

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

May 22, 2012 at 12:02pm

NCR reader writes Cardinal Levada in support of sisters

by Alice Popovici

Eileen Ford, of Rockport, Mass., mailed the following column and cover note to Cardinal William Levada, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

She has sent it to *NCR*, for publication:

Dear Sir,

I hope you will read the following article in the spirit in which it was written - as a tribute to those who have served the Church faithfully.

When will you investigate the bishops who have never been held accountable for their negligence and are still in positions of power and honor?

Catholics are watching this abuse of power by the Vatican and the Church will continue to implode if you continue to persecute sisters and protect bishops.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Eileen M. Ford

Ford, a contributor to *The Gloucester Daily Times*, writes a monthly column titled *Insights and Outbursts*. (A similar version of this column appeared on the newspaper's website.)

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Insights and Outbursts: To the 'strong and lonely advocates'

Eileen Ford

"Institutions that claim power over our nature will have to pay nature's denied due, and will end by abusing their flock."

? "Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life," by James Hollis.

According to a news account, members of LCWR "challenged church teaching on homosexuality, the male-only priesthood, and promoted radical feminist themes incompatible with the Catholic faith." They were also "reprimanded for public statements that disagree with or challenge the bishops, who are the church's authentic teachers of faith and morals." (N.Y. Times, April 18)

Was Cardinal Bernard Law teaching "faith and morals" when he and his men covered up the sexual abuse of children in the Boston Archdiocese, transferring pedophile priests to other parishes and paying hush money to parents of abused children? Is that what Pope John Paul II was doing when he placed Cardinal Law in charge of a Vatican Basilica and refused to meet with abuse victims? Is that what prelates throughout the world did, confronted with a scandal so big it had to be kept secret from those who still think bishops actually are "authentic teachers of faith and morals?"

And who were the ones who urged the bishops to warn parishes that the priests they were sending them had a record of abusing children?

In many cases, it was a Catholic sister whose wisdom was ignored by both bishops and priests ? as well as the Vatican.

According to the report of the Attorney General of Massachusetts (July 23, 2003), Catherine Mulkerrin, a Sister of St. Joseph who served from Aug. 3, 1992 to Sept. 1, 1994 under Cardinal Law provided a "pastoral response" to victims and was "the primary Archdiocese liaison for the victims of clergy sexual abuse ... keeping a list of priests against whom sexual abuse allegations were made," a list that "grew to more than one hundred different names."

She also met with "a minimum of 200 victims and family members."

The report described Sister Mulkerrin as "a strong and lonely advocate for change" promoting a policy to reflect that victims were the archdiocese's "first priority" and should "apply to schools and other archdiocese institutions, not just clergy."

Unfortunately, her "suggestions were not incorporated into the final policy" because as the AG's investigation revealed, priests were the "first priority" of Cardinal Law and his bishops.

I learned "faith and morals" first from my parents, followed by Dominican Sisters in grade school and Sisters of Charity in high school in New York City. And Jesus learned a great deal from what the Vatican might call "radical feminists" in his life. His mother triggered his first miracle, saying "they have no wine" (John 2:1-11), and the Canaanite woman who begged him to cure her child,

reminding him that even "dogs were fed scraps," convinced him that his mission was broader than he thought (Mark 7:24-30).

Jesus warned his disciples that they would be persecuted and he denounced devious religious officials as "blind guides" (Matthew 23:1-39).

He'd probably be excommunicated if he was physically present today.

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