

Feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether dies at 85

by [Dawn Araujo-Hawkins](#) in the [June 15, 2022](#) issue



(Courtesy of the Claremont School of Theology)

Scholar and theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether died on May 21 following a long illness. She was 85. Ruether, a Catholic, is widely considered to be one of the founding mothers of Christian feminist theology.

In a statement announcing Ruether's death, Mary Hunt, codirector of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual, said Ruether's legacy was "rich beyond imagining," noting her work in helping to develop ecofeminist and liberation theologies, her antiracism work, and her concern for peace in the Middle East.

Ruether's teaching career spanned five decades, beginning in 1965 at historically Black Howard University—she later credited the Black Power movement with developing some of her thinking—and ending with her 2002 retirement from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

She wrote more than 30 books, perhaps the most famous being *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (1983) and *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (1994).

In a 2002 interview with *CrossCurrents*, just before her retirement, Ruether praised progressive lay Catholics for their dedication to effecting change within the institutional church. But she cautioned against expending too much energy on the cause, noting that she only devoted 10 percent of her own energy to it.

“I call it the 10 percent tithe, but it is also the sense that you shouldn’t be burnt out with the frustration of trying to do something with an institution that is not going to be very supportive,” she said. “You know, you sort of make your contribution without feeling like your whole life is going to end if this is not going to improve quickly.”