

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.*

WHO IS MARY OF MAGDALA?

By Margaret Cooper

On a Tuesday in early April, a small group of women gathered at the Cranaleith Spiritual Center to learn more about a woman known to all as Mary Magdalene. The collective consciousness in the room paused in anticipation of the usual designation for this Mary – as the “Prostitute”. All present had grown up with the teaching of Pope Gregory ringing loudly in their ears.

However, a sigh of relief as the fresh air of fact swept through the group like a spring breeze when the speaker calmly clarified that Mary Magdalene should properly be called Mary of Magdala. She was not a prostitute! Instead she was a woman of independent means from the town of Magdala, probably an owner of some of the fishing boats of that town and consequently she had income. Such a situation gave her the freedom to travel around the countryside as part of the group following Jesus. Of course, her independent status and liberty to move about could very easily lead to jealousy and scandalous rumors about her.

Sister Marie Michele Donnelly, RSM began the day by distinguishing all the Marys mentioned in the gospels: Mary of Nazareth (mother of Jesus), Mary of Cleophas (relative of Mary of Nazareth), Mary of Bethany (sister of Martha) and Mary of Magdala. Mary of Magdala was the woman delivered of demons by Jesus. According to experts in linguistics, the “demons” that were driven from Mary could have been a variety of physical illnesses – a sick person was said to have a demon.

There are also a few unnamed women mentioned in the gospels such as the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet. Sister pointed out that when a reader comes across one of these nameless women, it is helpful to put one’s self into that gospel person as a method conducive to meditation. Mary of Magdala is mentioned in all four gospels. She stands out as a leader who stayed by Jesus at His crucifixion and at His tomb. Jesus spoke to Mary first after His resurrection and Mary was given the command request to tell the Apostles that He had risen. So Mary of Magdala was an apostle to the apostles and proclaimed the word of the Lord, then and for many years.

To support her talk, Sister Donnelly referred to the studies of biblical documents and numerous other documents produced through the centuries by men and women, theologians and scholars. Two key gospel references were given as the starting point for the day and as on-going sources of meditation: Luke 8: 1-3 and John 20: 11-18.

She also recommended these meditations:
Sit with Mary of Magdala and let her share her memories with you of what it was like to share life, friendship and ministry with Jesus.

Let Mary tell you what it was like to watch Jesus die, stay behind to watch His burial, and then wait until after the Sabbath to return, only to find the tomb empty. How did she feel when the Apostles did not believe her?

Margaret Cooper is a member of the SEPAWOC Core Committee

*The Mary Magdalene Community celebrates Mary Magdalene’s Feast Day each July.
Check their website for date, time and place at smmcommunity.org*

A Church for Our Daughters

By Regina Bannan

Perhaps a universal complaint is that few young people participate in the Catholic church that nurtured us – and which we have gone beyond. Pope Francis has inspired many inside and outside by addressing issues of poverty, acceptance, and especially the environment. Yet he has a blind spot – women. And young women leave the church more than any other group. We do not want to be the last generation of Catholic women!

Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR), a national board on which I represent SEPAWOC, is taking on the American bishops about the issues that young women care about. Our Declaration is on page 7 in this issue of *EqualwRites*, and SEPAWOC has endorsed it.

COR has developed a wonderful web site with resources both brief and in depth. It’s at <http://achurchforourdaughters.org/>. I think it’s beautifully designed as well as informative, and you can link to any petitions from there and on [facebook.com/achurchforourdaughters](https://www.facebook.com/achurchforourdaughters).

In the next issue we will focus in more depth on the Pope’s commission to study the question of women deacons. I was especially impressed with issues the mother superiors raised, at <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/full-text-questions-francis-women-religious>. These sisters spoke their issues out loud; we should do no less.

Regina Bannan is President of SEPAWOC

A NEW CHURCH FOR A NEW DAY: ORDINATION DAY 2016

By Ellie Harty

Rain did not daunt us! We were there. Twelve of us. A minyan. Apostles in so many ways. Saying our Mass. Led by an ordained woman priest. Outside the cathedral.

