

**MISSION STATEMENT** - As women and men rooted in faith, we call for justice, equality, and full partnership in ministry. We are committed to church renewal and to the transformation of a structure which uses gender rather than gifts as its criterion for ministry.

***The St. Mary Magdalene Community celebrates Mary Magdalene's Feast Day  
Sunday July 23, 2017 at 9am, at Drexel Hill United Methodist Church, 600  
Burmont Road, Drexel Hill, PA 19026***

**The Seven Demons of Mary Magdalene's Disciples**

*By Mary Whelan and Ellie Harty*

You probably know the source of many of the misguided, nasty, misogynistic stories about Mary Magdalene – and, no, we don't mean the fact that mostly, if not exclusively, men with agendas propagated them. The stories actually got their impetus from one short paragraph in the New Testament: Jesus' casting out seven demons from Mary Magdalene prior to her becoming his disciple. Many church scholars considered the number "seven" significant, indicating her harboring all seven deadly sins, their obvious favorite being: lust!

We, today's followers of Mary Magdalene in the church reform movement, have come a long way in seeing and portraying our apostle differently. However, as we celebrate her feast this July, we thought it might be enlightening to reconsider the seven demon story in light of our own discipleship. What demons do we have to cast out in order to honor her and fulfill our own mission to ensure women are fully included in the leadership and priesthood of the church? Here are some of our guesses:

1. The demon of disillusionment, weariness, discouragement, defeat. *One way to cast it out: See the accomplishments and possibilities of the whole struggle, not just the recent past. Women gaining the right to vote in the United States, for example, took almost 100 years of constant pressure, demonstration, and witness. What if they had given up in weariness and defeat?*
2. The demon of cynicism, negativity, even too much realism. *One way to cast it out: Treasure our idealism as something precious and worth having. A sense of humor also helps. One reader commented about EqualwRites, "I like your newsletter but you are so serious." We can also lighten up and dance, especially when the madness of those in authority gets to be too much!*
3. The demon of shortsightedness, lack of imagination. *One way to cast it out: Open up to fresh per-*

*spectives, new approaches...let's face it, some of us are not gray only because we dye our hair! Valued practices, experiences, models from the past yield the wisdom we sorely need, but we have to find new ways to reach the daughters and sons to whom we will pass our purple stoles.*

4. The demon of being too angry or not angry enough. *One way to cast it out: Consider where anger paralyzes rather than motivates, alienates rather than inspires. Consider where too much uncritical acceptance, as well as too much anger, makes us twist everything to fit our own narrative or makes us put blinders on. Our mothers often cautioned, "Everything in moderation." How boring, we thought, but maybe also how true.*
5. The demon of being too busy or too lazy. *One way to cast it out: Know the two imposters for what they are - excuses.*
6. The demon of over-complication or over-simplification. *One way to cast it out: Keep talking and listening. Nothing is so overwhelmingly difficult it cannot be mastered by a bunch of minds, hearts, and hands acting together; nothing is so overwhelmingly simple that it cannot profit from new insights sharing in a diverse community can bring.*
7. The demon of judgementalism. *One way to cast it out: Realize the isolation it can bring to our lives; how it makes us truly alone in our quest.*

One final thought: On a broken down shack in the woods near us, someone had spray painted this: "Do no harm - but keep hurricanes at your fingertips!" We think Mary Magdalene would have approved.

**Mary Whelan and Ellie Harty** are co-editors of EqualwRites.

## **The Women Under the Bus** *By Eileen McCafferty DiFranco*

To paraphrase the prophet Jeremiah, “They have treated the wound of their sisters carelessly crying ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace. They have acted shamefully and yet they were not at all ashamed. They do not even know how to blush.”

On Saturday, May 20, two men were ordained as priests for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the smallest numbers of ordinands since the 1830’s. Aside from female visitors, musicians, and the ironers of the altar cloths, ordination day is an all male affair. In order to enter a seminary, proceed to ordination, and remain a priest in good standing, these men must throw their sisters, who are like them in every way except for the magical male organ, under the bus. That which must not be named-women’s ordination- must remain verboten. Everyone conspires to keep silent about the women waiting in the wings lest the local bishop-with the support of the Vatican-weighs in with his and its heavy, ornate hand, shuts them down, and fires them. Roy Bourgeois and Tony Flannery got hung out to dry for publicly supporting their sisters and the merciful and allegedly more tolerant Francis has not seen fit to reinstate them. It is a lesson every priest, newly ordained and otherwise, understands. All remain complicit in the “Women Need Not Apply” sign that invisibly guards the entrance of every Catholic seminary in the world.

I read the stories of the two men who were ordained on Saturday. Both seem dedicated, personable, and spiritually prepared. I hope that they will make excellent priests.

