

Male Priest Punished for Holding Mass With Female Priest

A 92-year-old Wisconsin Jesuit has become the latest Catholic priest to be punished by church authorities for celebrating Mass with a woman priest in violation of church rules, a Jesuit spokesman said on Wednesday.

Father Bill Brennan, a Milwaukee-area peace activist who has done missionary work in Central America, celebrated Mass last month in Georgia with Janice Sevre-Duszynska of the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests.

Though Brennan remains a Jesuit and can still celebrate Mass and hear confessions with other Jesuits, he can no longer celebrate Mass or other sacraments publicly, according to Jeremy Langford, spokesman for the Society of Jesus, known as the Jesuits.

Women are forbidden by the church to become priests, but some have been ordained and celebrate Mass outside of the official church. Pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed the church's ban on women priests this year.

Catholic clergy who support the women can face sanctions. The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith dismissed Roy Bourgeois, 74, from the priesthood in October, citing his participation in the 2008 "invalid" ordination of Sevre-Duszynska and in a "simulated Mass," according to the Catholic News Service.

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Province of the Jesuits mutually agreed on the sanctions against Brennan, Langford said.

"The Province did not approve or sanction the event, and regrets Father Brennan's participation in it," the Province said in a statement.

Langford said that the Wisconsin Province had no plans to take any further action against Brennan, who is retired from active ministry and living in a Wisconsin retirement home and was not available for comment.

"Sometimes in our lives we have to trust our conscience and bring about the consequences," Brennan told the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. "I wasn't trying to show off for the ladies."

Sevre-Duszynska told Reuters that Brennan exemplifies the best of the Jesuit tradition, including that he "is able to understand the suffering of women who are called to the priesthood and are denied the priesthood by the church and by the hierarchy."

"I think this is a bullying tactic. And I think it's shameful. It certainly is not what Jesus would do," she said of the sanctions against Brennan.

Brennan worked as a missionary in Belize and Honduras for 16 years and then returned to the United States as a teacher at Jesuit-run Marquette University High School and as pastor at St. Patrick Church in Milwaukee, according to a 2007 Catholic News Service article.

Five years ago, at 87, Brennan traveled to Cuba as an act of civil disobedience against the U.S. economic blockade, delivering humanitarian and medical supplies to the Cuban people, the article said.

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