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Kansas City's first woman priest has been excommunicated

by Dawn Cherie Araujo

Kansas City, Mo. — Georgia Walker, the woman ordained earlier this month as Kansas City's first female priest by the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests, has been excommunicated.

In a letter delivered to Walker's home Monday afternoon by certified mail, Kansas City-St. Joseph Bishop Robert Finn said Walker had been advised of the "seriousness of her contemplated course of action to attempt to receive sacred ordination" and that her excommunication was effective immediately. He added, however, that the diocese remained ready to assist Walker "if or when she seeks such process in good faith."

Walker says she plans to continue attending Mass at her parish church, St. James, though she will not be taking part in any liturgy.

"I'm not going to take Communion," she told *NCR*. "I won't in any way compromise the parish, but I attend to still be part of the community and go there for worship on Sunday."

Bridget Mary Meehan, the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests bishop who presided over Walker's Jan. 3 ordination, posted to her blog both Finn's letter and a personal response, arguing that women ordained through the association are not leaving the church, but are leading it.

"The principal consecrating Roman Catholic male bishop who ordained our first women bishops is a bishop with apostolic succession within the Roman Catholic Church in communion with the pope. Therefore, our bishops validly ordain deacons, priests and bishops," she continued.

In an email to *NCR*, diocesan director of communications Jack Smith verified the accuracy of the letter, saying the excommunication is not an action of Finn or the diocese, but "merely a notice recognizing that under church law, Ms. Walker has incurred automatic excommunication because of her participation in a simulated ordination. We do hope and pray that Ms. Walker is reconciled to the Church and are eager to assist her in approaching the Vatican to reverse this automatic excommunication if she chooses."

Previously, the diocese's vicar general, Fr. Charles Rowe, had invited Walker to meet with him in order to discuss her ordination. However, the two were unable to schedule a meeting.

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**This story was updated from an earlier version at 3:55 p.m. central time.*

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