

## **Gay Catholic Priests**

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By **Jeffery Mingo**

This book consists of gay men and feminists responding to the controversy in the Catholic Church in 2002, especially surrounding Cardinal Law and Father Geoghan. It questions and answers how so many gay men can actively work for a vocally homophobic institution. (I almost gasped when I read one contributor state, "I figured no man would ever love me anyway, so a job that required celibacy didn't seem difficult.") It also forcefully condemns how all gay priests are being equated with priests, of any sexual orientation, who molest children. They note that leaders of the Church would rather demonize gay priests than take the blame for letting criminal priests transfer from job to job. They show how Church leaders want to silence dissent. Priests are told to "be themselves" but also told to lie about their sexual orientation and sexually-active status. I do think the authors were speaking to themselves and the choir, but I think this would be a good read for both progressive and conservative, both pro-gay and bigoted, lay and clergy, members of the Catholic community.

This book continually repeats, "If gay [male] priests think they have it bad, think about all women who can't be leaders in the Church." This book is clearly inspired by Suzanne Pharr's "Homophobia: The Great Weapon of Sexism." The link between homophobia and misogyny is honorable, if not novel. Still, at one point, one female contributor opines, "I'm glad Mark Jordan didn't mention f\*g h\*gs [like Grace on the NBC hit series] in his book." Now, that's a stretch.

To be honest, while this book juggles religion, sex, and sexuality well, I thought it failed by not bringing up issues of race and nationality. So many white/Anglo priests lead non-white churches. Some opine that the answer to the priest shortage is to bring them from abroad, principally developing countries. I didn't appreciate the "whitewashing" of this anthology.

The authors are asked to respond to Mark Jordan's "The Silence of Sodom" and at the end he responds back. It turns into a love fest: the contributors praise him and he praises them back. This book could have been improved by including more critical voices.

The contributions were rich. For example, an Australian wrote, and so did an Episcopalian/Anglican. Still, this book was repetitive often. There's much "queer theory" speak here. They use "queer" at a time when most activists have abandoned that term in favor of "LGBT." I still have no idea with "non-homohatred-conforming" means.