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Marielle Sweeney

May 2013

## Abstract

In the 1960s, a group of American women Religious separated from the Roman Catholic Church following a prolonged conflict. These women, the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Los Angeles, were women of integrity and dedicated members of the Catholic Church. The mother superior of the IHM sisters at the time of the conflict, Anita Caspary, makes clear in her account of the events that she, as well as her fellow sisters, had no intention of disobeying the Vatican; they believed that their process of renewal was in line with Vatican II's call for renewal.<sup>1</sup> The crux of that conflict, their idea of religious life, was incompatible with that of their local Episcopal authority and ultimately that of the Vatican.

Throughout this project, I argue that in their split from the Vatican, the Immaculate Heart Sisters were implicitly demanding a new broader interpretation of the vow of obedience in religious life. The Vatican held to a more juridical definition of religious obedience while the sisters saw obedience to their conscience and to their understanding of Vatican II as a valid fulfillment of that vow. While the IHM did not explicitly state their intentions of challenging existing Catholic doctrine, their actions, following a restrictive maneuver by the local hierarchy, imply that they had found a voice and a conscience of their own. In claiming their ability as women religious to renew their form of life, the IHM sisters were claiming obedience to the Holy Spirit above that of any earthly authority.

I develop my argument through an examination of a range of traditional and contemporary theologies of obedience, and how the IHM decisions align with interpretations of that vow. Additionally I explore the way in which those theological differences were manifest symbolically through the habit. Finally, I contemplate the implication that those theological and symbolic changes had for the IHM as Religious, as prophets, and as women within a patriarchal institution. The IHM conflict with the Vatican can help shed some light on the current conflict between the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (an umbrella group of women Religious in the US recently accused of espousing "radical feminist themes"<sup>2</sup>) and the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Anita M. Caspary, *Witness To Integrity: The Crisis of the Immaculate Heart Community of Los Angeles* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, p. 3.

No Longer Creatures of Habit:  
American Women Religious and Conflicts of Obedience

Marielle Frances Sweeney

Submitted to the Department of Religion at Mount Holyoke College in  
partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts  
with honor

Mount Holyoke College  
Department of Religion  
South Hadley, Massachusetts  
6 May 2013

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my advisor and mentor Jane Crosthwaite. This project would not have been possible without your continued encouragement and support. I cannot adequately express my appreciation for your generosity, your humor, and your wealth of knowledge.

Additionally, many thanks to my committee members Susanne Mrozik and Frederick J. McGinness for agreeing to read and engage with my work. Thank you to Sr. Annette McDermott, your sources were invaluable and our two brief meetings inspired me to continue questioning.

I would also like to thank my wonderful parents. Thanks mom, for your boundless love and thank you dad, for your pride in my work. My gratitude also goes to my friends for inspiring and encouraging me throughout this process.

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## INTRODUCTION

I have always been delighted by the quote “Well-behaved women seldom make history.”<sup>3</sup> It speaks volumes about the nature of our understanding of history as well as our ideas of propriety in terms of gender relations. As a woman, to “make history,”— the process of both making it into the story that we tell about ourselves and the process of forming or crafting that story—requires misbehavior. His-story has little room for women; his story is about him. In order for women even to make it onto the page we have to act outside of the boundaries of the life that the patriarchy has prescribed for us. Some would say that such action is necessarily feminist.<sup>4</sup> Some would say such action is necessarily radical. Whatever one’s understanding of the act of misbehaving, the process of weaving ourselves into history, of “making” that space, requires courage.

American nuns are currently making history. The umbrella group governing American women Religious, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), has been in conflict with the Vatican.<sup>5</sup> The Roman

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<sup>3</sup> Historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich is the original source of this quote. The phrase has since gained popularity and can be found on numerous commercial items.

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this paper I will define feminism as concern for equality between the sexes and purposeful movement towards actualizing that equality. I am unsure how the Vatican defines feminism.

<sup>5</sup> The Leadership Conference of Women Religious was founded in 1956 at the encouragement of the Vatican. It currently represents roughly 80 percent of the United States’ 57, 000 women Religious.

Women Religious refers to members of the Church who have taken vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. Unlike nuns who live in cloisters and have minimal contact with anything outside of their institution, “apostolic women Religious” “Religious” or “sisters” engage with the world. These terms are all somewhat interchangeable. I also occasionally use the term “nuns” to refer to women Religious as that usage is colloquially accepted.

Catholic Church hierarchy is concerned enough with these women's refusal to speak out against issues like abortion and homosexuality that it has cited them for insubordination.<sup>6</sup> The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), the arm of the Church responsible for regulating doctrinal error, has termed the situation a "crisis." The CDF has also claimed that the umbrella organization of women, espoused ". . . certain radical feminist themes incompatible with the Catholic faith in some of the programs and presentations sponsored by the LCWR."<sup>7</sup> The paradox here borders on amusing: these nuns, in perhaps the oldest continuing patriarchal institution left on earth, are being named radical feminists.

The bud from which this conflict and the ensuing paradoxical claim bloomed was undoubtedly the Second Vatican Council. There has been significant controversy surrounding the Catholic Church in the late twentieth century and that controversy has largely been fueled by the Church's adherence to traditional values and viewpoints despite a changing world. In order to keep the vitality of Catholic life alive, both Catholic leaders were tasked with navigating between the weighty pull of tradition and the rushing push of the modern world. In an attempt to aid in this navigation, Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1962. The Council lasted for three years and produced sixteen documents during its session. The

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<sup>6</sup> "Roman Catholic Church," "Catholic Church," and "church" are all referring to the same institution. I use these titles interchangeably as phrasing permits.

<sup>7</sup> Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, p. 3.

topics of these documents ranged from the role of laity in the Church to the proper means of renewing Religious life.

The Second Vatican Council ushered in the opportunity for widespread change within the Catholic Church.<sup>8</sup> Both lay Catholics and members of the hierarchy, both those abroad as well as those within the United States, were aware of the importance of the Council in shaping the future of the Church. John Seidler and Katherine Meyer, authors of *Conflict and Change in the Catholic Church*, claim, “To understand what has happened to the Catholic Church in the United States, one must look at worldwide Catholicism, because that was the locus of the major catalyst of change, the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, the conflict between Religious and the Church hierarchy within the United States is only one part of a larger movement within world-wide Catholicism.

There was an excitement in the air and a hope that the Catholic Church would rise up to meet the modern world with vitality and resolve. Catholics everywhere were proud of their denomination and hopeful of the change to come. Sisters Lora Ann Quiñonez and Marie Daniel Turner, authors of *The Transformation of the American Catholic Sister*, write, “That Catholicism could change was as much a revelation to Catholics as it was to the public at

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<sup>8</sup> “The Second Vatican Council,” “The Council,” and “Vatican II” all refer to the same event. I use these titles interchangeably as phrasing permits.

<sup>9</sup> John Seidler and Katherine Meyer, *Conflict and Change in the Catholic Church* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), p. 6.



large.”<sup>10</sup> Tradition and past teaching indicated that the Church was unchangeable. The Council challenged that indication.

During the 1960s change within the Catholic Church was not only possible but, as the Second Vatican Council demonstrated, encouraged. At this time in the United States, civil society was also going through a time of change. Civil rights movements were gaining national attention and the war in Vietnam was well under way. The Cuban missile crisis occurred, the Equal Pay act passed through congress and women begin to demand that their voices be heard. Being Catholic and a woman during this time seemed to offer exciting possibilities.

During this time of social and ecclesiastical change the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters (IHM), a group of women Religious living in Los Angeles, California, began a process of renewal. These sisters were an apostolic group of women Religious who ran the Immaculate Heart school and university. In the years during and before the Second Vatican Council, these sisters had experienced problems with their local hierarchy.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE CONFLICT**

The Immaculate Heart Sisters of Los Angeles were women of integrity and dedicated members of the Roman Catholic Church. The mother superior of the IHM at the time of the conflict, Anita Caspary, makes clear in her

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<sup>10</sup> Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, *The Transformation of the American Catholic Sister* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), p. 5.

account of the conflict that she, as well as her fellow sisters, had no intention of disobeying the Vatican; they thought that their process of renewal was in line with Vatican II's call for reform.<sup>11</sup> The crux of that conflict, their idea of Religious life, was incompatible with that of their local Episcopal authority and ultimately that of the Vatican.

Throughout this project, I argue that in their split from the Vatican, the Immaculate Heart Sisters were implicitly demanding a new broader interpretation of the vow of obedience in Religious life. The Vatican held to a more juridical definition of Religious obedience while the sisters saw obedience to their conscience and to their understanding of Vatican II as a valid fulfillment of that vow. While the IHM did not explicitly state their intentions of challenging existing Catholic doctrine, their actions, following a restrictive maneuver by the local hierarchy, imply that they had found a voice and a conscience of their own. In claiming their ability as women Religious to renew their form of life, the IHM sisters were claiming obedience to the Holy Spirit above that of any earthly authority.

Understanding the vow of obedience is essential to understanding Religious life. Judith Schaefer, a scholar of women Religious, writes, "For the majority of the history of Religious life, whatever the focus or end for obedience a particular institute emphasized, the vow itself was seen as the

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<sup>11</sup> Anita M. Caspary, *Witness To Integrity: The Crisis of the Immaculate Heart Community of Los Angeles* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003).

primary vow, and contained within it all other vows and structures.”<sup>12</sup>

Religious obedience can be interpreted in a myriad of ways, some focusing on the more direct, or tangible application of the vow, some focusing instead on a broader reading of its fulfillment. Whatever one’s interpretation, the centrality of obedience and that vow’s connection to prophetic tradition, community, authority, gender, and the Holy Spirit is undeniable.

As the IHM sisters were some of the first American women Religious to implement the renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council, their story can be seen as a cautionary tale for the Vatican. Examining the events that led up to the IHM departure from the Church provides context for understanding the current theological differences between the Vatican and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. The similarities between the IHM sisters and the LCWR sisters are evident in their understandings of obedience and their treatment by the hierarchy. The IHM and the LCWR understandings of obedience agree with that of progressive Catholic scholars. Many of these scholars, mostly American women Religious, are currently or have previously been members of the LCWR.

While the Immaculate Heart Sisters were never accused of feminism they were told that their vision of Religious life was incompatible with that of the Church. Additionally, the IHM leaders were members of the LCWR

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<sup>12</sup> Judith Katherine Schaefer, “The Vow of Obedience as Decision-making in Communion; Contributions from Ecclesiology and Psychology” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2004), p. 221.

during their conflict with the hierarchy. While the LCWR did not explicitly voice their support for the IHM, many members of their organization did agree with the steps taken by the IHM and implicitly made that support known.<sup>13</sup>

There is not much written exclusively about the Immaculate Heart Sisters. While the conflict between these sisters and the hierarchy was popular in the media, there is little scholarly research done on these specific nuns. Newspapers across the country reported on the IHM conflict as it unfolded, however, these reports were rarely in depth and usually just outlined the points of contention between both parties. Therefore, the majority of the material that I have read in preparation for this thesis has dealt with the IHM struggle as part of a larger narrative. I have also researched issues that relate indirectly to the IHM conflict such as change within the Religious life, the possibility of feminism coinciding with Catholicism, and the gendered nature of power dynamics within the Church.

The main source that I will be using in my analysis of the conflict is Anita Caspary's *Witness to Integrity*. Caspary, the mother superior of the IHM sisters at the time of the conflict, recounts her understanding of the course of events approximately forty years after their unfolding. Her book is the most thorough and detailed account of the events in publication and while it certainly does bias the reader towards the sisters, it also explores the evolution

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<sup>13</sup> Ann Carey, *Sisters In Crisis: The Tragic Unraveling of Women's Religious Communities* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Publication Division, 1997).

of the IHM understanding of their identities as Religious and as members of the Church. This account serves as the foundational text for my analysis of the conflict.<sup>14</sup>

I develop my argument through an examination of a range of traditional and contemporary theologies of obedience; I then explore how the IHM decisions align with those interpretations of the vow. Additionally I explore the way in which those theological differences were manifest symbolically through the habit. Finally, I contemplate the implication that those theological and symbolic changes had for the IHM as Religious, as prophets, and as women within a patriarchal institution.

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<sup>14</sup> My understanding of the IHM view of the conflict is largely derived from Caspary's account of events. Given that most of the sisters left the Catholic Church with Caspary to begin their own community, I think that referring to Caspary's representation of the other IHM sisters regarding the conflict is a legitimate albeit broad representation of those women's feelings and views.

## **CHAPTER ONE: THEOLOGIES OF OBEDEINCE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

While the Second Vatican Council demonstrated the Church's ability to adapt to the modern world, Catholic doctrine is still considered infallible. If the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters had overtly challenged areas of Catholic doctrine, they would have alienated themselves from the Church much more quickly than their implicit challenges did. According to Antia Caspary's account of the controversy, a complete break from their roots was never the sisters' intention. While the conflict ultimately resulted in the IHM's departure from the Church, Caspary maintains that they were forced to leave by the hierarchy's refusal to understand their process of renewal. Not only did Cardinal McIntyre refuse to understand the IHM, he even refused to listen to them by continually shut down possibilities of dialogue. Caspary felt that she and her fellow women Religious were not given a choice and were not fully heard. In choosing to advocate for change, these women saw themselves as advancing an institution of which they were an integral part.<sup>15</sup> They took the

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<sup>15</sup> Anita Caspary and the IHM only saw themselves as advocating for change in so far as the Second Vatican Council had encouraged them to renew their community. Perhaps then a "broadening of their understanding" of Religious life as opposed to a "change" within the Catholic Church would be a more appropriate term. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will let the term "change" stand. There are differences in the possible interpretations of the idea of "change" within the Catholic Church. Hard change, or change in doctrinal or essential aspects of the Church is more difficult to initiate than soft change, or change relating to traditional or nonessential aspects of Church teaching.

renewal asked of them seriously and prepared to apply the changes they imagined would best suit their community.

The renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council and the IHM response to that renewal were countered by the strength of tradition within the Church. The impetus for change that many Catholics felt Vatican II inspired was not explicitly written into the Council's documents. Or if that change was explicitly stated, all Catholics did not understand it in the same way. Among the ideas complicated by the ambiguity of Vatican II's documents was the idea of the institute of Religious life. In response to lack of normative structure following the Council and the ensuing lack of role clarity among Religious, American women Religious began to imagine lasting, or what some might even term radical, change. While not explicitly radical, it was this imagination of change that, when actually put into practice, profoundly affected the IHM relationship to the vow of obedience.

Neither the Code of Canon Law nor the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* indicates any shift from pre to post-Vatican II conceptions of the vow of obedience. Nevertheless, some sources less central to the hierarchy indicate that the Catholic idea of obedience has evolved.<sup>16</sup> Cardinal McIntyre subscribed to a pre-Vatican II view of authority, while the IHM sisters embraced an evolved understanding of authoritative power. Because of his

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<sup>16</sup> Code of Canon Law, 654-658.

K.V. Truhlar, "Obedience" *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Second Edition Volume 10* Bernard L. Marthaler et al., (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), pp. 503-508.

traditional understanding, Cardinal McIntyre saw the IHM refusal to submit to his authority—their refusal to obey—as contrary to the very definition of Religious life. In light of that understanding, the IHM were challenging the prevailing definition of the vow of obedience through their opposition to McIntyre and the hierarchy.

This chapter is divided into five sections; each section furthers the argument that the IHM and the Cardinal held divergent understandings of obedience. In the first section, I explain the major developments in the IHM conflict with Cardinal McIntyre and, ultimately, the Vatican. In this chapter's second section I focus on how these divergent understandings of the vow of obedience shaped the IHM conflict with Cardinal McIntyre and the connection between obedience and rightful authority. The third section explores the importance of obedience in Catholic doctrine. The fourth section focuses on the problems that Religious have faced defining their role within the Church after the Second Vatican Council. The pull of tradition within Catholicism and the post-Vatican II Church's movement back towards preexisting paradigms clashes with many American women Religious movement towards more liberal and radical theological positions. The fifth and final section explores some of the developing ideas of obedience that have gained voice in the Church since the 1960s and how these new ideas correspond to those of the IHM sisters.



## **THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE IMMACULATE HEART SISTERS' CONFLICT**

The first real confrontation between Anita Caspary and Cardinal McIntyre was over material taught in some of the art courses at the Immaculate Heart College. At the time, Caspary was the College president. She indicates as the first point of confrontation the Cardinal's concerns that the IHM were too "liberal." He voiced these concerns in the late fifties and cited the IHM College's art department as particularly problematic. While this confrontation did not lead to direct action, the Cardinal threatened to close the college should its liberal tendencies continue. Caspary writes, "Episodes like this one, denying the academic freedom necessary to effectively operate a college, continued long after this encounter."<sup>17</sup> While Caspary recognized this tension, she claims that never once did she imagine that it could eventually result in her order's split from the Church. Another confrontation that Caspary documents arose over a traditional Mary's Day celebration. Auxiliary Bishop John J. Ward wrote a letter to Caspary questioning the publicity the celebration received. That letter prompted an exchange between Caspary and Cardinal McIntyre.<sup>18</sup> While the issue was formally resolved, it left a feeling of unease within the IHM community.

In 1963, Anita Caspary was elected Mother General of the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters. Regarding that year's chapter, she notes it as ". . . a

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<sup>17</sup> Caspary, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Caspary, p. 39.

clear if not drastic manifestation of the change in priorities among the majority of the delegates, as they made clear that the whole idea of Religious life was for them about to evolve, to change.”<sup>19</sup> For Caspary, this date marked the beginnings of a new direction for the IHM and their community. The sixties proved to be an exciting and eventful time for the IHM. Caspary writes that her community was, “. . . opening up to the world around us, sometimes judiciously, sometimes spontaneously.”<sup>20</sup> As American women began to claim their voice and engage in society, the IHM began to take control of their community and reach out to the world around them.

Another major development in the conflict unfolded while Caspary was in Rome attending the Second Vatican Council in November of 1965. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles sent an ominous delegation of priests to visit the IHM sisters. According to Caspary the questions asked of the sisters were designed “. . . it would appear, to undermine their faith in the renewal process by questioning the present practices of the Immaculate Heart Sisters and many other matters mostly related to the modest experimental changes proposed at the 1963 chapter.”<sup>21</sup> While not in and of itself unusual, the timing of the visit and the interrogatory manner with which the visited was conducted greatly concerned the sisters. In a meeting following this intrusion, Cardinal McIntyre threatened to withdraw his moral support from the sisters.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Caspary, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> Caspary, p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> Caspary, p. 69.

<sup>22</sup> Caspary, p. 71.

From that point onwards, the conflict between the Cardinal and the sisters only escalated. The Cardinal found the outcome of his priests' visitation with the IHM sisters to be less than satisfactory. In response, he proposed a number of restrictive measures that he felt should be implemented immediately by the sisters, despite the dictates of their 1963 General Chapter. Sensing a troubled horizon, Caspary sought outside council from Cardinal Antoniutti who suggested that the IHM write a letter affirming their loyalty to the Archdiocese. However, this letter did little to stem the Cardinal's growing mistrust and another visitation followed in March of 1967.<sup>23</sup> Yet the IHM continued with their renewal. Addressing the almost inevitable nature of events, Caspary writes, "Yet we could not, even if we wanted to, stop the growing tide of renewal that had caught the imagination of the majority of sisters."<sup>24</sup>

The Immaculate Heart Sister's 1967 Chapter of Renewal proved to be the event that irreparably deepened the cracks of disagreement between the Sisters and the Cardinal. The general thrust of the reforms instituted by the Chapter moved away from restrictive, hierarchical authority towards individual conscience and personal responsibility in community. In an attempt to secure the legality of the Chapter, Caspary consulted theologians, advisors, and Canon lawyers, all of whom assured her of the legitimacy of the IHM endeavors. While not all sisters accepted this renewal, the vast majority of the

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<sup>23</sup> Caspary, p. 79.

<sup>24</sup> Caspary, p. 83.

IHM greeted these changes with enthusiasm. Despite the Cardinal's disapproval, the sisters approved their General Chapter of Renewal and set about implementing reform.<sup>25</sup>

The IHM's adherence to the authority of their 1967 Chapter ultimately resulted in their renunciation of their canonical status. Following a heated meeting with Caspary about this Chapter, McIntyre demanded that the sisters withdraw from his diocesan schools by June 1968.<sup>26</sup> The Cardinal cited what he perceived as the IHM repeated disobedience as the grounds for this dismissal; Caspary cited the authority of the Chapter of Renewal as grounds for her inability to compromise. Caspary writes, "But the die was cast," and whether or not either party wished to work further towards reaching an agreement, conflict seemed inevitable.<sup>27</sup> While deeper theological issues were clearly at stake, the question of whether or not the IHM need wear a recognizable Religious habit surfaced as a central point of contention.

In the fall 1967, the Vatican sent in an apostolic delegate to meet with members of the IHM community. That delegate, Father Gallagher, conducted interviews with each of the sisters aimed at questioning their practices and their understandings of the Chapter decrees. This visit ended with Father Gallagher demanding the IHM follow four practices and attitudes essential to Religious life which were; the maintenance of the habit, life in common

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<sup>25</sup> Caspary, p. 106.

<sup>26</sup> Caspary, p. 123.

<sup>27</sup> Caspary, p. 132.

including prayer, active life as subordinate to spiritual life, and mandatory cooperation with the local Ordinary.<sup>28</sup> In response to the sisters' further refusal to comply with Vatican mandates, another investigation, this time headed by three American Bishops, was sent to interview the IHM. At this time, the lay public was highly interested in the outcome of this conflict and many members of the Catholic Church expressed support for the sisters.

The sisters who had been teaching in the diocesan schools were made to withdraw from their positions on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1968.<sup>29</sup> This act forced many of the IHM sisters to seek other employment and radically rethink their identity and calling. In May of 1969, the pontifical commission returned to the IHM for one last visit and told the sisters that their experimentation would not be permitted.<sup>30</sup> At this time, a group of those sisters who did not agree with the renewal decrees left the rest of the IHM to form their own community.<sup>31</sup> While the larger group of sisters all requested dispensation from their vows, they maintained that they did not do so freely; the Cardinal and the Vatican had forced them to choose between their integrity and their canonical status.