An “officially ordained” ordination was taking place inside the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul. Relatives, friends, well-wishers were showing up for them inside as we prepared. Some of them gave us thumbs up; others ignored us or scoffed. The usual response.

Then something poignant happened before our always poignant liturgy began. Above one of the cathedral’s giant double doors, a new sign had been hung. “Door of Mercy” it proclaimed. As soon as we began, it slammed shut... and locked. Once again.

My sister co-editor, Mary Whelan, and I were recently in England and toured, among many other sites, Kings College Chapel at Cambridge University. As you probably know, in the Middle Ages and Renaissance and even before, the visual arts, sculpture, and especially stained glass windows, brought Biblical stories alive to people who, perhaps, could not read and had only heard the passages read to them, often in humbler churches with far fewer embellishments. In the main area of Kings College Chapel, the magnificent stained glass in each enormous window actually told two related stories: one Old Testament and below it, New Testament.

One of the windows told the Old Testament story of “The Temptation of Eve” above its New Testament story of “The Annunciation”. In the “Temptation” window, the serpent is alluring, sexual, seductive...and a woman; Eve is meek, weak, passive, ashamed, already figleafing her essential femaleness. In “The Annunciation” below, Mary is also submissive, honored, of course, but inert, silent, accepting. These are the stories we have been told in words, images, and actions throughout the ages.

Judith Heffernan, M.Div. told a very different story through the images and art she brought to our outdoor “church” on Ordination Day. On the folding table altar were:

- Two crosses, one vibrantly multicolored from Guatemala, one, simple and wooden, donated by an aunt who had helped fund Judy’s ministry
- A simply wrought pottery chalice and plate with both bread and gluten free rice cake and non-alcoholic juice so that all could feel included
- A purple stole on which was embroidered “Hallelujah” for the ordination of men **and** women
- A picture of the Last Supper with both men **and** women at the table
- A stone with “Peace” carved in it and one that

just said “Yes”

- Colorful butterflies
- A yellow flowering plant
- A huggable globe ball we could all squeeze in hope for world peace
- A carved figure of the lion laying down with the lamb
- A picture of Karen Lenz, in memorial to a beloved advocate for women and for justice
- A picture of Brother Bart Schlachter, in memorial to a beloved advocate and friend to all
- Multi-colored ribbons expressing our solidarity with women’s ordination worldwide

This was the new story, told in images, of a new church for a new day for all of us.

HOLY THURSDAY – some thoughts

By Margaret Cooper

A bright, sunny, warm, breezy day nourished our spirits as we gathered in the park across from the Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. A mix of Roman Catholics and United Methodists, men and women, joined our voices as we prayed that women might be allowed to use their gifts to proclaim the word of the gospel and administer the sacraments.

We honored the strong, valiant women who have gone before us, who stood up amid derision and scorn to bring to the world the results of their intelligence, thoughtfulness and prayer. We honored those who are currently speaking out to give the world an open, balanced picture of God’s love - that the world will have a fuller consciousness of the breadth of God’s wisdom and goodness.

While we prayed and sang, priests and laity left the cathedral’s Mass of chrism. Most ignored our group across the street. Those who showed any curiosity were women and children. One man, clad in suit and tie, (deacon??, business person??, bystander??) approached relatively close to our group (not too close) and in a quite disapproving manner stated: “You don’t understand your faith”. This comment has stayed with me into the next day. Does the correct understanding of my faith mean that I can’t raise my head and speak? That I am not allowed to ask questions? That I don’t have the right to join with others and want more?

Oliver Twist took both his courage, and his dish, in his hands as he asked for more!!!! What happened to Oliver is happening to all of us in the Church who want more! We are also being excluded, punished, and thrown out of the churches into the streets! But Oliver triumphed in the end! So will we triumph! All women and all minorities! It will just take longer than reading Oliver’s story. How long? No one can tell, but we can’t let go.

