

**In an article from the *Boston Globe*, the Rev. Roy Bourgeois continues to speak out on behalf of women's ordination.**

**Priest takes church to task for not ordaining women  
Won't recant despite excommunication**

by Michael Paulson, August 24, 2009

WESTON - A prominent priest whose support for women's ordination has him in trouble with the Catholic Church ratcheted up his confrontation with the hierarchy yesterday, calling the church's refusal to ordain women a "scandal" and "spiritual violence."

"I will not be silenced on this issue," said the priest, the Rev. Roy Bourgeois, to about 100 people in Weston at an event hosted by the congregation of Jean Marchant, a former staffer for the Archdiocese of Boston who claims she was ordained as a priest in an unsanctioned ceremony four years ago.

The Catholic Church views Marchant and Bourgeois as having been automatically excommunicated for participating in unsanctioned ordination ceremonies.

Yesterday Bourgeois said he remained unclear about his status because he has had no formal communication from his order, the Maryknoll Fathers, or from the Vatican, which last fall told him he would face excommunication if he did not recant.

"If they choose to kick me out of the church because I believe that men and women are equal, so be it," Bourgeois said. "I will never be at peace being in any organization that would exclude others.

"What's going on in our church today is spiritual assassination, it's spiritual violence being done that's inexcusable. That is a scandal," he said.

The Archdiocese of Boston yesterday declined to comment on the event in Weston, referring instead to a statement it issued last year saying, "The ordination of men to the priesthood is not merely a matter of practice or discipline within the Catholic Church, but rather, it is part of the unalterable Deposit of Faith handed down by Christ through his apostles."

And in 1994, Pope John Paul II declared that "the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women," citing both tradition and the fact that Jesus' apostles were male.

For their part, advocates for women's ordination say Jesus also had women in his inner circle, that polls show most American Catholics support their cause, and that the church faces a crushing shortage of priests.

But church officials say women play other valuable roles in the church, and the answer to the priest shortage is a combination of prayer and efforts to help young men recognize and accept callings to the priesthood.

Bourgeois is the first Catholic priest in good standing to participate in an unsanctioned ordination ceremony held by advocates of women's ordination. He took part in a ceremony in Kentucky last summer.

In an interview yesterday, Bourgeois, 70, a Louisiana native, said he has stopped wearing a clerical collar and celebrating the Eucharist and other sacraments out of respect for the church's view that he has been excommunicated.

But, he also said at one point, simply, "I am a priest."

He said he is confident his position on women priests is the correct one.

"If anyone should be excommunicated, it is the patriarchy involved in this discrimination," he said. "But I don't believe in excommunication - no one has a monopoly on the truth." Bourgeois said he is winning some support from other priests.

He said five priests around the country have agreed to go public with their support for women's ordination, and yesterday's gathering drew at least three archdiocesan priests, none of whom would comment publicly. ...

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**Also from the *Globe*, the following editorial about Senator Edward Kennedy.**

**Edward Kennedy, 1932-2009**  
**August 27, 2009**

TED KENNEDY was not a great man. The extraordinary events of his life clashed with his human frailties, and the frailties sometimes won. He had real talent as a legislative politician, but for his first few decades seemed destined mainly to be someone's kid brother.

There was nothing modest, though, about Ted Kennedy's accomplishments or the hard work that went into them. There was nothing modest about his compassion for those without means, for whom he toiled most of his life. There was nothing modest about his love of his family, and the way that devotion spurred him past his very real failures and frailties to amass a legacy to match that of any Massachusetts politician, including his brothers.

He staked his career to the highest goals of liberalism, and defended those goals through decades when his views were not shared by most, or even that many, of his fellow citizens. While he could have simply chosen to be the liberal movement's spiritual leader, he opted instead to spend most of his life in the legislative trenches, fighting, bill by bill, to provide government aid to people in need of health care, education, and a road out of poverty. The programs he championed may not have solved those problems, but they brought tangible assistance to millions whose lives would have been far more difficult if not for Kennedy's exertions on their behalf.

Now is a time to think, too, of the millions of people with cancer whose treatments were developed with billions of research dollars for which Kennedy was the leading - and most relentless - advocate. Of the people with the AIDS virus for whom Kennedy was instrumental in securing government funding that now covers half of all Americans living with HIV. Of the millions of people with disabilities whose lives were transformed by his

advocacy for the Americans with Disabilities Act. And of the tens of millions of Americans whose immigration to the United States from continents other than Europe would not have been possible without the Immigration Act of 1965 that Kennedy sponsored.

