NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

A lament over the silencing of brothers

Thomas C. Fox | Dec. 18, 2012 NCR Today

The decision in October by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to remove longtime peace advocate Roy Bourgeois [1] from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers upset many Catholics.

Bourgeois was singled out for having participated in the ordination of Roman Catholic Womanpriest Janice Sevre-Duszynska in August 2008. Shortly after, Bourgeois was notified by the Vatican that he had incurred a *latae sententiae*, or automatic, excommunication for his participation.

Then last month, Jesuit Fr. Bill Brennan, a 92-year-old Milwaukee-area priest, was informed [2]he could no longer celebrate Mass or perform any other priestly duties after it was disclosed he had participated in a eucharistic liturgy with a woman priest.

It seems priests will be singled out as long as they associate with women priest liturgies. It also seems the conflict between advocates of an inclusive priesthood and those who support an entirely male priesthood in the Catholic church will not die out soon.

One small example: A few days back I received an email from Jim Ewens, a former Jesuit living in North Lake, Wis. He wrote what he called a "Hopkinsian lament," wondering out loud why more religious had not spoken out against the way the Vatican had treated Bourgeois and Brennan. This is Ewens' lament.

A Hopkinsian Lament over the Silencing of Brothers

Is there not one, nowhere, no how, not (even) a single Jesuit -- or two --
In the entire Great Lakes province who might dare, so to speak, up, out --
Finding some way to stand forth and say:

"Yes, I do support my brother, Bill Brennan S.J., his friends, Roy Bourgeois,
Jerry Zawada, O.S.F. , the NCR Editorial [3]Statement -- the
600 Austrian and 1,000 Irish priests -- in stating that it is well past time
To ordain women to priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church."

I mean, if not now, when? At 75, 87, 92? Wholly retired, slipping Into
Dementia? At any rate, well past when most other Catholics in the country
Or world will have approved the rightness of overturning this massive wrong.

True, there might, in time, be charges, losses, challenges, repercussions.
As there were back in the 60s for hundreds of thousands who sat in at
Lunch counters, marched, rode in the front of buses, for months, years,
Until laws were passed, freedoms won, for millions. We were with them, then.

Why not now? In large numbers. The Sisters of Mercy [4]across the country
Have seen fit to do so. The American Catholic Council concurred as well.
Are Jesuits different, quieter, unable, unwilling? But since when -- and why?
It could be changed. By one, two at a time, then some more. This Advent.
Talk more about elephants in the rec room. Then, stand up, move them out.

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