

[Opinion](#)

[News](#)

[Spirituality](#)



(Unsplash/Olivia Snow)



Tom Roberts

[View Author Profile](#)

[troberts@ncronline.org](mailto:troberts@ncronline.org)



Joan Chittister

[View Author Profile](#)

Follow on Twitter at [@joanchittister](#)

## [\*\*Join the Conversation\*\*](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

December 11, 2024

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

As a young sister teaching school, Joan Chittister one evening came across the small book, *Women and the Church*, by Sr. A.M. McGrath, a Dominican sister and a Ph.D. historian and chair at the time of the history department at Rosary College.

The book, published in 1976, is a piercing march through the church's historical attitudes about women, a mixture of deep history and polemic. Chittister read it in one sitting, and the book lined out a part of the path she took in advocating for women.

"It marked me," Joan says of the book during this episode. "It marked me inside myself. Actually, I never forget the woman. I still have the book. I consider it a moment of grace for me."

Her commitment to women and their place in the church and the wider world led her to such moments as the 1995 U.N. conference on women in Beijing.

She still feels the negative effects of being a woman in the Catholic Church but she also thinks on many levels and in society, things have changed for the better from the time she came across the McGrath volume.

"Risking the Questions" is a joint project of [Benetvision](#) and NCR. This podcast has been made possible in part by the generosity of Bill and Jeanne Buchanan.

## **How to Listen**

Click the "play" button inside this article to start the show. Make sure to keep the window open on your browser if you're doing other things, or the audio will stop.

*From your mobile device:*

You can listen and subscribe to "Risking the Questions" from any podcast app. If you're reading this from an iPhone or other Apple mobile device, tap this [link](#) to listen in Apple Podcasts. The podcast is also available on Spotify, at this [link](#).

If you prefer another podcast app, you can find "Risking the Questions" there.

This story appears in the **Risking the Questions** feature series. [View the full series.](#)