In retrospect, the defining moment of Ted Kennedy's life came in June 1968. His brother Bobby was assassinated in Los Angeles, and Ted, at 36, suddenly realized that his life would no longer be his own. Most people spend their careers trying to match their skills to endeavors that are meaningful and rewarding to them. Ted Kennedy wouldn't have that luxury: He would have to realize not only his own ambitions but those of his hard-driving parents and his martyred older brothers. Then there were the 13 fatherless children who would rely on him, as much as his own three kids. There were also the thousands of former officials from the Kennedy administration for whom he would be a leader. And there were the tens of millions of Americans who believed that only another Kennedy presidency could cure the ills of the '60s - that only a Kennedy could speak to the young and the old, the hawks and the doves, the people of all races striving for fairness and dignity.

Kennedy spent some of that summer of 1968 sailing by himself in silent contemplation, adrift in a world he couldn't control and which seemed at any moment ready to kill him. It turned out not to be his death but his survival of a car crash on Chappaquiddick Island in 1969 that marked his fate. His failure to immediately assume responsibility for the accident that killed a young woman in the car he was driving gravely damaged his chances of being president. Worse, the implication that he was thinking of his political interests rather than the woman's life during the eight hours that the crash went unreported followed him all his years, even though friends insist that the judgment was unfair. He had suffered a concussion. He wasn't himself.

His only presidential campaign ended in failure, and, during his middle years, his personal life was usually raucous, sometimes embarrassing, and often unhappy. But it was during those years, as well, that he made his loneliest and most courageous stands, building coalitions to preserve the civil rights legacy of the '60s from the Reagan administration's attempts to dismantle it.

In his later decades, with strength from his second marriage and a ripening paternal relationship with the Commonwealth and its citizens, he reached a new level of effectiveness in the Senate, helping to bring health care to more children while improving benefits for elderly Americans, and increasing federal aid to education. He also drew on his experience of repeatedly having to summon strength amid tragedies to help other individuals in the Commonwealth cope with their own losses. Like his weekly appointment to read to schoolchildren, these daily phone calls to grieving constituents attested to his strength of character and the depth of his commitment to other people.

Human frailties kept Kennedy from being the leader that his most feverish admirers imagined that he would be. But his humanity also redeemed him. Often described as the most thoughtful and empathetic of the Kennedy brothers, and the most loving uncle to his large family, Kennedy bridged the gap between personal kindness and the politics of compassion. When pushing legislation full of complex formulas and percentages, he could always tell exactly how many families would benefit. He saw past the numbers to the souls in need. Those people, like so many of his Massachusetts constituents of almost 47 years, owe him their enduring respect and gratitude.

He made Massachusetts larger in the world of politics, and in its commitment to the highest aspirations of fairness, equal opportunity, and concern for the disadvantaged.

The state already feels smaller without him.

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**“Prayers for Agnostics and the Puzzled” by Daniel O’Rourke, appears in *The Observer*, Dunkirk, New York**

08/27/09

I just finished watching a DVD of “The Boy in the Striped Pajamas.” More than anything on the holocaust I’ve seen or read, that movie gave it a human face. It also helped me recall the story about a group of Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz who met secretly at night in their dormitory. This particular night they met to put God on trial. They argued that if God were really all-powerful and loving, they would never be suffering the chilling evils of slave labor, starvation, gas chambers and genocide.

They argued that God was responsible. Even if He only created human beings capable of such evil, He permitted it; He could have prevented it, therefore He was culpable. After much discussion, they took a vote. They agreed. God was guilty and condemned Him to death. The conversation continued, until one of the elders said, “This discussion has gone on long enough; we have to stop. IT IS TIME FOR THE EVENING PRAYER.”

How does anyone pray in the light of life’s atrocities? William Cleary in his powerful, little book gives us such prayers. (*We Side With the Morning: Daily Prayers to the God of Hope* Sorin Books: Notre Dame, Indiana, 2009.) Cleary’s prayers consistently acknowledge his bafflement with the realities of war, terror, famine and genocide, but even in face of these evils his puzzled heart cries out in prayer. His prayers are a fitting prayer book for agnostics.

