

Priest ousted for support of women's ordination

News in the [December 26, 2012](#) issue

A long-running struggle between Catholic authorities and Roy Bourgeois over his support for ordaining women has ended with Bourgeois's dismissal from the priesthood and his religious order, the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers.

A statement from Maryknoll on November 19 confirmed that the Vatican's office for orthodoxy, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, laicized Bourgeois in October.

The move stems from Bourgeois's participation in an August 2008 ordination rite in Lexington, Kentucky, for Janice Sevre-Duszynska. The ceremony was not recognized by the Vatican and took place under the auspices of a group called Roman Catholic Womanpriests, which rejects the church's teaching on the all-male priesthood.

Three months later, Bourgeois was notified that he had been automatically excommunicated for his role in the rite. In the ensuing years, Bourgeois and Maryknoll engaged in intensive negotiations aimed at restoring his standing and keeping him in the order and the priesthood. But Bourgeois insisted that his support for women's ordination was a matter of justice and he could not be silent about it.

"The Vatican and Maryknoll can dismiss me, but they cannot dismiss the issue of gender equality in the Catholic Church," Bourgeois said in a statement published November 20 on the website of the Women's Ordination Conference. "The demand for gender equality is rooted in justice and dignity and will not go away."

"My conscience compelled me to break my silence and address the sin of sexism in my church," he said. Bourgeois called his dismissal "very difficult and painful."

In its statement, the Maryknoll order, based near Ossining, New York, said it had done everything possible to work things out with Bourgeois.

“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.”

Maryknoll thanked Bourgeois for his 40 years of service as a member of the order and said that in “the spirit of equity and charity” it would help him in his transition to life outside the community. —RNS