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Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister and former NCR editor Tom Roberts record the podcast "Risking the Questions." (Benetvision/Jacqueline Small)

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Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister has a well-earned reputation as one who dares to ask big, bold questions — of civil and church authorities, of long-held assumptions about women and their place in the church and the wider world, about religious life, about the church itself.

This first episode in her new podcast, "Risking the Questions," fittingly explores her book *Called to Question: A Spiritual Memoir*, a detailed exploration of one of the important arcs of change she experienced in religious life.

A joint project of Benetvision and NCR, "Risking the Questions" invites you into conversations that most of us only have in our own minds. Chittister — whose courageous and surprising spiritual insights come from 70 years as a Benedictine sister — and her friend and biographer, former National Catholic Reporter editor Tom Roberts, discuss deep and universal topics in this series.

In episode two, Chittister and Roberts explore the impact of the Second Vatican Council on religious orders, focusing particularly on the council's direction to religious orders "to go back to their founder, decide what you were founded for, what you were doing now and what was needed now."

The result was a deep examination of purpose, of history and how the wisdom and practice of centuries applied to contemporary life. The changes that began in the mid-1960s have picked up pace during the Francis papacy. In this episode, Chittister speaks of synodality and says, "I'm so glad I lived for this moment, and I'm watching this with happy tears in my eyes."

This podcast has been made possible in part by the generosity of Bill and Jeanne Buchanan.

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