In the light of life’s horrors and history’s evils, many are puzzled about a silent god. It is difficult to estimate the number of agnostics in this country. A lot depends on the terminology in the questionnaires (humanists, freethinkers, agnostics, skeptics, atheists, naturalists, secularists?). Much also depends on what questions are asked, who asks them -- and how they’re asked. But no matter what statistics you consider, great populations of people are uncomfortable even speaking ABOUT God let alone speaking TO the Mystery. They should sample this book. We all should really. Many believers and many atheists are really agnostics. As Dan Brown has his fictional pope say in “Angels and Demons,” “The questions are more powerful than the answers.” That’s true for all of us, but especially for doubters and deniers. The book will surprise its readers. Listen to this example.

“Darker realities awaken too, but we side with the morning, with the urgent sun, with life Immeasurable.” The title of Bill Cleary’s collection of daily prayers comes from this January 4th prayer. In the midst of life’s darkness and sorrows, His prayers side with the light and joy of life. Faced with death and loss his prayers emphasize existence and hope. Indeed, the book’s subtitle is “Prayers to the God of Hope.” The subtitle is accurate, but it could just as truthfully have been entitled, “Prayers to the God of Silence and Mystery.”

The prayers are really addressed to Meister Eckhart's "Godhead beyond god." With a poet's pen and mystic's insight, Cleary's prayers lift up a song of gratitude through a cloud of unknowing to the Beneficent but Deepest Mystery. Cleary's prayers pulsate with gratitude for existence, for creation, for life, for "all that has been and all that will be." Hope and gratitude are braided together and draw us, willing or not, to the Ineffable Source.

Citing Augustine of Hippo, Cleary asks rhetorically have you really made us for thyself, O Lord? Are our hearts forever restless till they rest in Thee? His answer is a tentative "yes," acknowledging our insatiable appetite for life that we hope will be fulfilled in the incomprehensible depth of life's Source.

Cleary's prayers, however, also have a practical bent. He prays, "Send us prophetic people, Holy One ... lest the killing wars continue and thousands more die needlessly. It cannot be your will that so much violence prevail, or that the strong and lucky dominate. Grace us with leaders who love and revere the challenge of making peace. Amen."

For those of us whose God is too immense to be defined by our simplistic catechisms or academic theologies -- or too mysterious to be adequately expressed in the rites and prayers of our limiting religions, this is our prayer book. It will stir up our hope and help us "side with the morning."

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**They make so much noise it is a surprise that they are a minority.**

### **Bishop decries 'combative tactics' of a minority of U.S. bishops**

by Tom Roberts, National Catholic Reporter Editor at large

A majority of U.S. bishops disagree with the loud tactics of some of their peers in opposing President Barack Obama's May appearance at the University of Notre Dame, but remain silent because they do not want to engage in a public battle over the issue, according to Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, NM.

In an Aug. 12 interview at archdiocesan headquarters here with *NCR*, Sheehan took the opportunity to decry the combative tactics of what he described as a minority of U.S. bishops who spoke out against the university's invitation and issuance of an honorary degree. Many urged the university to rescind the invitation because of Obama's opposition to criminalizing abortion.

Sheehan said he spoke out strongly against the strategy during the bishops' meeting in June in San Antonio. According to reports from *NCR*'s John Allen at the time, some bishops said privately that they were appalled at the conduct of the most vocal opponents and others said the debate had become too narrow and partisan, but the issue was never brought up in public session. The bishops interviewed at the time commented anonymously.

In the Aug. 12 interview, Sheehan said the Catholic community risks isolating itself from the rest of the country and that refusing to talk to a politician or refusing communion because of a difference on a single issue was counterproductive. He described such actions as a "hysterical" reaction.

The comments came in the course of an interview on a range of other topics, most of which will appear in subsequent stories in the ongoing series, *In Search of the Emerging Church*.

The archbishop was forceful in describing the manner in which church leaders should handle significant disagreements with elected officials. He said his approach – whether dealing with civic officials or church members, relied heavily on collaboration, a technique he said he learned from the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago.

“I believe in collaboration,” he said. “I worked under Cardinal Bernardin and he taught me how to collaborate, how to consult. So I am very committed to the concept called shared responsibility. I think involving people in the process all the way along – my priests, my lay people, I am open to talking to them, working with them. Consultation, collaboration, building bridges not burning them. And you can get so much done when you have collaboration and you build the bridge with other people, whether it’s priests or laypeople, deacons, whoever.”

Bernardin had a reputation as a reconciling force within the bishops’ conference and was often called on to oversee mediation efforts in disagreements within the conference or between U.S. bishops and Rome. He also founded the Common Ground Initiative just before he died. It was an effort to establish a means for Catholics to discuss differences in a civil manner.