The Sophia Wars By Marian Ronan

This article is based on a talk I gave at the SEPAWOC-sponsored book launch of the thirtieth anniversary of Wisdom's Feast: Sophia of Struggle and Celebration which I co-authored with Susan Cole and Hal Taussig.

One of the interesting aspects of the emergence of Sophia in the 1980's and 1990's was the resistance it encountered. A writer whose work figured significantly in the increased use of Sophia-language in Christian theology, was, of course, the Catholic feminist theologian, Elizabeth Johnson. Johnson's systematic theology of God-Sophia, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, was published in 1992, three years after the first edition of *Wisdom's Feast: Sophia in Study and Celebration*.

Four years later, in the preface to the second edition of *Wisdom's Feast*, my coauthors and I noted that Johnson did not encounter the kind of hostile disciplinary action for *She Who Is* that two of us, Hal Taussig and Susan Cole (and especially Susan), encountered after the publication of *Wisdom's Feast*. Specifically, a hostile lay coalition within the United Methodist region to which Hal and Susan belong, and later another clergyperson, tried unsuccessfully to bring heresy charges against them for their Sophia work. Eventually, the 1992 quadrennial national United Methodist General Conference narrowly defeated a call for an investigation of Sophia theology.

We suggested in 1996 that this was the case because Susan and Hal were (and still are) ordained United Methodist clergy, whose status as such "raises the stakes relative to the power equations in the churches," whereas Elizabeth Johnson was not ordained. We also attributed the differences between the Roman Catholic and United Methodist responses to the fact that the "Sophia figure in the Catholic tradition has not yet begun to converge with the practice of ordaining female priests...and bishops." Finally, we attributed the extra hostility experienced by Susan to the virtually unique (among U.S. Protestants) United Methodist practice of not only ordaining women but also placing them in congregations. The effect of this is that local congregations lack the power to refuse the appointment of women as pastors and assistant pastors, something the more widespread Protestant/Congregationalist governance structure allows. Finally, we argued that the ferocious response to *Wisdom's Feast* reflected the many bewildering changes that characterized the late twentieth century U.S., including economic uncertainty and the decline of white Protestantism in the U.S.

But in March of 2011, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops declared that Elizabeth Johnson's book *Quest for the Living God* "contaminates the traditional Catholic understanding of God" and "distorts" the Catholic tradition "beyond recognition." The statement is not addressed to *She Who Is* but does cite Johnson's use of Sophia and other female images of God, based in her "radical position on the unknowability of God." This, the bishops claimed, reduces all theological "language and concepts to mere metaphors..." effectively eliminating as a criterion "both divine revelation...and the Church's teaching which interprets them."

Elizabeth Johnson's theology is noted for its coherence, as well as for its orthodoxy, at least, by comparison with much other feminist theology. And she had certainly used female images for God and made reference to God's unknowability long before the bishops' 2011 statement (as had a string of women mystic theologians going back at least to the Middle Ages.) So why did the U.S.C.C.B. wait until 2011 to declare that Johnson's work "completely undermines the Gospel"?

They did so, we believe, because, while the institutional Roman Catholic Church had certainly not begun ordaining women, or placing women priests in Catholic parishes, it did experience, during the decade before the U.S. bishops' statement on Johnson's book, an escalation of tension regarding women's ordination and another problem as well. In early 2002, the *Boston Globe* published a series of articles on the cover-up of clergy sex abuse, igniting a scandal that spread worldwide and has not abated fourteen years later. Then, in June of 2002, seven Roman Catholic women were ordained on the Danube River by an unnamed Catholic bishop reported to be in good standing with the Vatican. This action launched the organization Roman Catholic Womenpriests, now with some hundreds of women deacons, priests and bishops around the world.

The Vatican responded to this development in 2008 by declaring anyone who participated in such an ordination automatically excommunicated. At the same time, the world economy underwent a massive recession in 2008, resulting in a reduction of financial support for any number of causes, including churches.