Many of the Religious who were dispensed from their vows came together to form the Immaculate Heart Community. This Christian ecumenical community, as Caspary summarizes it, “. . . was born out of a Religious

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<sup>28</sup> Caspary, p. 157.

<sup>29</sup> Caspary, p. 186.

<sup>30</sup> Caspary, p. 195.

<sup>31</sup> Caspary, p. 209. The smaller group of about fifty members was led by Sister Eileen, while the larger group in favor of renewal contained close to three-hundred and fifty (Caspary, p. 210).

idealism, a faith perspective, deep relationships, a collective resistance to unjust authority, and an unwavering Christian commitment to the individual conscience of each sister.”<sup>32</sup> Despite many skeptics, the Immaculate Heart Community is still in existence as a vibrant community of married and unmarried men and women, all committed to working towards social justice. The following section focuses in on the role of obedience in the conflict.

#### **DIVERGENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF OBEDIENCE AND RIGHTFUL AUTHORITY**

Obedience plays a vital role in Caspary’s narrative.<sup>33</sup> She remembers its importance even as the events of the conflict were unfolding, writing, “It is interesting that when I look back to my first thoughts on the occasion, it was to my personal practice of the vow of obedience, to how well I fulfilled the will of superiors, the legalistic rules, rather than to anything more fundamental.”<sup>34</sup> These questions of the proper place and nature of obedience in Religious life soon became central to the conflict.

As the 1960s progressed, the conflict between the IHM sisters and Cardinal McIntyre escalated. The status of the IHM institute in relation to the Cardinal and the implications of that relationship was a source of tension for

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<sup>32</sup> Caspary, p. 219.

<sup>33</sup> Caspary’s account of the events surround the conflict, *Witness to Integrity*, was completed over forty years after the IHM left the Church. Such a length of time as well as the ultimate decision of the Immaculate Heart sisters to begin their own community most probably affected Caspary’s perception of the way in which the conflict unfolded. Given the perspective of time, it is quite possible that Caspary’s reflections on the conflict illustrate a more comprehensive understanding of the vow of obedience than the IHM had during the conflict.

<sup>34</sup> Caspary, p. 47.

both parties. While the Cardinal's understanding of the vow of obedience was grounded in a strict interpretation of Canon Law and the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, the IHM interpretation of the vow was evolving and building on ideas generated during the Second Vatican Council. Both understandings of the vow were inherently tied to questions of authority within the Church. Both parties strongly adhered to their respective views; the clash of these divergent views ultimately caused conflict.

The Cardinal's more traditional understanding of obedience required the sisters to submit to an earthly authority. According to Caspary's account of the conflict, Cardinal McIntyre saw his role as that of the earthly authority and the sisters' role as one of submission. When the IHM pushed back, he could not understand their lack of submission as anything less than a violation of their Religious vows. Caspary writes, "From the Cardinal's side, what was desired, even demanded, was absolute fidelity to the past and unquestioning obedience to the hierarchy—this in spite of the fact that the community as a pontifical institute was exempt from the local hierarchy's special directives except in public matters that might prove scandalous."<sup>35</sup> This interpretation of the Cardinal's position is reinforced by his repeated attempts to bring the IHM sisters into line.

Other members of the Church also viewed the IHM sisters as misguided. Caspary writes, "Thus we seemed to many good parishioners,

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<sup>35</sup> Caspary, p. 75.

especially in our local area, to be disobedient, disloyal, and rebellious instead of self-determining women who hoped to serve more effectively as adult members within the fold.”<sup>36</sup> Perhaps because the IHM had not yet found a way to articulate their theology of obedience, perhaps because alternative theologies of Religious life were still just gaining exposure, the sisters’ actions were not fully understood or accepted by local lay Catholics.<sup>37</sup>

The IHM were a pontifical institute. As such, the IHM were subject directly to the authority of Rome rather than their local hierarchy. Historically, orders of women Religious often gained pontifical status in an attempt to gain some autonomy from often-meddlesome local bishops. Answering only to Rome gave those women greater freedom from their local Churches. According to Kenneth Briggs, however, even with this greater degree of autonomy sisters and the hierarchy were expected to maintain cordial and cooperative relations to their local Church hierarchies.<sup>38</sup> Despite the fact that the IHM were not directly subject to McIntyre, precedent dictates that they were supposed to respect him. The Cardinal became incensed the sisters lacked proper respect for his office.

The IHM conflict with the Cardinal can be distilled to conflicting understandings of rightful authority. Tensions ran high as both parties

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<sup>36</sup> Caspary, p. 181.

<sup>37</sup> It would be interesting to compare the lay understanding of the IHM to that of the LCWR. The LCWR has had more time to codify their position and more practice expressing that position. This factor of clarity could contribute to lay people’s acceptance and support of their actions.

<sup>38</sup> Kenneth A. Briggs, *Double Crossed: Uncovering the Catholic Church's Betrayal of American Nuns* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), p. 13.



continued to adhere to their understanding of obedience. Caspary claims that during her meetings with the Cardinal, he repeatedly tried to force her and the IHM sisters to submit to his ideas of what was appropriate and what was not. On the one hand, the Cardinal's claim that women Religious submit was in agreement with traditional understandings of the vow of obedience found in Church law and teaching. According to this traditional view, the IHM women should have been happy to submit to the authority of the Cardinal regardless of their status as a pontifical institute. As a member of the hierarchy and thus a legitimate superior, the Cardinal's requests should have been understood by the IHM as an expression of the will of G-d and thus obeyed. The IHM vow of obedience required them to conform their will to that of their superiors in so far as the will of their superiors does not contradict their moral knowledge of what is right. In requesting that the IHM adhere to certain standards of dress and modes of prayer, McIntyre was not asking them to do anything immoral. According to this view of the vow of obedience, the sisters have little to no authority and power rests only with the hierarchy.

On the other hand, Anita Caspary and the IHM imagined obedience in a more progressive sense and so did not see their rejection of the Cardinal's authority as antithetical to Religious life. The sisters saw themselves as living in the spirit of Vatican II. They believed that they were obeying their true calling as Religious through their adherence to the authority of G-d and of their lived experience. While Caspary agreed to restate her obedience to the

ordinary during this conflict, she only did so in so far as that obedience did not interfere with their internal workings of the IHM community.

Additionally, the IHM did not recognize McIntyre as their legitimate superior. Therefore they did not view their vow of obedience as requiring them to submit to his authority. In disagreeing with the Cardinal, the IHM imagined themselves as following the will of the Vatican, more specifically, the Second Vatican Council. As a pontifical institute, the IHM were legally within their right to resist the diocesan demands that they found contrary to their understanding of Vatican II.

Furthermore, the IHM claimed enlightenment through the Holy Spirit. Attention to guidance from the Holy Spirit was one of the points of renewal that Caspary suggested be adopted in the IHM Chapter of Renewal. Caspary claims that this “. . . abandonment of narrow legalism in favor of the guidance of the Holy Spirit” was suggested in the Second Vatican Council’s decree on the renewal of Religious life.<sup>39</sup> As “The will of God can be known in concrete situations . . . by the actual enlightenment of the Holy Spirit,” the IHM understanding of themselves as obeying their interpretation of divine will was in line with Catholic teachings.<sup>40</sup> The Cardinal’s traditional understanding of the authority of the hierarchy was contrary to the IHM’s more progressive understanding of authority through the Holy Spirit and through lived experience. The prophetic tradition of Religious orders and the implications of

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<sup>39</sup> Caspary, p. 88.

<sup>40</sup> Truhlar, p. 506.

the IHM's claims of guidance by the Holy Spirit will be explored further in Chapter Three.

### **OBEDIENCE AND CATHOLIC DOCTRINE**

Obedience to God and obedience to the Catholic Church as the earthly representative of the will of God is vital to most Catholics' understanding of their relationship to the divine. The Code of Canon Law as well as the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* make clear that obedience to the authority of God as expressed through an earthly authority is necessary for the fulfillment of the Religious vow of obedience. Submission to such an authority should not, however, supersede the will of the one obeying. Individuals' actions are their responsibility regardless of whether or not they were asked to act by a superior.

The Code of Canon Law asserts the importance of obedience in all Catholic life. In terms of Religious life, the Code of Canon Law states that obedience is of utmost importance and one of the three evangelical counsels, or vows, which Religious take upon entering their institutions. In regards to Religious life, Canon Law reads, "The Christian faithful freely assume this form of living in institutes of consecrated life canonically erected by competent authority of the Church. Through vows or other sacred bonds according to the proper laws of the institutes, they profess the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience and, through the charity to which

the counsels lead, are joined in a special way to the Church and its mystery.”<sup>41</sup>

In other words, obedience is an essential element of Religious life.

Not only must obedience be rendered to G-d, but obedience also requires an earthly superior to whom one should submit. Canon Law clearly states that obedience must be rendered to an immediate authority, reading “The evangelical counsel of obedience, undertaken in a spirit of faith and love in the following of Christ obedient unto death, requires the submission of the will to legitimate superiors, who stand in the place of G-d, when they command according to the proper constitutions.”<sup>42</sup> According to Canon Law, obedience is a requirement of Religious life. For that obedience to be recognized, one must render it to an earthly authority.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* also defines obedience in terms of submission to authority. While ultimate authority is always divine, in many cases direct authority can and must be vested in human beings.<sup>43</sup> The section on obedience in the Encyclopedia reads, “The subject who obeys embraces the possibility of action that the will of authority has determined should be realized. He accepts it as commanded and renounces conflicting possibilities. Thus does he render to authority what is due, namely, submission.”<sup>44</sup> In accordance with Canon Law, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that obedience requires submission to an immediate, earthly superior.

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<sup>41</sup> Canon Law 573, 2

<sup>42</sup> Canon Law 601

<sup>43</sup> Truhlar, p. 503.

<sup>44</sup> Truhlar, p. 503.

While submission to an earthly superior is a necessary part of Religious obedience, one should ultimately be submissive to the will of G-d. The will of G-d requires the submission of both the earthly superior as well as the one obeying that superior. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* explains, “The will of God can be known in concrete situations by applying to them the norms of divine positive law and natural law, and by the actual enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>45</sup> The idea here is that in submitting to an earthly superior, one will never go against the will of G-d as that superior’s commands should be in line with divine will. There are, however, occasional discrepancies between the will of the earthly authority and the submissive Religious’ perception of the will of the divine. In such cases, the appropriate recourse available to the one obeying is either divine law, as illuminated in scripture, or enlightenment by the Holy Spirit. Recourse to the Holy Spirit can be complicated, as measuring the validity of one’s enlightenment is nearly impossible. There is, however, recourse for the one obeying if that individual finds moral fault with the directives of their earthly authority.

In regards to this recourse, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that acts of obedience should never supersede the will of the one obeying. Rather, the will of the one who is obeying should be matched to the will of the superior. The matching of wills is enabled through the conscious effort of the

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<sup>45</sup> Truhlar, p. 506.

one who is obeying.<sup>46</sup> The will of the one obeying aligns itself to the will of the superior who aligns itself to the will of G-d. The need for personal responsibility even within obedience is made clear: “Genuine obedience to the will of the Father carries with it not only the submission of one’s will to the command of a superior, but also, when there is abuse of authority, prudent and firm opposition”<sup>47</sup> While Canon Law merely stressed the importance of obedience, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* clarifies that obedience is not an excuse for an individual not to exercise moral judgment before acting. Both of these sources articulate the fundamentals of obedience in Catholic doctrine and that doctrine’s roots in tradition.

#### **RELIGIOUS AND LACK OF ROLE CLARITY**

There was wide consensus concerning the need for the adaptation and renewal of Religious life in the early to mid-twentieth century. Lack of role clarity following the Second Vatican Council allowed for alterations in the norms of Religious life, including the role of obedience. The Immaculate Heart sisters’ position within the Church both helped and hindered their efforts to bring change to their institution. The constraints on the IHM efforts at renewal were in part due to the Church’s entrenchment in tradition. Because the sisters were subject to hierarchical control without themselves being members of the hierarchy, the means that they had to bring about change were

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<sup>46</sup> Truhlar, p. 507.

<sup>47</sup> Truhlar, p. 508.

limited. Conversely, the IHM effort to cultivate renewal was aided by their distance from the Vatican, the perspective that distance allowed, and the lack of norms for Religious life in the post-Vatican II period.

The Second Vatican Council and the documents produced during its session provided confusing direction for renewal, complicated the existing distinctions between clergy, Religious, and laity, and placed new focus on the role of women in the Church. The documents that related either directly or indirectly to Religious life were particularly ambiguous. Despite the widely acknowledged need for change, Religious scholar Judith Schaefer writes, “No common theology of the vows has emerged.”<sup>48</sup> The position of Religious within the Church remains ambiguous.

Vatican II documents began with a renovation of the concepts of Religious life. The vast majority of Catholics agree that in *Lumen Gentium*, the first document produced during Vatican II to address Religious life directly, there was a call for Religious to reorient or renew their way of life.<sup>49</sup> Whether or not this reorientation was a break from past practices and traditions is still being debated. *Gaudium et Spes* further complicated Religious life by redefining the laity’s possible proximity to holiness.<sup>50</sup> Following these two constitutions, *Perfectae Caritatis* illuminates the ways in which renewal of Religious life should be implemented and *Ecclesiae Sanctae*

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<sup>48</sup> Schaefer, p. 114.

<sup>49</sup> Vatican Council II, “*Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church].”

<sup>50</sup> Vatican Council II, “*Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World].”

further attempts to clarify that implementation.<sup>51</sup> All of these documents demonstrate how the Vatican has repeatedly attempted to guide the renewal of Religious life.

Despite attempts at clarification, some members of Religious institutions imagined that the Council gave them broad freedom to experiment, while others imagined the boundaries defined within these documents as more limited. *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Ecclesiae Sanctae* attempted to clarify the need for and means of implementing renewal; however debates within Religious communities and between Religious communities and the hierarchy continued to be fought in the years following the Council's close. For example, Ann Carey, author of *Sisters in Crisis*, a book warning against the dangerous trends among American women's Religious communities, thinks that progressive sisters have gone too far in their renewal. She charges, "Many Religious institutes went far beyond the boundaries for experimentation set by *Ecclesiae Sanctae*. These communities radically transformed the purpose, nature, and character of their institutions, all under the guise of obedient renewal."<sup>52</sup> Other voices, such as Caspary, maintained that institutional changes were within the boundaries allowed by Vatican II.<sup>53</sup> The debate between members of the Church in following years, of which the IHM conflict is one primary example, illustrates the profound

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<sup>51</sup> Vatican Council II, "*Perfectae Caritatis* [Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life]."

Vatican Council II, "*Ecclesiae Sanctae*" [Apostolic Letter]."

<sup>52</sup> Carey, p. 42.

<sup>53</sup> Caspary, p. 199.



differences of opinion concerning the Council documents. While neither side will admit this, the fact that there even are such debates proves that Rome gave very mixed signals on the nature of renewal.<sup>54</sup>

The meaning of Religious life was also confused—some might even say fractured—following the Second Vatican Council. The scope of renewal was not clearly understood and the lines between the various memberships of the Church were obscured. J. Brian Benestad acknowledges the blurring of the boundary between clergy and laity writing, “Distinguishing the duties of clergy from those of the laity has been difficult since the end of Vatican Council II.”<sup>55</sup> The elevation of the general Catholic population through the universal call to holiness in *Gaudium et Spes* complicated many Religious’ understanding of their identity. The confusion stemming from the Vatican II documents on Religious life led Religious to experience a decline in role clarity. Patricia Wittberg, author of *The Rise and Fall of Catholic Religious Orders*, claims that this lack of clarity had far-reaching effects on women’s communities across the United States.<sup>56</sup>

The Church’s attention to women also undoubtedly impacted the sisters’ understanding of their role within the Church. While ‘Religious’ is an identity that in many ways supersedes gender, sisters still identify themselves

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<sup>54</sup> See Appendix A for further writing on the documents of Vatican II.

<sup>55</sup> J. Brian Benestad “Doctrinal Perspectives on the Church in the Modern World” *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*. Ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 161.

<sup>56</sup> Patricia Wittberg, *The Rise and Fall of Catholic Religious Orders: A Social Movement Perspective* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1994.) p. 236.

as Catholic women. Vatican II placed increasing importance on the female members of the Church and women Religious felt called to rise to the occasion.

The combined effect of confusion over the meaning of Vatican II and post-Vatican II documents, the decline in role clarity experienced by many Religious following the Council, and the newly complicated role of women within the Church all contributed to the IHM serious consideration and reevaluation of their place within the Church.

The Catholic Church is an organization entrenched in tradition. Therefore the dominant Catholic paradigm of Religious life is understood in terms of traditional values and viewpoints. In many instances tradition holds equal weight with theological doctrine. That being said, it is often difficult to determine where to draw the line between traditional and theological doctrine and, in some cases, there is not even a clear enough distinction between the two for a smudge, let alone a clear line, to be drawn.

The Immaculate Heart sisters' conflict with the Church was, in a sense, a conflict over the proper place of tradition within the Catholicism. The problems the Church and the sisters faced in reconciling ideas of Religious life were outlined by the differences in interpretations of the importance of certain traditions. Both the Cardinal and the IHM viewed their interpretations of obedience as illuminated in Church teaching as more in line with a legitimate authority and with G-d. Especially pertinent to these problems of

reconciliation were differences of opinion concerning visible signs of obedience such as the habit.

At the same time as history was pulling the Church towards tradition, Vatican II was pushing women Religious towards renewal. With the Second Vatican Council came the possibility of widespread change within Catholicism. In terms of Religious life, that change was left open-ended. The role and therefore identity of Religious had been fractured yet the Church did not provide Religious with the proper framework for reestablishing their identity. Due to this lack of framework, or lack of normative structure, Religious were able to define what it meant to members of the prophetic branch of the Church on their own terms. This was a time of trepidation for many, but also a time of promise and hopeful change.

Following the Second Vatican Council change within the Church was comprehensive. John Seidler and Katherine Meyer, authors of *Conflict and Change in the Catholic Church*, reasonably argue that the change within the Catholic Church was broad and comprehensive enough to be called a social movement. They write, “The change in Catholicism was not merely a trend or a simple adjustment by the usual institutional mechanisms. Instead, it seems to have been a true social movement—a loosely coordinated set of collective effort to modernize the long—entrenched Catholic system.”<sup>57</sup> As such, they conclude that change produced conflict and lack of normative structure,

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<sup>57</sup> Seidler Meyer, p. 66.

writing, “Authors have also noted that great social upheavals produce anomia—that is, normlessness. Almost by definition, social changes include the introduction of new norms, and this normative change often leaves whole segments of society in confusion or uncertainty.”<sup>58</sup> From this normless period, many American women Religious moved towards defining their own norms. As they moved thus, the Vatican moved back towards the security of previous norms. This difference of direction following Vatican II resulted in widespread conflict between Religious and the hierarchy and increased the gap between their respective understandings of Religious life.<sup>59</sup>

While the Vatican’s conception of change was limited, those outside of the hierarchy were more apt to embrace more comprehensive change. As stated by Seidler and Meyer, “By contrast with the administrative mentality and conservatism of the Roman Curia and other Church bureaus and commissions, which are also attached at the top, Religious orders are not necessarily subject to the same pressures from bureaucratic and administrative thinking.”<sup>60</sup> The IHM sisters were in a prime position to initiate change since their distance from the hierarchy allowed them liberty of thought and the freedom to move towards a more radical perspective.

In the wake of Vatican II, the IHM sisters moved towards change through embracing new norms while the hierarchy remained tied to tradition

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<sup>58</sup> Seidler and Meyer, p. 71.

<sup>59</sup> The Vatican’s movement back towards pre-Vatican II norms was undoubtedly encouraged by the death of progressive Pope John Paul XXIII.

<sup>60</sup> Seidler and Meyer, p. 15.

and the security of previous paradigms. At the risk of alienation from the Church, the sisters only argued explicitly for symbolic change. I believe that this symbolism is, however, illustrative of an implicit argument for theological change especially because of the importance of symbols within the Catholic Church and Religious life.

### **EVOLVING THEOLOGIES**

Obedience within Religious life prior to Vatican II was too focused on archaic and empty ritual. Women living within Religious communities were forced to request permission of their mother superiors for everything from bathing to turning off their lights. Such restrictive requirements kept Religious in an almost childlike state of dependence throughout their lives. Given that dependence, Religious and especially women Religious often did not have the chance to develop a sense of individuality or independence. Following the Second Vatican Council, the vow of obedience within Religious communities underwent broad revisions. Additionally, outside of the official Catholic teachings on Religious obedience an evolving idea of that vow has been gaining voice. Various scholars have continued to develop this idea and have arrived at new definitions of Religious life.

Among the most vocal of the proponents of new theologies or evolved understandings of Religious obedience are American women Religious. Numerous former leaders of the Leadership Council of Women Religious,

including Pat Farrell, Joan Chittister, and Margaret Brennan, as well as sisters engaged in active public work including Simone Campbell, Margaret A. Farley, Jeannine Gramick and Theresa Kane have all complicated the prevailing idea of obedience as absolute submission to the hierarchy.<sup>61</sup> Through books, articles, interviews, and leadership these women made the weight of their authority felt within the Religious community and pushed for real and sometimes even radical renewal. The cost has often been harsh critique from the Vatican.

Along with these prominent American women Religious, Catholic scholars have begun to directly address the issue of obedience in Religious life. Howard Gray, author of the article “Shift in Theology,” persuasively argues that the prevailing theology of Religious life has undergone significant change.<sup>62</sup> Regarding this change, Gray writes, “. . . post-Vatican II understanding of the vow of obedience, while respecting legitimate authority and the need to sustain sound order in community and work, would emphasize obedience more as a communal effort to be corporately, radically obedient to God’s designs.”<sup>63</sup>

Members of Religious institutions have also voiced their ideas of the theology of Religious life. Judith Katherine Schaefer, a Dominican sister,

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<sup>61</sup> Following a question about her insubordination on a 60 Minutes interview about the LCWR, Pat Farrell states, “I think that is one of the areas of misunderstanding and difference, our first obedience is to God.” Pat Farrell interviewed by Bob Simon, “American nuns struggle with Vatican for change” 17 March 2013, *60 Minutes* (CBS).

<sup>62</sup> Howard Gray, “Shift in Theology” *The Way*, 1989.

