



The Other Catholics: Remaking America's Largest Religion

By Julie Byrne

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Independent Catholics are not formally connected to the pope in Rome. They practice apostolic succession, seven sacraments, and devotion to the saints. But without a pope, they can change quickly and experiment freely, with some affirming communion for the divorced, women's ordination, clerical marriage, and same-sex marriage. From their early modern origins in the Netherlands to their contemporary proliferation in the United States, these "other Catholics" represent an unusually liberal, mobile, and creative version of America's largest religion.

In *The Other Catholics*, Julie Byrne shares the remarkable history and current activity of independent Catholics, who number at least two hundred communities and a million members across the United States. She focuses in particular on the Church of Antioch, one of the first Catholic groups to ordain women in modern times. Through archival documents and interviews, Byrne tells the story of the unforgettable leaders and surprising influence of these understudied churches, which, when included in Catholic history, change the narrative arc and total shape of modern Catholicism. As Pope Francis fights to soften Roman doctrines with a pastoral touch and his fellow Roman bishops push back with equal passion, independent Catholics continue to leap ahead of Roman reform, keeping key Catholic traditions but adding a progressive difference.

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Editorial Review

Review

Julie Byrne's well researched book, *The Other Catholics*, shows that there are major communities of Christians who understand themselves as Catholics but not Roman Catholics. These Christians are creating vibrant communities of believers and are elevating women to leadership, including ordination as priests and bishops. This broader reality of world Catholicism can now be better understood, thanks to Byrne's excellent work.

(Rosemary Ruether, author of *Catholic Does Not Equal the Vatican: A Vision for Progressive Catholicism*)

This beautifully written study illuminates the range of groups that exist across the whole Catholic spectrum. Linked, despite their diversity, by a shared identification as Catholic and common emphasis on succession, sacrament, and saints, Byrne surfaces the complex, often unnoticed interactions between independent Catholics, Roman Catholics, and numerous religious traditions. This fresh approach opens a provocative window through which to view the meaning and making of Catholicity.

(Ann Taves, coeditor of *What Matters? Ethnographies of Value in a Not So Secular Age*)

Byrne's intrepid research and vivid prose brings to light a subterranean realm of 'Other Catholics,' an utterly fascinating world of colorful characters and inventive approaches to authority. Just as Protestantism cannot be reduced to, say, Presbyterians, this book makes it increasingly difficult to equate 'Catholicism' merely with the Roman Catholic church.

(Randall Balmer, coeditor of *Mormonism and American Politics*)

The growing phenomenon of Independent Catholicism is notoriously difficult to capture. Its varied forms defy easy categorization, and it generally makes its home in the ever-shifting margins of church and culture. Julie Byrne's years of research and extensive fieldwork have yielded this immensely valuable guide to the "Other Catholics." This book will doubtless open a window onto the "independent movement" for both scholars and interested people of faith. Byrne's choice to focus on two significant communities results in an engaging and sympathetic narrative, but never fails to be clear-eyed and critically informed. Any reader interested in the American religious landscape will be captivated.

(John Plummer, author of *The Many Paths of the Independent Sacramental Movement: A National Study of Its Liturgy, Doctrine, and Leadership*)

I could not put *The Other Catholics* down. It is an excellent book, one that will make important contributions to the fields of Catholic studies, American studies, and American religious history. Moreover, the focus on gender and the dynamics of power and privilege will be of special interest to scholars of gender, women's studies, and sexuality. Byrne's historical, sociological, and anthropological research is at once original and rock solid, and her findings are compelling. Most important, her clear and approachable writing style will

make this book appealing to a wide swath of readers.

(Kristy Nabhan-Warren, author of *The Cursillo Movement in America: Catholics, Protestants, and Fourth-Day Spirituality*)

The growing field of ethnographic history will never be the same after *The Other Catholics* is published. Without question, this work will be considered a significant contribution to the fields of American Catholic studies and American religious history. There hasn't been a finer study of alternative forms of Catholic identity since James Fisher's *The Catholic Counterculture in America*. *The Other Catholics* is unique for its careful consideration of the role of women and LGBTQ people in the life of American Catholicism. Byrne's lucid and accessible writing style only adds to the book's value and usability in undergraduate courses.

(Michael Pasquier, editor of *Gods of the Mississippi*)

[A] probing study.... Byrne's enlightening research and analysis will undoubtedly raise awareness of these little-known Catholic denominations.

(*Publishers Weekly*)

[A] landmark new book.

(Nathan Schneider *America Magazine*)

Byrne's book is an excellent study of churches on the fringe that incubate new ideas and shed new light on mainstream religion. Through her storytelling, Byrne documents the multiple claims to be Catholic and recognizes that in the very writing of her book she, too, is producing Catholicism.

(Jane Shaw *Times Higher Education*)

Byrne's fresh approach opens a window through which to explore the meaning and making of Catholicism. Any reader interested in the American faith landscape will be captivated.

(*Washington Review of Books*)

Drawing on deep research in archives as well as surveys, interviews, and ten years of field research and participant observations, the book is as important for the self-reflexive methods it reveals as for the remarkable story it tells.

(Grant Wacker *The Christian Century*)

Path-breaking study

(*Catholic Library World*)

[Julie Byrne] brings an astonishing narrative drive to a wide range of little-known historical and contemporary ethnographic material. There's nothing like a good story.

(Equal Writes)

About the Author

Julie Byrne is associate professor of religion and the Monsignor Thomas J. Hartman Chair in Catholic Studies at Hofstra University. She is the author of *O God of Players: The Story of the Immaculata Mighty Macs* (Columbia, 2003).

Users Review

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Brian Nelson:

This *The Other Catholics: Remaking America's Largest Religion* is a great guide for you because the content that is certainly full of information for you who also always deal with the world and possess to make a decision every minute. This kind of book reveals its info accurately using great organized words or we can say no rambling sentences within it. So if you are reading that hurriedly you can have whole information in it. Doesn't mean it only provides straight forward sentences but tricky core information with wonderful delivering sentences. Having *The Other Catholics: Remaking America's Largest Religion* in your hand like obtaining the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous just one. We can say that no book that offers you the world inside ten or fifteen moments right but this publication already does that. So, this can be a good reading book. Hello Mr. and Mrs. stressful do you still doubt which?

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Delaine Valencia:

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