

Citation for the following article:

Anne Barbeau Gardiner, "Catholic Feminist Ethics and the Culture of Death: The Case of Sister Margaret Farley," *Proceedings of the Nineteenth University Faculty for Life Conference at the University of St. Thomas School of Law, Minneapolis MN (2009)*, ed. Joseph W. Koterski, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: University Faculty for Life, 2013), pp. 281-294.

Catholic Feminist Ethics and the Culture of Death: The Case of Sister Margaret Farley

Anne Barbeau Gardiner

ABSTRACT: In her recent book *Just Love*, Sister Margaret Farley makes so-called “women’s experience” the basis for a radical new “sexual ethics.” She promotes an upper-class feminist ideology while censuring the Catholic Church for promulgating an ethics that is not universal but only a masculine construct. Ever since 1973, Farley has been a leading and consistent apologist for the Culture of Death, but in the year 2000, in her presidential address to the Catholic Theological Society of America, she openly confronted and blamed the Magisterium for standing on a narrow ground in its repeated condemnations of abortion. And yet her writings and those of other Catholic feminists in her wake reveal that it is these dissidents themselves who stand on a narrow ground in their defense of abortion. Their embrace of “women’s experience” as an ideology has led directly to Farley’s *Just Love*, a work that condones not just abortion but also masturbation, pornography, adultery, and active homosexuality.

IN *A JUST AND TRUE LOVE*, a recent collection of essays honoring Sister Margaret Farley, Maura Ryan asserts that in the last forty years Catholic feminists have challenged the traditional sexual ethics of the Catholic Church by insisting on “the significance of woman’s experience as a source for interpreting moral value.” Their strategy has been to give “priority” to women’s experience, with the “underlying assumption” that this experience is “revelatory of the divine.”¹ Sister

¹ “Introduction” in *A Just and True Love: Feminism at the Frontiers of Theological Ethics: Essays in Honor of Margaret A. Farley*, ed. Maura A. Ryan and Bryan F. Linnane, S.J. (Notre Dame IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 2-6.

Margaret Farley has led the way in claiming that “women’s lived experience—that is, knowledge gained from living as women—provides a perspective upon human reality which is itself a source of moral truth.” By this rule, Farley has turned woman’s experience into a “crucial resource for feminist ethics”² and a “radical challenge to Catholic ethics.”³ The Church claims that men and women share a common human nature that provides the ground for objective moral standards. Farley, however, denies that there is such a shared nature. She contends that the “official” moral teaching of the Church is based only on men’s experience, and so is not universal, and that the special experiences of women ought now to be the “starting point” for new ethical reflections.⁴

Jesuit Brian Linnane agrees with Farley and calls it a “scandal” that the Church will not “dialogue” with Catholic feminists on matters like abortion, for besides being “particularly attentive to the role of experience,” these feminists are correct, he thinks, when they call the Church’s teachings “experience-laden” rather than universal. For Linnane and Farley, Catholic morality is a masculine construct limited to the cultural plane. This is why Linnane can praise Farley for creating an alternative sexual ethic without the Church’s emphasis on “abstinence.”⁵

Lisa Sowle Cahill hails Farley as “a leader in the development of feminist theology” because she was the first to apply the feminist motto “the personal is political” to the Catholic Church and thereby subject the

² Anne E. Patrick, S.N.J.M., “Framework for Love: Toward a Renewed Understanding of Christian Vocation” in *A Just and True Love*, p. 325.

³ Susan L. Secker, “Human Experience and Women’s Experience: Resources for Catholic Ethics” in *Dialogue about Catholic Sexual Teaching: Readings in Moral Theology No. 8*, ed. Charles I. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, S.J. (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), p. 590. This article first appeared in *The Annual*, Society of Christian Ethics, 1991.

⁴ Secker, “Human Experience,” pp. 588-89.

⁵ “The Sexual Abuse Scandal in the Catholic Church: Implications for Sexual Ethics,” *A Just and True Love*, pp. 282, 278.