It's important to realize here that Professor Elizabeth Johnson was not involved in any way in the sex-abuse crisis nor is she on record as supporting the ordination of Catholic women as priests. She is, however, a member of a Roman Catholic canonical religious congregation, a "nun" to use the more popular term. This means that although she is not ordained, she is, in some respects, more like Hal Taussig and Susan Cole than like me. As a Roman Catholic sister, Johnson is much more directly under the control of the Vatican, and the United States Catholic hierarchy, than Catholic laywomen are. Indeed, as the Vatican investigation of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious from 2005 to 2012 suggests, Catholic sisters are virtually the only Catholic women the institutional Catholic church has much control over any more. Thus they exercise that control.

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President Hillary and Us *By Marianna Pulaski Sullivan*

Hillary Rodham Clinton has come closer than any other woman to winning the presidency of the United States. Whether or not she achieves her goal, let's consider how she got where she is, what restricts her as a political leader, and what that tells us about the state of women's rights in the 21st century. In so doing, perhaps we can learn something about the struggle to assert our rights in the Catholic Church.

A brilliant lawyer, Ms. Clinton's path to prominence began with her marriage to William Jefferson Clinton, himself a brilliant yet flawed character. Campaigning for the presidency in 1992, the Clintons promised the country "two for the price of one." Big Mistake. This was, perhaps, the first manifestation of the searing hostility toward her that has dogged HRC in her political life. Later there was the fiasco of her proposed reforms of the Health Care System and the secretive way in which they were designed and her mishandling of the White House travel office. These were concrete examples used by her enemies, but it was clear that their criticism was rooted in their dislike of feminine power.

Hatred of Hillary Clinton has grown over the years since 1992. It has persisted despite her success as a senator from New York and as Secretary of State during President Obama's first term. It remains a significant hurdle for her to overcome in order to be president.

Hillary Clinton's record clearly qualifies her to be president. In fact, aside from her lack of military service (which the last three men to hold the job also lacked), she is more qualified for the presidency than most candidates that come to mind. Yet, as I write this, she is struggling to secure the nomination against a socialist senator from Vermont. Also, she has historically high unfavorability ratings which will seriously complicate her path to the presidency.

Enough about Hillary's weakness (she campaigns as "Hillary" so it's not disrespectful to refer to her that way). Let's look at the context. The presumptive Republican nominee delivers innuendos about menstruation and women's toilet practices and suffers no loss of political support. The tone of Hillary's voice is often criticized while her high decibel opponent for the nomination is equally shrill but rarely described that way. Indeed, she has tried to act tough (but not too tough) in an environment that seeks masculine strength in a presidential candidate. These criticisms reflect long-standing attitudes toward women and the view that we are unsuited to have leadership roles in our country's politics and in our church.

Women's secondary status was assumed through much of the twentieth century. What was that old saying "keep them barefoot and in the kitchen"? When I was in graduate school in the late '60s someone told me, only half joking, that "we should have kept them in the kitchen". Women have to demonstrate superior competence in order to be considered for advancement in the work place. Notice the present tense; while there has been noticeable improvement, women still earn less than men in comparable jobs and we still face

unreasonable standards that seek women who are tough AND tender. So, it seems that we still have a long way to go. Will President Hillary Rodham Clinton change this? Yes and no. Surely, as President Hillary will face the same criticism she has faced for decades from her political enemies. However, let's assume the Democrats take over the Senate, giving her some allies on Capitol Hill. Further, let's assume that the ambitious Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, sees it in his interest to cooperate with her. If her achievements are significant, her reputation will grow and will serve as a tangible repudiation of notions of feminine inferiority. But, Hillary's detractors will persist. In all probability some will question her legitimacy just as they have done to President Obama.

It's even more difficult to see significant progress for women's roles in the Catholic Church, as long as it remains impossible for us to hold leadership positions. Pope Francis has loosened the strictures on many traditional attitudes and practices within the church but he has firmly kept women in their place as subordinate to men. Unfortunately, the Catholic Church is not a democracy and, therefore, does not provide a route to leadership through legal challenges based on a constitution or political challenges based on an electoral system.

