

Statement of the Board of Directors of the Catholic Theological Society of America on the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's "Notification: Regarding the Book *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* by Sister Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M. (March 30, 2012)

On June 4, 2012, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a "Notification" entitled "Regarding the Book *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* by Sister Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M." The "Notification" judged that, in a number of respects, Professor Farley's book presents positions on matters of sexual ethics that are contrary to the teaching of the Magisterium.

We, the undersigned members of the Board of Directors of the Catholic Theological Society of America, wish to note that Professor Farley is a highly respected member of the theological community. A former President of the CTSA and a recipient of the Society's John Courtney Murray Award, she has devoted her life to teaching and writing on ethical issues and has done so in ways that have been reflective, measured, and wise. Her work has prompted a generation of theologians to think more deeply about the Christian meaning of personal relationships and the divine life of love that truly animates them. The judgment of the "Notification" that a number of Professor Farley's stated positions are contrary to the teaching of the Magisterium is simply factual. In our judgment, however, Professor Farley's purpose in her book is to raise and explore questions of keen concern to the faithful of the Church. Doing so is one very legitimate way of engaging in theological inquiry that has been practiced throughout the Catholic tradition.

The Board is especially concerned with the understanding of the task of Catholic theology presented in the "Notification." The "Notification" risks giving the impression that there can be no constructive role in the life of the Church for works of theology that 1) give voice to the experience and concerns of ordinary believers, 2) raise questions about the persuasiveness of certain official Catholic positions, and 3) offer alternative theological frameworks as potentially helpful contributions to the authentic development of doctrine. Such an understanding of the nature of theology inappropriately conflates the distinctive tasks of catechesis and theology. With regard to the subject matter of Professor Farley's book, it is simply a matter of fact that faithful Catholics in every corner of the Church are raising ethical questions like those Professor Farley has addressed. In raising and exploring such questions with her customary sensitivity and judiciousness, Professor Farley has invited us to engage the Catholic tradition seriously and thoughtfully.

Signed, John E. Thiel, Ph.D.
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