Vatican to a “critique from the perspective of gender equality.”⁶ She blazed the trail for many other Catholic feminists, such as Jean Molesky-Poz, a former Franciscan nun who urges women to trust their “experiences” rather than the Church and to “begin with the local narrative...as a challenge to hegemonic power relations parading as universals.”⁷ It is not surprising that Margaret Farley follows the transcendental Thomists Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, for these two criticized Catholic tradition for making “individual conscience unduly subordinate to ecclesiastical authorities and norms.” Farley declares that the Church cannot impose rules on women by “juridical power” and insists that the Church can only invite “consent.” Of course, she herself rarely gives her consent, for as Charles Curran notes approvingly, she has for years opposed “papal teachings on contraception, sterilization, divorce, homosexuality, and direct abortion.”⁸ She has even criticized such papal encyclicals as John Paul II’s *Familiaris consortio* for not giving “due weight” to women’s experience.⁹ Farley has erected so-called “women’s experience” into a Trojan Horse full of armed amazons that can penetrate, she hopes, the very gates of Rome.

According to Mary Henold’s recent history of the movement, Catholic feminism embraced the Culture of Death in the early seventies. In 1973 Catholic feminists were “oddly silent on the abortion issue” when debate over *Roe v. Wade* raged across the nation. Henold claims to have discovered from interviews with them and their correspondence

⁶ “Feminist Theology and Sexual Ethics” in *A Just and True Love*, pp. 20-21.

⁷ Jan Molesky-Poz, “The Form That Didn’t Fit: Charting New Maps, Illuminating New Spaces” in *Reconciling Catholicism and Feminism? Personal Reflections on Tradition and Change*, ed. Sally Barr Ebest and Ron Ebest (Notre Dame IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2003), pp. 21, 23.

⁸ Charles E. Curran, “John Paul II’s Understanding of the Church as Teacher of the Truth about Humankind” in *A Just and True Love*, p. 430.

⁹ Secker, “Human Experience,” p. 584.

that even then a “majority” favored abortion-rights.¹⁰ In 1974 Farley published a subtle defense of abortion entitled “Liberation, Abortion and Responsibility,” in which she placed the Culture of Life and the Culture of Death on the same plane as “different experiences of moral obligation” and presented the raging controversy as between the rights of “mothers or fetuses,” never once using the word *child* or *baby*. She declared that both sides had an “unconditional claim” on “conscience,” while she found “ambiguity” only regarding the nature of the “fetus.” Then she ended with a wild utopian flourish by advising Catholic proliferators to start changing the “centuries-laden structures of oppression” that allegedly made abortion necessary.¹¹

Soon after, in 1982, the Sisters of Mercy sent a letter to all Mercy hospitals recommending that tubal ligations be done. Since this directive violated the Church’s teaching on sterilization, Pope John Paul II opposed it, gave the Mercy sisters an ultimatum, and caused them to withdraw that letter. Margaret Farley justified their “capitulation” to this papal demand on the ground that “material cooperation in evil for the sake of a ‘proportionate good’” is morally permissible. Here she claimed that obeying the pope was complicity in *evil* and excused her sisters’ obedience only because it prevented “greater harm, namely, the loss of the institutions that expressed the Mercy ministry.”¹² This contempt for papal authority followed from Farley’s basic contention that “women’s experience, if taken seriously, would alter the very moral norms that are being brought to bear in particular judgments. Women’s experience brings into view a dimension of personhood which the theological

¹⁰ Mary J. Henold, *Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement* (Chapel Hill NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 88, 132, 220-25.

¹¹ Farley’s article appeared originally in *Reflection* 71 (May 1974): 9-13, and was reprinted in *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*, ed. Stephen Lammers and Allen Verhey (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 434, 435, 437.

¹² “Framework for Love: Toward a Renewed Understanding of Christian Vocation” in *A Just and True Love*, pp. 316-17, 328.

tradition has ignored, distorted, or falsely characterized in its construal of the normatively human.”¹³ Thus she made so-called women’s experience the ultimate measure of good and evil in the Church. I say *so-called* because, although she pretends to speak for all women, Farley speaks for a radical minority of women, and even though she uses the word *experience*, she means something ideological.

