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The Jesuits and Women

Reflections on the 34th General Congregation's Statement on Women in Church and Civil Society

SUSAN A. ROSS

In the fall of 1995, not long after the 34th General Congregation issued its statement on the "Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society," I was asked to take part in a series of conversations on its recommendations. I ended up declining to participate, in part because of other obligations, but chiefly because the organizers of the series were not Jesuits, but rather two women religious who had been asked by some Jesuits at Loyola and a neighboring parish to put the series together. Then, as now, this situation struck me as inherently problematic: unless and until the Jesuits *themselves* initiated serious conversation with women on this issue, I thought, it would continue to be perceived as a "women's problem," and not a Jesuit problem. I wanted the Jesuits to do the hard work of organizing these conversations, not to delegate—even with the best of intentions—the work to women.

In the four years since the GC 34 statement on women, I have seen and heard almost nothing about it.

I had hoped that perhaps some Jesuits at my own institution would invite me to lunch or dinner to talk about the statement, or that Loyola's higher administration would take upon itself the task of implementing some of its recommendations, perhaps in partnership with the Women's Studies Program (which I directed from 1992-95). Neither has happened. So when the invitation came to respond to the statement for *Conversations*, I was glad that it had not been forgotten. Perhaps other women have had greater responses from their Jesuit colleagues than I have; perhaps other institutions have implemented these recommendations more fully. I can only speak from my own experience at one Jesuit university. But I

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suspect that my experience is not unique. Why have I heard so little about this statement in the last four years?

The quick and easy answer is that the Society of Jesus is a men's religious order within the Roman Catholic church. The church, while claiming to advocate women's equality, bars us from ordained ministry and therefore from any significant role of governance in the church. Indeed, for its entire history, the church has struggled with women's roles. Thus the statement can be perceived as a symbolic gesture of solidarity with women made by a sympathetic group of Jesuits in an ecclesial structure which does not permit any real change. "Everyone knows that the Catholic church discriminates against women" (as a number of my colleagues at Loyola would put it), so why should anyone be surprised that this statement has had little or no impact on Jesuit institutions?

While there is more than a grain of truth in this judgment, it conveys neither the deeper truth nor the complexity of the situation. The General Congregation's statement comes out of the depths of the Catholic, Christian, and Jesuit traditions even as it challenges them. Taking this statement seriously would result in some very real challenges not only to institutional structures and individual attitudes, but also to core issues in Jesuit spirituality. Perhaps a tacit awareness of the potential consequences of this statement has prevented its wider dissemination. But as a committed Catholic and a committed feminist (not a contradiction in terms), I see in the statement points of both contact and conflict between women and Jesuits. In what follows I will suggest some reasons for this complex relationship and offer some suggestions for putting the statement's recommendations into practice.

I

The statement itself is a clear and straightforward call for Jesuits to concern themselves with women's equality. It begins with a description of the situation of women. In the statement's second paragraph, we read: "The dominance of men in their relationship with women has found expression in many ways" (362.2). And in the next, "We still have with us the legacy of systematic discrimination against women. It is embedded within the economic, social, political, religious, and even linguistic structures of our societies" (363.3). The statement goes on to describe the church's contribution to the situation by noting that church social teaching "has called upon all men and women of good will, espe-

cially Catholics, to make the essential equality of women a lived reality" (365.5).

In the last twenty or so years, the Catholic Church has acknowledged that there has been discrimination against women, although the extent to which it repents of its own complicity in this is not always clear. Whether or not the prohibition of the ordination of women constitutes discrimination is still very much a disputed question. According to the Vatican, the issue is closed; those who publicly advocate women's ordination may face loss of employment and/or ecclesiastical censure.¹ But let us leave the issue of women's ordination aside here, since it is really not an issue that colleges and universities are in a position to decide—although it continues to be widely discussed and debated on campuses.