<sup>63</sup> Gray, p. 57.

wrote her doctoral dissertation titled: “The Vow of Obedience as Decision-making in Communion; Contributions from Ecclesiology and Psychology,” on the evolving ideas of the vow of obedience within Religious communities. She proposes a model of obedience-in-communion for Religious life that is based on understanding the power of community and experiential knowledge of the Holy Spirit.

Lora Ann Quiñonez and Marie Daniel Turner touch on issues of obedience in terms of American women Religious in their work, *The Transformation of the American Catholic Sister*. They claim personal authority through experience and believe an individual should ultimately obey his or her informed conscience.

Feminist scholar Sandra Schneiders has also contributed to a new understanding of obedience throughout her numerous works.<sup>64</sup> Schneiders highlights the prophetic tradition of Religious within the Church, and, like Schaefer, understands obedience as being based on communion with the Holy Spirit. While Howard Grey is a Jesuit priest, Schaefer, Quiñonez, Turner, and Schneiders are all American women Religious.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Catholic Church* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1991). Hereinafter referred to as BP. Sandra M. Schneiders, *Prophets in their Own Country: Women Religious Bearing Witness to the Gospel in a Troubled Church* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2011). Hereinafter referred to as PITOC.

<sup>65</sup> I venture to argue that it is not a coincidence that the majority of the new theologies of obedience are connected to women Religious. This view supports the trend that American women Religious are largely behind changes in terms of the vow and in terms of Religious life.

Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens, deceased Archbishop of Malines-Brussels, has also pushed for the renewal of Religious life. In his treatise on women Religious, *The Nun in the World: New Dimensions in the Modern Apostolate*, Suenens suggests ways of implementing reform.<sup>66</sup> He claims that, “The Religious of today appear to be faithfully out of touch with the world as it is, an anachronism.”<sup>67</sup> In order to update Religious life, Suenens suggested that women Religious engage with the world. Full engagement requires the evolution of Religious’ conceptions of the vow of obedience. Suenens wrote, “Obedience must be lived as a positive virtue, a stimulus rather than an invitation to passiveness,” and he adds that obedience “. . . cannot be productive unless there is openness, reciprocity, and dialogue.”<sup>68</sup> Suenens’ active interpretation of this vow rejects the idea of obedience as passive submission to a superior. Authority is important, but Religious must engage with and understand that authority. In other words, one should submit to G-d’s will alone; no earthly authority can replace that relationship with the divine. In addition to rethinking the vow of obedience, Suenens suggests that sisters reconsider the archaic nature of the habit, be up to date on the events of the world, and engage with the laity.

Dominican Priest Jean-Marie-Roger Tillard likewise envisioned obedience as a response to the authority of dialogue and community needs.

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<sup>66</sup> Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens, *The Nun in the World: New Dimensions in the Modern Apostolate* (London: Burns & Oats, 1963).

<sup>67</sup> Suenens, p. 35.

<sup>68</sup> Suenens, p. 138.



According to Schaefer's reading of Tillard's work, he understood obedience as listening as opposed to obedience as submission.<sup>69</sup> "By focusing on the history and development of Religious life, its origins and charismatic identity, and by moving outside the classical scriptural foundations, Tillard is able to emphasize the spirit and charism of each institute as a multiplication of the gifts of the Spirit, while continuing to situate Religious life firmly within the ecclesial structure."<sup>70</sup> While neither Suenens nor Tillard move beyond the hierarchical structure in the same way that some women Religious have, they both envisioned new conceptions of the nature of Religious life.

### **New Theologies and the IHM**

Through the efforts of Pope John XXIII both before and during the Second Vatican Council, Religious life was poised to undergo renewal. There was a distinct effort by members of the Church hierarchy to bring Religious life into the modern world and measures were taken to update everything from Religious dress to the means of living in community. While no one within the Catholic Church would argue for a return to the same petty obedience to custom previously practiced by women Religious, the extent to which Religious should be subject to their superiors is still debated.

The IHM developed their understanding of the vow of obedience over the course of the conflict. While she doesn't directly address her views on

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<sup>69</sup> Schaefer, p. 232.

<sup>70</sup> Schaefer, p. 109.

obedience, Caspary does express the foundations of her theology on Religious life, writing, “My ideal for the development of Religious life was a statement that for the world the Religious becomes witness to a kind of last-stand testament that life and love are greater than death and boredom.”<sup>71</sup> This idea of Religious life as vibrant and active force within the world as well as the emphasis on the individual within community and lived experience coincides with an understanding of the vow of obedience as permissive of such temporal engagement.

The individual in community is of central importance to the evolving theology of obedience. For many American women Religious today, obedience has evolved to focus on the communal, discursive aspects of obedience over the traditional and hierarchical. This conception of obedience placed greater emphasis on the person’s internal obeying than that person’s outward demonstration of their obedience.<sup>72</sup>

Religious believe that authentic obedience is dynamic. Describing a prevalent understanding of obedience in terms of acting in community in the world Judith Schaefer writes, “The principal of Trinitarian communion compels those living the vow to understand obedience in ways that are dynamic, participative, and dialogical rather than deferential, hierarchical, and

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<sup>71</sup> Caspary, p. 88.

<sup>72</sup> Gray, p. 58.

centralized.”<sup>73</sup> This understanding of Religious obedience is active, engaging, and focused on dialogue.

Such engagement requires a connection between obedience and work. Contemplating the nature of relations between subject and work, Gray writes, “The apostolic character of obedience resides not only in the object, i.e., the work to be accomplished, but also in the subject, i.e., those who do the work.”<sup>74</sup> Such obedience is manifest in apostolic works. Also, obedience is not only the correct external response to authority, but an internal willingness to submit to that authority and then externally obey as well. That internal response presupposes a mature individual.

Furthermore the needs of individual Religious have begun to be recognized as integral to the health of the whole community. Schaefer writes, “Most recently, however, obedience has emphasized an individual’s participation in decision-making within community for the sake of the goals and mission of a particular institute, as well as for the good of the individual Religious.”<sup>75</sup> For many members of the Church, the theology of obedience has evolved to focus on the vow of obedience within the context of community and individual needs.

The IHM conflict reflects a similar focus on the individual within community. Caspary phrases this focus in terms of maturity, writing, “The

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<sup>73</sup> Schaefer, p. 268.

<sup>74</sup> Gray, p. 58.

<sup>75</sup> Schaefer, p. 220.

teaching of the council shifted the notion of virtue, so that the former unquestioning, passive obedience to ecclesiastical or Religious authority gave way to the personal responsibility of adult, mature Christians.”<sup>76</sup> The IHM focus on the individual was coupled with an emphasis on community. In their conflict with McIntyre, the IHM proved that they were willing to go to any lengths in order to follow what they believed was G-d’s intention for their community. Nothing could exemplify this condition more directly than the sisters’ resignation from the Church and their formation of the Immaculate Heart Community. They had a vision of life in communion and they pursued it at the price of losing their cherished Catholic identity.

The authority of experience is another tenet of the evolved theology of obedience. Quiñonez and Turner argue, “Experience possessed its own authority.”<sup>77</sup> Moving obedience away from ecclesiastical authority to personal experience, women Religious began claiming personal authority and in doing so complicating the prevailing Church idea of obedience. Regarding this focus on experience over external authority, Quiñonez and Turner write, “While neither ignoring nor trivializing Church teaching in making choices, [women Religious] nevertheless value the wisdom found in their personal and collective experiences and in the social experience of humankind.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Caspary, p. 22.

<sup>77</sup> Quiñonez and Turner, p. 38.

<sup>78</sup> Quiñonez and Turner, p. 43.

Experience likewise played a central role in the IHM conflict with the Cardinal. It was their experience of living as women in community that gave them the power to confront their bishop and eventually break away from the Church.<sup>79</sup> Through an understanding of the importance of the individual in community and the power of experience, the IHM conflict reflects the later theology of obedience promulgated by contemporary theologians.

While the traditional view that Religious must be completely submissive to an earthly, divinely elected, hierarchical authority is still subscribed to by many Catholics, there are other lay and Religious theologians who are arguing for a shift in the theology of Religious life. Obedience as subordination to an earthly authority as opposed to obedience to oneself and one's community is being questioned. Through their conflict with the local hierarchy, the IHM were implicitly subscribing to a progressive idea of obedience, by claiming active existence and obedience to conscience and community as the ultimate authority.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The Immaculate Heart Sisters and Cardinal McIntyre held divergent ideas of obedience. The vow of obedience as explained by the Code of Canon Law and the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* requires Religious to obey an earthly authority and submit to the hierarchy. Despite this apparent clarity in Church

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<sup>79</sup> Carey, p. 220.

teaching, the Second Vatican Council and the documents produced during and after its assembly have fostered different ideas of Religious life. These different ideas necessarily colored the conflict between the IHM and the Cardinal; while the IHM embraced a more progressive idea of obedience by placing rightful authority within their community, the Cardinal adhered to a more traditional view of the vow, imagining rightful authority as only within the Church and hierarchy.

Statements by the current Vatican leadership indicate that they want only nonessential change.<sup>80</sup> The Church has only allowed traditional or cosmetic change as a token that it is in touch with the modern world. Women Religious in the U.S. however, want more radical change. As stated by Seidler and Meyer, “Finally, a majority of women Religious constituted another leading force for change. In the United States, these and a number of other groups were all fighting against middle-of-the-road leadership by bishops and in some cases conservative policies of traditional bishops.”<sup>81</sup> This push against the authority of the Church was vital for renewal. Seidler and Meyer point out that “Delegitimation of traditional authority is a very important aspect of transformation.”<sup>82</sup> As the IHM sisters were at the forefront of this push for more radical renewal, they were also engaged in a process of delegitimizing Vatican authority.

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<sup>80</sup> Peter Sartain interviewed by Bob Simon, “American nuns struggle with Vatican for change” 17 March 2013, *60 Minutes* (CBS).

<sup>81</sup> Seidler and Meyer, p. 65.

<sup>82</sup> Seidler and Meyer, p. 27.

Since Vatican II, new theologies of obedience within Religious life have gained voice. As has been demonstrated, some aspects of these understandings of obedience are similar to those held or implicitly expressed by the IHM sisters. Whether they intended their actions to be part of this trend towards a re-imagining of the vow of obedience or not, their understanding of authority is similar to that of many contemporary theologians.

It is possible to view the IHM conflict in terms of the vow of obedience. It is also possible to view the conflict in terms of progressive voices within the Church as opposed to more conservative ones. The IHM were pushing for change and actively working to move the Church into the modern world, while the hierarchy was moving back towards traditional understandings of Religious life. These two divergent directions are, perhaps, irreconcilable. The second chapter will explore a symbolic manifestation of this conflict and delve further into the nature of these two theologies.

## CHAPTER TWO THE VOW AND THE HABIT

### INTRODUCTION

Tension between the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters and Cardinal James Francis McIntyre had been rising for years; the Cardinal believed that the sisters were too experimental in their lifestyles, and the sisters felt that the Cardinal's attempts to control them were unwarranted. This tension eventually led, at the prompting of the Cardinal, to the IHM sisters' renunciation of their canonical status and their departure from the Church. A central point of contention between the IHM sisters and the Cardinal was the issue of whether or not the sisters were required to wear some form of the habit. The Cardinal demanded that the sisters wear uniform dress in order to teach in his schools. Anita Caspary, backed by the majority of the IHM sisters, insisted that their Chapter of Renewal allowed them to experiment with Religious dress and that the Second Vatican Council sanctioned that such experimentation.

Canon Law states that some form of Religious dress is required, however, certain Vatican II documents allow for experimentation of dress.<sup>83</sup> The decree on the adaptation and renewal of religious life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, reads, "The religious habit, an outward mark of consecration to God, should be simple and modest, poor and at the same time becoming. In addition it must meet the requirements of health and be suited to the circumstances of

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<sup>83</sup> Canon Law. 669 §1. Religious are to wear the habit of the institute, made according to the norm of proper law, as a sign of their consecration and as a witness of poverty.



time and place and to the needs of the ministry involved.”<sup>84</sup> This was the only Second Vatican Council document to refer directly to Religious dress and its reference remains ambiguous. An apostolic letter written after the close of the Council, *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, states, “Experiments contrary to the common law, provided they are to be undertaken prudently, will be willingly permitted by the Holy See as the occasions call for them.”<sup>85</sup> Given these vague directives, the actual necessity of the habit to Religious life following the Second Vatican Council was unclear.

The question of whether or not the IHM sisters should or would continue to wear the habit was at the heart of their conflict with Cardinal McIntyre. Regarding this issue Caspary writes, “The habit was the thing that divided the sisters and the cardinal.”<sup>86</sup> As the IHM were not members of the hierarchy, they were subject both to the Vatican and, although unofficially, their local hierarchy. Perhaps due to their lack of political power within the Church and most certainly due to their understanding of renewal, the IHM sisters began to challenge various Church teachings. Since they could not explicitly argue for a change in theology the sisters initiated negotiations over symbols such as the habit.

This chapter is divided into four sections; each section furthers the argument that the symbol of the habit represented the IHM and the Cardinal’s

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<sup>84</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis* 17.

<sup>85</sup> *Ecclesia Sanctae* 43.6

<sup>86</sup> Caspary, p. 143.

respective views on the vow of obedience. The first section focuses on the importance of discursive politics and the IHM story as active protest within the Church. The 1967 Chapter of Renewal can be seen as the actualization of a cognitive shift regarding the IHM's understanding of community. The LCWR and many other women Religious also currently use such discursive politics as a means of instigating change. The second section briefly explains the history and importance of the habit in Religious life through an exploration of the habit as a symbol of Religious life, the origins of the habit in the dress of the day, and the importance of the habit in terms of understanding Religious identity.<sup>87</sup> The third section addresses the importance and power of the habit as symbol. Despite the fact that Caspary claimed the debate should have moved beyond issues of "mere" dress, the tenacity with which she and the Cardinal fought over the necessity of the habit indicates that both parties knew its symbolic importance. The fourth section contemplates the implications of the IHM refusal to stop experimenting with Religious dress. Caspary's refusal to comply with the Cardinal's demands eventually resulted in the IHM expulsion from diocesan schools. While the sisters maintained that they were following the directives of Vatican II, they refused to give in to their local hierarchy and thus directly disobeyed the earthly representatives of the Church.

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<sup>87</sup> The dress of the day is an expression used to indicate that women Religious were originally meant to wear whatever was the customary clothes for women or widows of the time period of their institutions' founding.

## DISCURSIVE POLITICS

The Catholic Church is not a structure accustomed to dialogue. The nature of Church structure reinforces a top-down mentality, and the Pope's is the final word on any Church discussion.<sup>88</sup> As members of a hierarchical institution such as the Catholic Church, women Religious are expected to be obedient. There is an undeniable power structure within the Catholic Church and women, whether lay or Religious, fall on the lower ends of that structure. As a minority of women within an institution composed primarily of men, American women Religious did not have the same authority as members of the Church hierarchy.

As a relatively disenfranchised group within the Church, American women Religious often attempt to initiate discussion. Without the power to directly implement change, Religious rely on the means available to them; discussion is way of promoting understanding and communication. Author of *Faithful and Fearless: Moving Feminist Protest Inside the Church and the Military*, Mary Faisod Katzenstein, terms this verbal and symbolic discussion, "discursive politics."<sup>89</sup> Katzenstein further explains, "Discursive politics relies heavily but not exclusively on language. It is about cognition. Its premise is

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<sup>88</sup> One example of this structure is the debate on birth control within the Church. Despite the fact that a Vatican elected panel of Catholic doctors, laity, and priests all deemed the use of birth control as morally permissible, Pope Paul VI thought otherwise and spoke out against its use.

<sup>89</sup> Mary Faisod Katzenstein, *Faithful and Fearless: Moving Feminist Protest Inside the Church and Military* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 1-23, 105-177.

that conceptual changes directly bear on material ones. Its vehicle is both speech and print-conversations, debate, conferences, essays, stories, newsletters, books.”<sup>90</sup> Women Religious can control language and symbol without direct challenge to the hierarchy. Katzenstein persuasively argues that Religious pushing for change within the Church post-Vatican II were engaging in political activism.

Not only are these women engaging in political activism, many have been successful at achieving change. After the Second Vatican Council, the norms of Religious life were greatly weakened. As discussed in Chapter One, the identity of Religious had been complicated, perhaps even fractured. Without the role clarity they had previously possessed, American women Religious were forced to redefine their roles within the Church on their own terms. What began as the creation of norms in a space of normlessness soon became the international adherence to non-institutional norms. Katzenstein claims that women Religious “... are violating firmly established institutional norms and participating in role-shattering behavior. This too is protest. This is not mere ‘resistance’ to the power of dominant elites; it is proactive, assertive, demand-making political activism.”<sup>91</sup> While this political activism attempts to effect less essential change, that change is still a challenge to the status quo.

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<sup>90</sup> Katzenstein, p. 17. Katzenstein claims that second wave feminist protest has not lost its impulse; rather it has moved from a place of disenfranchisement, or the public square, to one of greater strength, inside institutions.

<sup>91</sup> Katzenstein, p. 8.

Despite hierarchical pressures, women within the Church have worked towards finding their voice. Through conceptual and perceptual shifts, the sisters were able to initiate conversations conducive to change. The language used in such conversations held great power. Katzenstein writes, “Judging by the attempts of the Church hierarchy to silence those who speak out . . . words are believed by both feminists and the Church clerical leadership to have very real consequences.”<sup>92</sup> Both the IHM sisters and the Church understand the importance of language; both are aware of the powerful effect such language holds.

The IHM refusal to compromise on their ideals can readily be seen as protest: they were standing up against an institution that would not permit their renewal. Referring to American women Religious, Katzenstein writes, “Less law-breaking than norm-breaking, these feminists have challenged, discomfited, and provoked, unleashing a wholesale disturbance of long-settled assumptions, rules and practices.”<sup>93</sup> The way in which the IHM conflict played out certainly did challenge many long held assumptions about the role of women in Religious life. Their case can be seen, to some extent, as a test case of women within the Church who dared to challenge long established principles.

Because they could not explicitly argue for radical changes in theology, the IHM focused on symbolic change. There is greater flexibility in

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<sup>92</sup> Katzenstein, p. 123.

<sup>93</sup> Katzenstein, p. 7.

discussing symbols and sentiment than in discussing doctrine. The issues that the IHM sisters explicitly chose to focus on are similar to those that Seidler and Meyer claim contemporary women Religious have claimed. That is, issues which, “. . . could be summarized under categories representing kinds of disarticulation: cultural, structural, and symbolic. Beyond the more dramatic clashes, exploration centered on the subtle struggles arising from various sets of taken-for-granted beliefs and customs.”<sup>94</sup> In the years after the IHM conflict, many other American women Religious also chose to focus on symbolic issues over and above explicitly pushing for radical theological change.

Symbolic and verbal dialogue served as a means of conveying the IHM message. The Cardinal, however, appeared to lack interest in furthering discussions with the sisters. From the first time that the Cardinal refuses to illuminate what he meant by accusing the IHM College of being “liberal,” to his unwillingness to talk about alternative options, the McIntyre shut down dialogue. When the dialogue stopped, the IHM sisters felt forced to renounce their canonical status.

The IHM’s departure from the Church was an outright protest of their treatment. While still within the institution of the Church, however, the IHM did attempt to institute change through discursive politics. One example of the IHM reclaiming of an idea through reframing it is the idea of community.

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<sup>94</sup> Seidler and Meyer, p. 146.

By reimagining the classical idea of a Religious community, the IHM sisters engaged in discursive change and protest of past traditions. The implications of that change in community will be further explored in the third section of chapter three. Through re-appropriation of these ideas, the Immaculate Heart sisters re-formed their identities. By opening up a dialogue around these ideas, the IHM sisters began a process of re-imagination. This process led to substantial, some might even say radical, soft change.

After the Vatican launched an investigation into the LCWR, these women have focused on opening up discussions with the hierarchy. Many of the newspapers featuring articles on the conflict will cite the sisters as wishing to further “dialogue.”<sup>95</sup> As they have relatively little actual power within the Church, these women are working with what they have: their ability to name. Quiñonez and Turner, authors of *The Transformation of the American Catholic Sister* argue that the Leadership Conference of Women Religious intentionally uses discursive language as a means of conveying meaning and feeling. “It is obvious from reams of paper extended on publications, reports, memos, Newsletters, correspondence, and studies that the women of the

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<sup>95</sup> Becky Bratu, “US nuns call for more dialogue with the Vatican” *NBCNews*. 10 August, 2012. Web. 10 March, 2013.

<[http://usnews.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2012/08/10/13222015-us-nuns-call-for-more-dialogue-with-the-vatican?lite](http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/08/10/13222015-us-nuns-call-for-more-dialogue-with-the-vatican?lite)>

Laurie Goodstein, “National Nuns’ Group Dodges Showdown With Vatican,” *The New York Times*. 10 August, 2012. Web. 10 March 2013.

<[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/11/us/national-nuns-group-seeks-dialogue-with-vatican.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/11/us/national-nuns-group-seeks-dialogue-with-vatican.html?_r=0)>

LCWR rely heavily on language.”<sup>96</sup> Through opening up dialogue with each other and eventually with Rome, American women Religious arrived at new ideas about their identities as women in the Church.

In an article for *America: The National Catholic Review*, Jesuit scholar Drew Christiansen wrote about the place of dialogue in Christian thought post-Vatican II.<sup>97</sup> Christiansen elaborates, “For great swaths of the church today, dialogue is an undeniable sign of the times. Some in authority may deny the fact, but for a great many laypeople, clergy and Religious—and not a few bishops—dialogue remains a gift of the council to which they are deeply committed.”<sup>98</sup> American women Religious are also well aware of the powers of language. Quiñonez and Turner write, “Words not only reflect experience, they fashion it as well. Language can support or block change.”<sup>99</sup> Words can be powerful, especially in an institution as reliant on symbol and expression as the Catholic Church. Verbal and symbolic discussion was as integral a part of the IHM renewal process; such discussion remains essential to American women Religious’ renewal today.

Quiñonez and Turner’s optimism about the possibility of dialogue is not, however, shared by all women Religious. Schneiders states clearly that the Vatican conflict with the LCWR has progressed beyond the point of discussion. She writes, “There is nothing mutual about this process, and it is

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<sup>96</sup> Quiñonez and Turner, p. 109.