Another major confrontation occurred soon afterwards when the Vatican responded to a *New York Times* advertisement published on 7 October 1984, which had been paid for by Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC). The ad consisted of a statement (composed in 1983 by Daniel and Marjorie Maguire and Frances Kissling), entitled “A Diversity of Opinions Regarding Abortion Exists among Committed Catholics.” It was signed by ninety-seven Catholics, including two priests, two brothers, and twenty-six nuns from fourteen communities. Among the signers was Margaret Farley.¹⁴

She waited until her presidential address to the Catholic Theological Society of America in 2000 to attack the Vatican’s “overwhelming preoccupation” with abortion and its attempt “to control internal debate.”¹⁵ In her speech “The Church in the Public Forum: Scandal or Prophetic Witness?” she called the Church’s defense of the Culture of Life “scandalous” and asked for an end to the Vatican’s “opposition to

¹³ Secker, “Human Experience,” p. 587, paraphrasing Farley’s “Moral Imperatives for the Ordination of Women” in *Women and Catholic Priesthood: An Expanded Vision*, ed. Anne Marie Gardiner (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1976), p. 42.

¹⁴ There were 75 more priests, religious, and theologians who signed the ad but who asked for their names to be withheld because they feared to lose their Church-related jobs. See Barbara Ferraro and Patricia Hussey, with Jan O’Reilly, *No Turning Back: Two Nuns’ Battle with the Vatican over Women’s Right to Choose* (New York NY: Poseidon Press, 1990), p. 220.

¹⁵ Presidential Address, *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 55 (June 2000): 87-101. See her note on it in Margaret A. Farley, *Compassionate Respect: A Feminist Approach to Medical Ethics and Other Questions*, Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), p. 98.

abortion” until “the credibility gap regarding women and the church” has been closed. She also demanded “a reasonable degree of tolerance for theological diversity.” Despite Farley’s contumacy toward her religious superiors, Sister Anne Patrick calls her “thoroughly Catholic” and echoes her view that the Vatican must listen to “the wide range of church members’ experiences before teaching on controversial issues.”¹⁶ This “wide range” of experiences apparently includes having abortions and practicing lesbianism, but not repenting from these grave sins. It is tragic to contemplate the effect of such an ideology on educated Catholic women. Once caught in its spider web, many seem unable to break out of it. Take, for example, Janet Kalven of Grailville, who was born in 1913, received into the Church in 1937, and converted to feminism in 1969. Kalven writes, “On the sexuality issues—contraception, divorce and remarriage, ordination of women, mandatory priestly celibacy, homosexuality, abortion—both my studies and my experience led me to part company with the current teachings of the Church.”¹⁷ As a result Kalven, now in her nineties, sees Christianity as one “myth” among others and clings desperately to the ideology of an aging feminist minority.

Since the eighties, Farley and her fellow Catholic feminists have defended the Culture of Death by claiming that the Church’s teaching is too *narrow* for them. In this they are entirely mistaken, since the Church’s teaching on sexual morality has the breadth of metaphysics and natural law, as well as the heights and depths of revelation itself, whereas their new sexual morality stands on the narrow base of a postmodern feminist ideology. Yet Farley boldly criticizes the Church for the “narrow scope” of her “discourse” on abortion and asks that the debate be widened to encompass the “social and relational context,” “the ambiguity of fetal status,” and “the complex and intimate nature of women’s experience of pregnancy.” She hopes that by endlessly

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 324-25.

¹⁷ “Feminism and Catholicism” in *Reconciling*, p. 40.

complicating the issue of abortion, a new moral teaching will emerge.¹⁸ Following lockstep behind Farley, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend uses terms like *broad* for the permissive morality of feminists and *narrow* for the Church's teaching.¹⁹ But when we look at the stories told by Catholic feminists about how they came to promote abortion-rights, we find that their base is truly *narrow*, not *broad*. They usually trace their pro-abortion advocacy back to a single "experience" that triggered an impulsive choice.

A good example of this can be found in the story of two nuns who have never repudiated their decision to sign the CFFC *New York Times* ad in 1984. In 1990 they published *No Turning Back*, in which each defended her pro-abortion stand by citing a personal experience as her moment of illumination. For Sister Patricia Hussey it happened in 1969 when a friend told her she had aborted a child and was not sorry about it. Sister Pat reflected that Millie could not have been "wrong" in her choice because she was "a good and tender-hearted woman," so at that instant Catholic teaching "began to fall apart" before her eyes, and she decided without further reflection that abortion was not "a case of right and wrong." Similarly, Sister Barbara Ferraro in 1971 encountered Anna, a mother who had aborted her child and been told in confession not to receive the Eucharist till she repented but who now wanted to receive with her son at his First Communion. Barbara reflected that Anna was "a good woman," so even if the Church was "rigid" on abortion there was "no easy answer." On the spur of the moment, she told Anna to go ahead and receive Communion while assuring herself that "I could not believe that the God I was coming to know would say anything different." What god was Barbara "coming to know"? It was surely not the Most Holy Trinity, because she and Pat had been sitting in feminist circles discussing works like Mary Daly's "After the Death