In acknowledging discrimination against women, the Jesuit statement calls for the "promotion of justice"—an "absolute requirement of faith"—while also noting the "limited but significant influence" that the Society "as Jesuits and as male religious within the church" is bound to have (368.8). Then the statement sets out some modest but important goals. First, while it may not be possible for Jesuits to change the world, they can certainly look at themselves. The statement goes on to call for conversion from sexism and clericalism, to acknowledge the many contributions that women have made to the Society of Jesus as they have worked alongside its members, and then suggests some "ways forward" in which Jesuits can "align themselves in solidarity with women" (373.3). Significantly, in the conclusion, the statement requests that the Society "regard this solidarity with women as *integral to our mission*" (384; my italics).

In re-reading the statement in 1999, I am again both hopeful and frustrated. On the one hand, in my fourteen years at Loyola I have come to know and respect a number of Jesuits as colleagues and friends (and have even married a former Jesuit!); I have been impressed with the energy and intelligence of the scholastics I have taught; I have been inspired by the dedication of many Jesuits who have shared their ministries and gifts with me and others. Yet on the other hand, I wonder if "solidarity with women" is truly "integral to the mission" of the Society. Making such solidarity a reality will require a profound conversion, a conversion in which knowl-

¹ See *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*; see also various news reports about Carmel McEnroy and Barbara Fiand, for example.

edge of women's lives and experiences is central. It will involve something of a revolution in thinking. It is because this revolution is so challenging—even “dangerous”—that progress forward seems so slow. The revolution in thinking that I have in mind is feminism.

II

In March of this year, I was invited to a meeting of a group of women theologians. To prepare for the meeting, we were all asked to respond to a questionnaire in which one question was: “Do you consider yourself a feminist?” My own irreverent answer was “Yeah—you got a problem with that?” When we received everyone else's answers shortly before the meeting, I was struck by the response of a colleague and friend, who wrote that yes, she did consider herself a feminist, and she defined a feminist as one who, in every situation, asked the question, “What about women?”

It seems to me that the statement from GC 34 is committing the Society to ask itself, in every situation, “What about women?” What would it mean for every member of the Society to ask himself, in every situation of potential importance, “What about women?” The question “What about women?” was indeed asked in the early years of the Society. What clues do we have from the past? And, given these clues, what suggestions can we make for the present and future? I would like to explore these questions and suggest some ways that the statement's commitment to thinking and acting about the concerns of women might be incorporated personally in the lives of Jesuits, especially those whose mission is higher education, and institutionally into the work of Jesuit colleges and universities.

How have Jesuits understood women's roles in the past, and does this past have any influence on the present? From the earliest days of the Jesuits' ministry, women were inspired by the work of the Jesuits—particularly by the Spiritual Exercises—and many since have supported the work of the Society. There were, in fact, a few “women Jesuits” in the very early years of the Society, but that practice was short-lived.² One of the most ardent early supporters of the Jesuits' ministry was the English founder of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mary Ward (1585-1645). As a young woman, Ward was inspired by the vision of Ignatius of Loyola. After an unsuccessful time with the Poor Clares, she

² See John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 75-6.

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founded an institute for women, modeled after the Society of Jesus. Her Institute, however, faced strong opposition both from some Jesuits and from the Vatican, in large part because the members of the Institute were not to be under the authority of any bishop, were to wear simple, secular clothing, and were not to be cloistered, so that they could be free to serve God and the church.³ In short, Mary Ward wanted to live as much of a “Jesuit life”—which to her meant a life lived in active service to the Church—as was possible for women in the 17th century. Instead she faced condemnation and even imprisonment but refused to back down. Ward was finally vindicated (posthumously) in 1877 when the Institute was officially approved by the Vatican.

