

(My Address)

January 23, 2012

Reverend Edward Dougherty, M.M., Superior General  
P. O. Box 303  
Maryknoll, NY 10545

Dear Reverend Father,

I am a well-educated Catholic, having gone through 16 years of Catholic schooling, plus additional theological training. My family had always been conscientious Catholics. I remember my mother sending yearly donations to Maryknoll. I carried on the tradition while I taught in a Catholic school for 22 years by having my students collect money for the missions.

I am very concerned for the future of our Catholic Church, for four main reasons.

First of all, the number of young men called to the priesthood has dropped drastically. My local seminary, Immaculate Conception Seminary, reported that in 2011, only four new priests had been ordained to serve in our Diocese of Rockville Centre, and one new priest for Brooklyn.

Secondly, worldwide, many people feel the Church did not handle the priestly child abuse scandal adequately, or even justly.

Thirdly, I see most of the members of my own family and friends not continuing to practice their faith, calling Catholicism "irrelevant" and "too patriarchal" for 2012.

I believe God is allowing all these things to happen because He has something else in mind for His Church.

Theologians and parish priests have always taught that the Holy Spirit is always working through the Church. The Church is the whole family of believers.

I believe that God is calling married men and women to the priesthood, along with single men. Many Catholics I talk to have the same understanding. My religion books say we are all called to share in Christ's priesthood. If this does not happen, I believe we will lose even more members of the Church. In the Early Christian Church, there were married men and women priests and deacons.

Fourthly, wouldn't it be unfortunate to "silence" someone, especially a priest, who is expressing the promptings of the Holy Spirit? What would Jesus have done? Dialogue with that person?.

There were other people whose ideas church officials tried to silence. Galileo and sex crime victims come to mind. These squashed ideas later resulted in shame and embarrassment for the Church.

I understand that you are probably under pressure from your superiors in the church. Please do not become a pawn in "The Power Game" of fearful prelates!

The very name MARYknoll calls to mind the Mother of God. If God saw fit to have a woman, the Virgin Mary, conceived without original sin, shouldn't the Church also allow women to have the option of becoming priests? The Maryknoll Fathers have a mission to fulfill. Bring the gentleness of Mary into the priestly service!

Keep the dialogue going!

Very truly yours,  
(Signed)