However, I personally know of two young women- among many- who would make stellar priests, just like the two men ordained on May 20. Both of these women share many qualities with each other and with the men. They are deeply spiritual, prayerful, intelligent, and caring, just the kind of candidates any seminary would want to accept. One works as a chaplain and the other is a seminary student at a Protestant seminary. Without that critical body part, however, they will live their spiritual life on the outer fringes of the Catholic Church and offer their services to those on the pale who appreciate their many and varied gifts. When priests announce at Mass that only Catholics in good standing can receive the Eucharist, both of these sterling women of impeccable character might hesitate to present themselves at the altar even though both remain the spiritual equal of any priest.

The sheer numbers of women I know who feel called to the priesthood would substantially beef up the number of candidates for the priesthood so that St. Charles wouldn’t have to sell off property and move the seminary program to Newman University. Some of those parishes slated for closure because of the priest shortage could remain open. However, the ecclesiastical powers choose only to understand their own side of the story- that men rule and women obey- even if it kills the Spirit who tries unceasingly to birth a new heaven, a new earth, and a new church that fosters the full flourishing of all human beings, regardless of their sexual organs.

There are, of course, serious consequences that result from the male only rule. Too many of the brand new clerics will

never learn how to love women. Instead, they will use women: as housekeepers, cooks, linen ironers, perhaps musicians. They will never be able to fully regard women as their equals because in all things church, the clerical male word is the final word. They can ignore women at will and pretend female vocations to the priesthood don’t or even can’t exist so that their own vocation can remain safe. “Yes, Father,” will become to them magical and powerful words that will become more important to them as time goes on.

The entire church suffers because of this surfeit of clericalism. In spite of the hopes and dreams of reformers, Francis has not demonstrably changed any of this. For Francis, women are seen as “strawberries on the cake” rather than as preachers of the Word.

And so, as their equally qualified sisters attend Protestant seminaries which welcome them with open arms, the ordinands blissfully, in their sincere ignorance, laid down on the cathedral floor on May 20 and pledged obedience to their bishop, a man who maintains his position by inspiring fear in his clerical underlings. This vow of obedience will insure that they and their fellow priests will continue to throw their sisters under the bus every day of their professional careers. And so, the rule of clericalism enforced by obedience will continue to hold sway, however much it diminishes the Body of Christ.

**Eileen McCafferty DiFranco** is a Roman Catholic Woman Priest, member of the St. Mary Magdalene Community, and the SEPAWOC Core Committee.

**Be on the alert for Eileen DiFranco’s upcoming book, *How To Keep Your Parish Alive When Your Bishop Declares It Dead*, which will be published this coming October by Emergence Education Press. As the People of God have come to know so well, “Father” does not always know best.**

**St. Mary Magdalene Community**

**Sunday Mass at 11:30am**

**Epworth United Methodist Church**

**501 Morgan Avenue • Palmyra, NJ 08065**

**Drexel Hill United Methodist**

**Sunday Mass at 9:00am**

**600 Burmont Road • Drexel Hill, PA 19026**

**For information contact Eileen at 267-258-6966**

## What's It All For Anyway?

A Ten Minute Play by Ellie Hartly

*Scene: Mother enters carrying an "Ordain Women Now" sign. Daughter is sitting on a living room couch facing the phone on her lap and vigorously typing. Mother sits down next to daughter and emits a very loud sigh. Daughter ignores her and keeps typing.*

Mother: I don't know why I even bother. [*She sighs even more loudly.*]

Daughter [*not looking up*]: Hmmm.

Mother: I want to talk to you about church and about THIS. [*Holds up sign.*]

Daughter: Wow, you've got my full attention now! [*Keeps looking at phone and typing.*]

Mother: Would you put that down and look at me.

Daughter: [*Still looking down*]: And "send". [*Looks at Mother*]: Well?

Mother: Do you have any idea why I'm out there constantly protesting in front of churches, writing press releases, my blog, marching around and around church headquarters in rain, snow, God knows what?

Daughter: You're hoping for that elusive martyrdom badge you so crave?

Mother: Do not be rude to me, young lady. I brought you up to be respectful and listen when ... [*is interrupted by...*]

Daughter: You got that right. I listen, you talk. I listen, they talk. Priest, professors, parents, all talking, talking, talking – and I dutifully listen – until I don't.

Mother: You don't listen OR talk; you just type and tap. [*Angrily*]: I'm sick and tired... [*Thinks better of it*]: Okay, let's start again. We're not getting anywhere.

Daughter [*Smiles.*]: Does starting again mean I can go back to the phone? [*Seeing her mother's dejected face, she quickly adds*]: Relax. Just kidding.

Mother [*brightening and more determined*]: You did make a valid point about listening. And note: I did LISTEN to what you said about listening. So, before I talk – and be forewarned, I WILL talk - let me hear you tell me what our church means to you.