Mary Ward’s story is worth remembering and retelling, not only so that her determination and courage can be given its historical due, but also as a reminder that women’s desires to be active participants in Ignatius’ world-transforming vision have not always been welcomed, nor seen as “integral to the Society’s mission.” To be sure, Ward did have her Jesuit supporters, but they were in the minority. The Society of Jesus was and is a society *for men*; in fact, Ignatius’s reluctance to have women members stemmed from his insistence that members of the Society were not to be tied down in any way.⁴ The GC 34 statement acknowledges this “social positioning” by commenting that “The Society of Jesus accepts this challenge [to work towards justice for women] and our responsibility for doing what we can *as men and as a male religious order*” (367.7; my italics). Not only is the Society a male religious order; it is also an order with a particular spirituality that *was* at its founding, and may still be, particularly suited for men.

Searching the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* for references to women, one finds the following:

Likewise, because the members of this Society ought to be ready at any hour to go to some or other parts of the world where they may be sent by the sovereign pontiff or their own superiors, they ought not to take a curacy of souls, and still less ought they to take charge of religious women or any other women whatever to be their confessors regularly or to direct them.⁵

The mission of the Society was to take precedence over any human relationship, since one’s relationship with *God was always primary*. Like members of the military, Jesuits were to be ready to pack up and go at a moment’s

notice, and being a woman’s or a lay person’s spiritual director would entail a responsibility that could not be met under these circumstances. Ignatius’s caution then makes sense, if his main concern was, as George Ganss puts it, the “avoidance of impediment to the mobility of his men” (*Constitutions* 263). Given the context of the time, and the fact that the Jesuits taught only boys in their schools, the need to be in close conversation with women was not at all pressing at the time—indeed, quite the opposite was the case.

The mentality of “active readiness” that marks the spirituality of the Society of Jesus is one of its most distinguishing characteristics. Such a readiness has meant, positively, that one is always to be prepared for the next challenge, the next mission. Negatively, it means that one ought not to get too connected to persons or things. Ignatius writes in the *Constitutions* that “communications from friends or relatives, whether oral or written, generally tend to disturb rather than help those who attend to the spiritual life” (*Constitutions*, Ch. 4, #60; p. 94). The marked goal-orientation that we find in Jesuit spirituality means, positively, that everything works toward “the greater glory of God.” Ignatius’s words are also reflected in the statements of many other religious communities of the time and later. One thinks, for example, of the cautions, especially in women’s religious communities, against “particular friendships.”

Such a focus on goals, on active readiness, on detachment from the “things of the world” are of course characteristic not only of the Jesuits but also of much of post-Tridentine and pre-Vatican II spirituality. I would argue that *these* are characteristics that *the Jesuits have* perfected, many of them to the good. But I would also ask whether these particular characteristics are the most helpful in the ministry of college and university education in the present, and whether they best serve the mission of the Society, particularly as it affects women.

³ For an extensive biography of Mary Ward, see Henriette Peters, *Mary Ward: A World in Contemplation*, Trans. Helen Butterworth (Wiltshire: Gracewing Press, 1994).

⁴ See O’Malley, p. 75

⁵ St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Trans. and Ed. George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), Part VI, Ch. 3, p. 262.

While these characteristics have been key to the success of the Jesuits over the years, I suggest that they are in need of further reflection, if not conversion and transformation. Such a conversion can have profound effects beyond the institutions themselves and ultimately will contribute to “the greater glory of God.”

III

Let us consider this “active readiness” in the light of the GC 34 statement. The first (and most basic) concrete recommendation that the statement makes is the invitation to “all Jesuits to listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women.” The statement continues by cautioning that “Unless we listen, any action we may take in this area, no matter how well-intentioned, is likely to bypass the real concerns of women, and to confirm male condescension and reinforce male dominance” (372).

I applaud this call to listen, and I hope it will be taken seriously. But I would like to press the statement by pointing out that real listening is not possible apart from trusting relationships. Relationships take time and energy—often in short supply for both overworked academic Jesuits as well as lay people. To the extent that “mission” takes priority over “relationship,” relationships can be seen only as a means to a “greater end.” It requires a delicate balancing act to keep both of these important factors together.

