Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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Anne Tropeano has chosen to be ordained as a Roman Catholic priest, thus breaking the Catholic Church's ban on the ordination of women and crossing the threshold of formal excommunication. Read letters to the editor below from NCR readers about this story. The letters have been edited for length and clarity.

God bless my sibling in Christ, Father Anne. If nothing else, she will open minds and maybe hearts to the possibility. I agree neither she nor I will see this in our lifetime.

Women have been, are now and will always be the backbone of the church. We love Jesus with all of our being and hunger to bring him to others. I only wish Father Anne would dress as a woman of her age would dress and not as a cleric. It seems to present a message that we would like to be ordained but we have to dress like a man to be accepted.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina



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Interesting, tricky, thorny questions raised.

I personally regret the dogmatic affirmation of Pope John Paul II that the church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women. It would have been much wiser and more humble to say "we are not sure." This type of pretentious absolute knowledge of God's design has already led us to blind alleys, like the declaration of nullity on Anglican orders.

The decision of Anne Tropeano to follow to the end her call to serve will undoubtedly bring on her a few (at least) crosses, which she seems to be ready, or at least willing to carry. I pray she remain true to God and to the Spirit.

I hope Tropeano never forgets that her main purpose and raison d'être is the good of the flock. Czech Bishop Felix Davídek ordained Ludmilla Javorová to reach women detainees in Communist Czechoslovakia, and I think he was divinely inspired to do so, even if church authorities disavowed him on learning this.

The Sabbath is for humans, not humans for the Sabbath. Many church leaders seem to have torn this page from their Bible.

GEORGES CHEUNG

Rose Hill, Mauritius

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I believe that women can be ordained priests. I am happy to attend liturgies celebrated by women. In fact, I tend to prefer female clergy. Furthermore, I recognize Catholic women who are clandestinely or publicly ordained by a bishop as priests. None of that will ever lead me to romanticize schism as is done in this article.

Of course I want to see women ordained to the priesthood within the Catholic Church, but I have no more sympathy for progressive schisms than I do for neo-Tridentine schisms. Schism is not a valid method of Catholic reform. I also don't see why Protestants should be ordained as Catholic priests. Father Anne is a Protestant, and that's fine. With the exception of most Baptists, mainline Protestantism in the U.S. tends to be far more advanced on many critical issues than the Catholic Church is.

Why doesn't Father Anne, who will be co-consecrated by Protestants in a Protestant cathedral, who plans a speaking tour to promote a new Protestant Reformation, own her Protestantism? She would not be the first Protestant to have found succor for the soul in Ignatian spirituality.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York

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It was so inspiring to read the article of Father Anne's coming ordination. One quote in particular stood out to me: "I stopped taking Communion at the church I attend on Sundays so as not to cause problems for the pastor," she said. "... I want people to see the punishment that women like me experience. I go up with my arms crossed, but I don't receive."

As a woman who refuses to annul my first marriage for valid personal reasons and a certainty that God understands, I've been encouraged by many to still receive the Eucharist — "just don't tell the priest." I go up with my arms crossed and tears in my eyes because I want the priest to see every week the type of person being denied sustenance from the table of the Lord.

My life revolves around volunteering at church. I've cantored for 30 years, taught religious education for 25 years and I now even work for a church as their bookkeeper. If I cannot receive Communion, why can the rest of the sinners? Our Lord would never refuse to serve a guest at his table, would he?

ROSEMARIE WASKEL

Des Moines, Iowa

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I am 80 now and have been waiting since I was 7 when I announced to my mother that I was going to be a priest. Her answer: "Girls can't be priests."

I presume that I will not live long enough, even if I make it to 105 as one of my grandmothers did and to almost 104 as did the other, to see the day when our church realizes that women too are called to minister as priests.

But the fact that the desire has never gone away speaks volumes to me.

ROBERTA M. EISENBERG

Greenport, New York

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I can understand the story as NCR works to represent varied views and respect thoughtful, dignified, considerations of those who may think differently from ourselves — a really necessary work. But I must say with all the self-questioning I could muster as my eyes came to that picture and title was one of repulsion.

As I shared with a friend, asking if it was me, she noted that there are so many larger issues with which we as a church and nation need to deal. I needed that said. It is too bad this appeared as it did. It seems it will not help the larger issues and add antagonism of which we do not need any more.

If women are called to priesthood and so are moved by the Spirit to seek it, then may I suggest a bit more humility lest we add to the clericalism and showmanship of what we already are plagued with. There is a kingdom of God to seek in which we are all God's beloved; may our presence reflect the attributes of the Son who became incarnate to show us the way.

MARY PAUKOVITZ

New Lenox, Illinois

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At the first Women's March on Washington in 2017, I joined with thousands of others at the Civic Plaza in Albuquerque, New Mexico. As a Catholic priest, I anticipated stares and negative comments by wearing a Roman collar. And that happened. But I also received words of gratitude from those who appreciated to see at least one Roman Catholic priest who had joined with them.

As it turns out, I was not the only Roman Catholic priest in attendance. I spotted a woman holding a sign proclaiming, "Women Priests are Here." I asked if I could get a picture with her. We introduced ourselves. She was surprised to learn that I am a Roman priest. I was even more surprised to learn that she, Rev. Donna Rougeux, is also a Roman Catholic priest. She was validly ordained in 2012 by Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan who claims apostolic succession as she was ordained by a validly ordained male bishop in Austria.

Donna is loving, strong and wise and I am honored to call her my friend and to applaud the courage which she and so many countless women have shown in resisting the denigration and exclusion of our male magisterium.

What we ordained men have done is unconscionable … certainly not of the heart of Jesus!

Welcome Father Anne! Blessings on your priesthood.

GREGORY M. CORRIGAN

Wilmington, Delaware

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