<sup>97</sup> Drew Christiansen, “Of Many Things,” *America*. 10 September 2012. Web. 16 April 2013. <[http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=13558](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=13558)>

<sup>98</sup> Christiansen, p. 1.

<sup>99</sup> Quiñonez and Turner, p. xiii.



not a dialogue.”<sup>100</sup> The LCWR and the Vatican hold divergent ideas of what dialogue entails; while the LCWR sees dialogue as a part of discursive politics and a means of instigating change within the Church, the Vatican and its representative seem to view dialogue as a means by which to move women Religious towards their understandings.

Other women Religious are also concerned about the lack of space within the Church in which to discuss issue of contention. Sister Pat Farrell, former president of the LCWR, said on an interview with 60 Minutes, “There doesn’t seem to be a safe place to talk about issues of difference.”<sup>101</sup> This failure on the part of the Church to allow for spaces of open dialogue continues to concern American women Religious.

As members of a Church much real power, symbolism and dialogue are the ways in which Religious find means of expression. Through discursive politics women Religious were able to voice their understandings of their prophetic calling. In the IHM conflict, the centrally contested symbol took the form of the Religious habit.

### **THE HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE HABIT IN RELIGIOUS LIFE**

The IHM engaged in a discussion of obedience through a debate over the symbol of the habit. The habit is a symbol that has been recognized across

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<sup>100</sup> Schneiders PITOC, p. 30.

<sup>101</sup> Pat Farrell interviewed by Bob Simon, “American nuns struggle with Vatican for change” 17 March 2013, *60 Minutes* (CBS).

cultures for hundreds of years. When picturing women Religious, stark black and white immediately comes to mind. In a way, the dress defines the wearer since the office and, to some extent, identity, of Religious is immediately visibly revealed. The habit sets Religious apart and distances them from the laity while simultaneously concealing aspects of their individuality. This distance may be beneficial, marking Religious as living a life of separation and thus a life outwardly devoted to G-d, or it may, on the other hand, act as an impediment to their ability to engage with the laity. The question is still hotly debated within Religious communities. A full history of the habit is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, I will focus on the habit's origins, its connection to symbol, as well as its importance in defining identity for women Religious.

### **The Habit as Symbol**

The symbolic importance of the habit has been the focus of a number of scholarly works. Within this chapter, I will use two such works as points of reference. *The Habit, A History of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns*, by Elizabeth Kuhns focuses different ways in which women Religious, as well as Catholic laity, relate to the habit.<sup>102</sup> Kuhns discusses the historical origins of the habit and how the practices and symbols associated with the habit have evolved over time. She also discusses the evolution of the habit itself. In addition to

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<sup>102</sup> Elizabeth Kuhns, *The Habit: A History of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), pp. 1-75.

Kuhns, I will focus on a collection of essays on American Religious dress titled *Religion Dress and the Body*, edited by Linda B. Arthur.<sup>103</sup> Arthur's collection brings together works that explore how dress affects many aspects of people's social roles as well as personal identities. One of the essays within this work, "Fashion and Identity of Women Religious," by Susan O. Michelman explores American nuns change of dress following the Second Vatican Council.

In addition to Catholic scholars, many lay and Religious Catholics recognize the importance of symbol within the Church. Anita Caspary addresses symbol in Religious life, highlighting the impact that the image of women Religious made on her as a child. Caspary remembers her initial fascination those women, writing, "The sisters moved through our childhood world as somewhat mysterious beings, quick to disappear into the convent after school hours."<sup>104</sup> To Caspary, the habit served as a reminder of the sacrifices those women had made in their lives. From this starting point, it is not difficult to infer that women Religious' sacrifices serve as a reminder of G-d's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. There is mystery in the awesomeness of G-d. Members of the Catholic Church are well aware of the powers of mystery and their insistence on the habit in part reflects this awareness. The habit is visible evidence of the sisters' difference from the

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<sup>103</sup> Susan O. Michelman, "Fashion and Identity of Women Religious," *Religion Dress and the Body*, Edited by Linda B. Arthur (New York, New York: Berg, 1999) pp. 135-146.

<sup>104</sup> Caspary, p. 9.

laity and through that difference a reminder of the purity of life lived in accordance with the three evangelical counsels; chastity, poverty, and obedience.

While undoubtedly of vital importance for Religious, the symbol of the habit is somewhat of a paradox. The habit at once hides a part of its wearer while loudly announcing details of her personal beliefs and life choices to all who see her. Kuhns explains that, “At the same time that the habit serves to shroud the body and to mask the individual, it also dramatically announces its wearer to the world.”<sup>105</sup> The woman within the habit is hidden as an individual because her personal traits or desires are subsumed by the office her dress.

There is a possible correlation between the impracticality of Religious dress and the pervasive impracticality of laywomen’s dress before the twenty-first century. The symbol of women Religious maintaining a dress that is similar if not identical to the dress all women wore at a time when they were valued less than men is a powerful one. It could be argued that by putting on the habit, women Religious are putting on that female identity of a time where women had to obey what the men in their lives demanded of them. The habit may have been a sign of poverty and modesty, but it is also a symbol of femininity and as such its maintenance or abandonment have gendered implications. Both this focus on dress and the Church’s archaic attitude towards women are out of line with progressive feminist hope for the future.

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<sup>105</sup> Kuhns, p. 7.

The habit also, in a way, adds to the sense of mystery surrounding women Religious. Taken from the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir, the insistence of the Church that nuns retain their habits is an insistence that they remain shrouded by the mystery of their occupation.<sup>106</sup> Be that the mystery of their faith or the mystery of their femininity, the demand that nuns dress in specific clothing, clothing that creates and augments the preexisting distance and so perceived mystery by men, is an assault on the personhood of these women. De Beauvoir writes that “To say that women is mystery is to say, not that she is silent, but that her language is not understood; she is there, but hidden behind veils; she exists beyond these uncertain appearances. What is she?”<sup>107</sup> While in this case one might easily argue that Religious mystery is distinct from the mystery of non-personhood thrust upon women, I believe that the parallels between women’s “mystery” as a means of silencing lay women and the mystery of women Religious and their historical silence within the Catholic Church are nonetheless interesting to note.

In that the habit both reveals and conceals the individual wearing it, the habit as dress “. . . functions as an effective means of nonverbal communication.”<sup>108</sup> Women Religious project their identity through their mode of dress as well as their actions. The debate on the habit is connected to the debate over active and passive existence. This debate will be further

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<sup>106</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex: The Classic Manifesto of the Liberated Woman* (New York: Vintage Books A Division of Random House, 1974).

<sup>107</sup> de Beauvoir, p. 290.

<sup>108</sup> Arthur, p. 3.

explored in Chapter Three. Through their refusal to wear the habit, the IHM sisters were arguing for an acknowledgement of their individual selfhood and recognition of their consciences over passive conformity. They were arguing for their existence to be defined by their personhood over their representative witness for the Church.

### **Origins of the Habit**

While the habit may be an obviously identifiable symbol today, this was not the case. For the earliest Religious institutes, the form of dress in fashion at the time of their founding was adopted into a uniform habit for all members of that institute. The habit often mimicked the type of dress reserved for widows. Susan O. Michelman, writes, “Historically, the habit did not start as a symbol of Religious life, rather, it was the widow’s dress of the day.”<sup>109</sup> The habit’s indication of widowhood allowed women Religious do things, such as walking without chaperones, that married or single women could not do. Michelman goes on, “This early ‘habit’ was a protection in a sense and it allowed them to be free to do the work they wanted.”<sup>110</sup> The earliest versions of the habit worked against societal restrictions on women of the time. The intent of the habit was to help sisters blend into the societies in which they worked. As the popular image of nuns in black and white now demonstrates, the habits’ function as a nondescript but uniform dress has been replaced by a

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<sup>109</sup> Michelman, p. 136.

<sup>110</sup> Michelman, p. 136.

function of evident separation from the laity. Fashions and society changed; however, the Religious habit did not. All women Religious wore some form of archaic dress up until the close of the Second Vatican Council.

The habit has historically been representative of the office of Religious life. With the act of putting on the habit, Religious were putting on the identity of one devoted to the three evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Kuhns writes, “During these formative years of Christianity, the act of changing clothes *was* the act of Religious profession by those who aspired to holiness.”<sup>111</sup> The taking of vows was also compared to getting married. Recently vowed Religious were viewed as the brides of Christ, their habits signifying that marital state.<sup>112</sup> Donning the habit marked a significant shift in the life of a Religious, a change in status as well as purpose. Dress was directly connected to the identity of its wearer.

Lay and Religious Catholics currently perceive the habit in a variety of ways. Some see the habit as opening doors and helping sisters connect with the people of the world; others view it as closing them and sealing the sisters from the world in indifference and isolation. Kuhns writes that, “For example, the habit’s critics blame it for suppressing the individual, yet its proponents laud it for erasing class distinctions.”<sup>113</sup> Ironically, one of the main

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<sup>111</sup> Kuhns, p. 40.

<sup>112</sup> Kuhns, p. 25.

<sup>113</sup> Kuhns, p. 1.

complaints against the habit today is that it restricts Religious/lay communication and hinders the development of relationships between the two.

### **The Habit in Terms of Religious Identity**

Some of the habit's critics point to its outmoded style and impracticality. In his 1962 book suggesting possible renewal for women's Religious communities, *The Nun in the World*, Cardinal Suenens addresses the lay perception of the habit, writing, "Most Religious habits, too, seem to the layman to be ill adapted to current conditions, to have outlived their purpose, to be archaic and inconvenient."<sup>114</sup> Furthermore the habit is connected to cliché images and stigmas. Discussing women Religious who prefer not to wear their habits, Kuhns writes, "They believe these cliché images of the habit have made them seem an anachronism precisely at a time when their contributions to society are so relevant"<sup>115</sup> The habit, which once worked towards the protection of and empowerment for women's work in the world, is now sometimes seen as an impediment to that same work.

In her study of women Religious and dress following the Second Vatican Council, Susan O. Michelman also found that many of the women she interviewed felt better able to serve to the laity without the habit. In reference

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<sup>114</sup> Suenens, p. 20. Cardinal Suenens was an influential voice in support of renewal for women's Religious communities. He advised Anita Caspary on the course that the IHM sisters should take, and urged her to consider threats of breaking away from the Catholic Church. In *Witness to Integrity*, Caspary speaks of him with the utmost respect (Caspary, p. 109).

<sup>115</sup> Kuhns, p. 12.



to these women, Michelman writes, “Their perception was that this dress communicated a social identity that inhibited their ability to express personal identities that would allow them to function more fully in secular environments.”<sup>116</sup> In the last few centuries, women have begun to find that the habit served the opposite purpose of its origins; what began as a means of liberation has now become problematic. Michelman claims that whereas “. . . the habit had historically begun as a way of achieving autonomy, dress had evolved into a way of suppressing personal identity, through the social control of their body.”<sup>117</sup>

Proponents of the habit embrace the freedoms it offers. Kuhns cites examples of iconic women such as Mother Theresa, writing that “In these cases the habit is an empowering, positive symbol, and it is quite hard to imagine any other clothing that can make this kind of statement.”<sup>118</sup> Furthermore the habit can be seen as a means of escaping the pressure society puts on women to maintain a specific appearance. Addressing this benefit, Michelman writes, “The habit had given women Religious surprising freedom from the tyranny of appearance experienced by women in North American culture.”<sup>119</sup> It was precisely the habit’s androgynous quality that helped women transcend societal pressures and expectations. The habit helps to present women Religious as Religious first and women second. Kuhns writes

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<sup>116</sup> Michelman, p. 135.

<sup>117</sup> Michelman, p. 136.

<sup>118</sup> Kuhns, p. 14.

<sup>119</sup> Michelman, p. 139.

that the nun “. . . seems both less than female but greater than human.”<sup>120</sup> In other words, the habit helps to elevate women Religious above the constraints of society that result from their sex.

### **THE HABIT AND THE IHM**

Conflicting perceptions of the habit informed the respective opinions of the IHM and the Cardinal. Marshal H. Mercer, author of a dissertation of the IHM conflict, captures the essence of this debate in a question: “Should the IHM abandon their habit, losing a strong symbol, but accessing a larger audience, or should they continue the habit in its, then current, form, only to lose their ability to expand their scope within the laity?”<sup>121</sup> In their Chapter of Renewal, the IHM chose the former of these two options. Their decision to adhere to their choice and allow experimentation in Religious dress had far-reaching implications.

The appropriation of symbol is an important part of implementing institutional change. Religious who lack the proper backing of the Church can take existing frames, such as symbols and ideas, and appropriate them for their own use and advancement.<sup>122</sup> Patricia Wittberg writes, “In this context, a frame transformation would be any redefinition of Religious life that shifted its primary emphasis to a new legitimating purpose, thus changing the entire

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<sup>120</sup> Kuhns, p. 8.

<sup>121</sup> Marshal H. Mercer, “You People Don’t Pray Right: A Study of Power and Subordinate Goal-Conflict” (PhD Diss., The Claremont Graduate School, 1993) p. 11.

<sup>122</sup> Wittberg, p. 116. (She uses the term “spiritually disenfranchised virtuosi”).

definition of what it meant to be a member of a Religious community.”<sup>123</sup> The ability of Religious to rethink and reimagining the frames and symbols of their lives gives them the power to change aspects of their lives otherwise controlled by the Church hierarchy. In this way, frame and symbol transformation gives disenfranchised Religious some form of control.

The Church hierarchy is also attentive to changing frames and symbols. Wittberg writes, “Conflict arose over the symbolic role of especially focal Catholics-priests, men and women Religious. The more experimentally-minded men and women Religious met resistance as they adopted lay clothing or followed other secular patterns in housing or political acting.”<sup>124</sup> The fact that the debate between the IHM and the Cardinal focused on dress is a testament to the symbolic importance of the habit, as well as both parties recognition of that symbolism. However, despite the habit’s apparent influence, Caspary carefully downplayed its importance in her account of the events.

According to Caspary, the issue of dress was significantly less important to the IHM sisters than the other changes their community was in the process of making. She writes, “The question of uniform dress is an obvious but minor part of the discussion.”<sup>125</sup> While Caspary did not personally acknowledge the importance of dress, she did note that maintenance of the

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<sup>123</sup> Wittberg, p. 116.

<sup>124</sup> Seidler and Meyer, p. 77.

<sup>125</sup> Caspary, p. 140.

habit seemed to be a point of fixation for the Cardinal. On this point, Caspary claims, Cardinal McIntyre “. . . linked the wearing of the habit to the three vows sisters profess, suggesting that both were equally the preeminent mark of Religious women.”<sup>126</sup> While she claimed not to accept the symbolic importance of the habit, Caspary did acknowledge the linkage between that the habit and Religious vows had for the Cardinal.

One possible explanation for Caspary’s disregard of the debate over the habit is its implications for her idea of Religious life. The association of piety and proper conduct with the habit seemed natural to the Cardinal; however, Caspary felt that such an association missed the point of the nature of being a person Religious. Caspary’s express lack of interest in the issue of the habit can be seen as an argument for a theology of Religious life that focuses more on the active existence of Religious than on their passive witness.<sup>127</sup> This theology proposes that Religious life is more than the dress that signifies it. The fact that Caspary “. . . could not believe that after a decade of serving the Catholic Church of Los Angeles [they] were being fired over the issue of women’s clothing”<sup>128</sup> indicates her disregard of dress as a substantial concern. The idea that appearance is not the central component of Religious life helps to clarify Caspary decision to dismiss a debate on the necessity of the habit.

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<sup>126</sup> Caspary, p. 139.

<sup>127</sup> This theology will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>128</sup> Caspary, p. 120.

Additionally, Caspary's incredulity on the importance of the habit for McIntyre complicates her own insistence that the IHM had the right to continue experimentation. Despite her claim to the contrary, I believe that Caspary knew the symbolic importance of the habit and that her refusal to compromise on that issue indicates her recognition of its symbolic importance.

Despite Caspary's apparent disregard for the discussion on Religious dress, she refused to back down and require her fellow sisters to wear a habit. That action in and of itself indicates the importance of the habit and the importance of the surrounding theological debate of Religious life. One theological view states that shedding the habit was indicative of Religious' ability to shed an older idea of what their lives must entail. In adopting lay clothing, women Religious were opening the door to a new way of envisioning and living Religious life. In that she did not feel the habit was necessary to women Religious, Caspary was justified in not focusing on the habit. But in that shedding the habit implies the symbolic shedding of a theology of passive existence over active engagement, Caspary did not appropriately recognize the power of dress. The fierceness of the debate over the habit proves that while maintaining it was symbolically important to the Cardinal, shedding it was equally so to Caspary.

A fundamental question concerning the nature of Religious life is to what extent mystery and distance should be stressed over relations and

similarity. The habit can be seen as either promoting inclusivity, or indicating exclusivity. In requiring the sisters to keep their habit, the Cardinal was attempting to retain the distance and mystery of the sister's lives in relation to the laity. In choosing to lose the habit, the IHM was stressing their common humanity over their place within the Church. Again, these distinctions are indicative of two divergent theologies of Religious life and of obedience.

While Caspary claims that the debate should have been focused on larger issues than mere dress, other members of the conflict acknowledged the habit's symbolic importance. In his dissertation, Marshal H. Mercer interviewed Bishop John J. Ward, the vicar for Religious during the time of the IHM dispute with the Vatican. Over the course of the interview, Mercer and Bishop Ward discussed the habit as a crucial obstacle between the IHM sisters and Cardinal McIntyre. In a transcript of the interview, Bishop Ward is quoted as saying, "That was the thing: [the IHM] wanted to go into secular dress, not a uniform, but secular dress."<sup>129</sup> Here Bishop Ward makes a distinction between updating the habit without changing the appearance of a uniform and distinguishing look and simply adopting lay clothing. Bishop Ward also cites an example of Cardinal McIntyre responding positively to another Religious Community's change in dress. The Sisters Devoted to the

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<sup>129</sup> Mercer, p. 97.

Sacred Heart replaced their older style of habit with a uniform beige dress and the Cardinal had accepted this change.<sup>130</sup>

Bishop Ward goes on to insist that the maintenance of some form of habit, not its stylistic change, was the real problem. Mercer quotes Bishop Ward as saying “Yeah, right, they could have changed their habit. The change of the habit is not something that came up now [the time of the crisis]. The change of the habit came up under Pope Pius XII, twenty years before in the calendar. He told women Religious ‘why don’t you look at your habit and see if it might be streamlined.’”<sup>131</sup> Again, for the Cardinal, the problem was not that the IHM sisters wanted to change their habits, but that they wanted to eliminate their distinction from the laity. McIntyre saw the habit as a vital symbol of Religious witness. He knew the importance of that symbol and wished to see it preserved.

A letter from Cardinal Antoniutti, prefect for the Sacred Congregation for Religious illustrates the importance of the symbol of the habit for other members of the Church. This letter outlines four distinct demands of the IHM sisters, namely that nuns must wear a uniform habit, they must meet daily for Religious exercises, they should keep committed to education, and they must observe prescriptions in regard to work with their local ordinaries.<sup>132</sup> The first and foremost of these demands, a uniform habit, is a visual testament to the

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<sup>130</sup> Mercer, p. 96.

<sup>131</sup> Mercer, p. 113.

<sup>132</sup> Caspary, p. 156.

mystery of sacrifice and an important symbol for the Cardinal and the Vatican.

#### **CONTINUING EXPERIMENTATION**

Cardinal McIntyre's fixation on some form of recognizable Religious dress ultimately convinced him that the IHM were not suited to teach in the diocesan schools. While the IHM 1967 Chapter of Renewal gave sisters the right to experiment with lay clothing, nowhere was it mandated that such experimentation be applied to all sisters. In other words, the issue of the habit was left up to the individual. Caspary writes, "According to the 1967 Chapter of Renewal, the choice of clothing was at the discretion of the individual sister. During the time of this meeting we had sisters choosing either contemporary clothing or retaining their Religious habits."<sup>133</sup> It is then quite possible that while their Chapter allowed for experimentation in dress, the IHM could have individually chosen to forgo experimentation in exchange for their teaching positions. The sisters, however, chose to experiment.

Throughout her account of the conflict Caspary maintains that she was following the directives of the Second Vatican Council. The fact that the IHM did not give up on experimentation despite extreme external pressure speaks to the sisters' assurance of the moral and ecclesial justification of their actions. In short, the IHM sisters believed that they were right. Despite

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<sup>133</sup> Caspary, p. 120.



anticipated resistance from McIntyre, the sisters prepared to accept the consequences and follow their consciences.

Caspary's response to the Cardinal's termination of the IHM teaching contract was firm. Her decision to uphold the Chapter of Renewal's stance on experimentation with Religious dress cost many IHM their teaching jobs, a source of fulfillment, joy, and income for those sisters. The price for refusing to obey was high, but Caspary claims that submitting to the Cardinal's insistence on a habit would have compromised the sisters' sense of integrity. There seems to be many reasons why curbing experimentation would have been beneficial to the IHM, yet Caspary claims that, in all good conscience, she could do nothing other than maintain her position.<sup>134</sup> The other sisters' support of Caspary indicates that they were in agreement with her. Despite Caspary's claims otherwise, the issue of the habit proved to be both symbolically and actually connected to the IHM sense of integrity and conscience.

As the IHM's insistence on experimentation and the Cardinal's refusal of such experiments indicate, the symbol of the habit cannot be reduced to the merely cosmetic. The power of the habit as a symbol for both the sisters and

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<sup>134</sup> This claim calls to mind Martin Luther's purported statement of "Here I stand, I can do no other." Throughout Catholic history, members of the Church have challenged Church teaching and doctrine based on the authority of their conscience. The current debate between many women Religious within the United States and the Vatican recalls these past conflict of the individual or the community against the hierarchy. Speaking about the current conflicts between the LCWR and the Vatican, Schneiders writes, "At no time in history, except perhaps at the time of the Protestant reformation, has the church faced a crisis of such proportions" (Schneiders BY, p. 110).

the Cardinal complicated and intensified the IHM/McIntyre debate. The importance of symbol for the IHM and for women Religious today remains vital to understanding the way in which the overall conflict played out. Addressing the effects of symbol for women Religious, Quiñonez and Turner write, “The visible modifications also signal a substantive alteration in the way American sisters know and think about Religious life.”<sup>135</sup> Experimentations in Religious dress were indicative of experimentations and transformations in Religious life.

