

NCR on women's ordination: What took you so long?

Maureen Fiedler | Dec. 4, 2012 NCR Today

First, let me be clear: I am delighted that the *National Catholic Reporter* has formally, on its editorial page, endorsed the ordination of women in the Catholic church. It's about time.

But I was surprised to find out that *NCR* had not done that already. *NCR*'s coverage of these issues (conferences and demonstrations sponsored by the Women's Ordination Conference, theologians under fire on this issue, etc.) has been generally so positive that I thought *NCR* had already made its official views known.

I was wrong. Apparently, *NCR* had not heretofore endorsed women's ordination, and if I'm reading between the lines correctly, the case of Roy Bourgeois pushed the editorial board over the edge to come out with open advocacy for women's ordination.

God love Roy. He's a friend of mine. But he is not the first to be persecuted by the church for this; the editorial points out the case of Sr. Carmel McEnroy, and Sr. Louise Lears also comes to mind. Bill Callahan is another case in point, though the excuse used for expelling him from the Jesuits was not as clear as in Roy's case. And there have been countless others. But I'm left to wonder: Did the persecution of a *man* make a difference? OK, maybe not, but I'm just wondering.

But even before the days when people were generally persecuted for advocating for women's ordination, the theological writing was on the wall. Serious studies of scripture, the history of women filling priestly roles in the early church, and the bedrock Christian view that all human beings are equal before God left the Vatican without a biblical or theological leg to stand on. And the claim that priests had to be in the image of Christ, who was male, generally sent people I know into gales of laughter.

So I'm delighted to see *NCR* formally join the ranks on this issue. It took only 37 years since the Vatican first issued its big "no," and I guess in "church time," that is short!

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