woman sitting across from me, who has just uttered these words, works at the parish. We have met only once before when I approached her the previous Sunday. As Pastoral Associate, she stood at the pulpit after Mass, making announcements and managing to fit in a powerful two-sentence homily on that day’s gospel. Her words were the most spiritually significant moment of the liturgy for me (I still remember the entirety of that homily). I knew I had to meet her.

As we sat face to face I thanked her for her homily, and she accepted my gratitude. As a relatively new Catholic, eagerly learning about the Church, this good news did not come as a shock. Somehow, in my bones, I had sensed the existence of Catholic priests who were women. She went on, “God ordained me.”

As we continued our conversation, this priest shared some of her story with me and I was fascinated. My own vocation crystallized in a new way in her presence and I found myself musing aloud, “I’m a priest too, but I think I’m still in training.” With an abrupt and assured laugh she said, “Oh, believe me, you will know when God ordains you. It will not be subtle!”

She was right. A few years later, when God ordained me, it came with layers of ritual and wonder that took a long time to marvel at and absorb. Over the weeks and months that followed the sacrament I filled a handmade journal with reflections on the unfolding experience.

Vocational milestones marked my path over the next few years. The same night I experienced ordination I was also encouraged to join members of my parish on a visit to companion communities in Honduras. Smiling, I thought to myself, “Ordination comes with a honeymoon! Who knew?”

Days after returning from that spirit-expanding and soul-deepening trip, I began a Master’s program at Fordham’s Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education.

There are other vocational moments that also stand out from those early years: certification with the National Association of Catholic Chaplains; discovering my passion for group work while ministering with the inpatient Psych unit at Mary Immaculate Hospital in inner city Jamaica, Queens; and discovering my passion for the Hebrew Scriptures as I poured over ancient Hebrew words while riding the subway on my way to work each day.

One aspect of God’s call to me that continues to delight, bewilder, and sometimes exhaust me is its “both/and” quality: the “more” of Ignatius’ ad majorem dei gloriam, the surprising and joyfully abundant invitations that pour forth from a supremely generous Hostess. When I otherwise might fear that life is asking me for either/or decisions, God reminds me of this “more.” For instance, as I first discovered myself as Catholic, God assured me that I was not being asked to convert from Judaism to Catholicism; rather I was discovering a convergence of my Jewish ancestral being with my blossoming Catholic faith. Similarly, during the decade of my life following these milestones (roughly from age thirty-six to forty-six), God taught me to weave two aspects of my vocational life together, even as She wove them within me: priesthood and motherhood.

On my first date with my future husband in 2004, I told him about my Ph.D. application to Union Theological Seminary and my hopes to study depth psychology, theology, and the Hebrew Bible concurrently. He said with an odd assurance for someone who had only met me once before, “You’re going to get in.” And even though I had heard this sort of encouraging confidence from friends, this was the first time I believed it too. As we got to know each other over a pitcher of beer, he asked me, “So, why aren’t you a nun?” and with an odd frankness for someone who had only met him once before, I spoke about my vocation to motherhood. Later that evening, we laughed when he said, “Oh boy, now when our kids ask about our first kiss, I’m going to have to tell them it was when I called you a nun!” When he asked in a genuinely vulnerable way how I imagined raising kids and being so devoted to my work, the answer came out of me before I had time to second-guess its first-date appropriateness, “God isn’t asking me to choose between them. Please don’t ask me to either.” When I got home that night, with that floating butterflies-in-the-stomach-feeling that comes after a really, really good first date, I checked the mailbox on my way up to my apartment. The invitation to a four-year fellowship at Union Theological Seminary awaited me.

One aspect of God’s call to me that continues to delight, bewilder, and sometimes exhaust me is its “both/and” quality.

That four years stretched to eight and a half as Tony and I welcomed Daisy and Fred into the world. The intensity of both early parenthood and doctoral studies found relief in their entwined combination. Experiences from one side of my motherhood-priesthood vocation helped me develop the other. On one of my doctoral exams I was asked to articulate an aspect of psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott’s clinical theory. I wrote about Winnicott’s “transitional space” between mother and infant, and how that space widens to become the space of creativity, communication, and culture. Critiquing the exam, my doctoral advisor, Ann Ulano, noted that I was “spotty” on the theory but that the example I gave—from a surprising and humorous moment while nursing my son—confirmed that I indeed understood what Winnicott was driving at. These family and academic experiences, woven together as they were, formed an invisible stole that the shoulders of my priesthood still carry.

