

World & Nation

Father Fox accepts sabbatical; order rejects harsher measures

By Cindy Wooden

Washington (NC) — Dominican Father Matthew Fox, the leading developer of creation-centered spirituality, has agreed to take a sabbatical recommended by his religious superiors at the request of the Vatican.

While the Vatican has questioned whether Father Fox should be allowed to teach or publish at all, the Dominican order suggested he take a year's break to reflect on his work.

But Father Fox, founder of the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality in Oakland, Calif., told reporters October 20 that he wasn't sure if his sabbatical would last longer than six months.

"The issues that I have been dealing with are of such grave concern that I do not know what the eventual outcome will be," he said at a press conference in San Francisco.

Father Fox's spirituality emphasizes "the goodness of the human, the earthy, the imaginative, the instinctual life ... with a lesser or secondary concern about what might be sinful, destructive and suspect," said a statement released October 19 by his Dominican superiors at the Chicago-based central U.S. province.

The spirituality draws from Catholic mysticism, liberation theologies, Eastern religions, ecology, Native American religions, feminism and modern science.

While the 47-year-old priest has agreed to a sabbatical, he said he would not comply with a Vatican request that he "disassociate himself" from Starhawk, a member of his institute's faculty and a self-described witch who views witchcraft as a medieval women's movement.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, also asked Father Damian A. Byrne, the Dominican master general, that Father Fox's assignment as director of the institute at Oakland's Holy Names College "be terminated."

Father Byrne asked Father Fox to renegotiate his contract with Holy Names, but did not ask him to resign, according to the province's statement.

Holy Names Sister Lois MacGillivray, president of the college, said in an October 20 statement that Father Fox had been granted a sabbatical for the spring 1989 semester, but he continues as director of the institute.

At his press conference, Father Fox said it was "an honor" to be "silenced by the present regime in the Vatican."

Cardinal Ratzinger had asked the Dominicans in 1984 to review three of Father Fox's books, including what the Vatican considered his major work, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality*.

A critique by a panel of Dominican theologians "found nothing" in the books to warrant "condemnation," but did say that certain traditions and doctrines of the



Father Matthew Fox

Church "could be better integrated" with his work, according to the Dominicans.

The doctrinal congregation "had apparently conducted its own investigation and come to the conclusion that the order should forbid him to publish and should terminate his 'activities,'" the province's statement said.

Father Donald J. Goergen, the provincial superior, said in a statement that "theologians, including myself, have examined his writings from a doctrinal point of view and do not think there is sufficient reason to prohibit him from speaking and writing."

The Vatican's objections to Father Fox's work focused on his treatment of the doctrine of original sin, his references to God as "Mother" and his "fervent" feminism, the province said.

In San Francisco, Father Fox released a "pastoral letter" to Cardinal Ratzinger, expressing his concerns that the Church in dealing with dissent is "reverting to fascism."

It shows, he wrote, in "your method of dealing with diverse opinions by attempting to silence persons and abort meaningful dialogue."

Saying he wanted to "confront the person who most needs to hear the truth," Father Fox said, "it concerns me deeply that today's Catholic Church seems to reward authoritarian personalities who are clearly ill, violent, sexually obsessed and unable to remember the past."

Contributing to this story were John Godges in San Francisco and Greg Erlanson in Rome.

Joan Andrews to address area pro-life activists

Joan Andrews, whose jailing in Florida for anti-abortion activities has drawn national attention, will be in Rochester on Friday, Oct. 28, to speak at St. Augustine's Church, 410 Chili Ave.

Andrews, 40, was freed October 18 after her Florida prison sentence was commuted and a Pennsylvania judge sentenced her to time served for a trespassing charge in Pittsburgh.

She was sentenced to five years in prison in 1986 after being convicted of burglary, resisting arrest and criminal mischief at an abortion clinic in Pensacola, Fla.

Although her talk will be open to all denominations, Andrews is coming to Rochester on Friday in an effort to increase pro-life activity among Catholics in the area.

Andrews will hold a press conference that morning as well.

The renowned activist will also have a private meeting with David E. Long, executive director of Project Life of Rochester, and Father Anthony P. Mugavero, parochial vicar of St. Theodore's in Rochester, has been active in "rescue missions" and other pro-life activity.

One of the topics of discussion for Andrews, Long and Father Mugavero will be ways of increasing the number of Catholics in the Rochester-area pro-life movement. Andrews is also scheduled to meet separately with a small group of local Catholics.

Andrews spent two years in prison in Florida and in Claymont, Del., near her family. During much of the time in Florida, she was in solitary confinement for refusing to cooper-

ate with prison officials.

Some pro-life groups had launched a national campaign calling for clemency or a commutation of Andrews' sentence.

Florida Gov. Bob Martinez conditionally commuted her sentence, and she was released October 16 into the custody of Pennsylvania law enforcement officials for sentencing in the Pennsylvania case.

Allegheny County Judge Raymond Novak then sentenced Andrews October 18 to time served and three years probation for trespassing at a Pittsburgh clinic in 1985. She was released on her own recognizance.

Andrews, a Catholic, had served 64 days in jail on the Pittsburgh conviction, according to her attorney, Franklin Conflenti.

Under terms of the probation, Andrews will be jailed again if she takes part in any illegal protest.

Judge Novak, a former priest, told her, "If you do violate the probation by deliberately disobeying the law and are convicted of trespass, you will be charged with violating your probation. And I will not tolerate continued defiance of the law."

Asked later if she would work within the law, Andrews said, "The only thing I said I would consider doing more of is giving talks to other people and encouraging them to do rescues too. But I would never withdraw myself from doing rescues."

Andrews has been arrested 135 times and convicted 15 times for her role in anti-abortion actions around the United States.

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