Nevertheless, let's remember that challenges to the hierarchy in religious institutions as in lay organizations rest on changing attitudes and changed behavior. None of the advances in human rights in the United States have come about without converting some of the leaders at the hierarchy's top and in the middle (i.e., Presidents, Senators, and local and national judges). So too, must this happen in our church.

Bearing in mind the attitudes and church structures that hinder our struggle for equal rights, we must imitate the doggedness with which Hillary Rodham Clinton has pursued her goals despite discouraging circumstances. We must seek radical change while also arguing for incremental reforms. We must continue to challenge traditional norms and change sexist attitudes. Pope Francis has brought a breath of fresh air to our Church. He has not discarded the traditional patronizing way that women are viewed in, but his generous style is hopeful. The pope has reasserted the importance of Christ's teachings about human dignity. That's a start. It's up to us to prompt our Church's leadership to apply those teaching to all of his people.

Marianna Pulaski Sullivan is Professor Emeritus of Political Science, The College of New Jersey and a Member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Germantown.

**St. Mary Magdalene Community
Mass Schedule
Sunday Mass at 11:30am
Epworth United Methodist Church
501 Morgan Avenue • Palmyra, NJ 08061
Drexel Hill United Methodist
600 Burmont Road • Drexel Hill, PA 19026
For information contact Eileen at 267-258-6966**

Book Reviews

***Women's Bodies as Battlefield: Christian Theology and the War on Women* by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Paper, \$30; e-book, \$19.99. 224 pp.**

Reviewed by Maureen Tate

This was a difficult book and one of the most stimulating I have read in a long time. The title grabbed me and I had no doubt I would read it. Women's "bodies as battlefield" is an image I was groping for to capture a reality I could not quite put my finger on. For anyone haunted by daily news footage of bombed out Syrian villages, unending lines of refugees trudging toward Europe, traumatized Chibok schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram, numbing statistics of casualties of war, women raped as a strategy of war, or the carnage of women's bodies beaten, raped and discarded—in our U.S. cities as well as on popular TV crime dramas—this book is a must read. It was not only intellectually challenging but also physically uncomfortable. I admit feeling a visceral anxiety and queasiness as the author chronicles levels of brutality directed at women throughout history and into the present day.

Women's Bodies as Battlefield brings together issues of war, global economics, race, class and gender analysis and violence against women, issues we might view as distinct, and draws connections that become increasingly obvious. The goal of the author, stated from the outset, is "to examine violence against women in relationship to the models of war and peace that exist in Western thought. These models are primarily Pacifism, Just War, and Just Peace." To do this, Thistlethwaite builds upon classic philosophy, theology, mythology and feminist critique, presuming some familiarity on the part of the reader, but incorporates oft-repeated concept summaries that I found helpful. There are discourses on ancient mythology, literature and western archetypes as foundational to our thinking on war. Adapted by Christianity, these streams of western thought provide the cultural supports for not only war but also what the author names and reframes here as the "War on Women."

Thistlethwaite introduces the concept of "critical physicality" as the necessary lens to see clearly the connection between what happens to human bodies on a battlefield and what is happening to women's bodies every day across the world. Bodies are damaged, mangled and penetrated, flesh is ripped apart, blood flows, and minds and lives are destroyed. This focus on the body is essential for several reasons. To actually see and confront the body in pain is to encounter an "affront to the senses" from which we recoil because such seeing is not a natural inclination. The only way a human being can easily participate in such atrocity is to step back from the physicality of the experience through abstractions, justifications and rationales, for example, heroism, sacrifice, authority, restoring order and the like.