Lizzie Berne DeGear is a chaplain, teacher, Bible scholar and Catholic feminist based in New York City. One of the founders of Feminism and Faith in Union, she will be leading a retreat at Mercy by the Sea this summer entitled In Communion with our Biblical Sisters.
Prophetic Obedience in South Africa—Viva!

By Mary Ryan, RCWP

Of Roots and Wings

I was born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1954, the fourth of six children. I am a cradle Catholic with devout parents, convent schooling, active parish life, Catholic literature, Catholic jokes, rosaries, benediction, “May is the month of Mary,” and fish on Fridays—that kind of Catholic. I was brought up to believe that there is no other air to breathe.

Of course I was shocked out of my boots when pursuing an undergraduate degree in Religious Studies, I discovered not just a proliferation of others who laid claim to the same Christian story, but in addition, a world of other religious practices, beliefs, institutional forms and piety that were not Christian. Thus began an enduring fascination with the study of religion and spirituality as intrinsic to our human search for meaning.

My forays into other traditions gave me the freedom and wings to plunge deeper into my own, while not being constrained by it. As I became a more mature woman, I began studies in different aspects of Christian theology, and became introduced to liberation theology. I was active in parish life as a catechism teacher, in the justice and peace movement, the Christian Social Action movement, and I led parish Bible studies and prayer groups. I led the latter, that is with women, until I was asked to leave by the parish priest for “disturbing the simple faith of women.” As a member of the Grail I worked in community cooperatives with women during the 1980s and 90s, also known as “the struggle years.” The feminist theological underpinnings and commitment to justice of the Women’s Movement gave me a firm base to grow a spiritual core that stood me in good stead.

Call

If I am to trust family lore, I am supposed at an early age to have challenged visiting priests about not being allowed to be an altar boy, and I do remember as a teenager some serious conversations about women and priesthood. I think though that mostly I just set the idea aside as one of life’s impossibilities.

However, while working toward my master degree in theology the real pain of exclusion from priesthood became palpable. It was perhaps then that I would identify as my real moment of “call.” I remember an overwhelming sadness surging from the depths of my being during the Eucharist. I took the pain seriously enough to find a spiritual director, but while the process of direction was extremely helpful, the question of priesthood was never really on the agenda; it was outside of the agenda, as it were.

The call resurfaced while accompanying one of my dying patients and recognizing the immense privilege of sharing in life and death moments with others, and a renewed appreciation for the Catholic church’s rich sacramental theology that had opened my heart to a call to priesthood. This led me to seek out the women priest movement through a fortuitous discovery of a talk given by Patricia Fresen on one of her speaking trips. I had known Patricia Fresen, who is now a bishop, from earlier years, as the first South African woman to take the step in faith and courage to enter priesthood within the Catholic church.

In May 2012, I “stepped onto new ground” and decided to embark on a process of discernment and preparation toward ordination in the Roman Catholic Woman Priest movement (RCWP).

Ordination and Priesting in South Africa

I was ordained a deacon in New York in 2013 and a priest in Cape Town in 2014. I remain a member of the RCWP U.S. Eastern region through the generosity and welcome of the “Easters” until the time when South Africa is able to form its own region. My sisters in the East have been unstinting in their warmth of welcome, wisdom, and friendship and I am deeply grateful to them. Viva the movement, viva!

We now have two ordained priests in South Africa including myself and my colleague, Ann Ralston, who joined me in 2016. Each of us serve a community of spiritual seekers in different parts of the Cape. Soon we are to be joined by a third in Johannesburg. Bishop Patricia Fresen visits us each year, keeping a friendly and pastoral eye on each of us.

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Ministry of Irritation

The Movement for Women’s Equality in the Church Cannot Be Stopped
Marianne Duddy-Burke, Kate McElwee, Mary E. Hunt

As Catholic feminists and leaders of organizations committed to justice for women within our church as well as throughout society, we have followed Voices of Faith’s efforts to crack open the Vatican walls by sponsoring an annual forum about women inside one of the last remaining bastions of male domination in the western world. Since 2014, Voices of Faith has marked International Women’s Day (March 8) with an event that examines how the intersection of Catholic doctrine and practice impacts women globally. This year, the Vatican denied the women the use of a hall inside the walls due to Voices of Faith’s selection of speakers including former Irish President Mary McAleese and Ugandan Lesbian activist Ssenfuka Joanita W arry. Voices of Faith held its forum at the Jesuit Aula a short distance away. We applauded the decision to stick with speakers who would address issues in a way that challenged Vatican authority instead of replacing them with more “acceptable” individuals in order to be inside the walls. It is a sign of growth and integrity for Voices of Faith and a signal that our movements will not be dismissed or stopped.

