
BOOK REVIEW***TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR CHURCH REFORM: MEMOIRS OF A CATHOLIC PRIEST***

BY: JOHN WIJNAARDS

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When Martin Luther called for reform, he posted 95 theses on the door of a Catholic Church in Germany. Like him, John Wijngaards was an ordained priest. Unlike Luther, Wijngaards taught for over 35 years in seminaries, served as the Vicar General of his religious order, and earned a doctorate at the Gregorian in Rome. Both valued the Roman Catholic tradition enough to call for reformation. Both endured persecution for their efforts. Luther led a reformation that resulted in multiple Christian believers forming their own ecclesial traditions. Wijngaards remains hopeful that his efforts will impact the policies and laws of the Roman Catholic Church.

Using a narrative style, Wijngaards reflects on his life of priestly service to illuminate issues that require attention. As a thoroughly educated Scripture scholar, he also demonstrates deep theological understanding. He describes his efforts as a young man and his entry into ordained priesthood as a Roman Catholic assigned to missionary work in India. He articulates his journey as an educator, leader in his religious community, and as a man who wrestles with application of Church teaching and law in concrete pastoral circumstances. This process reveals his grounded call for reform in the Church.

At times, the text reads more like a self-congratulatory who's who in theological circles. Wijngaards documents incredible energy and effort at including many in the educational efforts he tirelessly supervises. Indeed, at times the reader can wonder incredulously

at his ability to network with multiple people toward reaching an ever-expanding circle of influence. He describes utilizing scholarship, cartoons, videos, still photos, power point slides, and eventually the internet in his tireless effort to make Church teaching and Scripture available to all. This work necessarily expanded his interactions with vowed religious women and men, ordained priests and bishops, and people of influence in India, England, the Netherlands and Rome. As a missionary, Wijngaards maintained a tireless dedication to spreading the word of God to everyone he could imagine. As a leader he models energy, vision, ability to network, and deep regard for the people he serves.

Throughout the memoir, Wijngaards reflects on his learning. These reflexive moments reveal insight about what the church needs to do to reform itself. Thus, the ten commandments of reform. Of course, the promotions for the book list a couple of the more obvious- like expanding ordained leadership to include women and married men. These two require a re-thinking of the theologies related to understanding sexuality, especially the theology advanced by Augustine of Hippo and others. Wijngaards also argues for opening the closed doors of the Vatican theologies to those who might think differently. He discusses thoroughly the process of more conservative theologians who shut down discussion of alternative theological viewpoints. These points are thoroughly rooted in his own experience in India. He brings a deep pastoral awareness of the people of God and lobbies for ordained ministers to listen to the laity as ordained and lay together form the church.

As a pastoral theologian, I found myself agreeing with the reforms Wijngaards names. As a lay woman I appreciated Wijngaards deep allied behavior as he names reforms and complies himself with those reforms he champions. This text answers questions I was asking as I interacted with his amazing store of online materials at <https://womanpriests.org>. I have used the website for my own research and have wondered how this man attracted so many assistants, compiled so many resources, and dared to stand in solid opposition to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on women in ordained ministries. This book answers all the questions and also documents a powerful life story that inspires solidarity.

The reforms are on target. At a time when the Roman church is entering a synodal process of listening, Wijngaards text offers a list that every Catholic could take to their local process. Wijngaards names ten reforms that would move the Roman Catholic Church to more fully live into the vision proposed by the 2500 bishops and others who approved the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

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