These rationales are used to justify not only war but also violence against women. Unlike the condition of war in which injury to bodies among combatants is the primary point, women's bodies have always been a battlefield in which men inflict injury, torture and death. Women's bodies are battlefields in the very real sense that the violence takes place not *between* men and women, as if between equals, but rather *against* women as part of a contest between men. The con-

trol over women is directly related to the power and status of men in relation to one another. For women, however, this battlefield is one they cannot leave, hence "women's bodies as battlefield" and the direct relationship between war and War on Women. The link that must be acknowledged is injury to the body. There is no rationale or abstract "just cause" that negates what the body suffers in either war.

Women's Bodies as Battlefield explores three primary legacies of violence in western culture that undergird our inclination to war: contempt for the body; hierarchy of being and authority structures (in family, church, society and in dynamics of race, class and gender); and power as dominance. It pursues in depth how the dualistic and hierarchical worldviews of ancient mythology, religion, and philosophy that link the female with materiality and chaos also undergird perspectives on war. War can be "just", or violence against women justified, as a way to bring order to chaos or rise above what is considered "of the body" or "dirty".

Those familiar with feminist theological scholarship on dualistic thinking will appreciate the author's debunking of Just War theory for its reliance on such a dualistic worldview and other justifications such as just cause, last resort, right intention, just end and condition of right authority. Her critical analysis of the flaws in Just War theory also exposes the underpinnings of what she terms a "Just Rape" or "Just Battering" tradition. The whole is very clarifying.

The book introduced me to several new concepts that I found helpful, such as the term "queering". "To actually 'see' past what is being normalized, it has to be queered. To 'queer' a subject is to make its very normativity problematic." To "queer" the issue of violence against women it is necessary to step back, apply a lens of critical physicality, and make the necessary judgment that such violence is not normal but rather highly problematic! To reframe the power dynamic that plays out on the battlefield of women's bodies as a War on Women is to see the magnitude and depth of the problem.

Thistlethwaite explores many examples from history, literature, social media, mythology and current day events in developing her theme. She incorporates a broad range of input, from the Babylonian creation story, the Enuma Elish, ancient Roman warfare, and the persecution of witches, to a review of slavery, women's suffrage, and Liberian women's peace activism. She explores the role of erotic literature, pornography, and video games in normalizing violence against women. I will never view Cupid's arrow quite so innocently or read Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, or the Book of Revelation, without seeing the images of rape in them that are blatant and primal. Nor will I glaze over some of western art's revered masterpieces without recalling the author's analysis, particularly of Renaissance art, of sexual violence, the rape of women by gods, or the material world being subdued by images of patriarchal domination.

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Book Review *continued from page 5*

Since reading this book, I readily see the interplay of contempt for the body, hierarchies of power related to race, gender and economics, and justifications for violence and war everywhere I turn. In just one recent *New York Times* Sunday Review section, there were three articles in which these themes were explicit. One focused on Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's bravado regarding his sexual prowess and history of sexual exploits as proof of vigor and fitness for office. Another reported on a Bolivian presidential candidate and member of the Social *Christian* Party, who promotes gun ownership, defense of torture, contempt for the poor and immigrants, has support among wealthiest Brazilians, and who said of a fellow legislator, "she was not worthy of being raped by him." The third addressed the prohibition for women, in all cultures regardless of privileged educational or economic status, to speak openly about sexual experience or feel ownership of their own bodies. The hierarchy of races, denigration of the body, abuse of women and economic power are all of a piece. *Women's Bodies as Battlefield* untangles these threads to show how the War on Women, and the unending cycle of war, are used to reinforce power as dominance in the interests of global economics.

Exploration of the religious roots of the War on Women cannot avoid the crucifixion of Jesus and the "body in pain ... as a central part of the faith drama." Thistlethwaite exposes, and challenges, the "Jesus as Hero" mythology that is foundational to other hero myths that justify modern warfare. Moreover, the logic of Christ as sacrifice supports a rationale for domestic abuse such that women are instructed to withstand abuse, and violence in war, as a way of emulating Jesus' sacrifice for others. As the author transitions to building a foundation for peace in the War on Women, she points to precepts in the Christian faith to build upon, such as "the law of love" that calls each to love your neighbor as yourself and to love your enemies. However, Christianity cannot separate itself from the philosophical, theological, mythological, and political traditions of western culture that have shaped its structures, dogma and practice.

