

# JOHN MCNEILL

b. September 2, 1925

d. September 22, 2015

*“Jesus ... opens the possibility of bringing gay relationships within the compass of healthy and holy human love.”*

One year after John McNeill published “The Church and the Homosexual” (1976), a book offering a new theological look at homosexuality, he received a letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the Vatican. Religious authorities ordered McNeill, an ordained Jesuit priest, to halt public discussion on the topic.

McNeill’s book reveals original text from the New Testament detailing Jesus’ ministry to homosexuals. McNeill argues that the original Greek text of Matthew 8: 5-13 describes Jesus healing a man’s sick gay lover. The Latin translation of this passage describes it as the healing of a master’s servant.

In compliance with the order from the Vatican, McNeill kept silent publicly while he ministered privately to gays and lesbians. In 1998, the Catholic Church submitted a further order to McNeill to relinquish his ministry to homosexuals. When McNeill refused, the Church expelled him from the Jesuit order.

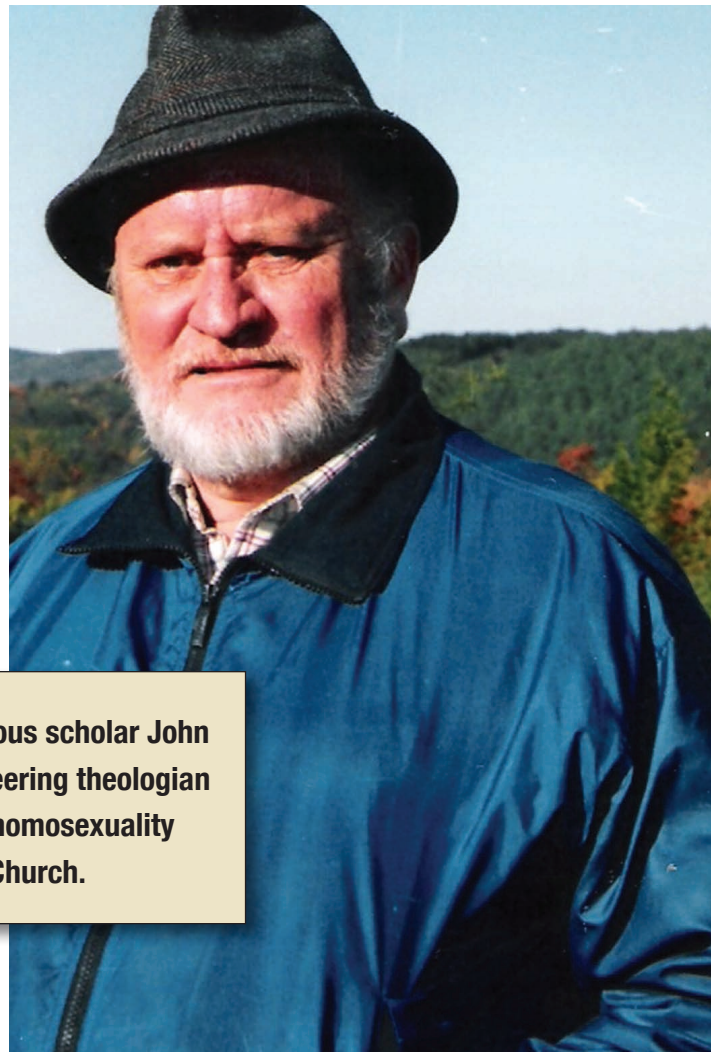
McNeill enlisted in WWII at age 17. German forces captured him while he was serving under General Patton in 1944. He spent six months as a POW before the war ended.

After graduating from Canisius College in 1948, McNeill entered the Society of Jesus. In 1959, he was ordained a Jesuit priest. Five years later, he earned a Ph.D. in philosophy with honors and distinction from Louvain University in Belgium.

McNeill began teaching in the combined Woodstock Jesuit Seminary and Union Theological Seminary in 1972. He cofounded the New York City chapter of Dignity, an organization of Catholic gays and lesbians. In addition to his teaching duties, he served as Director of the Pastoral Studies program for inner-city clergy at the Institutes of Religion and Health.

An accomplished author, McNeill’s works include “Taking a Chance on God: Liberating Theology for Gays and Lesbians, Their Lovers, Friends and Families” (1988) and “Freedom, Glorious Freedom: The Spiritual Journey to the Fullness of Life for Gays, Lesbians and Everybody Else” (1995). He has also published influential articles in The New Dictionary of Spirituality and The Journal of Pastoral Care.

McNeill led the New York City Gay Rights Parade as Grand Marshall in 1987. He has received numerous awards, including the National Human Rights Award in 1984, the Dignity/USA Prophetic Service Award in 1997, and the People of Soulforce Award in 2000.



**Author and religious scholar John McNeill is a pioneering theologian in the field of homosexuality and the Church.**

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