Daughter: Simple enough. It's a place you make me go. It's a place where I sit with my arms crossed, and it really is the sign of the cross, as in the gesture of the furious. It's boring; it's irrelevant; it's hopelessly out of date. It has nothing to say to ME. I know you work all the time for "church reform" and for "women's ordination" but, Mom, even if a woman were up there saying the words, I still would not want to be part of it all. I still wouldn't be listening.

Mother: But maybe it's not all about YOU, about what is said specifically to and for YOU. Maybe it's your presence

that's important for all of US, maybe it's our encouragement, our affirmation of each other – and – of - I guess – possibilities of what world we can bring about if we leave there nourished by – well - sacredness.

Daughter: Okay, you had me until that last one.

Mother: When I grew up as part of the Catholic Church, [*Daughter looks away and rolls her eyes and then looks back.*] one of the beliefs that really took hold, without my really noticing funny enough, was the sacramental nature of all life.

Daughter: I have no clue what you're talking about.

Mother: Well, this might not be the official interpretation but this is how I saw it, that everything, humans, animals, all of nature, even I, was a transmitter of – well - grace.

Daughter: Grace? That word they threw around in our Confirmation classes while we all pretended not to be bored to death? Again, no clue.

Mother: Grace, in the sense of having the power to bestow something upon us that helps us live life more deeply, more consciously, not missing the gifts around us. Grace says: Don't just skim the surface; don't dismiss life, and, for heaven's sake, don't destroy it. It's too precious, too amazing to miss.

Daughter: So, go out in nature and knock yourself out wallowing in it. Why church?

Mother: Because the sacramental sense of life is incredibly hard to sustain – or at least for me, and especially for me all by myself. Your dad is fond of chiding me for my "rose-colored contact lenses" as he calls it – but I do see the nasty side of the world and life quite clearly. I am even, more often than I'd like, part of it.

Daughter [*sarcastically*]: You? NO!

Mother [*glaring back at her*]: I know, hard to believe, huh? [*Pauses.*] But seriously, I want church for you in some form or other so that you can gain and give to others through – well – a combination of things...

Daughter: Like passing on the good exercise you get there? Up, down, up, down. [*Her phone chimes notice of an incoming text. She tentatively looks down.*]

Mother: Please. This is important to me. [*Daughter looks back at her.*] Aren't you even a bit captivated by Mass: the colors, the stained glass, the art, music, the smell of incense, the melody of chants, the drama that is the Mass as it tells the stories.

Daughter: In case you haven't noticed, Mom, this is the 21<sup>st</sup>, not the 12<sup>th</sup>, Century. We have movies, UTube, ipads, even – ahem - PHONE apps for all that.

Mother: How charmingly impersonal and remote. But let's not argue... How about something even more important, communion? That sense of the Whole that is God/Jesus everywhere being broken into pieces and sips and given to each of

*continued on pg. 4*

## A Ten Minute Play *continued from pg. 3*

us so that we, though still individuals, become the Whole, too. We take it in, and then, nourished by grace, we, as they say, go forth.

Daughter: Deep, Mom. Yet, even if true, it all has to be led, sanctified or whatever, by men only. I'm – we're – peripheral, pretty much just the child-bearers for future men.

Mother: Well, even for me, that's a bit harsh.

Daughter: And then there's the medievalness of it all, including the anti-female attitudes.

Mother: I agree with you about the attitudes, back to that in a minute. But I have to admit I love the "medievalness" as you put it. I love the feeling that, in the Mass, we are connecting back through the centuries with all the people who have ever worshipped and felt the sacredness. And even now, as we gather, millions gather and say the same words and read the same readings in all kinds of languages and settings - which brings me to my point.

Daughter: THAT is what brings you to your point?

Mother: This church is huge and hugely influential. It's everywhere, and it's everywhere rightly or wrongly, so I believe we have to work on the "rightly" part of that.

Daughter: Lost you again.

Mother: Even you must admire our church's work for social justice.

Daughter: When I finally learned about it, yes. When they stopped talking about my nasty little body and telling me what I could and could not do with it.

Mother: I'm still telling you what you can and cannot do with it, young lady. But, you're right, there's nothing nasty about it.

Daughter: Well, if social justice is so important, why can't I just go work in the soup kitchen or food bank while you go to Mass. It would do more good, right? Rightly?

Mother: Before or after, but not during. During is when we need your presence for our sakes as well as yours. When you're not there, we are a bit less. We feel your loss. Always.

*[Daughter's phone pings notice of another incoming text. She gives it a very quick glance but immediately returns to looking at her mother.]*

Mother: I think this, though, *[Holds up the "Ordain Women Now" sign.]* is sometimes crazy. We're working on reform without you, YOU, the inheritors of the purple stoles.

Daughter: Purple stoles! With our tee shirts and jeans? Can you take a guess, Mom, at how out of touch you really are?

Mother: My point!

Daughter *[slapping her forehead with her hand]*: Oh, no,

not another point!