¹⁸ Secker, "Human Experience," p. 583 n16

¹⁹ *Failing America's Faithful: How Today's Churches Are Mixing God with Politics and Losing Their Way* (New York NY: Warner Books. 2007), pp. 20, 130, 185.

of God the Father.”²⁰ The god they were “coming to know” was Margaret Farley’s idol of “woman’s experience” as the ultimate source of truth.

Soon the personal became the political. In 1982 and 1983 Pat and Barbara testified in the West Virginia legislature against a parental notification bill,²¹ and then in 1984 they sided with Democrat Geraldine Ferraro when she ran for Vice President, pleased that she supported “freedom of choice” as a “matter of conscience.” It was to help her campaign that they signed the CFFC ad in *The New York Times*. At the time Ferraro was claiming that her “experience” in the district attorney’s office had led her “to disagree with the official church,” yet she continued to call herself a Catholic and she invited the other Catholics in Congress to a CFFC breakfast, where she informed them that the “Catholic position on abortion” was not “monolithic.”²² Like Ferraro, Pat and Barbara were now militant in claiming to be Catholics supporting the Culture of Death: they spoke out for abortion-rights at a NOW rally in Washington, D.C. on 9 March 1986, and, after freely resigning from their religious order in 1988, they helped found two pro-abortion organizations: West Virginia Catholics for Choice and West Virginia Clergy and Laity for Reproductive Rights.²³ This is where Farley’s idol of woman’s experience led them, straight to the worship of Moloch, the idol to whom the ancient Canaanites sacrificed their screaming children.

Here are two more examples of feminists who made a single narrow experience their reason for opposing the Church on abortion. Sister Laurie Brink, O.P., who teaches biblical studies at Catholic Theological Union, tells of a girl named Olive who came to her some years ago in Jamaica to request money for an abortion. The two of them went to the principal, who told Olive to come back with her mother. The girl never returned, and ever since then Brink has felt that she let Olive down. And

²⁰ *No Turning Back*, pp. 67-71, 99-100, 98.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 217-18.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 261, 325.

so she has committed herself “to a path because of that experience, for the sake of Olive and every single Olive I meet.” Brink’s disaffection from the Church is profound (she says she would be Jewish in a heartbeat if she didn’t believe the Jesus “story”), but she stays in place in the hope that Catholic teaching will “change.”²⁴ This is an oft-repeated pattern—Catholic feminists retaining a position inside the Church from which they have mentally excommunicated the Magisterium. As Mary Henold observes, when Catholic feminists say they are committed to “the church,” they mean “the people, not the structures and hierarchy,” because their “understanding” of Catholicism is not “contingent on institutional affiliation.”²⁵ Yet feminist nuns like Brink are glad to take as their due the security, prestige, and influence that come from having a teaching role in the Church.

A further example of building on a narrow experience comes from Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, who tells of writing a paper in college in 1974 to justify her friend’s abortion: “I undertook the project so I would have time to think of her, our friendship, and what our public policy should be.” Before she wrote that paper, she had already decided that her friend was a “good person” whose “experience” was a matter of “conscience” and that the Catholic Church was “adamant, unforgiving, un-nuanced” in its perennial teaching on abortion.²⁶ The paper was the rationalization of an emotional leap. In 1986 Townsend ran for Congress on a platform of abortion-rights. When her Catholic identity was questioned by pro-lifers, she retorted that she was indeed a Catholic: “Yes, I disagreed with the Church on abortion rights,” but “the idea that each soul was precious, that every person was indispensable in the sight of God, stood at the heart of everything I tried to do.” We should note that she applied her maxim *each soul is precious* so narrowly that it

²⁴ Kerry Kennedy, *Being Catholic Now: Prominent Americans Talk about Change in the Church and the Quest for Meaning* (New York NY: Crown Publishers, 2008), pp. 133-34.

²⁵ *Catholic and Feminist*, p. 7.

