

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

August 16, 2012 at 10:04am

Authoritarianism and anarchy

by Mary Ann McGivern

NCR Today

In her address to LCWR, Sr. Pat Farrell said, "There is an inherent existential tension between the complementary roles of hierarchy and religious which is not likely to change."

Indeed. When people have asked me over the years about the relationship of sisters' communities to the hierarchy, I have usually described this tension as parallel streams of authoritarianism and anarchy. On the one hand, we have popes, vows of holy obedience and dogma. On the other hand, we have the desert fathers who sat on poles, the mystics and holy poverty.

Both authoritarianism and anarchy are imperfect states. But this is an imperfect world.

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