Mother: I AM out of touch. I can only guess what kind of church would speak to you, but not just to you, to all women and men and all those who are oppressed and suffering everywhere. We cannot let such a large institution, not to mention one that is spreading, especially among disadvantaged peoples, limit anyone's opportunities, gifts, hope, vision of what church could be, because of her gender. We can't let this happen.

Daughter *[Claps]*: Nice speech. Bravo! But, let's face it; that means you'll stay and put up with the old, tired language and stale rituals in the meantime?

Mother: That's why I work for change.

Daughter: And you'll let yourself be beguiled by all the theatrics, the color, light, perfume, drama you described, into putting up with narrow minded narratives and sexist language?

Mother: That's why I make my voice heard.

Daughter: To deaf ears.

Mother: I'm not so sure. If we work long and hard enough, if we never give up, if we make a commitment to bring about what our daughters and sons everywhere want and need...

Daughter: Whew! *[Calls out.]* Dad, where are you? Mom's giving me "rose-colored contact lens" life lesson. Save me!

Mother: All part of my church upbringing: all that sensual beauty in one setting. When I went to church on Sunday, I felt as if I were entering a place that looked so different from the common everyday world around me. It was another kind of world with another kind of possibilities and treasures. That's why I stay. I want that for you but in a way that reaches you and your generation, that enriches you, and...

Daughter: I'm not sure what I want, what would reach me...probably not that though...I guess I want something more thrilled with me – with all of us – just as we are. Okay, I expect CHURCH to throw in a few moral pitches now and then but maybe with more regard for the "pitchers". I'd like to see, not only certain women and men up there in charge, but all of us contributing more than just presence... *[She pauses.]*...but, you've convinced me, that, too. Some combination of... *[Daughter's phone rings loudly. She ignores it.]*

Mother: Maybe we could start figuring it out together? *[Daughter's phone rings again.]*

Daughter: Hmmm. An idea with some contact and some lenses...and rosy-colored, too. Dad has the last laugh.

Mother *[laughing]*: Maybe, but... *[Daughter's phone rings again. Daughter pushes a button to stop it without ever looking down.]*

Daughter: Go on. I'm listening.

Mother: Me, too.

**Ellie Harty** is co-editor of EqualwRites.

## The Wearing of the Pink

By Maria Marlowe

*Editors' note: We received this article in response to the descriptions in our last issue of the January 2017 Women's March. We thought the author focused on something very important to SEPAWOC that had been overlooked: the need to include all women's voices in our work for women's rights.*

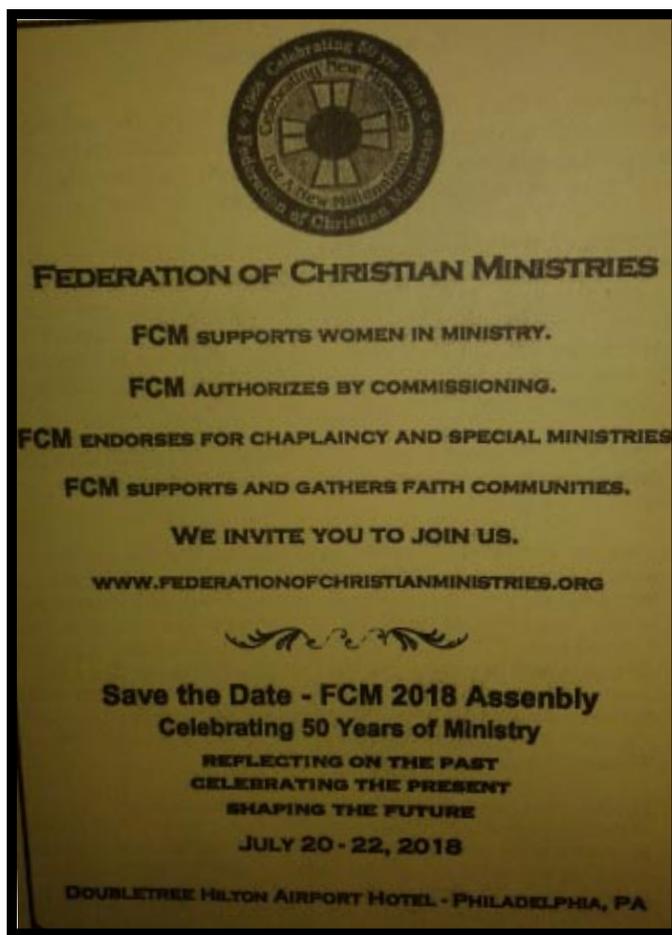
The wearing of the pink. How loudly and proudly we “band together against tyranny” [but apparently not against our own tyranny] “and for our freedoms”—but not freedom for all. How strongly we stand “in solidarity of protest, for recognition, for people’s rights”—but not for all. How strongly we stand for the have-nots. Except for one have-not. It’s sadly lacking there. It’s **unjustly** lacking there. It’s lacking at the seed of all life where God begins the very definition of Her plan. It’s sadly lacking at the seed of God’s most unique and beautiful creation. Hope may have seemed everywhere that day but the sad truth is that it was not there for everyone. No...sorry...keep your pink.