What is the antidote to war and the War on Women? The author has extensive experience in peace building and gender, race and class justice work. She insists that building a Just Peace framework cannot be done without dismantling the ideological, theological, and philosophical supports for violence against women endemic even in the "peace traditions," for example, pacifism. Just as violence is not aberrant, she contends peacemaking is not innocent. Rather,

Peace is the product of culture and requires religious, legal, economic, and political support for resolving problems without violence and for providing a just and equitable means to live for all. Gender justice must be part of that culture in a central way.

Unless peace building confronts the misogyny, power dynamics and dualisms that inform cultural attitudes on gender it will be impossible to dismantle the mechanisms of war built upon those same dynamics. Therefore, ending the war on women is essential to developing lasting peace. It cannot work in the reverse. The cessation of war has never ended

the War on Women, as men continue to confront one another on the battlefield of women's bodies in society as well as in the home.

"Can I get a witness?" Thistlethwaite insists that this is the starting place from which to understand the War on Women, but she is not optimistic that war will end anytime soon. The human capacity for violence is part of our human condition and the work to overcome violence in general, and violence against women in particular, is a deeply spiritual work. The book concludes with a review of "practice norms" to build a new paradigm of peacemaking. However, Thistlethwaite contends no approach will be effective unless it takes on "the nature of power, hierarchy in being and the legacy of contempt for women's bodies and sexuality."

Thistlethwaite concludes as she began, with the centrality of critical physicality. To focus on the pain and injury to the body, and not turn away, is to choose a stance of witness. As witnesses we are called to look, see and feel the pain and chronicle the suffering, so that it can no longer be hidden from sight. It cannot and must not be justified. There can be no healing until the trauma of violence that destroys the self is addressed. The body must remain at the center of peacemaking, as an embodied theology of just peace. One way to begin to engage the author's challenge to be a witness is to read this book.

Maureen Tate is a member of the Grail community and the SEPAWOC Core Committee.

**OKAY, WE ADMIT IT!
WE WERE DESPERATE!**

We barely got this last issue out. Thank you, thank you, thank you to those who faithfully donate. In fact, it was only thanks to your continued support that we got this issue mailed by the skin of our last few dollars!

We love bringing you news and views concerning Women's Ordination and Women's Rights in the Church. Please help us with our printing and mailing costs so that we can continue to do so.

Any amount you feel inspired to send would be most gratefully received. We've even included a self-addressed envelope for your convenience.
THANK YOU.

A Church for Our Daughters - Declaration

We are women and men, sisters and brothers, grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, mothers and fathers, godparents — members of the Catholic community who are deeply committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and who believe the Body of Christ must include all genders equally. Today, we call on our Church leaders to work with us to build a Church that strikes down every oppressive practice, teaching, and law that assigns women and girls to a subordinate status. We call on our leaders to create a Church that is truly inclusive and alive with the gifts, spirit, and potential of all its members.

A Church for our daughters is a community that

- recognizes that all people are created in God's image and equally endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the common good.
- honors the vocations and ministries of all its members, fostering and welcoming all called to priesthood, diaconate, and liturgical leadership.
- opens its sacred sacraments to all, as nourishment and ritual without limitations based on gender or sexuality.
- celebrates the witness and contributions of our foremothers in faith – those in Scripture, those in our tradition, and those who walk with us today.
- affirms the spirit of the divine present in the gifts, needs, and dreams of all God's people.
- celebrates and promotes a spirituality that recognizes an inclusive God, beyond gender, and incorporates language that is inclusive and representative of God's feminine, masculine, and non-gendered attributes in liturgy, doctrine, and pastoral practice.
- honors women's moral agency to make decisions that impact their health and family life.
- takes a firm and proactive stand opposing all forms of exploitation and violence perpetrated against women.
- advocates for social structures that support and sustain the basic needs of women including access to clean water, clean air, adequate housing, food, security, education, the workforce, political and social engagement, and freedom of movement.
- advocates for education for all our children, but especially for our daughters around the world who face daily acts of discrimination and violence in their quest for knowledge.
- works to dismantle oppressive structures and customs that disproportionately impact women creating inequality in pay, employment opportunities, development of public policy, and property ownership.
- works to eradicate destructive forces that triply oppress women of color such as racism, religious intolerance, and unequal access to social goods.
- honors and justly compensates the contributions of women working in the Church including equal pay, equal access to job opportunities, healthcare, and paid family leave.
- commits to reflect on its own participation in the oppression of women; to repent for unjust acts, systems, and teaching; and to renew structures of leadership to be more inclusive of the People of God at every level.