Within the Aula, it was clear that both the location and the discourse shifted from previous programs. The opening video, which challenged the Vatican to catch up with the global empowerment of women, began the institutional church that characterized this fifth annual meeting. The room was remarkably quiet as Mary McAleese delivered her keynote address. She is a brilliant and passionate critic with the political experience, canon law credentials, Irish wit, experience as the mother of a gay child, and fire in the belly to tell it like it is in a memorable speech for the ages. Her own bishop, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, called it “brutally stark” and said that he must “accept the challenge with the humility of one who recognises her alienation.”

Ms. McAleeses’ speech plowed the soil for equally frank challenges to Vatican dogma and the explicit lifting up of issues that are fundamental concerns of women worldwide.

Other speakers addressed the ways in which Catholic hierarchicism and misogyny, in addition to creating a male-only clergy and decision-making body in the Church, underpin the exclusion of women from authority or even representation in education, business, and government. Speakers were not shy about pointing out how religious leaders, including Francis, when they endorse criminalization of homosexuality endanger life and safety. The most explicit refrain, perhaps the theme of the day was the many ways in which women seek sanctuary in the church, only to find further peril, the spiritual violence Catholic women experience in our spiritual home. Living one’s faith is a human right every day, every place, and that right is annulled.

This event also highlighted that the work of the church must be about many forms of justice, rather than about enforcing doctrinal ideology. The same misogyny that excludes women from ministerial and decision-making roles within the Roman Catholic Church is at the root of injustice around the world. For the millions of refugees driven from their homes due to war, famine, poverty, or human greed, for the millions of girls denied access to education, for the countless women who do not comply with misogynistic, heteronormative cultural expectations, for the billions of women who struggle to feed, house, and clothe their children, for women denied reproductive justice, for all of us living on a planet that is dying due to our failures of stewardship, there is critical need for an urgent response to the real dangers in this world. Arguing about whether women should be allowed to serve as deacons pales when and their children continue to die every day due to the ways we impoverish and victimize them.

This event, along with the work that movement organizations like ours rooted in the real needs of humans on a daily basis, highlight all the ways in which we too often ask the wrong questions and quibble over matters that obscure the most urgent questions. It illuminated the fallacy that “allowing” women into ministerial roles that offer opportunities for service while still banning their input into policy would be progress: visibility without voice can be more damag-

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South Africa continues to be a society of deep hurt. After three hundred years of colonialism and nearly forty years of apartheid, the struggle to erase racial prejudice and inequality is ongoing. I believe that one of our main priestly responsibilities in our current context is to hold the pain and contradictions of gender, class, and race that play out within our society, to witness to hope in situations which often appear hopeless, and to apply practical wisdom and compassionate care to those in most need.

Reflection

As I reflect on my spiritual and theological journey and hold it up alongside the vision and mission of RCWP, I feel a strong sense of having found a home for myself, where the integrity of each of the threads of my life are recognized and celebrated: the strands of my being as a woman, as a married woman, as a mother and grandmother, as a scholar, as a seeker after spiritual meaning and commitment, and one deeply immersed in healing and service in the world.

In its core values I find resonance with my own: that we are all equal before God and all may equally represent Christ; that Jesus modelled an inclusive and welcoming community, which is to serve as our template for church; that hierarchies and castes are fundamentally harmful to all people—both oppressor and oppressed; and that “othering,” whether based on gender, race or creed, speaks mostly to our own shadows and deepest longings for integration; and that a praxis that seeks to take on “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16) will advance the transformation of human structures, and now and in the future bring about the reign of God.

As I prostrated myself before the cross at my priestly ordination in September 2014, I invoked the memory of all our spiritual foremothers, but especially of Mary Magdalene, first witness to the risen Jesus and acknowledged “apostle to the apostles.” She continues to give me courage to face certain displeasure from those who do not trust the witness of women, and reminds me constantly that women, too, can be great friends of Jesus.

Mary Ryan, RCWP lives in Cape Town, South Africa.