²⁶ *Failing America’s Faithful*, p. 59.

excluded all babies in the womb. Townsend ends by advising the Vatican to concede that abortion is a “deeply complicated and difficult issue” on which “good Catholics” can disagree. Otherwise, she warns, Catholic women will ignore the Church’s teaching on abortion as they have on contraception. After all, she adds with palpable contempt, rules made by “celibate” men who have not known “the joy of sex” and merely want to protect their “power” are irrelevant to Catholic women liberated by “sexual revolutions.”²⁷

Many feminists join Townsend in scoffing at *celibate* men in the Vatican who lack personal experience of sex. They might as well scoff at the Virgin Mary and our Lord Jesus Christ. For example, Jane Zeni warns that the “limitations” of a Church authority wielded “exclusively by celibate males” must be taken into account when the issue is abortion or some sexual matter on which they lack “subjective experience.”²⁸ She is echoed by Father Linnane, who observes that “the traditional Catholic sexual ethic may be deficient insofar as it has been formulated largely by celibate, male religious professionals.”²⁹ Likewise, Susan Secker remarks that feminists want the Church to adjust its concept of the “normatively human” because it was “formed by Western, celibate, highly educated and affluent men on the basis of men’s experience.”³⁰ Thus, the ideologically-driven experience of an upstart minority is supposed to trump the wisdom of the ages. Catholic feminists are grandiose enough to imagine that their so-called experience is a battering ram that will knock down the gates of Rome.

Another theme that recurs in Catholic feminist writing is the claim that abortion is a very “complex” issue. Kerry Kennedy complains that the Church’s teaching is too *simple*: “the public generally only hears the simple answers to complex questions,”³¹ while Patricia Hussey and

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-46, 62.

²⁸ “Journey from/to Catholicism” in *Reconciling*, pp. 196-97.

²⁹ “The Sexual Abuse Scandal” in *A Just and True Love*, p. 282.

³⁰ Secker, “Human Experience,” p. 581.

³¹ Kerry Kennedy, “Preface,” *Being Catholic Now*, p. xxxi.

Barbara Ferraro declare that after attending a Women-Church conference in 1983, they realized that the “ambiguities” surrounding abortion are “infinite.”³² Margaret Farley faults the Church for its failure to take into account the full “complexity of experience,”³³ and Charles Curran blames the Vatican for failing to sift in “great detail” the “complex human reality before coming to an answer to a complex moral question.” Curran agrees with Farley that the “hierarchical magisterium” should not claim “certitude” in sexual ethics but rather should learn to embrace “self-doubt” as the basis for “discernment.”³⁴ In short, feminists can parade as infallible in their pronouncements, but to suit them the Pope must wrap himself in complexity, ambiguity, and doubt.

Farley has long taught that women’s experience has an “authoritative function in interpreting biblical and theological sources.”³⁵ Little wonder that in chapter five of her recent book, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*, where she discusses the four sources of a new framework for sexual ethics—Scripture, Tradition, secular disciplines, and contemporary experience—she makes experience the most authoritative source of all. First, she dismisses Scripture as “sparse and often confusing” on sexual ethics, and then she finds Tradition so “confusing” that its “practices and beliefs” will now have to “be challenged” and “replaced.” She regards her third source—disciplines like biology, sociology, and history—as not usable without “discernment,” yet giving access to “reality,” an access that she never credits

³² *No Turning Back*, p. 214. “Women-Church groups” is defined on p. 213 as “feminist base communities, small circles of women who share their stories and their faith, help each other to live in solidarity, and try to create rituals.”

³³ Secker, “Human Experience,” p. 583. She is paraphrasing Farley’s “An Ethic for Same-Sex Relations” in *A Challenge to Love: Gay and Lesbian Catholics in the Church*, ed. Robert Nugent (New York NY: Crossroad, 1986), p. 99; and Farley, *Personal Commitments*, p. 82.

³⁴ “John Paul II’s Understanding of the Church” in *A Just and True Love*, p. 450.

³⁵ Secker, “Human Experience,” p. 588. Secker is paraphrasing Farley’s “An Ethic for Same-Sex Relations,” pp. 97-98.