I am committed to equality and justice. My relationship with Christ will demand nothing less. Compassion for the suffering and the poor is Christianity 101. But to truly follow in those mighty footsteps, I must consider *all* of God’s masterpiece, the seamless garment, from womb to tomb, from beating heart to ceasing heart. To do anything else would be a grave disappointment to the One I truly love.

I also abhor the trumpeting of the Women’s March...Justice for some but not justice for all is hypocrisy. The time spent shouting “power to the people” is better spent trying to determine how we failed them. Furthermore, and this is very telling, whole-lifers were unceremoniously disinvented. Apparently those of us who are “uncomfortable with legal reproductive options some women choose” (my lens calls this killing someone and we are far beyond “uncomfortable”) were prevented from embracing “the larger justice agenda” because “the larger justice agenda,” in Washington at least, did not want to embrace us. Apparently *they* were the ones who were “focusing narrowly on one issue.” We showed up anyway and endured the usual amount of unembracing liberal hostility. We’re used to it. As one whole-life Democrat said, “We get slammed from both sides.” Conservatives/Republicans slam us because we are reluctant or unwilling to vote for their candidates. Liberals/Democrats slam us because a whole-life feminist is a thorn in the side of their ideology. They simply do not know what to do with this creature who looks beyond a woman’s right to control her own body and sees another body who never had any control at all.

No matter how worthy the goals, I cannot be part of a movement where liberals are asleep at the womb, refuse to wake up and hear two heartbeats, not one, and refuse to resolve the crisis/unexpected pregnancy in a compassionate and non-violent way for both the woman and the prenatal child—*two* human bodies and *two* human lives.

**Maria Marlowe** is a deacon in the Community of Saint Mary Magdalene in Drexel Hill and a member of Democrats for Life and Feminists for Life.



### Editorial Staff of *EqualwRites*

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Editors: **Ellie Harty, Mary Whelan**

Regular Columnists: **Judith A. Heffernan, Marian Ronan**

**WOMEN, FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHURCH,  
CONVERGE**

**A Report on the Annual Meeting of Women-Church  
Convergence 2017**

*By Margaret Cooper*

There are, in the Catholic Church, groups of people who are concerned with the status of women in this particularly patristic, misogynistic, religious denomination. Women are currently considered to be second class citizens. They have no voice!

The groups trying to change this take many different shapes and forms according to their gifts and talents and exist throughout dioceses all over the U.S.A. They strive to begin a dialogue with the hierarchy of the church so that men will begin to recognize that women are not out to nullify them or their work, but to be partners in their work, to help all, together, side by side, in spreading the good news of God's love.

They would like men to realize that women are called (have been called) just as much as men have been called to spread the good news of the gospel.

They are attempting to create an awareness that the position of women should be one of respectability in the eyes of the men. Women already occupy positions of responsibility but have no voice in any decisions that might be considered as the church moves forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Their ability to utilize their many and diverse talents in response to God's call is limited to those functions which keep women in the background and subservient to all the men. Many of the reform groups that strive to change this join resources and support each other under the umbrella term of Women-Church Convergence.

The Women-Church Convergence groups meet monthly, via phone, so that all can keep apprised of each other's current activities which are taking place throughout the U.S.A. and Canada. Each group attending maintains an active schedule in their geographical area to bring to the forefront those rights of women which are being denied by the hierarchy of the church. Actions taken by the groups combine confrontation, political statements, education, protestation, prayer, pleading, and attempt to attract the attention of the men as well as lure more young women to join in their efforts.

Every year the Women-Church Convergence holds an annual, face

to face, meeting with representatives of its member groups. The meetings are staged to take place in a different city each year so that all will have an easier opportunity to attend. Different locations also offer the chance to reach out to, and dialogue with, the Catholics in different areas of the country.

This year's meeting convened in Mt Prospect, IL, March 31-April 2, extending itself into the "8<sup>th</sup> day Center" in downtown Chicago for the Saturday program which included a public discussion of spirituality and activism.

Members of Women Church who attended the 2017 meeting represented some of the more active organizations pushing for reform that would give more recognition to women in the Catholic Church. Those attending were, Mary Grace Crowley-Koch(RCWP), Marianne Duddy-Burke(DIGNITYUSA), Erin Saiz Hanna(WOC), Mary Hunt (WATER), Carolyn Kellogg(A CRITICAL MASS), Donna Quinn(NCAN) Sonja Spoo(CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE), Ruth Steiner Foote(GREATER CINCINNATI WOMEN-CHURCH), Rosemary Ganley(CFC-CANADA), Katherine Wojtan(MARY'S PENCE), Dar Noesen(CHICAGO WOMEN-CHURCH), and Marge Cooper(SEPAWOC).

