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Maryknoll: Vatican has dismissed Roy Bourgeois from order

by Joshua J. McElwee

Roy Bourgeois

Roy Bourgeois, a longtime peace activist and priest who had come under scrutiny for his support of women's ordination, has been dismissed from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, which he served for 45 years, according to the congregation.

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith made the dismissal in October, according to a news release issued Monday afternoon by the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers.

Dominican Fr. Tom Doyle, a canon lawyer acting on Bourgeois' behalf, told *NCR* he was not aware of the move.

Doyle said he and Bourgeois met with Maryknoll's superior general, Fr. Edward Dougherty, in June, and the issue of dismissal had not been discussed.

"The idea then was that things would continue and they would not dismiss Roy and they would continue to dialogue," Doyle said. "And then this just happened, unilaterally. [Bourgeois] had no idea."

Bourgeois was not available for comment Monday afternoon.

Mike Virgintino, the manager of communications for the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, declined to answer any questions about the matter.

"I cannot answer any additional questions," Virgintino said. "We have to stay with that statement. I can't answer anything more."

The statement reads: "The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on October 4, 2012, canonically dismissed Roy Bourgeois from the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, also known as the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers.

"The decision dispenses the Maryknoll priest from his sacred bonds."

Monday's statement from Maryknoll seemingly puts a cap on years of discussion about Bourgeois' role in the order following his participation in the ordination of Roman Catholic Womanpriest Janice Sevre-Duszynska in August 2008.

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Shortly after, Bourgeois was notified by the Vatican congregation that he had incurred a *latae sententiae*, or automatic, excommunication for his participation.

Over a period of years, the congregation had not responded to requests for clarification on the matter.

Monday's statement from Maryknoll states that Bourgeois' "disobedience and preaching against the teaching of the Catholic Church about women's ordination led to his excommunication, dismissal and laicization."

"With this parting, the Maryknoll Society warmly thanks Roy Bourgeois for his service to mission and all members wish him well in his personal life," the statement concludes. "In the spirit of equity and charity, Maryknoll will assist Mr. Bourgeois with this transition."

Maryknoll asked Bourgeois to publicly recant his support of women's ordination, telling the priest in a March 2011 letter he faced laicization and removal from the order if he did not comply.

In a series of letters and interviews since then, Bourgeois has said he could not comply with the request.

"In essence, you are telling me to lie and I say I do not believe God calls both men and women to the priesthood," Bourgeois wrote in a formal reply to Maryknoll's request. "This I cannot do, therefore I will not recant."

Maryknoll's leadership took a vote on removing Bourgeois from the order in the spring. While the order would confirm at the time that a vote had taken place, it would not comment on its outcome.

Doyle told *NCR* at the time that Maryknoll Fr. Mike Duggan, the U.S. regional superior of the order, informed Bourgeois of the vote, which was a split decision.

Doyle said Duggan told him two council members voted in favor of dismissal and three members abstained.

After the spring vote, Doyle and Bourgeois met with Dougherty on June 6.

In interviews following that meeting, Bourgeois said the discussion made no mention of his removal, but

instead focused on the rights of conscience of Catholics and "the importance of people of faith and members of Maryknoll to be able to speak openly and freely without fear ... of being dismissed or excommunicated."

Bourgeois is known for his work with SOA Watch, a group he founded in 1990 to protest the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, a U.S. Army training school at Fort Benning, Ga., formerly known as the School of the Americas.

Bourgeois served for 45 years in Maryknoll, with 39 years as a priest.

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The full statement from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers follows:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith
Canonically Dismisses Roy Bourgeois

Maryknoll, New York ? November 19, 2012 ? The Vatican?s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on October 4, 2012, canonically dismissed Roy Bourgeois from the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, also known as the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. The decision dispenses the Maryknoll priest from his sacred bonds.

As a priest during 2008, Mr. Bourgeois participated in the invalid ordination of a woman and a simulated Mass in Lexington, Kentucky. With patience, the Holy See and the Maryknoll Society have encouraged his reconciliation with the Catholic Church.

Instead, Mr. Bourgeois chose to campaign against the teachings of the Catholic Church in secular and non-Catholic venues. This was done without the permission of the local U.S. Catholic Bishops and while ignoring the sensitivities of the faithful across the country. Disobedience and preaching against the teaching of the Catholic Church about women?s ordination led to his excommunication, dismissal and laicization.

Mr. Bourgeois freely chose his views and actions, and all the members of the Maryknoll Society are saddened at the failure of reconciliation. With this parting, the Maryknoll Society warmly thanks Roy Bourgeois for his service to mission and all members wish him well in his personal life. In the spirit of equity and charity, Maryknoll will assist Mr. Bourgeois with this transition.

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