Scripture or Tradition with giving.³⁶ In discussing her final source “contemporary experience,” Farley laments that some sexual activity has been experienced as “evil” or “deviant” only because it has been *constructed* that way by religion and society. Today, however, the views behind such constructions can be “overturned” and experience in the sexual sphere can “assert an authority that modifies prior norms that would order it.” She gives so great an authority to feminist experience in this section that it alone can serve as the “measure against which the other sources are tested.”³⁷ In her view, therefore, so-called women’s experience outweighs Scripture, Tradition and secular disciplines combined. She might as well call it a new revelation. In her seminal essay on Margaret Farley, Susan Secker correctly sums up her view in this way: ethical appeals that violate a woman’s experience cannot be “legitimately claimed to have authority, even if such appeals are grounded in Scripture or theological tradition.”³⁸

In chapter six of *Just Love*, Farley speaks of “mutuality” as a norm for her new sexual ethics, but she notes that mutuality differs “in kind and degree” in the various cases of a one-night stand, a short fling, or a love with commitment. Her new ethical approach does not allow her to state that such sexual activity outside of marriage is sinful. She even refuses to say that “hooking up,” defined here as “sex without any relationship,” is gravely immoral. All her warnings are in the opposite direction—against a return to what she scorns as “sexual taboo morality.” She worries that if teenagers are rebuked for hooking up, they might end up with a sense of “shame and guilt.” She says we already know the “dangers” and “ineffectiveness of moralism,” of “pinch-faced virtue,”

³⁶ Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York NY: Continuum, 2007), pp. 182-89.

³⁷ *Just Love*, pp. 190-96.

³⁸ Secker, “Human Experience,” pp. 587-88. She is drawing this from Farley’s “Feminist Consciousness and Scripture” in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1985), pp. 42-43.

and of “narrowly construed moral systems,”³⁹ but she does not explain what “dangers” follow from living according to Catholic morality. Thus Farley repeatedly depicts the moral teachings of the Church as spiteful and narrow rather than as lofty and universal. In another work, where she defends the use of condoms in Africa because of the AIDS crisis, she once again condemns “taboo morality” and the “reiteration of long-standing sexual rules” because this perpetuates “fear and shame,” prevents “change” in “traditional beliefs,” and fails to respond to “present experiences.”⁴⁰ She never considers that *present experiences* might be tokens of a licentious age.

In *Just Love* Farley even defends masturbation—a practice that the *General Catechism* of the Catholic Church calls “gravely disordered” (#2352)—as the “great good” of “self-pleasuring,” and then defends pornography—something that the *Catechism* calls a “grave offense” (#2354)—as not necessarily “harmful” when it does not distort “gender relations” or eroticize “sexual violence.”⁴¹ She has an entire chapter in her book justifying homosexual activity on the basis of same-sex “experience.” Here we see the spreading tentacles of the Culture of Death: hardly any form of impurity fails to be legitimized in Farley’s new framework of sexual ethics for Christians.

Catholic feminists such as Farley continue to await the Church’s capitulation. As Mary Henold points out, many of them are ensconced in departments of theology and in parishes in the roles of “pastoral associates, pastoral administrators, theologians, liturgists, directors of religious education, and seminary instructors.” In these positions they claim to have the “right” to “define what it means to be Catholic.”⁴² An example of a feminist defining *Catholic* for herself could be seen in Milwaukee in 1991, when Theresa Delgadillo, a self-declared Latino lesbian feminist, became part of a “human barricade” in support of

³⁹ *Just Love*, pp. 233-35, 243.

⁴⁰ *Compassionate Respect*, p. 12.

⁴¹ *Just Love*, pp. 235-40.

⁴² *Catholic and Feminist*, pp. 242-43.

abortion-rights against Operation Rescue. Delgadillo became angry when she saw “a Latino man wielding a banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe.” Why? Because, she complained, “his version of Guadalupe was not mine.”⁴³ In other words, she had the right to claim that Our Lady of Guadalupe, in her untainted purity, was on the side of active lesbianism and abortion-rights. Well, why not, if a Catholic feminist like Sister Margaret Farley, from her endowed chair at Yale, has taught for decades and with apparent impunity, that her ideology of “women’s experience” outweighs Scripture, Tradition, academic disciplines, and plain common sense.

⁴³ Theresa Delgadillo, “Race, Sex, and Spirit: Chicana Negotiations of Catholicism” in *Reconciling*, p. 247.