It is our hope that the conversations sparked by the Voices of Faith continue around the world with a sense of urgency and conviction. The lives of our children and grandchildren depend upon it.

Marianne Duddy-Burke is executive director of DignityUSA. Kate McElwee is executive director of Women’s Ordination Conference (WOC). Mary E. Hunt is a feminist theologian who is co-founder and co-director of the Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) in Silver Spring, Maryland.


The Movement for Women’s Equality...continued from page 8

visibility without voice can be more damaging than total exclusion

Come to
The Table:
Where all are welcome to participate.

And talking religion is always proper etiquette.

Join the conversation at womensordination.org/blog

Prophetic Obedience in South Africa...continued from page 7

"othering," whether based on gender, race or creed, speaks mostly to our own shadows and deepest longings for integration;
**News & Notes**

**From WOC’s Intern Caroline Condon**

For three months, from the end of January to the end of April, WOC was lucky to employ Caroline Condon as an intern. “My experience has been filled with wonderful opportunities to learn and grow,” said Caroline. “I feel fortunate to have been exposed to such a worthy mission and to support an organization that ensures strategic alignment with their values at all times. It has been a joy to connect with people across the globe who actively support Women’s Ordination Conference’s mission.”

Caroline undertook a variety of projects under the direction of ED Kate McElwee, working mostly on social media posts and marketing. She was grateful for the “autonomy and flexibility with hours which helped me hone my time management skills and broadened my creativity.” We will miss Caroline but are glad that she has found a full time position supporting girls’ education.

**Meet Katie Lacz, WOC’s New Program Associate**

I join the team at WOC with deep joy and gratitude for the opportunity to be at the forefront of the movement for women’s equality in the Catholic Church. As a cradle Catholic, I have the lived experience—echoed by so many of you—of loving the church that is my home and experiencing pain at the ways it has limited the roles of women.

That love compelled me to join the Jesuit Volunteer Corps after college as a community organizer against the death penalty; to pursue a calling to a campus ministry role in faith and justice at Regis University in Denver; and to work with young adults called to serve those who are poor through the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers. I studied for and earned an M.Div. at the Jesuit School of Theology (JST) of Santa Clara University in Berkeley, Calif, in order to more deeply understand the church and gain the footing I needed to lovingly challenge it to wholeness and justice.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to explore my own vocation through preaching and presiding at lay-led liturgies at JST, as well as at the Boulder Community in Discernment, a small faith community similar to the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. I feel a deep call to support women in their discernment of and journey toward ordained ministry, and am incredibly lucky to do this in a new way at WOC.

I currently live in Colorado with my husband and two young children. I also have a part-time practice as a spiritual director, including working with women incarcerated in Denver. I have been humbled by the warm welcome I have received from WOC members already, and am eager to get to know you better and serve you to the best of my ability.

**Announcing our newest Advisory Board members**

Regina Bannan, PhD., Southeastern Pennsylvania Women’s Ordination Conference

In the Catholic church, priesthood is power. No decision-making structures include anyone who is not ordained. For the good of the whole church, women need to be empowered within it.”

Regina Bannan, Ph.D. is a retired American and Women’s Studies professor at Temple University and past Board President of WOC. She is on the coordinating council of Southeastern Pennsylvania WOC and represents SEPAWOC at the Catholic Organizations for Renewal meetings. Regina is a longtime activist and now writes weekly for the WOC blog, The Table.

Sr. Teresa Forcades, MD, PhD, OSB

“The Roman Catholic church, which is my church, is misogynist and patriarchal in its structure. That needs to be changed as quickly as possible.”

Teresa Forcades i Vila, O.S.B. is a Catalan physician and a Benedictine nun. She is a social activist, and feminist theologian, with a focus on public health and queer theologies. Teresa presented a keynote address at the Women’s Ordination Worldwide conference in 2015.

Jamie Manson, M.Div, National Catholic Reporter

“Women’s ordination isn’t simply about making women priests. It’s about helping church leaders recognize that if they were to include women in their leadership as their equals, they could truly be a powerful force for economic and social justice for women and children throughout our world.”

