

Fr. Perozich comments —

My hope for you who read my emails is a close relationship with Jesus as He offers Himself in teaching, guiding, and sanctifying. This is done to unite ourselves to Him in His passion on the cross and now in His glory in heaven, each of us doing our PART: Petition, Adoration, Reparation, and Thanksgiving.

I am not so naive as to think I am exempt from various active forces in the church which might pull me away from Jesus. The article below shows how strong and pervasive such forces are. It provides a history of the force and power that has perverted the minds of so many toward something other than salvation in Jesus.

Because of the frustration of living in the chaos in the church today, one recipient asked to be taken off the list. She declared that the controversies were too much for her. She said, "I will just follow Papa Francis."

Of course I removed her from the distribution list, but fear for her spiritual life as it will be shaped by forces and declarations by so many who have their own ideas of church, claiming that what they think and feel must replace the truth of Jesus Christ.

Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Satan has devoured the souls of many in the article below.

Keep yourself safe, knowing that Jesus will be with you until the end of time.

Apostatizing in Place

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Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement

By Mary J. Henold

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*Using archival material and oral interviews, as well as published sources, Mary Henold has written a history of the first twenty years of Catholic feminism in the U.S. A history teacher at Roanoke College, **Henold admits that she herself is a Catholic feminist who regards our Church as sexist. This is problematic — it prevents her from maintaining a critical distance from the movement she studies. Even so, her book is valuable because the evidence she assembles is eye-opening — and profoundly disturbing.***

When Catholic feminists speak of their commitment to the Church, they equivocate; it turns out they mean the

“people,” not the “institution.” Indeed, Catholic feminists constantly reduce the Magisterium to an “institution.” **They have their own understanding of Catholicism and see themselves as free to choose what to “believe” and what to “abandon.”** This is not cafeteria Catholicism, but something different, for **they are guided in their choices by a primary loyalty to feminism.** Donna Quinn, one of the leading feminist nuns in the 1970s, represents many of them when she declares, “This is my church, this is my tradition. I love this church. I want to change it.” Then she adds, “I have never rejected anything in the feminist movement.... I love the word ‘feminism,’ I have put that first.” Yes, first. **This is the idol to which Catholic feminists have been willing to sacrifice the Church.**

At the 1975 Detroit Women’s Ordination Conference (WOC), the “pivotal event” of the Catholic feminist movement in the 1970s, theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza spoke of our Church needing “a radical conversion.” **Feminists like her choose to remain Catholic as a means to an end. Their strategy is called defecting in place, but it may more fittingly be called apostatizing in place.**

Throughout *Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement*, Henold reveals how **Catholic feminists have taken a utilitarian approach to religion, using the Church’s sacred language, symbols, and traditions as a “means of understanding and structuring their feminism.” Yes, a means to an end.** To begin with, they wanted women priests, Henold says, because they needed a controversial issue “to capture the institution’s attention” and gain financial support — another means to an end. They also hoped that with women priests at the altar, Mass would become an “instrument” in their struggle for social justice — the Mass was yet another means to an end. At the 1975 Detroit WOC, Rosemary Radford Ruether declared that even “**Catholic teaching authority**” had to be dismantled so that the

Church would accept women priests. That authority too was a means to an end.

In the chapter “Making Feminism Holy” we learn of Catholic feminists using the Church’s liturgy to advance their cause. Since there are no published histories of this liturgical movement, Henold examines eighty documented liturgies and a number of others her “oral history subjects” remembered. She finds that the Mass was a problem for many feminists who thought it sexist because it was “focused on and performed by a man” and celebrated in an “unholy” and “exclusive” language. In reaction, they held private, all-female Eucharists using apples, milk, or honey. In one 1979 liturgy, for instance, an apple was elevated to affirm Eve and “her act of defiance.” Original sin here is the boasted symbol of feminism. Their liturgies were full of “gender-neutral language,” as when those in the Deaconess Movement prayed to a “gender neutral” Holy Spirit to avoid addressing the Father and the Son.

It didn’t matter to them whether such a liturgy was illicit; **their goal was to “redefine” worship and create a different model without the “clerical, hierarchical, and patriarchal elements of the Catholic Mass.”** For strategic reasons, of course, they kept these liturgies out of the limelight for fear of “excommunication,” something that would not have helped them “convert” the bishops and “redeem” the Church. It was enough for them to build “creative communities” on the margins and enact “a dramatic form of protest directed at the institutional church.” Catholic colleges and theological schools provided them with space for their novel rites.

Catholic feminists from the beginning rejected the view that women are complementary to men, declaring instead that “liberated” women have “the same task as men.” Theologian Sr. Margaret Farley warned that “excessive humility” is an obstacle to feminist consciousness, a “capitulation” to former Catholic views of womanhood. No surprise then that in the debate over

contraception **Catholic feminists vehemently oppose self-sacrifice and join in a “universal denunciation of the church’s stand on birth control.”** They accuse the Church of an “ancient aversion” to women’s sexuality and call for an end to “clerical control of women’s bodies and its underlying roots in Mariology.” On birth control, Ruether remarked, “I see very clearly that I cannot entrust my destiny just to biological chance.... A woman who cannot control her own fertility, who must remain vulnerable to chance conception, is a woman who cannot hope to be much more than a baby-machine.” Here Ruether **flatly denied the role of divine providence in bringing a child to conception, reducing it all to “chance.”** Here, too, she framed an argument soon to be used in support of so-called abortion rights. By the 1980s the Vatican had to step in to stop the Sisters of Mercy, “the most visibly feminist order of sisters,” from performing “tubal ligations” in their hospitals. As Henold demonstrates, by then Catholic feminists had gone very far in support of the culture of death.