We pray together as a family of the faithful with the vision of a Church community that at its core upholds the full equality of all of its members. So that our daughters and yours may know radical inclusion and justice, equality without qualification, and an institution that transforms oppression into love without bounds, let us build a Church for our daughters.

The Sophia Wars *continued from page 3*

Clergy sex abuse, women's ordination and even economic slowdowns, are not the only problems facing religious traditions in our time, of course. In particular, the fragmentation of faiths, nations, and ideologies around the globe inspires—indeed, drives—crack-downs of all kinds, and not only on advocates of female images of God. But as the postcolonial feminist theologian Mayra Rivera explains, Sophia, in particular, calls forth just such brutal attempts at control. This is so, in part at least, because Sophia refuses to conform to the binaries between immanent and transcendent, male and female, native-born and foreigner, pure and contaminated, that are such a comfort to the threatened.

The 30th anniversary edition of Marian Ronan's book (with Susan Cole and Hal Taussig), *Wisdom's Feast: Sophia in Study and Celebration* is available on Amazon: Google Wisdom's Feast Apocryphile Press

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Scripture Reflections

Luke 13: 10-17

Judith A. Heffernan, M.Div.

On May 17, 1980, SEPAWOC gathered for our first Ordination Day Witness. Ten of us, ages 8 to 65 were in the park across from the Cathedral, praying, singing and holding one banner: "Remember your sisters who are ready and willing to be ordained". We watched the cardinal, bishops, priests, deacons and ordinands process outside from the chapel to the cathedral entrance doors. We were able to see each other as real people, all part of the church.

Well, since that day, the solemn ordination day procession is completely indoors! (Margaret Mead told us to "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed (people) can change the world"!)

Usually through the years the doors were left open and we could see into the cathedral. This year all the doors were closed as the procession began. I was struck that the door that seemed to be closed- and locked- had the inscription that it was the 'Holy Door of Mercy'!

Pope Francis declared 2016 as the Jubilee Year of Mercy. He has preached and spoken about it saying that this is the time for mercy...to heal wounds, to meet all those who are waiting to see and touch the closeness of God, to be caught up in tenderness...enter the door of mercy

and open wide the door of your heart...work against exclusion...

Outside we celebrated our beautiful Liturgy as a community of equals. We read this Gospel of Luke together...A woman had been bent over for eighteen years and Jesus said to her, "You are set free!" Jesus touched her, and she at once stood upright and glorified God!

Sister Elizabeth Johnson writes that Jesus was teaching in the synagogue where this woman was, and "compassion for her welled up in him." Jesus had concern for people on the margins and His healings and teachings were inclusive of women. Women were in the circle of His followers. Yet, Elizabeth reminds us that there are over 500,000,000 women in the Roman Church and every one of them is officially barred from being deacon or priest. Another commentary states that just what the woman yearns to do, yet cannot, is precisely what Jesus empowers her to do. You are set free!

The image of the closed "Door of Mercy" really bothered me all day. Then I remembered Edwin Markham's poem *Outwitted*, and thought of all of us...He drew a circle that shut me out, heretic, a rebel, a thing to flout; But Love and I had the wit to win, I drew a circle that took him in. May it be so.

Judith Heffernan, M.Div. is a member of the SEPAWOC Core Committee.