Jamie Manson is a columnist and books editor at the National Catholic Reporter. She received her Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, where she studied Catholic theology and sexual ethics. She is editor of Changing the Questions: Explorations in Christian Ethics, a collection of writings by Margaret Farley (Orbis, 2015). Her activism on behalf of women in the church garnered her the Theresa Kane Award for Women of Courage and Vision from the Women’s Ordination Conference.
forgiveness, destine this work to be a post-modern spiritual classic.” I stand by that claim!
Teresa, thank you for taking time from your schedule in Germany to be with us. We only wish you were here in the office where you have been before, at our table having lunch and discussing the many issues we face as conscious and conscientious feminists. We wish you a wonderful time there with Christmas Markets and music. We look forward to your insights on our topic, “Medieval Feminist Monasticism: Did it Exist and Can it Be Relevant Today?”
It might seem that our topic today is a little off base, far from the mark. That could be considered if the writer of the piece, our speaker today, were not Teresa Forcades, a friend of WATER from Catalonia who is deeply immersed in the problems of our dear world. Welcome, Teresa.
Teresa Forcades: Thank you, Mary, for this opportunity. I’ll imagine I’m sitting at the table with you. You said my topic is off the mark in the sense that we have so many pressing issues today. So why should anyone care about medieval feminist monasticism? As Alice Walker showed us, it is important to cultivate our mothers’ and grandmothers’ gardens. I think for any feminist today it is important to know more about the women of the past, to see that they are not strangers from another world, but people who can give us strength, courage, and humor to deepen and strengthen our world today.
Is it an anachronism to try and speak of feminism in an era when it did not exist yet? To me, it’s not a matter of names, but what the name means. In a previous book I wrote, Feminist Theology in History, I found that whenever there is a church that precludes women from tasks and responsibilities just because of being women, which is a simple way to speak of patriarchy, immediately women (and also men) appear, now and in the past, that find this unacceptable. When discrimination is justified in the name of God and theology, then those who argue against it can be called not only feminists, even though the name didn’t exist until the end of the 19th Century, but feminists. That is my position today: women who have understood the problem of discrimination against women being justified in the name of God.
I gave a text about Gertrude of Helfta to read. I think it can be inspiring for feminists today. I would like to speak of another woman, Isabel de Villena, abess of a monastery that still exists today, located in the city of Valencia, Spain, south of Barcelona. She lived in the 15th Century. Isabel de Villena dealt with a misogynistic text written by the doctor in the monastery, Jaume Roig, a satirical book called Espír or Mirror. The abess published this book in response about the life of Jesus written from the perspective of the women who met Jesus. One of the best-written biographies of Christ happens to be from the perspective of women! It can be read in English in a selection of texts. I’m not sure if it’s fully translated, but there are translations of selected texts: Vita Christi.
I want to mention some places where shows a different view on some well-known passages. For example, the figures of Adam and Eve. Is Eve understood as an example of a guilty woman? A woman that does not behave as she should, or as a symbol of wickedness, deceit, mistrust, negative aspects of our being human?
In her book, Isabel de Villena describes scenes where Eve and Jesus happen to meet each other. This is undoing the theology of Eve as a villain. De Villena is doing something that in Christian theology should be obvious but is an exception: she applies to Eve the Christian idea that sin is overcome by grace and guilt by forgiveness. So she concludes that whatever Eve did, she is now free by grace and nobody can be a Christian without acknowledging that Eve is fully redeemed and her daughters have not inherited any guilt from her. Eve’s relationship with Jesus is not one of blame, but an example for all Christians: whoever wants to honor Christ cannot do so without honoring Eve as the mother of all and without loving and respecting all women as Jesus did.
How can it be that even for 21st century readers it’s shocking to read these texts? Her literary and theological work depicts Jesus as someone who respects women, with no presence of mistrust or criticism against them. Isabel de Villena also deals with Mary. There have always been these images of Mary as the mother of God, the saintly woman, and Eve as the wicked woman. In this text by Isabel de Villena, Eve and Mary find each other and love each other. They happily embrace each other and Mary calls Eve her mother, acknowledging her as her own mother in a shockingly positive way.
Whenever we do theology, we are basically filling in the gaps. It’s impossible to do theology without filling in the gaps. There are ways of filling in the gaps that have been consecrated by tradition and go along with power structures of church and society. There are ways of filling in the gaps that sound unbelievable or implausible. But why? Because they don’t fit within the social structures of our day. Hermeneutics, interpreting the texts, filling in the gaps is important because we have to be responsible for our own interpretations. We can never have a final, once and for all interpretation. Every generation needs to interpret anew. What is it that God speaks to the world? This does not happen through a dead text. It needs a living interpretation, which happens through community.
The third example that Isabel de Villena writes about is Mary Magdalene. This text is a joy for me to read. She deals with Resurrection Sunday when she finds Jesus’ tomb empty. This thing happens where she sees a man who she confuses for the garden keeper, but in reality it’s Jesus. She asks him if he’s seen Jesus’ body. And then comes this moment where this man speaks her name to her. This is when Mary recognizes that this is Jesus. Then Mary tries to embrace Jesus, and he says, “don’t touch me.”
This is an interesting sentence theologically. “Don’t touch me because I have not yet gone to the Father.” What interests me is that usually most interpreters assume that this is what happened. But Isabel de Villena isn’t satisfied with this explanation. In her usual sobering and unrestricted way of writing, she explains that Mary Magdalene convinces Jesus that an embrace is necessary. It comes not as a source of temptation but as a source of an expression of love and a welcoming of the resurrected Jesus. So in her text, Magdalene and Jesus embrace one another. This shows Jesus together with women in a way that goes beyond some of the stumbling blocks of classical patriarchal interpretation, which asks what we should do with the body. Instead of asking this, the possibility of experiencing the body as our freedom and capacity to love is put forth.