In reconsidering the role of relationships in human life *coram Deo*, feminist theologians have argued that in fact our relationships are where we live out our relationship with God, that God as Trinity is the model of relational community, that passion is essential to the moral life.⁶ Thus I would suggest that “active readiness” be seen as an active readiness for relationship, especially in our institutions of higher education. With tenure, many Jesuit faculty will be less likely to be “taking off at a moment’s notice” for new duties. And this readiness for relationship, particularly with women colleagues, can be developed in a number of concrete ways in our institutions. I have in mind four: teaching and research, administration, social life, and liturgy.

Teaching and Research

GC 34 is actually quite clear when it comes to teaching, by calling for “explicit teaching of the essential equality of women and men in Jesuit ministries, especially in schools, colleges, and universities” (374). In addition, the statement calls for the “use of appropriate inclusive language in speech and official documents.” In

my own experience at Loyola, I find little that contradicts these basic recommendations, at least on the surface. I would be very surprised to find that women’s subordination is actually taught in courses (except as part of the historical record), and the language in official documents does include women as well as men. Like many other Jesuit institutions, Loyola has a thriving Women’s Studies Program (the first established at a Jesuit institution), and scholarship by and about women is, for the most part, encouraged and rewarded.

Yet I wonder to what extent teaching and scholarship about women has gone beyond the “add women and stir” approach—that is to say, in any course, include one or two books by women or other “underrepresented minorities” so as to ensure that there is sufficient diversity in one’s course, but don’t change the basic recipe. One dimension of the concern for relationship in feminist scholarship has been more attention paid to collaborative learning and research, challenging the traditional “lone ranger” or monastic model of the scholar. Feminist scholarship has also challenged the “detached observer” model of the scholar by pointing out that we bring our whole selves—embodied and relational—to our teaching and scholarship.

I would suggest that Jesuit communities associated with colleges and universities invite their women colleagues to conversations about the impact of feminist scholarship on their fields, and about new models of teaching and research. I would also suggest that they engage in some honest discussion with us about the challenges of juggling academic careers and family life. One of my concerns is that in the drive for “academic excellence,” Jesuit institutions may too readily emulate the culture of the elite universities, where a publish-or-perish ethos can run seriously counter to the values of family life so cherished in the Catholic tradition. Because of their commitment to the intrinsic connection between faith and social justice (a commitment which has attracted many of us to work in Jesuit institutions), Jesuit colleges and universities are well-positioned to help redefine teaching and scholarship in ways that honor relationships between students and faculty, that encourage

⁶ See, for example, the work of Margaret Farley, Elizabeth Johnson, and Catherine LaCugna. It is worth noting that a number of feminist moral theologians are engaged in a retrieval of Catholic natural law theology; see particularly Lisa Sowle Cahill, Jean Porter, and Cristina Traina.

collaborative research, that recognize the embodied and relational characters of our lives, and that do not define academic excellence only in terms of the number of one's publications.

Merely teaching "essential equality" and using inclusive language are not enough, although they are both good starting points. Scholarship by and about women, as well as by and about other underrepresented groups, has begun to change the face of teaching and scholarship. Jesuit institutions, with their explicit commitment to faith and justice, are in a unique position to redefine the prevailing models of academia. By listening to women, by becoming familiar with feminist scholarship and theory, Jesuits and Jesuit institutions might think more creatively and holistically about the meaning of teaching and research, while simultaneously tapping (again) into their own long tradition of creative approaches to educational problems and opportunities.

Administration

GC 34 includes some significant statements about women's participation in colleges and universities: "genuine involvement of women in consultation and decision making in our Jesuit ministries" (378 13, 5) and "respectful cooperation with our female colleagues in shared projects" (379 13, 6). At Loyola, women are involved at many levels of university administration, from vice-presidents on down. But it is not so much the *numbers* of women that I have in mind when thinking about Jesuit solidarity with women—although that is a significant issue—but more the *kinds* of involvement that women (as well as other non-Jesuits) have in college and university administration.

