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Focus is on Bourgeois as SOA weekend opens

Patrick O'Neill | Nov. 22, 2008

COLUMBUS, GA
On Friday?s opening night of the annual School of the Americas Watch gathering in this southwest corner of Georgia, the talk was less about Latin America, and more about the plight of SOA Watch founder, Maryknoll Fr. Roy Bourgeois, who was given 30 days, which were up today, by the Vatican to recant his support for women?s ordination or face excommunication.

At a local Howard Johnson motel that serves as headquarters for many of SOAW activities, recently ordained Catholic priest Janice Sevre-Duszynska celebrated a Eucharist. It was at Sevre-Duszynska?s Aug. 9 ordination in Lexington, KY, that Bourgeois con-presided and preached, an action that drew a quick and harsh response from Rome.

In a roundtable discussion following the Liturgy, mo st attends praised Bourgeoise as a hero and prophet. The gathering was sponsored by the Washington DC-based Women?s Ordination Conference, a group that has sent representatives to the gathering the last five years, said executive director Aisha Taylor.

Taylor, who has spoken with Bourgeois on the phone several times recently, called the 36-year priest a prophet, and praised his willingness to follow his conscience.

Bourgeois ?listened to the stories of women, and was really affected by it, and this is what happens,? she said. ?This is what we need to get the issue out there to make a real change.

?... I would call him a prophet, a courageous man.?
Taylor said its tragic that the Vatican has turned its back on a priest who has given ?so much credibility? to the Church through his peace and social justice work.

?I think it?s sad,? she said. ?I think it?s a shame what our Church does to loyal priests. He?s given 36 years of his life lo the Church.?
Taylor said priest pedophiles have gotten off easier than ordained women and Bourgeois. ?These women are taking the prophetic step of ordination, and they?re being excommunicated almost immediately. Priests have abused children for many years, 12 years after it was reported to the Vatican, the Vatican didn?t do anything until it came out on the secular media, and then they had to do something about it.

?Fr. Roy and these women are being treated like criminals when they?re not, and the criminals are being protected. It really shows that there?s really something wrong with our Church, and something needs to change in a major way.?

Taylor said the newest strategy of the WOC will be to promote women?s ordination as a hum an right, and to pressure the Vatican to stop ?violating women?s human rights? by refusing them ordination.

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