The debate over changes to the habit soon escalated into conflicts over the importance of the vow of obedience. Caspary felt that in refusing her local hierarchy and, ultimately, the Vatican itself, she was being obedient to her understanding of the Second Vatican Council’s call for renewal. The fact that the majority of the IHM accepted Caspary’s leadership indicates that they agreed with her understanding. The IHM adherence to renewal through their insistence on experimentation with the habit was essential to their integrity. To do anything less than follow their consciences would have been a betrayal of their senses of integrity. This claim of conscience is a claim that there is authority outside of the hierarchy. Such resistance to the earthly authority of the Church is incompatible with existing norms and ideas of the obedience in Religious life. Through her actions more than through her words, Caspary was challenging the prevailing definition of the vow of obedience.

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<sup>135</sup> Quiñonez and Turner, p. 31.

The Cardinal's refusal to allow the IHM experimentation with the habit was a rejection of their means of expression. His actions shut down the possibility of dialogue and so left the sisters no choice but to withdraw from the diocesan schools. The Vatican's further refusal to allow the sisters to continue with their forms of experimentation is, again, a shutting down of dialogue.

The current Vatican leadership appears to be more willing to hear alternative ideas on Religious life than the Cardinal was. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the LCWR is a much larger and more influential organization than the IHM were. In the same way that the IHM refused to have their clothing choices dictated to them by the Holy See, the LCWR refused to compromise on the issue of clothing. The Vatican's inability to push the LCWR further on issues of the habit speaks to the sister's insistence on the need for experimentation with Religious dress.

The Vatican maintains that it is open to discussion. Archbishop of Seattle, Peter Sartain, the man put in charge of monitoring the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, claims to be open to beginning a "dialogue" with the LCWR leadership. Following a question on the nature of that dialogue, Sartain responds, "If dialogue means that the goal is to change the teachings of the church, then that's not what we're about. If it's about a dialogue which leads to a better understanding of the Church's teaching, that

kind of dialogue, I think it's already begun in many ways."<sup>136</sup> The tension between reaching understandings and implementing change will certainly inform the progress of this debate.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The IHM/McIntyre conflict's engagement with questions of Religious dress speaks to the importance of the habit as a symbol of Religious life. In refusing to continue wearing their traditional habit, the IHM sisters were refusing to don a visible symbol of institutional obedience. The IHM were not explicitly arguing for a new theology of obedience; on the contrary, Caspary maintains throughout her account of the events that she and the other IHM were obeying Vatican II. Whether or not Caspary was following the lead of the Second Vatican Council, her refusal to obey anything less than her understanding of the Council's directive did in itself complicate the prevailing definition of obedience in Religious life. Furthermore in their refusal to renounce their Chapter of Renewal and eventually through their departure from the Church, the IHM were adhering to a new theology of obedience: one that challenged the existing model. Contrary to their statements, they enacted an essential, theological change.

While the IHM's conflict focused on the issue of the habit, American women Religious today are free to wear what they choose. The fact that the

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<sup>136</sup> Peter Sartain interviewed by Bob Simon.

habit is no longer an issue indicates that the conflict has moved the more substantive issues at stake out into the open. There are, however, those within the Vatican who still wish to display nuns in full habit.<sup>137</sup> Further implications of the symbolism of authority in the Church will be explored in the following chapter.

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<sup>137</sup> Annette McDermott, conversation, November 27, 2012.

## **CHAPTER THREE IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the fall of 1967 the Vatican sent Father Gallagher, an apostolic delegate, to interview the sisters and assess the situation. Following these interviews, the Vatican sent a group of three American bishops to further interrogate the sisters. Both parties felt that the outcome of these visits was less than satisfactory; while the Vatican did not feel the sisters were receptive to its critiques, the sisters did not feel that their process of renewal was properly understood or acknowledged. In claiming different definitions of Religious life, both the Vatican and the IHM were claiming the right to authority. There are numerous ways in which this conflict could be conceptualized, but the question of prophetic authority provides a strong framework for understanding the nature of its complexity.

The vow of obedience is necessarily linked to ideas of authority. One cannot obey without having something or someone give a command. Whether that command comes from a person or an idea, that command must have authority. Questions of rightful authority, in relation to Religious life, are often phrased in terms of their prophetic role within the Church. Addressing the nature of obedience, Judith Schaefer writes, “Intrinsically, obedience involves a relationship of the wills.”<sup>138</sup> That power struggle of wills and that

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<sup>138</sup> Schaefer, p. 182.

claiming of prophetic authority are the elements that link the IHM to the American women Religious today.<sup>139</sup>

Issues of rightful authority can provide context for the current conflict between the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the Vatican. By accusing the LCWR of supporting radical feminism, the Vatican aimed to delegitimize the sisters and thus exercise greater control over their actions. Responses by American women Religious to the Doctrinal Assessment have been varied. Sandra Marie Schneiders, a prominent proponent of feminist spirituality, writes, “The fear of radical feminism that has been expressed with increasing alarm by ecclesiastical officials is actually quite well founded because the Roman Catholic Church, as a social institution, is perhaps the most patriarchal structure in the western world, and it has even, at times, defined itself as hierarchical by divine institution.”<sup>140</sup> Most women Religious agree that the Vatican is afraid of the power of women in community. The reasons they cite for this fear are unclear.

If divergent theologies were the crack between the IHM and the Cardinal, and the issue of the habit was the wedge, then the problem of prophetic calling was the hammer that fell and irreparably split the parties apart. The IHM sisters adhered to their understanding of the vow of obedience and, in doing so, claimed rightful authority to live their prophetic right and

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<sup>139</sup> While the LCWR did not explicitly voice their support for the IHM, many members of their organization did agree with the steps taken by the IHM and implicitly made that support known.

<sup>140</sup> Schneiders BP, p. 24.

role within the Church. This chapter examines the implications of those theological and symbolic changes for the IHM and for women Religious in general and situates the IHM conflict within the larger movement of women Religious in the United States. By linking the IHM claims of prophetic authority to broader trends in American women Religious' struggles I hope to shed light on the LCWR conflict with the Vatican.

This chapter is divided into four sections; each section furthers the argument that the IHM were claiming their prophetic tradition within the Church through an examination of the broader implications of the theological changes to the vow of obedience. The first section looks at Religious life in terms of ideas of active and passive existence. I compare different paradigms of Religious life and then connect those paradigms to different ways of living. The second section focuses on the prophetic role that Religious have historically played and the authority that Religious can and have gained by connecting their processes of renewal to their prophetic place within the Church. The Holy Spirit is perceived of as grounding Religious endeavors in their prophetic tradition. In the third section, I explore the IHM re-imagination of their community and the way in which that community is linked to ideas of authority and to obedience. Through their understanding of community as a group of equals rather than as a hierarchically structured group, the IHM were more subject to their individual consciences. The reclaiming of words such as community, like their reclaiming of dress, further allowed them to move



forward with their process of renewal. The fourth and final section explores the possibility of feminist influence in the IHM conflict and the prevalence of that influence in the LCWR's conflict today. The Vatican has openly condemned "radical feminism," yet feminist themes are actively present in American women's Religious life.

### **RELIGIOUS LIFE IN TERMS OF PASSIVE AND ACTIVE EXISTENCE**

Religious are witness to the perfect charity and love of G-d through Jesus Christ. One view of Religious life maintains that living as such witness does not require active participation in the world. Following the Second Vatican Council, however, the idea of Religious life moved from passive existence with an emphasis on Being as opposed to active existence with an emphasis on Being in connection with doing.<sup>141</sup> Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner write that Prior to Vatican II, "The single most important idea, the linchpin, of the worldview from which sisters derived their meaning was that the sacred and the secular were separate and distinct realities."<sup>142</sup> That being the case, Religious life was not connected to active engagement with the world. Rather, "'Religious life,' in short, was about personal holiness."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> It could be argued that the idea of personhood for women is actually the idea behind feminist thought. In fighting for women's rights, feminists are fighting for a general acceptance of women as full persons in the way that men are considered to be full persons. Despite the fact that the broader implications of their choice to view Religious as capable of "doing" as opposed to merely "being" was not address by either the sisters or the Vatican, those implications affect our understanding of the debate.

<sup>142</sup> Quiñonez and Turner, p. 34.

<sup>143</sup> Quiñonez and Turner, p. 35.

The more traditional school of contemporary Catholic thought still argues that it is enough for Religious, particularly women Religious, to exist in the world as a testament and witness to the love of G-d. While this existence may appear passive in the world, those who so devote themselves to G-d are active on a spiritual level. Absolute obedience perfects this devotion and thus the opportunity for spiritual activity. This view places the witness of Religious life as central to the purpose of that life; in living as Christ did through the three vows, Religious are fulfilling their purpose.

Another, more recently established, train of thought argues that Being in an active and devoted relationship with G-d does not negate the possibility of being active in the world. Through the pursuit of justice in the world, one can achieve that same opportunity for spiritual activity. Many American women Religious espouse this view today.

The debate between these two views is connected to ideas of individual autonomy within Religious groups. The train of thought that argues for Religious isolation tends to subjugate the possibility of individual development to communal development, often at the expense of the individual. The opposing views claim that only through acknowledgment of the unique personhood of each individual can a community thrive.

According to the more traditional view that places existence over action, the mere fact that men and women are willing to join Religious orders fulfills the purpose of their lives as Religious. Ann Carey, author of *Sisters in*

*Crisis*, subscribes to this more traditional interpretation of Religious life. She claims that the purpose of Religious rests not in their apostolate, in their active engagement in the world, but rather in their existence as witness however withdrawn and cloistered. Carey explains that many of the American sisters who supported change “. . . also deviated from the long-standing principle that the traditional, primary value of Religious men and women is who they ‘are’—consecrated persons who witness to the transcendent—and instead place nearly the entire emphasis on what Religious ‘do.’”<sup>144</sup> In other words, the primary duty of Religious is to love G-d. While loving G-d may be active on a spiritual level, loving G-d does not necessitate activity in the world.

Along with Carey, Judith Katherine Schaefer’s dissertation cites Thomas Dubay as subscribing to a more conservative understanding of the vow of obedience. Dubay sees Religious life “. . . as representing a Trinitarian theology of discipleship within a hierarchical view of authority and grace.”<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, Dubay holds a strict view of the importance of earthly authority, claiming, “One who rejects human superiors is not listening to the Spirit.”<sup>146</sup> He also values being over doing in Religious life, writing, “Religious life is not primarily about apostolic works on behalf of the world, but rather an eschatological witness to union with God.”<sup>147</sup> Both Carey and Dubay’s understanding of obedience in Religious life are representative of a

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<sup>144</sup> Carey, p. 131.

<sup>145</sup> Schaefer, p. 94.

<sup>146</sup> Schaefer, p. 97.

<sup>147</sup> Schaefer, p. 95.

more conservative theology. The Vatican's response to the LCWR indicates that it strongly adheres to such an understanding.

The IHM's understanding of Religious life is complicated. While Caspary sees the reason behind valuing the members of the IHM community for who they are over what they do, her perception of Religious life ultimately differs from Carey's. In response to Father Gallagher, an apostolic visitor sent to assess the IHM after their Chapter of Renewal, Caspary claims the importance of the sisters' selfhood. She writes, "We are seeking to make each person aware of what she contributes to the community, not by what she does, but by what she is."<sup>148</sup> While both Carey and Caspary seem to be arguing for existence over action, they are arguing from different understandings of individual responsibility. Carey's perception of the importance of existence over action is connected to ideas of maintaining a unified community of and for God than to developing individuals. Caspary's definition of who a sister is over what she does refers to the importance of individual self-awareness.<sup>149</sup>

Other members of the Church have also contributed to the contemporary understanding of the nature of Religious life. Cardinal Leon

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<sup>148</sup> Caspary, p. 153.

<sup>149</sup> The IHM understanding of their conflict also has a psychological component. In the years leading up to their spilt with the Church the IHM sisters formed meeting groups as means of promoting individual self-knowledge and self-expression among their members. These meeting groups were directed by Carl Rodgers and William Coulson, and grew out of humanist psychology movement. Those same psychologists who conducted the encounter groups later claimed that they believed the groups seduced the IHM away from their vows. However it is phrased, the groups had an effect on promoting the IHM's confidence in their individual integrity and challenged their previous idea of authority. Robert Kugelmann, "An Encounter Between Psychology and Religion." (*Journal of the History of Behavioral Science* Fall 2005; 41(4), 347-65).

Joseph Suenens' writings on women Religious reflect the view that not only existence, but also action, is necessary for the fulfillment of Religious life. He claims that, "The primacy of prayer, any more than God's omnipotence which can work all the miracles of grace unaided, cannot serve as an excuse for inaction on our part."<sup>150</sup> In order for Religious to fulfill their calling, they must be active in the world.

Contemporary Catholic theologian Howard Gray also sees a shift in the definition of Religious life. This larger shift is one from isolation to community, from passivity to action, and, as Gray writes, a ". . . shift away from a juridical and towards a pastoral identity and mission."<sup>151</sup> The essence of Religious life moved from passive existence with an emphasis on Being to active existence with an emphasis on Being in connection with doing. This shift from temporally passive to active existence is also connected to ideas of isolation as opposed to community. Gray argues that Religious life post-Vatican II moved from isolation to engagement, writing, "The movement is, though, one from apostolic and communal isolation which characterized Religious life prior to Vatican II to an active commitment to communicate and collaborate with men and women outside one's Religious family."<sup>152</sup> Passive existence is connected with isolation, while active existence is connected with community.

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<sup>150</sup> Suenens, p. 45.

<sup>151</sup> Gray, p. 63.

<sup>152</sup> Gray, p. 56.

Vocal members of American women Religious' communities have embraced the more active definition of Religious life. In a 2012 address following the doctrinal assessment of the LCWR, the President of the Conference, Pat Farrell, articulated the ways in which women Religious could and should move forward. In that speech she spoke of the need for solidarity with the marginalized and stated, "There are structures of injustice and exclusion that need to be unmasked and systematically removed. I offer this image of active dismantling."<sup>153</sup> She proceeds to cite the image of people in El Salvador celebrating peace accords with the destruction of the machinery of war. This statement is a clear endorsement of women Religious' license and need to act and engage in the world.

Quiñonez and Turner, authors of *The Transformation of the American Catholic Sisters* push the boundaries beyond the dichotomy I have described. They write, "No longer viewing their work as extraneous or secondary to their Religious identity, [women Religious] grasped that work and identity are inseparably related. Dichotomies between Being and doing ceased to make sense to many women Religious."<sup>154</sup> Through their work, women Religious were able to engage actively in the world and in doing so become part of the larger Christian community. I believe that this is the most accurate representation of most American women Religious' conceptions of the debate

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<sup>153</sup> Pat Farrell, "Navigating the Shifts," (August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Presidential Address), p. 4. Hereinafter referred to as NTS.

<sup>154</sup> Quiñonez and Turner, p. 39.

today. All of these understandings of Religious life are highly nuanced. For the sake of clarity, I have attempted to outline areas of difference between these understandings, there is, however, considerable overlap in many of their views.

Activity and passivity inform the purpose of Religious life and, therefore, inform the way in which the vow of obedience is understood and honored. If obedience to G-d demands that a Religious act and be part of the world, then constraints based on ideas of Religious life that promote existence and non-activity will not be seen as valid. If, conversely, obedience to G-d demands that Religious focus on being as opposed to activity in the world, then constraints based on ideas of Religious life that promote active Being over existence will not be seen as valid. Whether one believes that Religious life should be oriented towards activity or passivity, the “pastoral” over the “juridical,” to use Gray’s terms, or whether one refuses those dichotomies altogether, the nature of Religious life remains contested.

The idea of Religious existence is also connected to the symbol of the habit. In shedding the habit, the IHM women were claiming their place as active members in the world. This idea of shedding an older and more constrained identity was not, however, directly articulated by either Vatican II or the IHM. This change in group, as well as individual, identity associated with the loss or update of the habit is implicit in the larger claim that women Religious should engage more fully in the world. Caspary and the IHM

perceived that they were asserting their place in the world as they thought Vatican II has asked them to do. As examined in Chapter Two, the implications of their actions are more nuanced than merely following the Vatican's wishes.

### **THE PROPHETIC TRADITION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE**

Religious life is modeled after the life of Jesus Christ. Apostolic Religious live as extensions of Christ's mission in the world and in imitation of Christ they adopt the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Cardinal Suenens writes, "Religious life continues to express before the eyes of the world the social implications of evangelical fraternity as a consequence of the voluntary association of members and the practice of the three vows."<sup>155</sup> The ultimate mission of Religious life is to be a testament to the power of God and Christ; through the consecration of their lives, Religious bear witness to the power of Christianity and the Church. Judith Schaefer describes Religious life as ". . . the pursuit of God in a communal context that utilizes the practice of the evangelical counsels for the sake of the Gospel."<sup>156</sup> In addition to bearing witness through practicing the evangelical counsels, Religious identify their mission as a primarily a prophetic one. This prophetic history and calling has given and continues to give Religious authority within the Church outside of and often despite the hierarchy.

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<sup>155</sup> Suenens, p. 58.

<sup>156</sup> Schaefer, p. 222.



In arguing for the IHM's right to experiment with Religious life, Caspary was implicitly claiming a new theology of obedience, one in which earthly authority played a secondary role to experiential understanding and conscience. Caspary believed that she had a better understanding of Vatican II's call for Religious renewal than the Cardinal. Through her belief, she was claiming prerogative beyond that which she held over the IHM as their mother superior. The idea of obedience to G-d as the ultimate authority—instead of the earthly authority of the Cardinal or the Vatican—placed great importance on the power of individual conscience.

Claiming the authority of individual or communal conscience and claiming the authority of prophetic tradition are largely the same in a practical sense. For the sake of clarity, however, it is important to note the historical validity of Religious' prophetic authority. Sandra Schnieders claims that the foundation for Religious' understanding of the vow of obedience is rooted in Religious' prophetic role within the Church. While the Church might not recognize such claims, framing one's authority in terms of prophetic tradition as opposed to conscience lends that claim legitimacy. While Caspary does not directly state her prophetic intent, the certainty with which she followed her calling indicates that she had embraced the prophetic nature of her position.

The focal point of the IHM/McIntyre conflict, the issue of the habit, soon became a debate over the authoritative power of the IHM Chapter of Renewal. Addressing the confusion over the power of the IHM General

Chapter, Caspary writes, “It was difficult—no impossible—for him to believe that a General Chapter of Religious women could have the authority we gave it, above that of the officers of the community, a distribution of ‘power’ utterly foreign to his office.”<sup>157</sup> In Caspary’s placement of authority in the IHM General Chapter, she was claiming the IHM’s authority to know G-d independently of the hierarchy. This claim must be seen as one of prophetic authority within the tradition of Religious and the Church. The Cardinal’s indignation over the IHM’s refusal to wear the habit was fueled by the fact that the sisters used their own Chapter of Renewal to challenge his authority. The sisters’ claims were enabled by their individual consciences and the prophetic tradition of Religious life.

Over the course of the conflict, the Cardinal and, eventually, the Vatican, attempted to impose restrictions on the IHM process of renewal. Through suggested changes to the sisters’ way of life, the Cardinal and then the Vatican were attempting to regain the power that the IHM had defended. Caspary writes, “Our legitimate experimentation, authorized by our 1963 General Chapter and under evaluation by our own sisters, was basically denied, to be replaced by the old, minute, and uniform specifications as to time, place, and type of prayer.”<sup>158</sup> Despite not linking their claims of authority to the historically prophetic tradition of their office, the IHM were

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<sup>157</sup> Caspary, p. 125.

<sup>158</sup> Caspary, p. 75.

implicitly claiming their authority from the prophetic tradition of their Religious order.

The shift in authority was not, however, solely from the hierarchy to the IHM. The structure of authority within the IHM community changed as well. Caspary writes, “Advice, encouragement, consultation—all these were the true work of governing officers, so that the simple vertical relationship of governor to governed no longer existed.”<sup>159</sup> Caspary came to view the traditional and formal structure of authority within the Church and within Religious institutions as incompatible with optimal governance. This view that authority is more flexible than practice would suggest has gained prominence among other American women Religious after the time of the IHM conflict.

In her book on the current and continuing struggle between the LCWR and the Vatican, *Prophets in their Own Country: Women Religious Bearing Witness to the Gospel in a Troubled Church*, Sandra M. Schneiders also examines the nature of authority within the Church. She does so in the context of the prophetic tradition of Religious. Schneiders writes, “Religious Life has been called a prophetic lifeform both in official documents and in spiritual writings almost since its inception.”<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, the duty of all Religious to either verbally or symbolically speak prophetic truth is intrinsic to their very identity.

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<sup>159</sup> Caspary, p. 93.

<sup>160</sup> Schneiders PITOC, p. 97.

The prophetic mission of Religious is not always in agreement with Church teachings. Schneiders writes that the conflict following Vatican II “. . . often placed prophetic ministries in tension with Church authority. The tension tended to be framed as a conundrum of obedience.”<sup>161</sup> Given this framing, disobedience is wrongfully claiming authority, while obedience is recognizing rightful authority. Therefore, this question of authority is nearly impossible to reconcile. Schneiders writes that “. . . history suggests that there is virtually always tension, if not opposition, between institutional and prophetic authority.”<sup>162</sup> This conflict of claimed authority is not new, rather it is newly out in the open.<sup>163</sup> Pat Farrell, former President of the LCWR agrees with Schneiders, writing, “There is an inherent existential tension between the complementary roles of hierarchy and Religious which is not likely to change.”<sup>164</sup>

A prime example of this tension is found in the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and its current problems with women Religious and authority. The Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious clearly states that American women Religious are misguided in their prophetic claims. The assessment reads that the LCWR’s claim to prophetic authority “. . . is based upon a mistaken understanding of the dynamic of prophecy in the Church: it justifies dissent by positing the possibility of

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<sup>161</sup> Schneiders PITOC, p. 117.

<sup>162</sup> Schneiders PITOC, p. 95.

<sup>163</sup> Schneiders PITOC, p. 26.