I mentioned earlier that the spirituality of the Society of Jesus as evident in the *Constitutions* was, in some important ways, particularly suited for men. The military-style sense of companionship and readiness seemed in the 16th century, and for some now, very attractive to men who sought to do God's work with like-minded others. Another dimension of the Society apparent in the *Constitutions* is the emphasis on hierarchy. To be sure, this is not a hierarchy of oppression or of superiority, but a clearly-organized institution where everyone knew his place. Obedience is highly prized.

As with any other example of 16th century spirituality, the term "blind obedience" and the role of the superior as the vicar of God can be taken out of context and seriously misunderstood. My intention here is not at all to chastise this great classic of Christian spirituality and organization for its emphasis on hierarchy and obedience. But again, I wonder to what extent the kind of hierarchical structure and obediential order so characteristic of the Society remains in both obvious and subtle ways in Jesuit institutions. It is not so much that hierarchy and unquestioning obedience are paramount among the Jesuits I know; quite the contrary. But I wonder how it is that this structured mentality continues to permeate the institutions.

One of the key issues under vigorous consideration right now at Loyola is the idea of shared governance. Loyola's Faculty Council has for years functioned only in an advisory, not legislative, capacity; chairs of departments advise deans, who advise vice-presidents, but the real decision-making is still very much top-down. While some consultation does take place, the administration is still very much hierarchical. In fact, some important decisions, such as closing a department or a school, have been met with dismay by members of the faculty for whom these decisions have come as a complete surprise. Yet another issue that is of concern to

Jesuit colleges and universities today is the issue of the institutions' relationship to the Roman Catholic hierarchy. It is here that feminist thinking on relationships and even on obedience may help to shed some light on structures and forms of governance and administration. Such thinking has implications far beyond Jesuit relationships with women; indeed, it can positively affect relationships among all members of the university.

Traditional conceptions of obedience, such as we find in the *Constitutions*, emphasize submission to the will of the superior. This model of obedience still seems to be operative as well in the church-wide theological arena, as we witness in the situations of dissenting theologians such as Charles Curran, Tissa Balasuriya, and others. This, in fact, is one of the concerns of many theologians in Catholic colleges and universities in regard to the implementation of *Ex corde ecclesiae*. Feminist reinterpretations of obedience, however, suggest another

OUR
RELATIONSHIPS
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WITH GOD

er model. According to ethicist Anne E. Patrick, “[i]n this [new] paradigm, the image of the obedient Christian is one of attentiveness, of listening with care for clues to the divine will.”⁷

My suggestion here is that administrators, particularly those Jesuit administrators in positions of authority, consider carefully how assumptions about male authority and structures might find their way into decisions and structures. A feminist model of authority and structure does not necessarily condemn all forms of hierarchy, but is always alert to the possibility that models based on patriarchal authority may still linger, deeply embedded in institutions and structures. My challenge to Jesuits in positions of administration would be for them to ask themselves with whom they are regularly in conversation, how they may put themselves in positions of attentive listening, and to what extent their structures are open to mutual conversation. As my colleague put it, in all of their deliberations they need to ask the question “What about women?” and this means asking not just “How many women are there?” but also “How will this decision affect women who are struggling to balance career and home life? How will it affect the men who are their friends, colleagues, and spouses?” “How does this affect women students, faculty, staff?” Again the point is that Jesuit administrators can only answer this question adequately if they have put themselves in positions of attentive listening, in trusting relationships.