The program focused on young women in the church – where are they? – what can we do to get them involved? The group presented a public forum entitled "Feminist Spirituality and Activism, in Challenging Times". The panel, consisted of Sonja Spoo and Mary Hunt, both of Women Church and three local women: Laura Singer who works for the Women's Ordination Conference, and Laura Robinson and Violet Ricker both seminarians at McCormick Theological seminary. Each woman shared her unique perspective on activism. Erin Hanna moderated the panel.

The five women had five different stories to tell of their own experiences in spiritual growth and their path that focuses on the future – five different plans of action! It was a truly inspiring discussion, filled with life, energy and hope. All were concerned with spreading the good news and attracting more partnering young women to the task of emerging women's rights in the Catholic Church.

*Margaret Cooper is a member of the SEPAWOC Core Committee and Women Church Convergence.*

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## Book Reviews

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*There Were Also Many Women There: Lay Women in the Liturgical Movement in the United States, 1926-1959* by Katherine E. Harmon (Liturgical Press, 2012). 412 pp. Paperback: \$39.95 (on sale for \$25.97 at <https://www.litpress.org/Products/6271/There-Were-Also-Many-Women-There>); eBook, \$31.99.

Reviewed by Marian Ronan

Despite the positive impact of the women's movement over the past half century, many kinds of sexism continue. One is the omission – exclusion – of women from histories of various developments and movements.

One history from which women have been significantly excluded is that of the liturgical movement in the Roman Catholic Church. In *There Were Also Many Women There*, historian Katharine Harmon examines the influential and largely undocumented role that women, that is to say, laywomen played in the Roman Catholic liturgical movement in the United States. (All Catholic women are considered laywomen, even nuns, because women cannot be priests). To do so, Harmon first explores the European origins of the liturgical movement, and then focuses on the liturgical movement in the U.S. The Grail movement, the women's community in which I have spent my entire adult life, figures significantly in both sections of the book.

So, what is the liturgical movement, and why is it important? Begun in the 1830s, the liturgical movement was an effort to reform the worship practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Some consider it an attempt to return to the romanticism of the Middle Ages, but Harmon demonstrates that the movement was, from the outset, a profoundly social development. It was social because it moved Catholic worship beyond the isolation of the Latin Mass, where individuals had engaged in private devotions like the rosary, and encouraged instead responding to and singing together during the Mass. In effect, the goal of the movement was to make the liturgy a socially unifying experience, so as to bring the liturgical participant "into union with the Christian community and, thus inspired, to expand this spirit outward for the renewal of society." (11)

Launched in Benedictine monasteries in France, the liturgical movement took on new energy after the catastrophic effects of World War I. Active, intelligent liturgical participation in the oneness of Christ's body would enable God's grace to permeate and redeem the world. Not coincidentally, the Society of the Women of Nazareth, the group which became the Grail movement, was itself founded in 1921, to convert the world from the callous and demoralizing values evidenced by the war.

Harmon acknowledges that the Women of Nazareth and the Grail Youth Movement they launched in 1928 were not explicitly part of the European liturgical movement. But she argues that the massive colorful religious performances that the Grail staged with thousands of Dutch girls in stadiums beginning in 1932 was "one of the most courageous and public realizations of Catholic Action (the lay Catholic turn to social justice) in the years between the world wars." She also quotes an early article about the Grail in a publication of the U.S. liturgical movement stating that the Grail movement was paradigmatic of the essential relationship between liturgy and lived Christianity: The Grail seemed "to be enlivened with a living appreciation of liturgical life and an active understanding of the real meaning of the lay apostolate." (45).

After the Grail's arrival in the U.S. in 1940, the liturgical dimension

of the movement became even more explicit. U.S. co-founders Lydwine van Kersbergen and Joan Overboss attended and spoke out at national liturgical meetings, and nationally recognized leaders of the liturgical movement led courses and celebrated the Eucharist at Grail centers. And in the U.S., as much or more than was the case in Europe, the Grail celebration of the liturgy, including the singing of Gregorian chant, the creation of other chant-based liturgical music, and liturgical dance, was inextricably connected to the Grail's commitment to Catholic Action—social justice—and the fostering of an integrated life on the land.

Lydwine van Kersbergen stressed that "the first principle in the training of lay apostles is the understanding that the experience of the sacred liturgy is the integrating center of life" (224). The great Catholic social justice activist Dorothy Day made retreats with the Grail outside Chicago and at Grailville and commented enthusiastically on the unity between prayer, singing and action in the Grail. For Day, this same integrated vision was at the center of the Catholic Worker movement. And as Harmon demonstrates, thousands of other U.S. women also took their Grail liturgical training back with them to parishes and lay groups across the country.