Henold’s revelation about the silence of Catholic feminists on the topic of abortion during the years surrounding Roe v. Wade is disturbing. As Henold puts it, **“Feminist sisters were also oddly silent on the abortion issue during a period when [secular] feminists made abortion rights their chief cause and debate raged over the issue throughout American society.”** Even at the pivotal WOC in 1975, Catholic feminists were silent about the massive slaughter of babies now underway. Henold has not found any mention of abortion in their archives either. That doesn’t mean, of course, that they didn’t discuss the subject. From reading their correspondence and conducting interviews, Henold has learned that keeping silent on abortion was a strategy. In fact, “a majority (but not an overwhelming majority) of feminists active in the Catholic movement were in favor of abortion rights.” Yes, a majority of these well-educated white Catholic women, many of them nuns

and theologians, were fully on the side of the culture of death, among them nuns like Donna Quinn and Margaret Ellen Traxler. While nearly all the Catholic feminists remained silent, **the National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN) broke rank and became “the first Catholic feminist organization” to endorse “abortion rights,”** and Sr. Traxler wrote to First Lady Betty Ford in 1975, thanking her for publicly opposing the Hyde Amendment that denied federal funds for abortion. In her letter, Traxler called Congressman Hyde a “fat ass.”

Henold asks why, since a majority of them favored “abortion rights,” **Catholic feminists did not join the larger movement in promoting them. The answer is that they were dependent on the support of Catholic women in the pews who were mostly against abortion, so they didn’t want to offend “their base for a low-priority issue.”** Yes, abortion was a low priority. Another reason was that many of them worked for the “institutional church” as teachers, secretaries, and associates. Note the treachery implicit here: They worked for the Church yet acted as fifth column. They fought for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and kept assuring reluctant Catholics that this had nothing to do with “abortion rights,” but they kept silent about the fact that most of them favored these monstrous “rights.” Ironic, isn’t it, that Pope Pius XII is attacked for his alleged silence during the Holocaust while these Catholic feminists get a free pass for their self-serving silence at the launching of an even greater Holocaust.

Henold defends their silence, contending that they were right to fear the “international hierarchy.” The “worst days” of the Vatican “repression” were soon to begin in 1984, she says, when a New York Times advertisement appeared, sponsored by Catholics for a Free Choice. Among the signers of this ad — which claimed that “a diversity of opinions” existed among Catholics on the issue of abortion — were many noted Catholic feminists, including Ruethe, Quinn, Traxler, Farley, Maureen Fielder, Mary Hung,

Frances Kissling, and Marjorie Tuite. The Vatican warned those priests and religious who had signed the ad that unless they recanted they would be dismissed from their orders and defrocked. The few priests among the signers quickly recanted, as did several nuns, but a group of nuns known as the “Vatican 24” stood out for two years. In the end, only two left religious life for this cause. In Henold’s view, the event demonstrates “the extremes to which the Vatican would go to silence feminist opposition.” Though Henold calls herself a Catholic, it doesn’t occur to her that it was these twenty-four nuns who went to unconscionable extremes to defend the culture of death.

So why did Catholic feminists remain inside the Catholic Church? Henold thinks **the nuns stayed because the Church gave them “a structure and a lifestyle through which they could pursue justice not as a cause, but as an apostolate.”** For justice, read feminism. Again, the Church was only a means to an end: “Feminist theology was emerging as a viable and exciting new discipline that in turn helped to educate and inspire grassroots activists.” It was worth their while to be inside the “system.”

In the early 1970s Catholic feminists were hopeful because of the influx of large numbers of “new nuns” fresh from transforming their religious orders in the wake of Vatican II and now ready to use the same “agitation for progressive reform” on a broader scale. In 1974 NCAN boldly dismissed the U.S. bishops’ “Theological Reflections on the Ordination of Women” as sexist. That same year, the National Assembly of Women Religious started taking “strong public stands on feminist issues,” especially in support of the diaconate for women.

Then came Rome’s thunderbolt of 1976 — the definitive prohibition of women’s ordination, *Inter Insigniores*, the “Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood.” Catholic feminists felt an “overwhelming sense of betrayal,” Henold recounts, for their “strategy of

dialogue” with the bishops had been cut short by the Vatican’s display of “absolute power.” After this blow, they found “a way to leave and stay at the same time.” They created Women-Church, opting for part identification with and part struggle against Catholicism. **They avoided separation while maintaining “an alternative community of reference” that could serve either as a “primary worship community” or as a “supplement” to the parish church. *In short, they apostatized in place.***

Henold rejoices that **Catholic feminists have since thrived and made huge gains in colleges and universities, especially in departments of theology. They have transformed the discipline, she boasts, along with its professional organizations. In parishes they have assumed the roles of “pastoral associates, pastoral administrators, theologians, liturgists, directors of religious education, and seminary instructors.” She concludes that Catholic feminists have now become the “most visible and strongest advocates” of the “right” to “define what it means to be Catholic.”** But there is no cause to fear: Read our Savior’s last words to the eleven Apostles in Matthew 28:18-20.

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