Social Life

This may seem to be an odd category for discussing the impact of the GC 34 statement on women, but from a feminist standpoint, one’s “social location” is central. Usually, social location is brought up when one acknowledges one’s own gender, race, class, or orientation, so that one’s judgments can be contextualized. But for our purposes here, I would like to explore, if only briefly, the ways in which our social lives are conducted, especially as faculty, staff, and administrators at Jesuit colleges and universities. Jesuits have always been known for their intellectual acumen, rigorous training, and subtle argumentation. But I would like to suggest here that these qualities, together with the active readiness I have already discussed, need to be combined with serious attention to hospitality. By hospitality I do not mean the ability to host parties, but rather the capacity to “care for the stranger” and to construct a space where others can feel at home, where real conversations can take place.

Protestant ethicist Christine D. Pohl writes about the importance of Christian hospitality that is more than entertainment. Such hospitality transcends prevailing social boundaries, builds community, meets significant human needs, and reflects divine hospitality.⁸ Good hospitality is practiced best by those who have known what it means to be in need of hospitality—what Pohl describes as the experience of marginality. The problem with those who can *only* be host, and never guest, is that they perpetuate the inequality that has led some to be in need of hospitality. Pohl writes: “Persons who have never experienced need or marginality find it easier to be hosts than guests, and the deepest condescension may be expressed in their unwillingness to be a guest, an unwillingness to allow the relationship to be mutual” (135).

The writers of the GC 34 statement on women had something akin to this in mind, I suspect, when they mentioned the risk of condescension by men towards women if real listening does not take place. I suggest that reflecting on the practice of hospitality—especially towards women—be a central part of community life among Jesuits. By this I mean more than hosting parties (although I do not rule this out). Since, in a very real way, the Jesuits *are* the hosts at Jesuit colleges and universities, it is important to consider how practices of transcending social boundaries, of community building among their colleagues, and of reflecting on their own marginality—since I do think that all religious communities are called to be marginal to the larger society—might help work towards greater justice for all, especially including women.

While the fact that I can count on one hand the number of times I have taken meals with my Jesuit colleagues in their residences over the past fourteen years may say more about our busy schedules than our very respectful relationships, it also suggests that hospitality may be something that needs to be cultivated to a much greater extent among Jesuits than it is now. Perhaps it is the goal orientation of Jesuits—the “be prepared” spirituality that has influenced them to regard their residence

⁷ *Liberating Conscience: Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

⁸ Christine D. Pohl, “Hospitality from the Edge: The Significance of Marginality in the Practice of Welcome,” *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (Georgetown University Press, 1995), pp. 121-136; these particular qualities are listed on p. 121.

as always provisional—that has helped to make hospitality seem less important than other values. But more consideration of the responsibility of the host of the fact that in the Christian tradition Jesus is both guest and host, might help to develop the kinds of relationships that can work towards greater justice.

Liturgical Life

This category is not found in the GC 34 statement on women, and it may seem to some that it is a less appropriate topic for an article on colleges and universities. After all, not all women who are involved in Jesuit higher education are Catholic, and even fewer are regularly involved in campus liturgies. But one essential part of Jesuit ministry in higher education is providing a campus liturgical life. And this is certainly an area in which a great deal of listening is needed.

In reading the GC 34 statement, one of the longest paragraphs is the one entitled “Appreciation,” where the statement expresses its gratitude to the many women, both lay and religious, who have worked alongside members of the Society in their ministries, and who have adopted the Spiritual Exercises. The writers “hope that this mutuality in ministry might continue and flourish” (370-10). The relationships developed in these ministries have enriched both the men and women involved. But there remains a fundamental gap between men and women when it comes to liturgical life. Benedictine liturgical theologian Mary Collins expressed this well when she commented, in an address to the Leadership Council of Women Religious, on how relationships are “reconfigured” when one “moves into ritual assembly”: “Entrance into ritual space separates you physically from the churchmen who are your friends and collaborators.”⁹ In my own experience of writing and lecturing on women and the sacraments, the issue that comes up again and again is the role of women in the liturgical assembly: to be more precise, the pain that women, particularly women religious, experience when it comes to the requirement of male clerical leadership in liturgy.¹⁰

THERE REMAINS
A FUNDAMENTAL GAP
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AND WOMEN
WHEN IT COMES
TO LITURGICAL LIFE

⁹ Mary Collins, O.S.B., “Women in Relation to the Institutional Church,” LCWR 1991 National Assembly, ms. p. 3.