Sheehan said that in June he told his fellow bishops, “I don’t feel so badly about Obama going [to Notre Dame] because he’s our president. I said we’ve gotten more done on the pro-life issue in New Mexico by talking to people that don’t agree with us on everything. We got Governor Richardson to sign off on the abolition of the death penalty for New Mexico, which he was in favor of.”

Gov. Bill Richardson, in explaining why he reversed his long-standing support for the death penalty, said he was persuaded in part by discussions with church activists and with Sheehan.

“We talked to him, and we got him on board and got the support in the legislature,” Sheehan said. “But you know, he’s pro-abortion. So? It doesn’t mean we sit and wait, that we sit on the sides and not talk to him. We’ve done so much more by consultation and by building bridges in those areas. And then to make a big scene about Obama – I think a lot of the enemies of the church are delighted to see all that. And I said that I think we don’t want to isolate ourselves from the rest of America by our strong views on abortion and the other things. We need to be building bridges, not burning them.”

Asked if there were any other bishops who agreed with him, he said, “Of course, the majority.”

He was asked why none of the bishops who disagreed with the protests that dominated the news for weeks had spoken up.

“The bishops don’t want to have a battle in public with each other, but I think the majority of bishops in the country didn’t join in with that, would not be in agreement with that approach. It’s well intentioned, but we don’t lose our dignity by being strong in the belief

that we have but also talking to others that don't have our belief. We don't lose our dignity by that," he said.

"We'd be like the Amish, you know, kind of isolated from society, if we kept pulling back because of a single issue."

He acknowledged the loudest voices were creating what appeared to be the Catholic position for the general public.

"Of course. I mean that's always been the case," he said. "That's news, you know."

He said that in speaking to the other bishops he wondered aloud what was so bad about inviting Obama and giving him a degree. "Last month," said Sheehan, "the pope made the president of France an honorary canon of St. John Lateran's -- and he [President Nicolas Sarkozy] is pro-abortion, pro-gay marriage, married invalidly to an actress, and the pope did that. It doesn't seem that [the Vatican] had quite as big a concern about this matter of Obama and Notre Dame as some of us."

Noting that the Vatican has consistently been more positive about Obama than some of the leading critics among the U.S. bishops, Sheehan said, "The Vatican is a little more diplomatically sensitive. But you've got to have the big picture."

He also said given Obama's association as a young man with priests and nuns during his time as a community organizer on Chicago's South Side that the "issues of social justice that we teach and preach would resonate in his own work and in his own mind."

If Sheehan disagreed with the tactics of some of his fellow bishops, he believes at least that Obama may have "a greater awareness now of how passionately and how deeply the church people feel" about abortion. "I think he probably had to come to grips with it in a way that, I suspect, has had a positive effect."

He said the bishops might revisit a controversial statement on Catholic politicians but he said he opposes withholding communion based partly on the church's own historic experience. Making reference to Giuseppe Garibaldi, who campaigned to unify Italy in the mid 1800s and who advocated abolition of the papacy, Sheehan said the church then said Catholics would be excommunicated or refused communion if they voted for him. "Well, it didn't work."

"Using sanctions -- you have to be very careful about doing that." He said he was cautioned in seminary to be very careful when even considering refusing communion to someone. "And I've had occasions where I was wondering whether I should give communion to this person who had been in a quote bad marriage. I gave him communion and after Mass he came up to me and said Archbishop, I have such good news. Our marriage case was settled." With a bit of emotion, Sheehan said, "And if I would have refused him communion.

"You have to be very careful. The Vatican doesn't do these big sanctions, you're out of the church if you vote this way. They've tried it, it doesn't work, and I try to learn from what the Vatican has to teach and to use that myself," he said. "The primary responsibility for someone receiving communion is the person himself or herself and

their conscience, to come forward to receive. The priest shouldn't be like a watchdog, looking around and finding out who's unworthy."

Asked if he was concerned about reaction from those who seemed to consider opposition to Obama's appearance at Notre Dame or refusing communion to a politician who differed from the church's view on abortion strategy as proof of orthodox Catholicism, he responded: "I seek to teach, to teach, and not to use sanctions. To teach, to talk to people. Like I say, we got more done this year with the state legislature by connecting with people and by saying our piece in a hopefully reasonable, and not an emotional and hysterical, way. Hysterical activity doesn't bear fruit, and there's been some hysteria in these areas."

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**Please send your comments and suggested articles to [tony@tonyercolano.com](mailto:tony@tonyercolano.com)**