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Women for the Church Manifesto

"Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman" (1 Cor 11,11-12)

Who We Are

We are women believers, we are followers of Jesus, in love with the Church, with our families, with vulnerable and harmless people; but we are also in love with our strength, energy and intelligence that are gifts from God. We want to offer everything that we are to the Church, to society, and to our families, without belittling ourselves in order to please someone else. We do not need to identify with a standard model, but we claim the chance to build our personal and unrepeatable path: unique as is every person, woman, sister, daughter, wife and mother. We love the motherhood that the Lord has entrusted to us, but we are aware that it is much bigger and more radiating than physical maternity: for this reason we try to be generative in every situation of our lives, including places of work and of political and social commitment.

We claim our assertiveness as a resource for our communities and we do not accept to appear weak just to flatter the male strength. We love men and we stand next to them with love, co-responsibility, respect and esteem. In the same way we want to offer our cooperation to our Ministers, made up of reciprocity, appreciation of differences, and mutual respect and esteem.

We are aware that in some ecclesial realities the situation is evolving; but meanwhile, as adult women, every day we experience the subordinate role of the woman in the Church, making us feel more and more out of place and inadequate. We suffer the inability of being seen and appreciated for our capabilities and skills, and this often deprives us of a real recognition. We see that the women exist in the community as long as they solve the problems of the men, who are the protagonists; only the men.

Whether it is the parish oratory, the ecclesial movements or theological schools, the proposed feminine model is always that of a “crutch” supporting the male figure (presbyters, teachers, or husbands). There are no glimmers for feminine skills to go beyond procreation, caring, or support for men, except for those who seriously renounce to their womanliness.

Along our paths we have seen how the faith of the woman and the adherence to any vocation she embraces are considered to be inferior, of lower quality than those of men, except in special and culturally stereotyped cases.

In our communities, a real respect to the women is often missing, whether they are single, married or divorced: in the first case, they are NOT resources to be exploited - “they have nothing to do” -; in the second case they are NOT “just” mums and wives; in the third case they do NOT deserve to be judged for what they are not, but should be recognized for what they are and do.

When it comes to decision making, there is no space for the original contribution of women, their vision of life, their ability to face the situations with a creative approach, from within the relationships, thus precluding the chance to break worn-out and ineffective frameworks of action, in order to create new opportunities for community growth.

We want to say that what is at stake is not just the waste of talents, the lack of respect and the blaming of all those who are not within the frame of pious and devoted wife/mother (all things that are already good themselves), but above all there is a deep unfaithfulness to the Gospel, to the way chosen by Jesus for dealing with women, to Mary’s strength, to the good news of the announced by Mary Magdalene.

We Ask:

- Respect for our commitment, the chance to render a service coherent with our competences and abilities
- That Presbyters, to whom our communities are entrusted, understand and appreciate the feminine, that they have a healthy and peaceful relationship with women, that they are psychologically mature people
- That feminine vocational research be taken into consideration, because it has opened new and more articulated horizons, in a maturation of perspective that needs attention and answers
- To recognize the possibility for the women to get nearer to the core of the ecclesial life, and to assign the right value to the authentic desire of the women to take part in a more active ministerial role, including the sacramental one. Therefore it is legitimate and is for the good for the whole Church to begin to conceive concrete answers in this area

We are not substitutes for action, but we can “invent” new forms that enrich the Church.