¹⁰ See Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1998).

Now my point in this article is not to rehearse any of the arguments for or against the issue of women's ordination. Rather, it is to suggest to Jesuits that they be aware of this pain, that they listen to it and consider its implications for their own liturgical lives. In a very profound way, liturgical life on campus is perhaps the most significant way that Jesuits are hosts to their colleagues and students. With the exception of the President, who in most places still must be a Jesuit, faculty and staff positions are open to the most qualified; there is a sense of shared responsibility for the institution. But it is in the chapels that the Jesuits are the hosts to their faculties, staffs, and students, and often to women's religious communities that are neighbors or even collaborators in the mission of the institutions—as with the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Loyola, or the Religious of the Sacred Heart at Boston College.

To be sure, this issue causes a great deal of pain among women's communities themselves, many of whom still struggle with community practice about the Eucharist. Why is it, some ask, that men's religious communities can celebrate the Eucharist among themselves alone, while for women, it is necessary to bring in a priest, often someone unknown to the community? I suggest that men's religious communities consider their own Eucharistic practice, as I am sure many already have, and reflect on how their own situation as hosts might honor the sense of marginality that many women experience in liturgy. While I think that there is grace in this marginality, and that the brokenness of the Body of Christ continues to be manifest in the brokenness of the church today, women's pain surrounding the Eucharist needs to be heard and felt. Acknowledging the pain will not take it away, but it will respect those who experience it. And given the expansion of roles for the laity in liturgical life, there may indeed be further opportunities for Jesuits to play the role of guest as well as host in campus liturgical life, as in invitations to women to preach. Being the host does not mean controlling the liturgy, but allowing the presence of Christ to permeate the assembly. Such a sensitivity to the presider/host position can go a long way in deepening relationships with women.

IV

Implementing the recommendations of GC 34 will take courage and trust on the part of both Jesuits and women. It is important to acknowledge the suspicion and lack of trust that can hamper conversation on both sides. There are still some in Jesuit institutions who fail

to take women's gifts seriously; every campus has its stories. And some Jesuits may well be reluctant to initiate conversations out of a fear of confrontation or misunderstanding. Perhaps there is a sense of sadness on the part of some Jesuits who see their numbers diminished and fewer men choosing to go into the ministry of higher education. Jesuit higher education is at a crossroads, in relation to the men who choose to go into the ministry of higher education, in relation to the Society of Jesus and the larger culture, and in relation to the concerns of Catholic institutions and the magisterium.

But these conversations are well worth pursuing. As my husband and my Jesuit colleagues have often reminded me, there are many feminist themes and concerns that resonate with central aspects of Ignatian spirituality: an emphasis on the affections, a knowledge of what it is to be marginal, an identification with the suffering Christ. A commitment to conversation between Jesuits and women can lead to a deeper and more multifaceted awareness both of the riches of the Jesuit tradition and of the complexities of women's lives. And conversely, women in conversation with their Jesuit colleagues could benefit from the wisdom of four centuries of reflection on discernment, a central focus of Ignatian spirituality, as issues of community, difference, and voice continue to be contested issues in scholarship and practice by and about women.

The title of this issue of *Conversations* is "Ideas Have Dangerous Consequences." I am not sure how dangerous the consequences are of trying to respond more substantially to the recommendations of GC 34's statement on women. But if some of the consequences are that Jesuits establish closer working and personal relationships with women, that they incorporate greater mutuality into institutional structures, that they consciously play the roles of both guest and host in their institutions, and that they consider with sensitivity the roles of women in liturgical life, then much will have been accomplished, and in the process, much will have changed. This may well be perceived as dangerous by those who fear change, but the potential rewards are worth the challenge.