So, why does this matter? Because the liturgy, and especially liturgical singing, were fundamental to the formation of the generations of Grail women who helped change the Catholic Church and the wider society in which that church played an influential role. And many of these women went on from that formation to engage in amazingly hard, brave, and even heroic work to establish what they understood to be God's kingdom on earth. I am thinking here of the Dutch Grail women who continued to hold underground meetings during the Nazi occupation of Holland, although they knew they would be sent to concentration camps if they were caught. And others who stayed at their mission stations in Africa and Latin America in the face of horrifying violence—in one case, remaining in central Africa even after a Grail member was murdered in her bed in the next room during a tribal civil war. And then there were the women who worked their entire lives for subsistence at the Grail's farm and national center in southwest Ohio and other Grail centers.

The Grail is currently active in eighteen countries around the world. Over its near century of existence, it has supported, enlivened and educated thousands of women and girls, running schools and hospitals, leading pioneering programs in progressive education, feminist theology, social transformation, and agriculture. And for many years the Roman Catholic liturgy was at the heart of such action for social change. What will provide the foundation for desperately needed action in 2017, in the face of the rise of nationalist populism and religious wars around the world?

**Marian Ronan** is Research Professor of Catholic Studies at New York Theological Seminary in Manhattan. The Apocryphile Press will publish her book, *Women of Vision: Sixteen Founders of the International Grail, co-authored with Mary O'Brien*, in 2017.

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## Book Reviews

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*Catholic Women Confront Their Church: Stories of Hurt and Hope*, by Celia Viggo Wexler (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). 216 pages, \$34.

Reviewed by Ann Zech

(Mark 7: 24-30) Because the unnamed woman in this Gospel story **did not remain silent**, she was able to challenge how Jesus understood the Spirit's universal message being given to this world and thus work with God's plan to bring this love to the entire human race. Jesus *listened* with a graced heart and was moved by the Spirit to change how He approached the world. So it is with the stories of these modern women (brought to life in this exceptionally well written book) who continue to challenge our institutional church (and all of us) to open our eyes to the universal truths of Christ's message of acceptance, healing, understanding, love and salvation.

Eleven gifted women (I include the author) – religious, lay, theologians, feminists, converts, lobbyists, spouses, mothers, abuse survivors, lesbians, visionaries, professors, missionaries, African Americans, Latinos, Caucasians, all of various ages – did **NOT** let their religion get in the way of their Faith. These women allowed the Spirit to shake the “perceived” reality of the world around them, by the truth preached by Christ – a God of justice for all. At one point in time and various places, they were able to open their eyes to the truth that we are all called to broaden our vision of future possibilities. They were able to see that the morality as spoken by male clerics no longer speaks the love and acceptance that Jesus lived and wanted for us all.

As is evident in reading the personal and, at times, challenging stories of these strong women, everyone's faith journey takes a life time to complete. Some individuals chose to become a part of a particular religious institution. When that institution no longer truly gave life, hope, growth, protection and support as preached in the Gospel, they then had to make the choice to either leave or to stay and fight for change. Fortunately for all of us, these women chose to stay and are willing to constantly speak the TRUTH; knowing full well the consequences this choice brings to their personal lives.

The author (gifted, award-winning former journalist, nonfiction writer, lobbyist, spouse, Mom), Celia Viggo Wexler, began this book as a way to get ideas shared among women in our Church. What she found were stories of strength, vibrant faith, conversion of heart and mind, and total dependence on God, within the pain of rejection, struggle, abuse, and darkness in a living, changing faith tradition. The journey of interviewing and then writing this book, not only allowed Ms. Wexler to join others' truth to her own, but now gives us the privilege to read, to share, and to internalize the emotions that drive all of us as we seek to find the life to which our God is calling us. Since Vatican II has proclaimed that “we are the Church”, we have no choice but to listen to these stories and then seek to find ways to challenge the institutional church. Institutional structures, rules, blindness, and lack of openness

to the movement of the Spirit, does not allow the Faith to flourish in its fullness for all. It is only in our willingness to learn from others' experiences and to be open to the wisdom these stories provide, that we can truly say “we are one in the Spirit of God”.

The author concludes this **well referenced** book with the following words, “So I dedicate this book not only to my own nonpracticing daughter but to all daughters with the hope: Don't give up on Catholicism just yet. Make it work for you. Fight for it. Faith is a gift, even when inside a box marked, *For men only.*”

I cannot say you will “enjoy” this book – challenged and awakened would be better words. I can truly say that no matter where you are on your faith journey, you will find so much truth in this book. You will be able to identify with the hearts of all these women. You will find the grace that fills your soul with the eagerness to be part of this time in history when we can bring to the “institution” what the Church is truly called to be for all eternity.