We do not seek positions of power, but to be fully recognized as God’s daughters and as members of the community co-equal with men.

For this we are ready to be at the service of the church with three criteria:

- Assertiveness: we are not afraid to propose and ask for recognition of what we do and offer to the community
- Freedom: our actions are not aimed at conquering power positions, so we are in conditions of non-blackmail
- Women’s alliance: where we are and among us, we choose to be allies with the sisters we meet and, above all, we choose not to fall into rivalry between women in order to obtain male approval

For this:

- We, adult women who have lived and still are living their own faith journey, decided to meet to share and exchange opinions and we are ready to welcome all those who will decide to join us
- We want to express a clear message about the kind of womanhood we think the Church needs
- We want to be known in order to prove that inside the Church there are women who do not submit themselves, and try to call other sisters who feel disoriented by this traditionalistic wave
- We don’t give up insisting in consequential and legitimate requests, such as being ordained to render woman-presbiteral service


This manifesto had been signed by 87 European women as we went to press.
Despite 2017 being the third hottest year on record, large swaths of California going up in flames, and massive storms flooding Houston, South Florida and Puerto Rico, a majority of U.S. Christians still aren’t much concerned about climate change. Like most problems, the causes of this one are complex. But as historian Lynn White argued already in 1967, a major reason for this deadly apathy is the dualism between spirit and matter that permeates much Christian thinking.

More than half a century after Lynn White’s provocative indictment of dualism, ecofeminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson, in her splendid new book, Creation and the Cross, offers a remedy. White focused on the “dominion theory,” the Christian belief that God had given humans “dominion” over all earth’s creatures. Johnson homes in on another source of the human/nature binary, this one devised by the eleventh-century theologian, Anselm of Canterbury—the “satisfaction theory” of redemption. According to this theory, Jesus died on the cross to atone—to pay the debt owed to God—for human sin. And since the rest of creation—animals, plants, all biotic entities—cannot sin, redemption, salvation, the essence of the Christian faith, applies to humans, and humans alone.

But, Johnson argues compellingly, redemption is about a great deal more than human sin; it’s about the compassionate mercy of God for all of creation, groaning and longing together for liberation from suffering. In her usual clear and frequently lyric style, Johnson draws on the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament to demonstrate that such a redemption of all creation has been part of the Christian tradition from the outset. She calls this understanding of redemption “accompaniment theology.”

My favorite chapter in Johnson’s delineation of this accompaniment theology of redemption is the next-to-the-last one, “God of All Flesh: Deep Incarnation.” The creator God Jesus Christ is, Johnson explains, the God of all flesh, with flesh not signifying sin alone, as the dualism between spirit and matter suggests, but the finitude and death suffered by all creation, including God’s own son. But with the resurrection, this “flesh was called to life again in transformed glory.” And, as St. Paul writes, the hope promised to all in this transformation “has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven.”

One of the interesting characteristics of Creation and the Cross is Johnson’s use in it of a question and answer format, adopted, ironically enough, from the very book in which Anselm of Canterbury presents his satisfaction theory. Anselm says that he uses this format to make his thought accessible, and that is surely what Johnson is doing as well.

The argument that creation is at the heart of the faith is by no means a new one for Johnson; it plays a central role in a number of her earlier works, most recently, Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love (2014). And her claim that God suffers with all creation was precisely what caused the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to condemn her 2011 book, Quest for the Living God. That condemnation was based in the same dualist notion that suffering is exclusively the result of sin as Anselm’s satisfaction theory, a notion Laudato Si’ has surely laid to rest.

But moving the symbol of the cross into the center of her theology makes that theology available to a much wider range of readers than her previous books did. May the compassionate Redeemer of all creation convert us, Catholics and Protestants alike, from apathy to a passionate concern about climate change and the other environmental crises that confront us.


Reviewed by Sheila Peiffer

we come to realize that there is compelling evidence that women may have been more active than men in the early Church figures—and each category of ornamentation is dissected and analyzed. While the archaeological particulars may at times become overwhelming to the casual reader, the scholarly attention to detail is what yields the compelling evidence that women were, indeed, esteemed figures of biblical learnedness and religious authority.

