

A pamphlet aimed at modern monarchs

Arthur Jones | Jul. 20, 2012

MY JOURNEY FROM SILENCE TO SOLIDARITY

By Roy Bourgeois, MM

Published by fxBear, \$5

Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* was 46 pages long. Maryknoll Fr. Roy Bourgeois' booklet *My Journey from Silence to Solidarity* is 43 pages long. Their similarities are striking if one doesn't stretch too far. Both are pamphleteers dealing with monarchs too blind to read the signs of the times. Both are urging causes and courses that threaten the monarchy and those dependent on it.

Each man presses for a new order, different from the old, but an obvious transition and a more all-encompassing improvement on what exists -- if handled commonsensically. Monarchs, usually old men, more often than not are reactionaries who believe they not only have the final word, but are the final word. Against that, Paine and Bourgeois both address the essential rights and freedoms (think conscience) involved, cogently and clearly.

Admittedly, while Bourgeois is not Paine's literary equal, the Maryknoller parallels Paine's common sense as the priest defends his outspoken support for women priests. *My Journey* is an easy read, and as important within the church of today, and to Bourgeois' fellow Catholics, as Paine's was to his countrymen.



Neither writer was a stranger to pressure from above -- Paine was fired from his

job, Bourgeois is threatened with being fired from his order. The term *radical* applies to both, but it only has a pejorative ring to it when used by current foes. History remolds the term to mean prescient. Paine is proof.

What Bourgeois offers that Paine did not is a modestly stated glimpse of what all this has cost and is costing him -- meaning what he has risked and risks. He was the son of a quite traditional Louisiana Catholic family. He'd been commissioned in the Navy, served in Vietnam and seen the horror of it all and learned to oppose it, joined the Maryknollers, been thrown out of Bolivia, cofounded the SOA Watch movement, and more.

Yet the most touching part of the booklet is short account of going to meet with his brother and two sisters and father (his mother had died three years earlier) to explain his 2008 letter to the Vatican in which he refused to follow the Vatican order to recant his support of women priests.

This booklet really is about ordaining women. Its purpose -- and the author succeeds in it -- is to state the facts as clearly and sincerely and sensibly as Paine's call for the American Revolution.

In Louisiana his sisters caution him that his letter and decision will "break Daddy's heart."

If you want to fight back tears, and why not, read on:

My father is a very religious, soft-hearted, and loving person. He didn't say anything and began to cry. Then he regained his composure and said, "God brought Roy back from Vietnam. God took care of him in Bolivia and in prison. God is going to take care of him now. Roy is doing the right thing, and I support him." He then stood up, came over, and gave me a hug. I wept. Then my brother and two sisters joined in with hugs and tears.

The way to women's ordination in the Catholic church will require years yet of hugs and tears. It will require constant work on God's part taking care of those who, like Bourgeois, press for it.

His booklet is 10,000 words long. I've written 585 words about it. Go read the rest. Buy a copy, buy 10, pass them on. But read it twice before you give your copy away. Once for the women, once for Roy Bourgeois.

[Arthur Jones is *NCR* books editor.]

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