*Ann Zech is a member of the SEPAWOC Core Committee.*



### ***Condolences, Prayers, and Love***

*The staff and writers of EqualwRites and the Core Committee and members of SEPAWOC express our condolences to WOC President, Erin Hanna, on the recent death of her mother. Those of us who have met Erin know her mother must have been an exceptional woman since she raised such an amazing daughter. Our thoughts, prayers, and love are with Erin and her family at this difficult time.*

## NEW BOOK BY MARIAN RONAN JUST RELEASED

**SAVE THE DATE:** You are invited to hear Marian Ronan, distinguished scholar, writer, and reviewer discuss her just released book, *Women of Vision*, on **Sunday, September 17 at 1:30 pm** at a lovely meeting space in a private at 15 Westview Avenue (just off Germantown Avenue) in the Mount Airy section of Philadelphia (19118).

The book focuses on the sixteen founders of the International Grail Movement, Catholic women who profoundly changed our perspectives on women's roles, leadership, and contributions in the world. The official "blurb" for the book quoted below gives you just a hint of what Marian will discuss:

*"Women of Vision* is a book that expands significantly public knowledge of the contributions of Catholic laywomen to church and society over the past century.

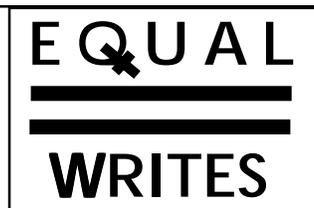
Despite historic advances in women's recognition and equality over the past half-century, the significant roles played by Roman Catholic laywomen in church and society still go largely unacknowledged. With *Women of Vision: Sixteen Founders of the International Grail Movement*, Marian Ronan and Mary O'Brien contribute substantially to remedying this situation.

Founded in the Netherlands in 1921, just after World War I, the Grail movement was focused, from the outset, on using laywomen's extraordinary gifts to resolve the crises in which the world found itself. By 1961, the movement had spread to twenty other countries, including Brazil, Australia, the Philippines and nine African countries.

Drawn from interviews done with Grail founders in many of these countries, *Women of Vision* highlights the relentless and often heroic work done by Grail women, founding and staffing hospitals and schools, supporting indigenous women and girls, preparing local women for church and Grail leadership, and in some cases, assuming governance roles in their own countries and at the United Nations."



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*Thank you.*



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**AFFILIATION:** *EqualwRites* is published by the Core Committee of the Southeastern Pennsylvania chapter of the Women's Ordination Conference. We are inspired by, but independent of, the national office of the Women's Ordination Conference.

## Scripture Reflections

### Pentecost (which is every day!)

#### Romans 8:22-27

By Judith A. Heffernan, M.Div.

As I write this reflection, we are awaiting the glorious feast of Pentecost. This reading from the Pentecost Vigil is one of my very favorites—the Holy Spirit is with us and turns our groans into prayer. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for it seems for seven months I have prayed “God help us!” every few minutes and the rest of the time I have groaned.

This same reading says that when we hope, we wait with endurance. Our first reading at our Ordination Day Witness was from Theresa Kane, RSM. Theresa reminds us that our journey as the WOC Community has sometimes been difficult; we have been criticized for envisioning, for working for something seen as impossible by the Catholic Church Institution—but we have endured, and endurance is a quality of prophets.

I must say that this year's Holy Thursday and Ordination Day Witnesses were light amid gloom for me. We sang, prayed, shared, spoke out and witnessed together in person and in spirit, united, in Sister Cities Park as one family of the gathering Spirit.

We remembered those, filled with the Spirit, who led the way for us and who stand beside us. This year we especially celebrated the life of Nadine Foley, OP, who died in May at the age of 93. Nadine was once the president of the LCWR and was the long time prioress of the Adrian Dominicans. In December, 1974, our own Mary Lynch invited 31 people together and asked, “What do we do next about women's ordination?” The decision was to go directly to the people, and the women's

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ordination movement, as we know it, began that weekend.

Nadine and the Adrian Community volunteered to help Mary plan the first gathering. A beautifully deep conference was held in Detroit on Thanksgiving Weekend, 1975. Nadine began the conference by introducing Mary to the 1200 people assembled, so that we would know the power of one questioning woman!

At our witness this year, the loved and loving men and women of SEPAWOC felt that power of the Spirit and pledged to keep working together for equality, justice and love.

We blessed each other with the prayer of Harriet Tubman, Diann Neu and Mary Hunt...Always remember that you have within you the strength and the passion to reach for the stars, and don't ever stop...Keep Going!...Many small acts of courage and commitment make change...We are part of a world phenomenon!

Finally, as I finish this, I hear the discussion as to the U.S. being one of three U.N. member countries not part of the Paris Climate Agreement. I think of my latest mailing from *Benetvision*. Walt Whitman is remembered on his 198<sup>th</sup> birthday with an excerpt from *Leaves of Grass*: “This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals...give alms to everyone who asks...stand up for the troubled...re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book...and your very flesh shall be a great poem...”

**Judith A. Heffernan** is a member of the Community of the Christian Spirit and the SEPAWOC Core Committee. She is our 2017 Mary Magdalene Award Winner.