Schenk balances the archaeological fine points with helpful summaries of the Greco-roman culture in which Christianity took root and some of the early church politics and theological debates that bear on the history of the suppression of women’s roles. Chapter 8, in particular, brings to life some important Church Mothers whom we should all know more about, like Macrina (both of them!), Melania (both of them!), Olympias, Proba, and others. We also learn how Pope Damasus (305-384) systematically altered the catacombs to promote male martyrs and suppress the memory of early women martyrs and powerful female patrons and how in the 4th century we see the beginning of the “distressing tendency on the part of churchmen to symbolically associate the female sex *per se* with heresy.”

After reading *Crispina and Her Sisters*, I not only plan to book a trip to Rome as soon as possible to see this fascinating array of catacomb depictions in person, I also want to know more about these many accomplished, courageous, and generous women who helped to shape the spirituality, theology, and social mission of the early Church. Schenck is cautious and does not use the contemporary word “priest,” but we know that, as she says, we need to reclaim these “countless women who witness that they are made in God’s image and called to serve in *persona Christi*."

Sheila Peiffer is a co-editor of NWNC, and serves as President of WOC’s board of directors. She lives in Connecticut with her husband, Steven, a Methodist minister. They have four children and five grandchildren.
Reviewed by Kate Kelly

**Spoiler Alert.** If you have not yet seen the film and do not want plot points to be pre-emptively revealed, return to this article after you’ve seen the film.

As a woman who was excommunicated for advocating for female ordination in my own church, I was particularly primed to enjoy the film “Created Equal” enthusiastically. I went to see it during its New York premier with another friend from Ordain Women, a movement I founded to advocate for Mormon women to be ordained. We were excited for the film because not many understand the issue of fighting for gender equality in a faith context. So I am always thrilled to see the issues religious women face brought to mainstream media venues.

**its approach to the wildly complicated lives of faithful feminists fell flat**

While the film is well acted and poignant at times, its approach to the wildly complicated lives of faithful feminists fell flat. The plot follows a young nun, Alejandra Batista (Edy Ganem), who works as a teacher in a Catholic elementary school but wants to be ordained a priest. She is sincere and faithful and tells the priest in the film that she wants to lead. This nun aspiring to the priesthood connects with a young, brash, playwright lawyer named Tommy Reilly (Aarón Tveit), who represents her in her legal case against the Church. I am a lawyer, and know that legal dramas typically deviate from actual courtroom procedure, so I’ll set the legal issues with the fictional case aside.

As soon as lawyer Tommy Reilly comes on screen, the entire plot revolves not around the ostensible subject of the movie—a woman seeking gender justice—but around the deeply flawed, yet gentle man trying to save her. I was honestly surprised to see this type of tired old trope in a movie purporting to be about such a progressive feminist issue. The pair go back and forth throughout the film, but oddly the primary conflict seems to be the impact of the male attorney’s relationship with Catholicism, not the protagonist. In fact, after the screening, the actor Aarón Tveit said that that’s one thing that attracted him to the script as a Catholic man that it “showed how both sides are equally right.” It took all of my willpower not to jump up and interrupt him and shout, “No! There are not two equal sides to this story. Gender discrimination is never ‘right.’”

After a series of events, and at the conclusion of the film, the nun loses her case. Completely implausibly, she goes back to work at the Catholic elementary school as if nothing had happened. She surrounds herself with children and shrugs, as if to say that they have “lived to fight another day.” I know that this is a drama and not a documentary film, but this tone-deaf conclusion absolutely floored me. I asked in the Q & A if the film makers thought that was a realistic ending to the Catholic Church being sued in federal court. They seemed to shrug it off, not even considering how extraordinarily caustic an adversarial relationship like that would become.

The irony of a film about a woman whose entire life is mediated by male leaders being filmed largely from the perspective of a man was not lost on me.

While I am excited to see that the topic of female ordination caught the attention of the filmmakers enough to pursue it, I was let down by the framing and the final product. I think more stories about women religious need to be told from the perspective of women. Our stories represent the universal struggle of people realizing they are part of an institution that discriminates against them and we need to see them courageously standing up to those injustices. That story arch can appeal to people across the board, regardless of religion. I hope more films are made that do better justice to this struggle. Kate Kelly is an international human rights attorney and the current U.S. Human Rights Fellow at Columbia Law School’s Human Rights Institute. She founded a movement called Ordain Women to advocate for gender justice in the Mormon Church and was excommunicated in 2014.
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