<sup>164</sup> Farrell NTS, p. 1.

divergence between the Church's magisterium and a 'legitimate' theological intuition of some of the faithful."<sup>165</sup> This divergence, according to the Vatican, is not possible and therefore the sisters are misguided.<sup>166</sup>

Through their refusal to submit and obey the hierarchy the IHM sisters were actively challenging Cardinal McIntyre. This challenge to Church authority went against the prevailing idea of the vow of obedience. The sisters claimed authority through their consciences. In obeying their sense of right, their sense of integrity, the IHM were claiming a new theology of obedience. Schneiders suggests that claiming this new theology is part of all women Religious' prophetic right.

#### **PROPHETIC AUTHORITY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Prophetic authority is directly connected to the Holy Spirit. Women Religious claim authority through their prophetic tradition within the Church. In order to act prophetically, women Religious must know the word and the will of G-d. Listening to G-d's word and will is often expressed as listening to

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<sup>165</sup> Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, p. 5.

<sup>166</sup> It is also interesting to note that under the category of "Theology of Prophecy" the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* cites the *Lumen Gentium* and that constitution's expansion of the role of prophecy to all people. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* reads, "In the *Constitution* one is told that all the people of God share in Christ's prophetic Office through their anointing by the Spirit (1 Jn 2.20, 27)" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia Volume 12*, p. 761). Nowhere in this text was there anything written about the special prophetic tradition of Religious within the Church. Sandra Schnieder claims the prophetic tradition of Religious, however that tradition is contested within the Church.

the Holy Spirit.<sup>167</sup> Linking obedience, prophetic vocation, and the word of God, Schneiders writes, “Religious obedience, however, is precisely an exercise of prophetic vocation calling its members to carefully discern the meaning of the Word of God in and for a particular situation.”<sup>168</sup> In order for Religious to fulfill the vow of obedience, they must fulfill their prophetic calling and listen to the word of God and the Holy Spirit.

Throughout her account of the conflict, Caspary claims that the IHM understood the vow of obedience as fidelity to the God and to the Holy Spirit. The Second Vatican Council, especially the apostolic constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, called for a reorientation of Religious towards the Holy Spirit. This reorientation was a distinct break from past interpretations of Catholic life, especially Religious life, and not all members of the Church were in agreement on the extent to which the Holy Spirit was accessible to members outside of the Church hierarchy. Through claiming access to the Holy Spirit, the IHM sisters were engaged in the radical process of rethinking their role as women and as Religious within the Church.

This does not, however, indicate that there was no room for direction by the Holy Spirit within more traditional understandings of Catholicism. As noted in Chapter One, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* explains, “The will of God can be known in concrete situations by applying to them the norms of

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<sup>167</sup> The Latin root of the word ‘obedience’ is ‘to listen to’ or ‘to hear.’ This root is interesting to consider in connection with Religious’ prophetic tradition and their claims to communion with the Holy Spirit.

<sup>168</sup> Schneiders PITOC, p. 120.

divine positive law and natural law and by the actual enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>169</sup> Because the IHM were claiming authority through the Holy Spirit, they were justified within the bounds of Catholic Church doctrine. Cardinal McIntyre, however, called the legitimacy of their interpretation of the Holy Spirit into question. Caspary muses on his vehement opposition, writing, “Was I simply seeing a powerful man facing his moment of incomprehension—the collective power of women relying on an authority greater than his own, the principals of renewal generated by his own hierarchical brotherhood?”<sup>170</sup> Caspary is subtly maintaining that it was not the Vatican itself that would not allow the IHM their renewal; rather it was the Cardinal’s antiquated ideas of Religious life.

It soon became evident, however, that the Cardinal’s ideas of Religious life were more in line with the Vatican than the IHM sisters’. Commenting on the pontifical commission of Bishops sent to meet with the IHM a second time, Caspary writes, “Our struggle to retain our self-determination and our integrity should be made subservient, they said, to unquestioning obedience to higher authority.”<sup>171</sup> Despite a rising tide of experimentation within orders of American women Religious, the Vatican sided with the Cardinal. Caspary writes, “It was not a single Cardinal who forced us to abandon our canonical status in the Catholic Church. It was a vast

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<sup>169</sup> Truhlar, p. 506.

<sup>170</sup> Caspary, p. 126.

<sup>171</sup> Caspary, p. 198.

ecclesiastical system that for centuries has used every ploy to keep women beholden to its curiously antiquated rules and regulations.”<sup>172</sup> The possible sexist implications of this decision will be addressed in a later section of this chapter.

The conflict soon spread beyond the immediate parties involved. Caspary addresses the broader tensions arising out of such a decision, writing, “To see a sister follow her conscience in stating that obedience to God might supersede obedience to immediate hierarchical authority was scandalizing to some sincere Catholics. The concept of obedience they followed was literal, uncritical, and placed the burden of decision-making on authority, not on the individual.”<sup>173</sup> There were and continue to be members of the Church who agree with the principles of the IHM opposing those who agree with the principals of the Cardinal. Catholic doctrine and the documents of the Second Vatican Council affirm both ideas of authority.<sup>174</sup>

While members of the hierarchy may have questioned the validity of the sisters’ actions, the IHM sincerely believed that the Holy Spirit sanctioned their process of renewal. Caspary writes, “Our renewal, which was ultimately a revolution, was accomplished only by an insistence on trusting our collective participation, which led us to a communal and practical vision. We

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<sup>172</sup> Caspary, p. 220.

<sup>173</sup> Caspary, p. 181.

<sup>174</sup> See Appendix A for further commentary of the Second Vatican Council’s documents on Religious life.



believed that the Spirit of God was with us.”<sup>175</sup> During times of need, Caspary felt that the IHM were sustained by the Holy Spirit. In speaking of a time of great frustration with their position, Caspary writes, “For me, and for others as well, there was an upsurge of hope, with a tremulous yet real assurance that we were walking together in the presence of the Spirit.”<sup>176</sup> The IHM re-imagined their fulfillment of the vow of obedience as their faithfulness to a higher calling.

Looking back on the conflict, Caspary not only imagines that the Holy Spirit sanctioned their pursuit of renewal, but even claims that it was their duty as Religious to contradict the hierarchy. Caspary writes, “We ourselves had not fully understood, I think, that to disagree respectfully with higher authority was a service, not a matter of shame for the person, the community, the Church.”<sup>177</sup> Retrospect affirmed for Caspary the truth in the IHM’s claim to conscience. Despite a lack of acceptance by the Church, the IHM were following what they believed to be the authority of the Holy Spirit.

#### **THE IHM AND COMMUNITY**

Through their process of renewal, the IHM actively engaged in the re-imagination of community. In both the earlier conflict between the IHM and McIntyre, and the later accusations of the LCWR by the Vatican, there

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<sup>175</sup> Caspary, p. 219.

<sup>176</sup> Caspary, p. 214.

<sup>177</sup> Caspary, p. 181.

appears to be a tangible fear on the part of the Vatican and its representatives of the power of women in community. Community is also directly connected to the vow of obedience, as Religious take the vow of obedience in order to live in community as witness to Christ.

In her doctoral dissertation on obedience in Religious life, Judith Schaefer proposes the idea that obedience in communion as an emerging and relevant understanding of the vow of obedience. Central to obedience in communion is a sense of Religious community. Schaefer writes, “For vowed Religious then, obedience-in-communion is a particular way of being in relationship with all other persons in community.”<sup>178</sup> Schaefer continues, “The vow of obedience, therefore, can never be understood in isolation. Historically and theologically, obedience only has meaning within the context of relationship and mission; it is and has been a way of communally actualizing the coming of the reign of God.”<sup>179</sup> Therefore, community is central to the very definition and actualization of the vow of obedience.

In a 2012 presidential address to her fellow women Religious, Pat Farrell also connects the vow of obedience to community, stating, “From an evolved experience of community, our understanding of obedience has also changed.”<sup>180</sup> Farrell then cites Judith Schaefer as an example of someone who has articulated a moving and compelling theological response to the crisis. For

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<sup>178</sup> Schaefer, p. 242.

<sup>179</sup> Schaefer, p. 215.

<sup>180</sup> Farrell, NTS p. 5.

both women, understanding the meaning of community for Religious is essential to understanding the way in which they conceptualize the vow of obedience.

The re-imagination of community played a central role in the IHM process of renewal. The conceptual shift in their definition of community moved from a restricted and removed number of sisters to an active and engaged collective of women within the world. This shift reflected evolving ideas of passive existence with an emphasis on Being as opposed to active existence with an emphasis on Being in connection with doing. The cognitive and perceptual shifts that the IHM employed in order to actualize their ideal of community were, like their debate on the habit, very close to Mary Faizod Katzenstein's discursive politics. One prime example of the IHM engagement with discursive politics was the decrees produced during the IHM Chapter of Renewal.

The traditional Catholic view of community for women Religious focused on who those women were rather than what they did. Jo Ann Kay McNamara's 1996 book *Sisters in Arms*, traces the evolution of women's Religious communities from their inception to their present day expressions.<sup>181</sup> Historically, McNamara claims, the relationship between the Church hierarchy and women Religious has been one where "Priestly arbitrators who equated female perfection with silence and invisibility treated

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<sup>181</sup> Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 1-6, 600-644.

active charity as inherently corrupting.”<sup>182</sup> Relationships within Religious communities were discouraged, sisters were not allowed to write to their families, and outside contact was kept to an absolute minimum. To live as a sister was to live in isolation. A sisters’ relationship with G-d was of prime importance and, in that near blind obedience to hierarchical authority was thought to enhance one’s relationship with G-d, such obedience was encouraged.

While this view of Religious has prevailed for centuries, the Second Vatican Council moved towards a new understanding of the role of Religious in the overall life of the Church. According to many interpretations, the post-Vatican II Church encouraged a closer relationship between the Church as an institution and the lived in world of the Catholic people. Seidler and Meyer write, “Apparently, the immediate goal of many was to bring consistency between theology and the contemporary world.”<sup>183</sup> In calling on the Church in general and Religious more specifically to engage with the world, Vatican II was opening the door for women Religious to focus greater attention on their actions in the world. Here ideas of passive existence with an emphasis on Being as opposed to active existence with an emphasis on Being as explored in the first section of this chapter are intimately connected to the idea of community.

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<sup>182</sup> McNamara, p. 5.

<sup>183</sup> Seidler and Meyer, p. 32.

Prior to Vatican II community life was seen as diluting the possibility of individual experience; strong individual development was seen as counter to cohesive communal development. Caspary and the IHM sisters successfully challenge this claim. Through their 1967 Chapter of Renewal, the sister re-imagined community as focused outwards and towards the world rather than inwards. They also stressed the development of individual members rather than forced conformity in all aspects of Religious life. Caspary writes, “Since one of our chief problems in the chapter had been the new understanding of ‘community’ as something different from organization or voluntary association, I wanted to restate the theme that a person can fully develop only in and through community.”<sup>184</sup> Community is defined through quality of relationships over strict adherence to rules and practices. The IHM imagined their community developing through internal and external cultivation of relationships.

The IHM’s focus on community in their 1967 Chapter is ultimately connected to ideas of obedience and authority. The Decree on Authority and Government in The Decrees of the Ninth General Chapter of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary claims, “The concepts of authority, obedience, and community are all correlated and interdependent.”<sup>185</sup> Each concept is necessarily connected to the others. Every Catholic has authority, as every Catholic has free will and therefore must be the author of his or her own

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<sup>184</sup> Caspary, p. 112.

<sup>185</sup> Caspary, p. 255.

salvation. This focus on the authority of the individual was incomprehensible to the Cardinal. Furthermore, the decree is centering community as another support of the IHM authority. The Chapter of Renewal reads, “Our Religious obedience consists not in passive submission but in cooperative interaction with other members of community.”<sup>186</sup> This movement towards the authority of the community marks a distinct difference from the previous linear relations between the governor and the governed. According to the IHM decrees, community life is directly linked to questions of rightful authority and so questions of obedience.

In describing the renewal decrees of the IHM special Chapter, Caspary writes, “The balance in the next decree, the decree on person and community, emphasized the ‘sacredness of the human persona and his [sic] fulfillment within community.’ Community was described in the decree as ‘a quality of relationships based in part on the mutual recognition of shared personal need for affection, inclusion, privacy, inner discipline and external limits.’”<sup>187</sup> The distinction of members of the community from those without still existed, however the affirmation and support of human relations are not severed.

This conceptual change in the IHM’s idea of community is connected to new ideas of the importance of individuality. Only through an acceptance and acknowledgement of their fellow sisters as individuals were the IHM able

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<sup>186</sup> Caspary, p. 256.

<sup>187</sup> Caspary, p. 114.

to re-imagine their Religious community.<sup>188</sup> Caspary acknowledges this shift in understanding, writing “But slowly, with a deeper understanding of human nature and of the freedom necessary to its full development, I was undergoing a change. The value of personal responsibility and of collegiality and the importance of appreciating the gifts and talents of each person were beginning to grow within me as well as in many members of the community.”<sup>189</sup> Caspary is claiming that action in the world and support of individual development is key to fulfilled community life.<sup>190</sup>

The Immaculate Heart sisters’ ideal of community evolved from an inclusive but dividing distinction between those within and without to a community of inclusion where relationships between members formed the central and cohesive bond. The authority that this conception of community gave to the individual and the authority that this idea of community placed within the community itself complicated the vow of obedience. Strengthening their communal ties further challenged the Cardinal and the Vatican’s claims to legitimate and ultimate authority over the sisters.

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<sup>188</sup> Schneiders also sees the connection between the personal and the communal. She writes, “The point here is that there is an intrinsic and reciprocal relationship between personal transformation and societal transformation” (Schneiders BP, p. 18). Again, humanist psychology and the encounter groups must have played a role in the IHM’s understanding of the importance of the individual.

<sup>189</sup> Caspary, p. 47.

<sup>190</sup> This claiming again comes back to the idea of personhood. Caspary writes, “We have thus come, over a period of time, to live in a more human fashion, to allow human relationships to deepen and broaden, to seek to worship and pray in a way that makes community meaningful.” (Caspary, p. 153) The internal bond between sisters, between sisters and their families, between the outside world were supported by the IHM rather than discouraged. These bonds were in conflict with the norms of Religious life prior to Vatican II. They also allowed for the growth in authority of the community as an entity in and of itself.

## **SISTERS AND FEMINISM**

The Cardinal and the Vatican's strong resistance to the IHM process of renewal initially confused Caspary; she claims that she could not understand how her interpretation of the spirit of Vatican II could be so opposed by other members of the Church. Even if their respective interpretations were so different, she could not understand why the Cardinal and the Vatican did not accept or make room for her and her sisters' ideas. As the conflict progressed, however, Caspary began to understand the possible gendered implications of the conflict. While the Vatican would never admit that sex and gender played a role in its discrimination against the IHM sisters, the gendered nature of the conflict due to differences between the hierarchy and the sisters cannot be ignored.

The IHM conflict allows for the consideration of the role, if any, that feminist ideology can and has played in the theology of Religious life. While the IHM were never accused of feminism they were told that their vision of the direction of Religious life was incompatible with the Church. The IHM leaders were members of the LCWR during their conflict with the hierarchy. While the LCWR did not explicitly voice their support for the IHM, many members of their organization did agree with the steps taken by the IHM and explicitly made that support known.<sup>191</sup> In both the earlier conflict between the

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<sup>191</sup> Carey, p. 188-190.



IHM and McIntyre, and the later accusations of the LCWR by the Vatican, there appeared to be a tangible fear on the part of the Vatican and its representatives of the power of women in community.

While Caspary does not make any claims to feminism, she does cite the changes undertaken by the IHM during the time of the conflict as “radical.” Caspary writes, “So a radical change in the Religious life of the IHM was given strong impetus by the short but important chapter of 1963.”<sup>192</sup> The sisters’ painstaking deliberation over their continued pursuit of renewal also speaks to the radical nature of what they were attempting to undertake. Re-imagining obedience and community are radical re-imaginings of the very nature of Religious life.

Robert Kuglemann, author of an article on the role of psychology in the IHM conflict, emphasizes Caspary’s implication of sexism in the church, writing, “In this regard, the IHM events were part of the emergence of a Catholic feminism.”<sup>193</sup> The implications of feminist ideals in the IHM conflict correspond to similar accusations of the LCWR by the Vatican. Recent statements by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith claimed that the umbrella organization of women Religious in the United States, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious espoused “. . . certain radical

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<sup>192</sup> Caspary, p. 47.

<sup>193</sup> Kuglemann, p. 335.

feminist themes incompatible with the Catholic faith in some of the programs and presentations sponsored by the LCWR.”<sup>194</sup>

While the LCWR does not identify as a radically feminist organization, Conference meetings and publications have promoted the ideal of the equality between men and women. Sandra Schneiders identifies the push for equality as the basis of radical feminism. She writes, writes, “Because radical feminism identifies patriarchy, especially in its sacrilized form of hierarchy, as the root of all forms of oppression, the root of its alternative vision is its resolute anti-hierarchicalism, or, to phrase it positively, its fundamental egalitarianism.”<sup>195</sup> In that the LCWR pushes for the complete equality of women within the Church, according to Schneider’s definition, they are in fact radical feminists.

In her work analyzing the possibilities and implications of being a feminist and maintaining Catholic faith, *Beyond Patching*, Sandra Schneiders claims that the time is ripe for the Church to address the issue of feminism. She defines feminism as “. . . a comprehensive ideology which is rooted in women’s experience of sexual oppression, engages in a critique of patriarchy as an essentially dysfunctional system, embraces an alternative vision for humanity and the earth, and actively seeks to bring this vision to realization.”<sup>196</sup> Stating the necessity of dialogue, she writes, “I am convinced

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<sup>194</sup> Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, p. 3.

<sup>195</sup> Schneiders BP, p. 25.

<sup>196</sup> Schneiders BP, p. 15

that the dialogue between feminism and the church is not only important and timely, but absolutely critical.”<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, she claims, “Feminist studies are a necessary complement to and criticism of the heretofore unconsciously masculine theological enterprise.”<sup>198</sup> In conclusion, Schneiders claims that there is the possibility of feminist spirituality—and that such spirituality will outlive or at least overcome women’s current patriarchal oppression. She views the Church’s treatment of women as unacceptable to anyone who defines him or herself as a feminist.

Schneiders’ idea of spirituality is more active than passive and this contributes to its possible compatibility with feminism. Focus on Being over doing opposes basic feminist ideals of personhood. Taking an existentialist perspective French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir writes, “An existence *is* nothing other than what he does; the possible does not extend beyond the real, essence does not precede existence: in pure subjectivity, the human being *is not anything*. He has to be measured by his acts.”<sup>199</sup> Now the fact that women Religious are part of the Church complicates de Beauvoir’s argument that a focus on being negates the possibility of transcendence. There are more factors at play here than power relations between the sexes. The implications of the loss of power in merely being are, however, worthy of note. According

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<sup>197</sup> Schneiders BP, p. 3.

<sup>198</sup> Schneiders BP, p. 1.

<sup>199</sup> de Beauvoir, p. 290.

to de Beauvoir, the connection between action and transcendence is quite evident.

The IHM sisters were not explicitly making such existentialist claims. They argued, rather, that in fulfilling their work in the world they were better able to exist as women Religious. It's interesting to note the implications of such a debate from an outside perspective. Whatever the IHM and the Vatican's motives, there were practical implications for the sisters. These implications relate less to feminist themes than to ideas of personhood. It could, however, be argued that in their pursuit of true fulfillment the IHM were advancing the feminist cause.

The debate over the vow of obedience is necessarily gendered since the Church hierarchy and so those in power are all male.<sup>200</sup> In complicating the vow of obedience in its traditional definition, women Religious were also casting off the idea of women as passively submissive. In refusing to obey in the way that the Church asked them, American women Religious, both the IHM and the LCWR, were and are refusing to submit. In this refusal, it could be said that these women are upholding feminist ideals.

The Vatican's characterization of the LCWR as feminists is important because it furthers understanding of the LCWR and the Vatican's complex

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<sup>200</sup> As the hierarchy and those who control power within the Church are male, women Religious cannot be part of the Church while expressing ideas that are antithetical to Church teachings. However much they may wish to remain Catholics, so long as the all-male Church hierarchy controls Catholicism, men will be the ones determining who is and who is not a Catholic. Any woman Religious that attempts to induce the Church to include them will be shut down, and their identity as Catholics will be revoked.

relationship, as well as why their still continues to be conflict between those two parties. In response to a question about the U.S. health care plan in a recent interview on 60 Minutes, Sister Simone Campbell states, “The boys played the girls, and for once the girls won.”<sup>201</sup> This amusing quote further speaks to the impossibility of ignoring gender in an obviously gendered institution such as the Church.

Even prominent members of the hierarchy have noted the discrepancy between the Vatican’s treatment of men and its treatment of women. Cardinal Suenens comments on the masculine bent of Church doctrine, writing, “Canon law still bears the marks of this masculinist mentality which has not yet entirely died out. It is well known that what one can only call the anti-feminist tradition has had a long inning.”<sup>202</sup> Suenens further argues, “Anything in the life of the Religious which does not fit in with the present state of feminist evolution is a hindrance to her apostolic activity.”<sup>203</sup> The Church must adapt and accept the importance of feminism.

Sources outside of the hierarchy have also accused the Church of an unfairly gendered bias towards men. Caspary writes, “The male hierarchy did not know what to do with us except to repeat the pattern of the past.”<sup>204</sup> In other words, Caspary is implying that the fact that the IHM were female biased the Vatican unfavorably against them; the IHM were not treated with

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<sup>201</sup> Simon Campbell interviewed by Bob Simon, “American nuns struggle with Vatican for change” 17 March 2013, *60 Minutes* (CBS).

<sup>202</sup> Suenens, p. 47.

<sup>203</sup> Suenens, p. 36.

<sup>204</sup> Caspary, p. 148.

the due respect they deserved based on the fact that they were women Religious and not members of the hierarchy or priesthood. Caspary continues to cite patriarchal power as oppressive to women Religious, writing, “Pitted against a powerful patriarchy through years of petty criticism and overwhelming condemnation, we emerged conscious that the ecclesiology in which we lived could not tolerate our vision of liberation or of a relationship of equals.”<sup>205</sup> Equality is placed in opposition to current Church practice.

