

*“Jesus is our best liberator model. At the Last Supper, He demolished the whole pattern of domination and submission and replaced it with the new paradigm of participation.”*

– Mary Christine Morkovsky

It is not difficult to imagine the astonishment of the disciples when Jesus insisted on washing their feet and then offered them his Body to share. With those two actions, Jesus changed their relationship with Him from the way the disciples had perceived it, that of Lord and servants, to that of friends. Domination and submission were thus transformed into participation and communion.

Almost two thousand years later, women religious, in imitation of Jesus and following the mandates of Vatican II, initiated a similar paradigm shift within our communities, i.e., a movement from hierarchical leadership to participative governance. Since then, efforts to improve the new collegial structures and form egalitarian relationships have continued. Though the structures, the relationships, and the Sisters themselves are less than perfect, our determination to strive to live in communion with all creatures remains strong.

It is understandable, therefore, that women religious pray for the time when similar efforts to imitate Jesus’ paradigm of communion will characterize the actions of the hierarchy of our Church. Many clerics still seem committed to the dominance mode, as is evidenced by the current investigation of women’s religious communities. It is important that we refuse to comply with such attempts at domination and accept the prophetic role of a religious community, to “speak the truth to power,” even as we struggle to live in communion with our brothers in Christ.

***Ellen Rufft, C.D.P.***

*Congregation of Divine Providence,  
Allison Park, Pa.*

