



## Catholic Bishops Condemn the Healing Art of Reiki as “Superstition” & “Dangerous”

by Nicola Burnell

I first heard about the new 'Guidelines for Evaluating Reiki as an Alternative Therapy' from a very disappointed Ursuline nun who had been working with Reiki energy as a tool for healing for many years. It was one of those comments casually made in the middle of conversation, but the moment her words settled into my soul I felt outraged.

I wanted to know exactly what these new guidelines said and what had motivated this change in the Catholic Church's position. Pope John Paul II had, after all, given an Apostolical Blessing to the Grandmaster of Reiki, Sister Mariusza Jadwiga Bugaj, also a Catholic nun, in recognition of her healing work with Reiki.

I soon discovered that these guidelines, which denounce Reiki as “superstition” and “dangerous” to the spiritual well-being of Catholics, had been announced on March 25, 2009, by the Committee on Doctrine at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. In essence, the Doctrine claims that Reiki has no validation as a tool for healing in the scientific and medical fields.

Moreover, these guidelines dictate that it is now inappropriate for any Catholic to practice Reiki: “For a Catholic to believe in Reiki therapy presents insoluble problems. In terms of caring for one's physical health or the physical health of others, to employ a technique that has no scientific support (or even plausibility) is generally not prudent.”

The Doctrine also states that “In terms for caring for one's spiritual health, there are important dangers...a Catholic who puts his or her trust in Reiki would be operating in the realm of superstition, the no-man's land that is neither faith nor science.”

I was raised in the Catholic Church so my childhood was steeped in Roman Catholic traditions. I loved the smell of incense, felt calmed by the candle flames and believed that I belonged to a group of neighbors who really cared about me. But when my parents divorced, my Priest publicly warned me and my siblings that our souls were now damned because of the sins of our parents.

This led me to question every aspect of my belief system. I quit attending the Mass that had been my Sunday morning routine my whole life.

Over the years I developed my own personal sense of spirituality. I became a Reiki Master/Teacher in 1997 and have experienced the benefits of Reiki not only in spiritual terms, but also in medical terms. You can read about my introduction to Reiki, while I was on life support, in my memoir “A Touch of Light” in this issue of CapeWomenOnline.

I have to dispute the Bishops' claims that Reiki is invalidated in scientific fields. During my own Reiki training I learned about the physics of energy fields within and around the human body, and how Reiki energy moves through these energy fields at different frequencies. James L. Oschman, PhD explains this in detail in Science and the Human Energy Field.

My work as a Reiki practitioner has introduced me to a variety of situations that confirm my belief in Reiki as a powerful healing tool. When I was offering free Reiki session to women with cancer I witnessed the comforting effects of Reiki on my clients. The energy healing was not only supporting the medical protocols they were undergoing, Reiki was also addressing their emotional and spiritual needs.

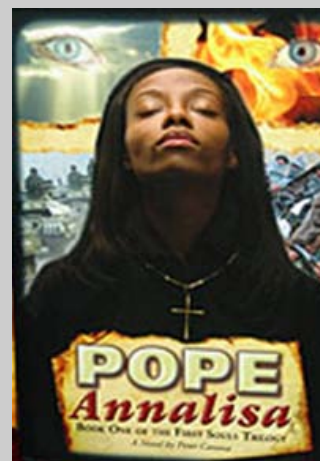
I also challenge the Bishops' claim that the efficacy of Reiki in the medical field is unsubstantiated. When I accompanied a client into the operating room and did Reiki on her during the entire surgical procedure, I witnessed the profound medical benefits of combining Reiki healing with medical science.



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Nicola is a member in Letters of the National League of American Pen Women <http://www.nlapw.org/> and an active participant in the Cape Cod Time Bank <http://www.capecodtimebank.org/>. She lives in Harwich with her two teenage sons and several pets.



### What happened to the female leaders of the early Church?

In Book One of the First Souls trilogy Peter Canova's Pope Annalisa <http://www.popeannalisa.com> explores the shifting tides of the Catholic Church.

The sports surgeon performing the surgery was amazed at how stable his patient remained during the procedure, and later stated that "I don't know what you were doing in there, but that Reiki made me look great." He has since added an Holistic component to his practice because he believed the Reiki treatment enhanced his patient's ability to tolerate her surgery and also to heal from it more swiftly.

The anesthesiologist was also impressed by the fact that he did not have to increase the levels of anesthesia he administered to this same patient. This was unusual because he claimed that the body typically went into trauma during the grinding of bones, but in this case the body remained stable. This was all documented in the patient's records.

When I recently had the same surgery, my doctor asked if I knew of any Reiki practitioner who could accompany me. I know many! I did receive Reiki and my healing from the surgery was much faster than my doctor anticipated.

The American Holistic Nurses Association offers Reiki as a complimentary healing treatment. Midge Murphy JD, PhD, who serves on the AHNA Ethics and Advocacy Committee, says that "The Guidelines in effect would violate the ethical principal of patient autonomy because the Guidelines would deny a patient in a Catholic hospital and/or health care facility the right to choose Reiki as part of the patient's treatment plan."

I asked a friend of mine who has been a practicing Roman Catholic for over sixty years what she felt about the new Bishops' guidelines. She confided that because her church has changed so much she recently stopped attending Mass. "If I feel a need for restoration of my soul, I will return, but the current presence in the Vatican and the most recent rulings from the U.S. Bishops' Committee have made me question where my church is going and if I want to follow."

My friend, who asked to remain anonymous, adds that she has "sensed a more domineering, businesslike aura, rather than a loving and shepherd-like mentality. The Catholic Church has been hurt by its own mistakes and 'turning a blind eye' from problems. In regaining respect and 'control' over its flock, I am afraid that it has become uncomfortable and distant to many."

Other Catholics with whom I've spoken have echoed her sentiments. The overwhelming response to the Bishops' new Doctrine is that of sadness and mistrust. Why anyone would want to deny the administering of a healing energy like Reiki, which is founded in the energy of love and compassion, is incomprehensible to me. Surely it is human nature to want to reach out and lay a hand of support on someone in need?

The Ursuline nuns have written to their Bishops to request that they revisit their decision to denounce Reiki as a healing tool for Catholics. I can only hope the Bishops consider their requests before they push more Catholics away from the Church they love. My friend has turned to her faith for comfort. "My daily prayers include guidance for the hierarchy and patience for those who wait. I am consoled with my Faith in God and all that He gives to me and no individual or religion can ever take that away."

I would like to hear your thoughts on this issue. Please email me at [Nicola@capewomenonline.com](mailto:Nicola@capewomenonline.com) so we can continue this conversation in the next issue of CapeWomenOnline.



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Center at 15 West Bay Road Osterville  
Village  
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Call Maxine 617 742 3242  
or Carol at 508 888 7788



Woman in the Tree, by Diane Soule