Along with Caspary, other American women Religious have spoken out against the Vatican’s treatment of sisters. Schneiders claims that the Church has a systemic and largely unaddressed problem of sexism. She writes, “The Vatican has struggled for decades against the egalitarianism [etc] . . . that women Religious have adopted.”<sup>206</sup> Because the hierarchy is all male, power, influence, and prestige within the Church are associated with men.

Schneiders continues, linking questions of a theology of obedience to an ongoing power struggle within the Church. She claims that the issue is portrayed as one of obedience, but that it is indicative of a larger gendered power struggle within the Church, writing “I would suggest that women Religious—being the only part of the female population of the Church to which the male hierarchy had visible access and over whom they have the ability to exercise direct coercive power—must be kept strict and publicly visible control lest the hierarchical power structure itself be called into

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<sup>205</sup> Caspary, p. 220.

<sup>206</sup> Schneiders PITOC, p. 115.

question.”<sup>207</sup> Women Religious made a move to step out of the hierarchical structure where coercive power and authority merge.<sup>208</sup>

Absolute obedience to an immediate authority cannot be compatible with feminism, as feminism demands the actualization of fully functioning consciences in all human beings. In any case, there is less room for obedience to an earthly authority in a discipleship of equals. The IHM’s dispensation from their vows demonstrated that the Church was incompatible with these women’s sense of their place within the Church’s prophetic tradition.

Regardless of whether or not the IHM imagined their stance against Cardinal McIntyre as representative of a growing women-consciousness within the Church, their actions can be interpreted as connected to feminist ideals. The IHM conflict seems to indicate that certain theological positions that are compatible with feminist thought are not compatible with Vatican teaching on Religious life. Therefore the LCWR is in dangerous territory if the Vatican senses these types of ideals within American women Religious’ teaching and community.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In their split from the Catholic Church, the IHM sisters were arguing for a theology of obedience different from that held by the hierarchy through the fact that they claimed prophetic authority to know G-d. This theology

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<sup>207</sup> Schneiders PITOC, p. 113.

<sup>208</sup> Schneiders PITOC, p. 114.

embraced the prophetic tradition of Religious in communion with the Holy Spirit. In pursuing their renewal despite the disapproval of Cardinal McIntyre and ultimately the Vatican, the IHM sisters were fulfilling their prophetic right within the Church.

The IHM understanding of the nature of Religious life and ideas of being in the world were also in tension with those of the Vatican. The IHM articulated this understanding through discourse over ideas such as community. In focusing on the individual as an equal member of community, the sisters were challenging the strictly hierarchical structure of the Church.

While Caspary never claimed to champion radical feminism, the IHM's focus on the integrity of their fellow women could be understood as feminist by nature. Many members of the LCWR have denied the pursuit of radical feminism in their organization, however, other members, most prominently Sandra M. Schneiders, embrace that title and all of its implications.

Within this conflict are echoes of former schisms between the Church and those claiming prophetic vision as well as feminist ideals and their confrontations with a hierarchical male-dominated world. The IHM conflict suggests that change directed by the Holy Spirit is perceived as less valid if the source receiving that direction is female. Women have not only been denied the right to become part of the priesthood, they have been repeatedly shut down in their attempts at engage with Christian prophetic tradition. In



that the Holy Spirit speaks only to men, it is masculine. This gendered understanding of the Holy Spirit and, ultimately, of G-d, will remain a problem for any woman in the Church who believes in the equality of the sexes.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have argued that the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters implicitly promoted a new and broader understanding of the theology of obedience throughout their conflict with the Vatican. When the Catholic Church shut down their attempts to verbally and symbolically express what they knew to be their prophetic truth, the IHM felt obliged to renounce their canonical status and leave the Church. The theology of obedience, the symbolic expression of obedience through the habit, and the broader effects of theological change all touched on fundamental aspects of Religious identity. Through their process of renewal, the IHM pushed the boundaries of prior conceptions of Religious life.

The IHM were one of the first institutes of American women Religious to begin their process of renewal. At least in the United States, the Catholic Community watched the outcome of their conflict with great anticipation. Many Catholics took sides in the debate; some rooted for the sisters, some agreed with the hierarchy, while still others remained undecided. Seidler and Meyer write, “The IHM conflict was multilayered; it included protagonists at the congregational, diocesan, national, and international levels. In addition, central issues varied from religious autonomy to appropriate renewal.”<sup>209</sup> While small in scope, the IHM conflict with the hierarchy had widespread effects on the Catholic community.

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<sup>209</sup> Seidler and Meyer, p. 81.

A struggle over the definition and application of obedience is currently being waged between the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the Vatican. American women Religious have radically reworked their identities. This re-definition could not and would not have been possible without an exploration into the vow of obedience. What the IHM have argued implicitly, the LCWR is arguing explicitly. In the years since the IHM conflict, members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious have articulated the active protest of those earlier sisters as a new and vibrant theology.

Numerous questions about these conflicts between women Religious and the Vatican remain. Is it possible to claim the Immaculate Heart sisters as feminists? In leaving the Catholic Church, the IHM were critiquing its refusal to accept their process of renewal. This critique was active protest. In that main problem the sisters had with the Vatican was informed by the gender dynamics of the sisters' position within the Church, the sisters' protest was inherently feminist. However it would be inaccurate to claim the IHM as feminists if they would not have celebrated the title themselves. Anita Caspary never addressed the possibility of feminist theology behind her actions and while she touched on the gendered nature of the conflict, she did so infrequently.

“Feminism” continues to have negative connotations within Catholicism. The very fact that in 2012 the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith accused the LCWR of feminism confirms this. In today's conflict,

the Church itself has raised gender as an issue. While the LCWR wanted to stress Catholic teaching on poverty and care, the hierarchy chose to cite the sisters for doctrinal error and label them as feminists. Through this labeling, members of the hierarchy are indirectly acknowledging that there is a problematic divide along gender lines among members of the Church.

If any of these sisters do identify as radical feminists, how can we understand their voluntary membership of an institution that overtly condemns feminist thought? Sandra Marie Schneiders, among other outspoken women Religious, imagines imminent possibilities for change within the Church. She believes that feminism within Catholicism has the power to change the institution for the better and she thinks that such change has already begun.<sup>210</sup> However the experience of the IHM and other groups of women Religious suggests the contrary.

The Catholic Church is a patriarchal institution. Gender has an immediate effect on one's status within Religious life. Church authorities asked the sisters to submit, to relinquish what they believed in their consciences was right, or else renounce their canonical status. Would the same sacrifice have been asked of them had the IHM been priests? Many Catholics would say "yes," however, there is evidence to suggest that the fact that the IHM sisters were women—women living in a world where their sex is not allowed the same privileges as men—influenced the Church's response to

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<sup>210</sup> Schneiders BY, p. 109.

their attempts at reform. The disciplinary measures within the Catholic Church for women generally include punishments such as dismissal, or near dismissal from communities while punishments for men generally include a lack of promotion or teaching bans.<sup>211</sup> A simple comparison of the Vatican's treatment of priests during the Church's sex abuse scandal to its current treatment of American sisters confirms this institutionalized male privilege.

The IHM claimed their own authority, but at the price of their ability to remain identified with the Catholic Church. Women Religious today are likewise claiming their authority, but it is as yet unclear whether or not those claims can be compatible with either Catholicism or the Catholic hierarchy. How much are the sisters willing to sacrifice to retain that right? Is the Church willing to adapt in order to appease them? The possibility of the Church radically changing its position on women Religious appears extremely slim at best.

How should the LCWR and the Vatican move forward? The Vatican must engage the sisters in open and honest dialogue. When Cardinal McIntyre shut down the opportunity for the IHM to express themselves through discursive politics, he shut down a part of their identity. Addressing the need for women Religious to obey the Church through discovery and discourse, Schaefer writes, "Obedience in the twenty-first century demands on-going discernment and dialogue, as well as clarification and definition of what

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<sup>211</sup> Katzenstein, p. 138.

constitutes communion, unity, and obedience.”<sup>212</sup> By disengaging and not allowing dialogue to continue, the Cardinal was not only suppressing what the IHM imagined themselves to be, but also who they knew that they were; powerful women with voice.

The Vatican should continue honest discussion with the LCWR if it doesn't want to lose its women Religious. Peter Sartain, the Archbishop heading the investigation of the LCWR, has made clear his openness to dialogue so long as that dialogue does not challenge or change the fundamentals of Catholicism. But can one promote open and honest dialogue if change in understanding is completely off limits? For the sisters, “dialogue” is about developing and deepening their understanding of Religious life. For the hierarchy, “dialogue” is about narrowing the sisters’ understanding of Religious life to match their own. However the Vatican decides to proceed, American women Religious have reached new understandings of the meaning of the vow of obedience for Religious life. This change will undoubtedly color the outcome of both current and future relations between the Vatican and American women Religious.

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<sup>212</sup> Schaefer, p. 151.

## APPENDIX VATICAN DOCUMENTS

During the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church produced a number of significant documents on the state of the Church and the world. The constitutions, decrees, and letters issued during and directly after the Council had a profound effect on the Religious' understanding of their purpose and identity. The Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters, as well as Religious around the world, began their processes of renewal in response to these documents. The content of the documents from Vatican II cover a wide range of topics. For the purposes of this paper I will focus on those documents which directly or indirectly discuss Religious life as well as those which discuss the increasingly important role of women in the Church.

Out of the sixteen documents that resulted from the Second Vatican Council, two clearly related to the role of Religious in the Church and in the world: the constitution *Lumen Gentium* and the decree *Perfectae Caritatis*.<sup>213</sup> Both of these documents delve into the role of Religious within the Church and the need for Religious life to adapt to the modern era. A third document, *Gaudium et Spes*, stresses the importance of the world which Religious had long shunned and, thus, indirectly affected Religious' interpretation of their role within the Church.<sup>214</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* also influenced women Religious'

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<sup>213</sup> Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. Vatican II, November 21, 1964. Decree on the Adaptation and renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*. Vatican II, October 28, 1965.

<sup>214</sup> Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*. Vatican II, December 7, 1965.

sense of purpose and identity through its redefinition of the role of the laity within the Church, in particular, through its exploration of a theology of women. *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, an apostolic letter directly following Vatican II, discusses a more precise implementation of the broad mandates called for in previous constitutions and decrees.<sup>215</sup> These four documents formed the basis for renewal efforts within women's Religious communities following the Second Vatican Council.

As a result of these four documents the IHM found their existing model of Religious life at least complicated if not altogether fragmented. Through a rough illustration of differing opinions on these documents, I hope to outline possible interpretations of Religious life and identity. Broadly speaking, those who interpret the Second Vatican Council documents as more supportive of change differ strongly from those who see the same documents as more in line with the Catholic status quo. In the following pages I have attempted to give voice to both of these conflicting interpretations.

### ***LUMEN GENTIUM***

The apostolic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, was written on November 21<sup>st</sup> 1965. This constitution directly addresses the changing role of Religious while proposing that all members of the Church are called to holiness. In regards to that universal call, *Lumen Gentium* reads “Thus it is

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<sup>215</sup> *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, Vatican II.



evident to everyone, that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”<sup>216</sup> In other words, a life of perfect or complete holiness is accessible to all members of the Christian faith if only they strive for it. This claim was understandably troubling to some members of Religious orders. Because Religious life had previously been perceived as closer to holiness than lay life, *Lumen Gentium*'s statement that all members of the Church are called to holiness forced Religious to reevaluate their lives in relation to the laity.

There were, however, those who maintained that *Lumen Gentium* was not a break from the past but rather the rearticulating of existing Catholic principals of holiness. Most senior Vatican officials currently in power subscribe to this latter view.<sup>217</sup> Even so, the view that *Lumen Gentium* marks a break from traditional doctrine can be interpreted as both empowering and disempowering for women Religious. In order to illustrate these interpretations of *Lumen Gentium*, I will look briefly at works regarding this text by three scholars: M. Clare Adams, O.S.C., who reads the texts through a neutral lens, Patricia Wittberg who interprets them progressively, and Benoit-

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<sup>216</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 40.

<sup>217</sup> The fact that the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith praised Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering's book compiling more conservative takes on Vatican II documents supports my claim (Back cover of *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print). Furthermore, continued Vatican opposition to radical change in recent years is indicative of a more traditionalist viewpoint.

Dominique de La Soujeole, O.P., who sees the documents more conservatively.<sup>218</sup>

Prior to Vatican II, according to many Catholic there was a marked difference in value between lay and Religious life. According to Wittberg, “The traditional ideology had postulated a kind of three-tiered hierarchical ranking of the clerical, religious, and lay states.”<sup>219</sup> Whether or not the hierarchy directly enforced such distinctions, they remained clear to most Catholics. In support of this conception of the special place of Religious within the Church, *Lumen Gentium* states, “Thus, the state which is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels, though it is not the hierarchical structure of the Church, nevertheless, undeniably belongs to its life and holiness.”<sup>220</sup> At a latter point however, the document states that perfect holiness is the calling of all members of the Church: “Therefore, all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of

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<sup>218</sup> M. Clare Adams, O.S.C., “Nuns Since Vatican II: Symbol, Myth, and Reality,” *Proceedings of the Carondelet Conference on the Future of Religious Life*. (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1990) pp. 99-130.

Sara Butler, (2008, September) “Apostolic Religious Life: A Public, Ecclesial Vocation.” Speech presented at Stonehill College. Yonkers, New York.

Benoit-Dominique de La Soujeole, O.P. “The Universal Call to Holiness.” *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*. Ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. ix-53, 147-183, 251-270.

There are a vast variety of interpretations of all of these Vatican documents. In an attempt to provide a nuanced view of them within a minimal number of pages, I have chosen to focus on only a few of those many possible interpretations. I hope the positions that I have selected are seen as representative of their respective general viewpoints, as more neutral, liberal, and conservative.

<sup>219</sup> Wittberg, p. 214.

<sup>220</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 40b.

their own proper state. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive.”<sup>221</sup> As these two passages demonstrate, the role of Religious as described within *Lumen Gentium* is far from clear.

In an article on the evolving role of women Religious, “Nuns Since Vatican II: Symbol, Myth and Reality,” M. Clare Adams, O.S.C. argues that *Lumen Gentium* was a distinct break from past interpretations Religious life. Adams writes, “Before *Lumen Gentium* persons and vocations were understood largely by means of Neoplatonic categories within a hierarchical and objective world view. In such a framework, the principal of valuation was that of immateriality.”<sup>222</sup> After the Second Vatican Council, however, the system of understanding the value of Religious life underwent significant changes. In place of hierarchical categories of lay and Religious, she claims that *Lumen Gentium* emphasizes “. . . the call and work of the Holy Spirit” or the universal call to holiness as the new means of valuation.<sup>223</sup> Adams stresses “. . . the pervasiveness of the principal of valuation, in order to emphasize how radical is the shift in theological perspective represented by *Lumen Gentium*.”<sup>224</sup> What had once been the private calling of a select few now became the calling of all baptized Catholics. This shift in valuation of Religious life in terms of lay life was both radical and troubling for many members of the Church.

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<sup>221</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 42e

<sup>222</sup> Adams, p. 107.

<sup>223</sup> Adams, p. 107.

<sup>224</sup> Adams, p. 108.

The effects of *Lumen Gentium* on women Religious can be interpreted as either empowering or disempowering. On the one hand, this shift in theological perspective might indicate that women Religious were not only a vital but also active and influential part of Church structure. Adams agrees with this interpretation, writing, “. . . it is clear that in the context of *Lumen Gentium* nuns do not stand apart from, but with, other members of the Church.”<sup>225</sup> If *Lumen Gentium* placed women Religious more securely within the Church as it exists in the world, the effects of this perceived placement are far reaching. As sisters ceased to see themselves as removed from the world, they were free to focus their work within the world and on helping those in need. For many women Religious, this shift in self-perception was empowering. It was in part this interpretation of *Lumen Gentium* and other Vatican II documents that support a reorientation of spirituality and encouragement of reform within Religious communities. The Immaculate Heart sisters understood the Second Vatican Council documents in terms of empowerment.

On the other hand, the loss of a special and clearly defined role within the Church was confusing for many Religious. Patricia Wittberg agrees with Adams that *Lumen Gentium* marks a shift in Vatican theology concerning the distinct roles of laity as opposed to Religious. After Vatican II, all Catholics received an equal call to perfection and charity. She writes, “Now, however,

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<sup>225</sup> Adams, p. 109.

the Vatican Council was stating that all baptized Catholics were called to holiness, not just members of religious orders.”<sup>226</sup> Where once the sisters held a place of prestige that most Catholics viewed as a tier above the laity, now their place appeared devalued in comparison. As a result of *Lumen Gentium* the sisters were closer to laity in the minds of many Catholics than they had previously been. This change complicated, one might even say compromised, the sisters’ sense of purpose within the church.

In opposition to Adams and Wittbers’s interpretations of discontinuity between pre and post Vatican II understandings of Religious life, Benoit-Dominique de La Soujeole, O.P. argues that *Lumen Gentium* did not initiate any radical theological change. In his article “The Universal Call to Holiness,” Benoit-Dominique argues that while many Catholics thought that some members of the hierarchy were called to greater holiness than the average lay person, such interpretations of Church teaching were and continue to be inaccurate. Benoit-Dominique claims that all members of the church are and always were called to perfect charity, whether or not they are able fulfill that calling. In this way, *Lumen Gentium* does not break from a past tradition of a hierarchy of holiness; rather it explains more clearly the continuous capacity and need for the holiness of all Christians. Benoit-Dominique does not address the possible implications of his understanding of holiness for Religious life.

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<sup>226</sup> Wittberg, p. 214.

### ***GAUDIUM ET SPES***

The constitution *Gaudium et Spes* was approved by Pope Paul VI, on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965. While *Lumen Gentium* directly addresses Religious, this later constitution also focuses on the role of the laity within the Church and, more broadly, the Church in the modern world. All human beings live together in this world and so are required to do Christian work in the world of today. *Gaudium et Spes* related to the IHM as women within the Church and, implicitly, as Religious in relation to the world. The writings of Ivy A. Helman, Patricia Wittberg, and J. Brian Benestad illustrate how this document related to the IHM sisters as well as how this document related to Vatican II's prior constitution *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>227</sup>

The constitution *Gaudium et Spes* had broad implications for the role of women within the Church. In her book *Women and the Vatican: An Exploration of Official Documents*, Ivy A. Helman argues that within *Gaudium et Spes* the Church—for the first time—took measures to develop a theology of women. Helman writes, “This document states that since humans, both men and women, were created by God, both have the same inherent reasoning capacity, share in the divine mission, and therefore are equal.”<sup>228</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* states that while women are equal to men, they are distinct

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<sup>227</sup> Ivy A. Helman, *Women and the Vatican: An Exploration of Official Documents* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012. Print), pp. 1-44. Benestad, pp. 147-164.

<sup>228</sup> Helman, p. 25.

from them. This document further states that women possess particular and valuable qualities such as tenderness, love, humility, and patience.<sup>229</sup>

Along with this distinction, women are tasked with a number of nearly impossible responsibilities including saving the peace and keeping a wholesome society intact. Helman clarifies that “The church is placing a heavy and difficult burden on the backs of all women, Christian or not, in this document.”<sup>230</sup> As women, the IHM sisters could not have ignored this call from their Church to engage with the world. Such a call would also, I imagine, be an empowering validation of the role women have in the family and in society. This document’s focus on the distinct gifts of women encourages the possibility of women taking more active roles within the Church and within the world.

Prior to the Second Vatican Council, even apostolic or active orders of Religious intentionally worked towards removing themselves from the world. With the elevation of the importance of the temporal found in *Lumen Gentium*, and the concrete call to work in the world found in *Gaudium et Spes*, Religious had to reevaluate an essential aspect of their lives. Wittberg writes that *Gaudium et Spes* “. . . proclaimed that the Church was to be in *solidarity* with the very world its religious orders had so long shunned. While perhaps not as traumatic as the implications of *Lumen Gentium*, which had attacked the very definition of religious life, the world-affirming stance of *Gaudium et*

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<sup>229</sup> Helman, p. 26.

<sup>230</sup> Helman, p. 26.

*Spes* did contradict the world-rejecting assumptions that had inspired the pervasive cloister and ministerial restrictions of many communities.”<sup>231</sup> This document essentially reinterpreted the way in which the Church functions in the world. By giving laity the task of bringing the Church to the world, Religious’ special place within the Church appeared to be diminished.

While some members of the Church interpreted this document as a break from past traditions of the holiness of the ephemeral, other scholars saw the continuity between *Gaudium et Spes* and past Catholic tradition. In his article on the latter half of *Gaudium et Spes*, “Doctrinal Perspectives on the Church in the Modern World,” Benestad highlights numerous areas of this document that correspond to past theological themes. Thematic continuity situates *Gaudium et Spes* within pre-Vatican II Church tradition. In particular, “The presence of these Augustinian themes is one of the many indications that *Gaudium et spes* is in continuity with the grand tradition of the Church; this council document is in no way a break with traditional teaching.”<sup>232</sup> Benestad also makes clear that *Gaudium et spes* must be interpreted in light of *Lumen Gentium* and not the other way around.

#### ***PERFECTAE CARITATIS***

The broad shift in spirituality called into being through *Lumen Gentium* was applied more specifically to Religious through *Perfectae*

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<sup>231</sup> Wittberg, p. 214.

<sup>232</sup> Benestad, p. 153.



*Caritatis*, a decree on the adaptation and renewal of Religious life. This decree was promulgated Pope Paul VI on October 25<sup>th</sup> 1965, towards the close of Vatican II. According to *Perfectae Caritatis*, renewal of Religious life should be advanced as follows: through imitation of the life of Christ, maintenance of the spirit and direction of each institutional founders, communal life within the Church, awareness of the changing times, and renewal of spirit over the aims of active ministry. Members of the Church, both those who tended to favor change as well as those more comfortable with the strict hierarchical structure of their institution, agree with Anita Caspary that *Perfectae Caritatis* “dealt with general principles for renewal and directed religious institutes to return to the original inspiration of their institutes and to adapt those principles to the changed conditions of contemporary times.”<sup>233</sup>

Many lay Catholics as well as members of Religious communities believe that *Perfectae Caritatis* marked a break from traditional interpretations of Religious life. Others argued that the teachings of the document are in accordance with earlier Vatican understandings; while there may have been a reorientation of Religious life, the essential aspects of that life remain the same. Among the controversial topics in this document were the call to work with the Holy Spirit and the necessity of adherence to the authority of the Church hierarchy. The scholarship of Antia Caspary, Anne Carey, and M Prudence Allen, R.S.S., and M Judith O’Brien, R.S.M. help to

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<sup>233</sup> Carey, p. 37.

illustrate some of the ways in which the debate sparked by this document have developed.<sup>234</sup>

Anita Caspary was among those who saw this document as allowing for liberty of experimentation beyond any of its concrete statements on renewal. In *Witness to Integrity*, Caspary cites *Perfectae Caritatis* as the document that gave the IHM permission to embark on their process of renewal. She, like many other Religious, interpreted this decree promoting experimentation.

Not only did *Perfectae Caritatis* allow Religious life to be envisioned in new ways, but many Religious also saw this document as giving communities full authority over their processes of renewal. Caspary writes, “Central to *Perfectae Caritatis* was the concept that ultimate authority for renewal rested within the religious community itself.”<sup>235</sup> This idea of the authority of individual communities is supported in the following passage of *Perfectae Caritatis*: “However, to establish the norms of adaptation and renewal, to embody it in legislation as well as to make allowance for adequate and prudent experimentation belongs only to the competent authorities, especially to general chapters . . . superiors should take counsel in an appropriate way and hear the members of the order in those things which

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<sup>234</sup> M Prudence Allen, R.S.S., and M Judith O’Brien, R.S.M. “The Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*” *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*. Ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 251-270.

<sup>235</sup> Caspary, p. 23.

concern the future well being of the whole institute.”<sup>236</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis* plainly states that there is need for renewal and experimentation in Religious life. The extent to which that renewal is subject to authorities outside the hierarchy, however, was open to further interpretation.

Other, more conservative, members of the Church imagined this renewal as still subject to the strict hierarchical approval of Church authority. This position is also supported in the decree, which states, “After the example of Jesus Christ who came to do the will of the Father (cf. John 4:34; 5:30; Heb. 10:7; Ps. 39:9) and ‘assuming the nature of a slave’ (Phil. 2:7) learned obedience in the school of suffering (cf. Heb. 5:8), religious under the motion of the Holy Spirit, subject themselves in faith to their superiors who hold the place of God.”<sup>237</sup> While the Holy Spirit became the new point of valuation, obedience to a superior was integral to proper fulfillment of the vows. Hierarchical authority was then still fundamental to the structure of Religious communities.

Ann Carey argues that American women Religious took the liberty granted them in *Perfectae Caritatis* too far. The more traditional members of the Church viewed the more change-oriented interpretation of this decree as relinquishing all adherences to the idea of an authority structure. Adopting this view, Carey writes, “There was no authority figure” in the renewal of many

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<sup>236</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis* 4b

<sup>237</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis* 14b

groups of women Religious.<sup>238</sup> While no one would argue that Vatican II asked Religious to begin renewal, the extent to which institutions had authority over their own processes of renewal was highly debated. This question of authority in renewal was central to the IHM conflict with Cardinal McIntyre.

In an essay arguing for the proper interpretation of *Perfectae Caritatis*, Allen and O'Brien agree with Carey. While Carey stressed a misinterpretation of authority as the central problem in attempts at renewing Religious life, Allen and O'Brien claim that misinterpretations of the decrees, and an undue perception of that these decrees deviated from past teaching, was partially responsible for problems with renewal. They argue that it is possible to “. . . demonstrate that *Perfectae Caritatis* is continuous with, and dynamically develops from, the foundation of previous Church teachings on religious life.”<sup>239</sup> In other words, the radical renewal spurred by this decree was contrary to the intention of Vatican II, because the documents produced during Vatican II did not deviate that drastically from previous church teachings.

Allen and O'Brien do, however, admit that Vatican II ushered in change. They write, “The manner of living, praying, and working were to be accommodated to modern physical and psychological circumstances, as required by the nature of each institute to the necessities of the apostolate and

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<sup>238</sup> Carey, p. 46.

<sup>239</sup> Allen and O'Brien, p. 252.

other factors.”<sup>240</sup> Caspary, Carey, and Allen and O’Brien all agree that Vatican II called for reform. Differences of interpretations arise when those who imagine renewal as more moderate encounter those who imagine renewal as more comprehensive.

These more radical and more traditional positions are nuanced; they do not always directly contradict one another. Given the ambiguity of the actual decree, both those who saw such authority as remaining within the hierarchy and those who interpreted ultimate authority for renewal as within Religious communities could find evidence for their views within Vatican II’s texts. Anita Caspary acknowledges the vague way in which the Vatican defined Religious life, writing, “Undeniably, as we now know, the word ‘religious’ had been used somewhat ambiguously in *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Second Vatican Councils decree on religious life.”<sup>241</sup>

While the means of renewal remained unclear, *Perfectae Caritatis* did encourage institutes of women Religious to revisit the spirit of their founders. Section two of *Perfectae Caritatis* reads, “The adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time . . . let their founders' spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions—all of which make up

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<sup>240</sup> Allen and O’Brien, p. 266.

<sup>241</sup> Caspary, p. 159.

the patrimony of each institute—be faithfully held in honor.”<sup>242</sup> Clearly, this is a call to women Religious to examine their collective history.

### *ECCLESIAE SANCTAE*

The possibility of change envisioned through *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Perfectae Caritatis* was broad and if not innovative, then inspiring. The apostolic letter *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, issued *moto proprio* in 1966, gave specific instructions for the implementation of the Vatican II mandates.<sup>243</sup> This letter’s instructions on the best way to initiate post-conciliar renewal were interpreted in a variety of ways of various members of the Church.

Anita Caspary argues that many members of the Church “. . . felt that the recent recommendations of the Second Vatican Council on religious life gave [them] the assurance of papal authorization—that of Pope Paul VI. [Ecclesiae Sanctae] stressed the importance of renewal by the religious institutes themselves if the ‘adaptation of their way of life and of their discipline’ were to reach fruition.”<sup>244</sup> In other words, these Religious interpreted *Ecclesiae Sanctae* as an expression of the Pope’s support of their renewal experimentations.

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<sup>242</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis* 2b

<sup>243</sup> “Moto proprio” means that the document was issued at the Pope’s personal initiative.

<sup>244</sup> Caspary, p. 85.

Others, however, did not view this document in the same light. The interpretation of a need for extensive reform at the initiative of individual communities was at odds with the idea of a need for less radical reform in accordance with the hierarchical structure of the Church. Carey argues in support of the latter of these two interpretations, writing, “Many institutions went far beyond the boundaries for experimentation set by *Ecclesiae Sanctae*. These communities radically transformed the purpose, nature and character of their institutions.”<sup>245</sup> The more traditional members of the Church, like Carey, viewed the intensity and breath of renewal as not authorized by the Pope and not in accordance with the attitude of Vatican II.

Most members of the Church acknowledged the need for reform; however, the way in which to go about implementing that reform was largely subject to interpretation. Whether or not the Vatican intended to be so opaque, *Ecclesiae Sanctae* furthered the divide between change-oriented and traditional thinkers within the Church.

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<sup>245</sup> Carey, p. 42.

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This article explores the symbolic nature of the nun as well as the changes Religious life has undergone since the Second Vatican Council. The author believes that women Religious must shatter preconceptions of the untouchable holiness in order to claim their place as active members in and of the world.

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The authors argue that the decree on the adaptation and renewal of religious life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, is in continuity with prior Church teachings.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex: The Classic Manifesto of the Liberated Woman*. New York: Vintage Books A Division of Random House, 1974. Print.

This book examines the place women occupy in society until the book's publication in 1949. The author argues that women have been defined in opposition to men and that they are therefore socialized to occupy positions of passivity. This work is considered foundational to contemporary feminist thought; its publication helped ignite second wave feminist activity.

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The author claims that the recent decline in orders of American women Religious is due to the Church's failure to live up to the promises made during Vatican II. The author interviews many American women Religious and tells their story as one of repression by the all-male hierarchy.

Butler, Sara. "Apostolic Religious Life: A Public, Ecclesial Vocation" Stonehill College. North Easton, MA. 14 Oct. 2008. Conference presentation.

The author delivered this article as a speech at a convention of traditionally minded women Religious. This article contemplates the problems in American women's religious orders by briefly examining the theological dimensions of Religious life. The author then comes out strongly against Religious who claim prophetic authority and challenge the hierarchy. The article concludes by stating that there can be no religious life without the Church and that those Religious who challenge the hierarchy are doing a disservice to their vocation.

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This book attempts to answer questions of "why" and "how" women's Religious communities in the United States now find their membership greatly declined and their finances incapable of supporting their rapidly aging population of sisters. In her narrative, the author uses the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters as an example of the ways in which American sisters were grossly out of line with church tradition. The author also criticizes the media's treatment of the conflict claiming that the sisters were portrayed in a far too favorable light, placing full blame on the IHM for not complying with the hierarchy and thus deciding to leave the church. In an attempt to be diplomatic, Carey uses the terms "change-oriented" and "traditional" to delineate between the more progressive and the more conservative sisters.

Carey, Ann. "The View from the Pew." Stonehill College. North Easton, MA. 27 Sept. 2008. Conference presentation. Web. 18 April 2013. <[http://www.stonehill.edu/Documents/Mission%20Office/RLS\\_Documentation/CAREY.pdf](http://www.stonehill.edu/Documents/Mission%20Office/RLS_Documentation/CAREY.pdf)>

In this address, the author reflects on the conflict between American women Religious and the Vatican and offers a solution that

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Code of Canon Law

<[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM)>

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This address followed the publication of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith's Doctrinal assessment of the LCWR. The author lays out possible paths forward and encourages her fellow women Religious to keep up their hope and keep true to themselves.

Goodstein, Laurie. "National Nuns' Group Dodges Showdown With Vatican" *The New York Times*, 10 August, 2012. Web 10 March 2013.

<[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/11/us/national-nuns-group-seeks-dialogue-with-vatican.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/11/us/national-nuns-group-seeks-dialogue-with-vatican.html?_r=0)>

The author outlines the conflict between the LCWR and the Vatican and describes the sisters' hopes for a resolution to the conflict.

Gray, Howard J. "Shift in Theology." *Way Supplement* 65 (1989): 54-65. Web. 2 April. 2013.

<<http://www.theway.org.uk/Back/s065Gray.pdf>>

This article claims that Vatican II did not provide adequate theological guidance for Religious life's mission within the Church. After interviewing a number of Religious from various orders, the author found some consistent similarities and differences in Religious' understandings of their work. While there are numerous areas where most Religious agree, such as the need for community life and an evolved understanding of the vows, there are also numerous areas where Religious disagree, such as the issue of authority. The author notes that after the 1980s, there has been a definite shift in the theology of Religious life towards a more pastoral as opposed to a juridical definition of Religious mission.

Helman, Ivy A. *Women and the Vatican: An Exploration of Official Documents*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012.

The book explores the Vatican's evolving theology of women through the official documents of the Second Vatican Council. The author analyses these documents at length, arguing that they demonstrate an acknowledgement of and a new attention to women in the Church.

Holscher, Kathleen. "Contesting the Veil in America: Catholic Habits and the Controversy over Religious Clothing in the United States" *Journal of Church and State*, 2011. Web. 18 April 2013.

<<http://jcs.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/02/09/jcs.csq146.full>>

In the article on Religious dress, the author draws comparisons between the current French rejections of the Muslim hijab with the U.S.'s past rejection of the Catholic Religious habit. While the habit is enigmatic, its history has often been controversial. In the past women Religious were often prohibited from wearing their habits. Even in the U.S., the symbol of the habit was not one that many (mostly Protestant,) Americans accepted until recently.

Katzenstein, Mary Fainsod. *Faithful and Fearless: Moving Feminist Protest Inside the Church and Military*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998.

The author explores the possibility of change within institutions such as the American Catholic Church and the U.S. military. The author claims that over the last few decades, feminist protest has moved from outside to inside these institutions. Her research indicates that diversity within institutions and legal provisions for the rights of minorities has enabled protest to have a voice where it previously would have been silenced. Different institutions generate different types of internal protest, and protest within the Catholic Church has historically been discursive and radical. The author briefly mentions the IHM women as an example of the Church's lack of restraint when retaliating against its outspoken women.

Kugelmann, Robert. "An Encounter Between Psychology and Religion." *Journal of the History of Behavioral Science* Fall 2005; 41(4), 347-65.

In this article the author explores the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters' conflict from a psychological perspective. The author focuses on the effect of encounters groups, a method of strengthening community and individual self-knowledge promoted by Rodgers and practiced by the IHM in the years before they split from the Church. He concludes that humanistic psychology, both the IHM's immediate contact with its practice and the broader societal openness to its strain of thought, had an effect on the IHM perception of the authority of their personal experience, their experience and, ultimately, their decision to leave the church.

Kuhns, Elizabeth. *The Habit: A History of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.

In addition to general history, Elizabeth Kuhns' novel on religious dress, *The Habit: A History of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns*, explores the significance of and differences in the habits of American Catholic sisters. From origins and adaptations to ritual usage, Kuhns writes an intricate and personal account of the significance of the habit for religious today.

Lamb, Matthew L. and Matthew Levering eds. *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

The authors' comprehensive collection of articles on the Second Vatican Council provides background on the Council. On the back cover of this book is an endorsement from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. The general perspective of those expressing their interpretations of Vatican II documents within the book tend towards the conservative end of the spectrum.

Leonard Blair, interviewed by Terry Gross, "Bishop Explains Vatican's Criticism Of U.S. Nuns." 25 July 2012. *Fresh Air from WHYY* (NPR).

Terry Gross interviews Bishop Leonard Blair about the Church's investigation of American women Religious. Blair makes clear that the Church intends to lovingly guide its sisters to understandings of Church doctrine more in line with those of the hierarchy.

McNamara, Jo Ann Kay. *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996.

The author's enormous volume illuminates the history of Catholic sisters in the Western world. The book works towards acknowledging the impact that sisters have had in the world as well as their continuing struggle to live according to the Gospel and the example of Jesus Christ.

Mercer, Marshal H. "You People Don't Pray Right: A Study of Power and Subordinate Goal-Conflict." PhD Diss., The Claremont Graduate School, 1993.

The author's focus was on goal conflict and the influence that owning their own land had on the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters' ability to leave the Catholic Church in order to pursue their own community. The author attempts to study the larger context surrounding the conflict and demonstrates that traditional values within the Church were not willing to see women take leadership roles. Creation of new subordinate goals for groups of religious during the Second Vatican Council necessarily produced conflict among members of the Church. Mercer's dissertation provides an outsider's perspective of the conflict. While he attempts to give both parties room to speak by interviewing key players in the conflict such as Anita Caspary and Bishop Ward (an aide to the Cardinal), it is evident in his narrative that he favors the IHM version of the events.

Michelman, Susan O. "Fashion and Identity of Women Religious," *Religion Dress and the Body*, Edited by Linda B. Arthur. New York, New York: Berg, 1999.

In this article the author explores the impact of Religious dress on the identity of American sisters. The author interviews sisters about their relationships to the habit and concludes that post-Vatican II the habit served as a metaphor for many Religious to convey their sense of displacement within the Church.

*The New Catholic Encyclopedia, Second Edition*. Edited by Bernard L. Marthaler et al. Washington DC: The Catholic University of America

Press, 2003.

This monumental collection of books consolidates and categorizes Roman Catholic History. The sections I have focused on for this thesis are those that directly reference “obedience” and the “Holy Spirit.”

Quiñonez, Lora Ann, and Mary Daniel Turner. *The Transformation of American Catholic Sisters*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

The authors write about the shift in ideology of American Sisters following the Second Vatican Council. Writing from the perspective of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, these two Religious attempt to explain how their actions were not intentionally disrespectful to Church tradition. The authors argue that they were attempting to implement renewal in a way that they felt was best for themselves as well as the Catholic community at large.

Pat Farrell, interviewed by Bob Simon, “American Nuns Struggle With Vatican For Change” 17 March 2013, *60 Minutes* (CBS).  
<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50143016n>

Bob Simon interviewed Pat Farrell, former head of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, about her organization’s conflict with the Vatican. Farrell claims that the sisters are only undertaking what they consider to be Vatican approved renewal, while the Vatican’s representative, Archbishop Peter Sartain, claims that the American sisters have gone too far. Both parties agree on the need for dialogue.

Pat Farrell, interviewed by Terry Gross, “An American Nun Responds To Vatican Criticism” 17 July, 2012, *Fresh Air from WHYY* (NPR).  
<http://www.npr.org/2012/07/17/156858223/an-american-nun-responds-to-vatican-condemnation>

Terry Gross interviews Pat Farrell, former head of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, about her organization’s conflict with the Vatican. Farrell had recently met with the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, and expressed her concerns about the implications of the assessment.

Schaefer, Judith O.P., B.A., M.P.S., M.Div. “The Vow of Obedience as Decision-Making in Communion: Contributions from Ecclesiology and Psychology.” PhD Diss. Marquette University, 2004.

This dissertation focuses on the lived experience of American women Religious and their understanding of the vow of obedience. The hierarchical and juridical ideal of the vow conflicts with a more

dialogue oriented understanding. The author proposes a theology of the vow of obedience as obedience in communion as a means of reconciling these conflicting ideas.

Schneiders, Sandra M. *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Catholic Church*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1991.

This book analyzes the possibilities and implications of being a feminist and maintaining Christian, more specifically Catholic, faith. The author first defines feminism, then looks at the implications of feminism in relation to scripture and finally explores the possibility of continuing spiritual life through feminist spirituality. The author concludes that there is the possibility of feminist spirituality and that such spirituality will outlive or at least overcome women's current patriarchal oppression.

Schneiders, Sandra M. *Prophets in their Own Country: Women Religious Bearing Witness to the Gospel in a Troubled Church* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2011.

This book is based on a compilation of articles published in the *National Catholic Reporter* and works towards rearticulating the meaning of Religious life. The author calls on her fellow sisters to claim their new life courageously and move forward as active and engaged members of the Church, despite hierarchical opposition.

Schussler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York: Crossroad, 1983.

The author reconstructs the role of women in early Church history and radically imagines a "discipleship of equals" where women live in community within the church structure established by Christianity. Her biblical scholarship challenges authority within the Church and calls on her readers to live in communion with each other.

Seewald, Peter interviewing Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. *Salt of the Earth: Christianity and the Catholic Church at the End of the Millennium*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997.

The author, a liberal German reporter, interviewed then Cardinal Ratzinger on the state of the Church. In an open manner, Ratzinger discussed his perception of the Church and gave insights into his ideas for moving the Church into the twenty-first century.

Seidler, John, and Katherine Meyer, *Conflict and Change in the Catholic Church*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989.

The book examines if and why the Church decided to change following the Second Vatican Council and how those changes were

brought about. Their collected data reveals that significant and lasting changes were made within the Catholic Church as a result of Vatican II. They argue that the church faced a crisis and that rather than die out it decided to adapt. Key processes such as environmental penetration, religious erosion, and ideological reconstruction give insight into why the church evolved. Conflict is linked to social change and the deterioration of existing norms. In their analysis, the authors touch on the Immaculate Heart of Mary conflict. They highlight the importance of this conflict in determining the possibility of Church acceptance of renewal within women's religious communities in years to come. They also explain the multilayered nature of the conflict, stressing the investment of laity as well as religious in the outcome.

Soujeole, Benoit-Dominique de La O.P. "The Universal Call to Holiness." *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*. Ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

This article discusses *Lumen Gentium*, a dogmatic constitution on the Church produced during the Second Vatican Council. The author attempts to clarify the structure and meaning of the documents, as well as the nature of the Church's the universal call to holiness. The author concludes that the mystery of the Church as mediation between G-d and the faithful allows for and encourages the laity to achieve holiness in this life.

Suenens, Cardinal Leon Joseph, *The Nun in the World: New Dimensions in the Modern Apostolate*. London: Burns & Oats, 1963.

The author focuses more on the renewal of religious orders than on the possibility of their decline. He wrote pre-Vatican II and theoretically focused on all women religious. In this book, the author illustrates the great need for reform within communities of women religious. As a Cardinal, the author supports the Catholic Church and sees the possibility of reform within the Church without disruption to the Church's structure or fundamental beliefs and practices. He then describes the ways in which such reform should be implemented, highlighting the importance of women Religious in the Church's presence in the world.

The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, "Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious," United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Web. 25 Mar. 2013.  
<<http://www.usccb.org/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=55544>>

This assessment, written by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, accused the Leadership Conference of Women Religious



of grave doctrinal error. This document has produced intense reaction on the parts of Religious and lay Catholics alike, many people supporting the sisters and many commending the Vatican's critique.

Truhlar, K.V. "Obedience" *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Second Edition Volume 10*. Ed. Bernard L. Marthaler et al., Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

The author provides a brief outline of the role of obedience in the Catholic Church and in Religious life.

Valentine, Ferdinand O.P. *Religious Obedience: A Practical Exposition for Religious Sisters*. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952.

This book delves into the relationship between mother superiors and their subordinate sisters. The author advises Religious to adhere to a more juridical understanding of obedience.

Vatican Council II. "*Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church]." 21 November 1964. Web. 18 April 2012.

<[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)>

Vatican Council II. "*Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World]." 7 December 1965. Web. 18 April 2012.

<[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)>

Vatican Council II. "*Perfectae Caritatis* [Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life]." 28 October 1965. Web. 18 April 2012.

<[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_perfectae-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html)>

Vatican Council II. "*Ecclesiae Sanctae*" [Apostolic Letter]." Web. 18 April 2012.

<[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_motu-proprio\\_19660806\\_ecclesiae-sanctae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19660806_ecclesiae-sanctae_en.html)>

Wittberg, Patricia. *The Rise And Fall of Catholic Religious Orders: A Social Movement Perspective*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1994.

This book analyzes social and organizational changes within the Catholic Church. Using theoretical analysis, the author examines the social phenomenon of periods of decline and abundance in membership to religious orders. She finds a number of possible reasons for the present decline, among them ideological change within

religious orders following the Second Vatican Council and lack of role clarity among religious. Within her study the author notes the IHM/McIntyre conflict as an example of discord between religious order's idea of their identity and that of many members of the church. She writes about the effect that the Vatican's response to the IHM had on religious communities across America.