

	<b>EQUAL</b>	<i>Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women and Men in the Philadelphia Area</i>
Vol. XVIII No. 2		JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2009
	<b>WRITES</b>	<i>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.</i>

## BREAK THE SILENCE – SHATTER THE STAINED GLASS CEILING: AN EVENING WITH ROY BOURGEOIS AND AISHA TAYLOR

*By Maurcen Tate*

I thought I heard a crack. Something felt as if it shifted. And I don't think I was the only one who noticed. It was a great night for SFPAWOC and the women's ordination movement as approximately 125 people came together May 29<sup>th</sup> to listen to speakers, Roy Bourgeois, Maryknoll priest and founder of School of the Americas Watch, and Aisha Taylor, Executive Director of national WOC. The event was part of a national speaking tour following events of recent months in which the Vatican has threatened Bourgeois with excommunication following his participation in the Roman Catholic Womenpriest ordination of his friend and fellow School of the Americas Watch activist, Janice Sevre-Duszynska. Both Aisha and Roy shared from the perspective of personal story. Their journeys traced a trajectory from early encounters with injustice or suffering, to awakening to the realities of sexism, racism, and oppression, to periods of education, discernment, and activism, all leading to this moment in which the course of events resulted in an intersection of lives and causes that seem perfectly reasonable and almost inevitable.

Aisha Taylor described her early Catholic upbringing and her unwillingness to participate in an educational program that sanctioned less than full participation of women. Her later experience with the Christian evangelical movement, anti-racism work, and studies in feminist theology prepared her to join the women's ordination movement, especially in challenging the absence of young women and women of color in church ministry. She became involved with WOC's Young Feminist Network and ultimately WOC national staff. Aisha spoke passionately about her commitment to issues of social justice and human rights that are the basis of her motivation to work for women's ordination. She advocated the need for a model that addresses and interconnects all forms of injustice from within the movement and without.

Aisha also touted recent accomplishments of WOC: more effective and focused organizing campaigns and steps taken in support of women seeking ordination through the Roman Catholic Womenpriest movement. She commented on emerging challenges and new directions for WOC: the now integral involvement of more young women in the movement; WOC's anti-racism task force, and the challenge to link women of color to the movement. Finally, she enthusiastically described WOC's new initiative in seeking non-governmental status within the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. If granted, WOC could challenge women's absence

from decision-making bodies of religious institutions as an international human rights issue, especially given the enormous impact of the Roman Catholic Church on the lives of women – physically, psychologically, culturally and politically. This challenge could bring greater publicity to the movement and the injustice of the Vatican's stand. Aisha noted that there is much on WOC's plate but expressed her confidence in the leadership abilities and effectiveness of her successor, WOC's new Executive Director, Erin Saiz Hanna. As Aisha leaves to pursue a doctorate in diversity and organizational change, she looks forward to continuing involvement in WOC's anti-racism work.

Roy Bourgeois' presentation was quiet, gentle, and disarming. Unlike the fiery rallies for justice he has led at SOA protests, Roy told a very personal story. With just a hint of slow, easy, Louisiana southern drawl, he spoke of an uncomplicated Catholic, patriotic upbringing and a straightforward desire to serve the country by enlisting during the Vietnam War. His reflection on the violence and suffering after the war led him to discernment of a call to the priesthood with the Maryknoll Missionaries with whom he ministered for many years in Bolivia. It was during his ministry with the poor and oppressed in Bolivia that he became aware of U.S. military policy that was the cause of further violence and instability in Latin America. He soon saw that the seeds of this injustice focused around trainings of international military personnel at the then named School of the Americas located at Fort Benning, Georgia. Upon returning to the States, he began, with a small group of ten, to challenge U.S. military operations at the SOA, an action that has since generated a national movement with 20,000 participating in this year's protest. There is renewed hope that new legislation, garnering more co-sponsors against the international training school, will result in a successful vote to close down the school in the near future.

Roy reflected on how much he had learned from, and been inspired by, the women he had met in his ministry, in Bolivia, and those who stood by him in the SOA Watch, remarking on their faithful witness. He began to see the denial of women's call to priesthood as a grave injustice and knew he could no longer keep silent. From his perspective, we learned of the circumstances behind a now infamous Vatican radio interview on the SOA Watch, in which he was strongly moved – with only two minutes left of broadcast time – to state that

*Continued on page 4*

## PHILADELPHIA HOSTS ITS FIRST WOMEN'S ORDINATION

*On April 26, 2009, Philadelphia hosted its first Roman Catholic Womenpriests' ordination at Mishkan Shalom Synagogue. Mary Ann Schoettly is now an ordained priest and Chava Redonnet an ordained deacon in the Catholic Church. Here is Chava's story.*

### Abandoning Myself to God

"So how was the ordination?"

I've been asked that many times, and the image that comes to me most clearly is of lying on the floor listening to the litany of saints and praying... as I was told in the rehearsal, "This is the part where you are abandoning yourself completely to God." So in that moment, that long moment during the litany, I lay with my face a fraction of an inch from a shawl on the floor, feeling its softness as well as the rug and the floor beneath, giving my life and my heart to God and remembering the moment almost nine years ago when I did the same thing in the chapel at Nazareth College, only without lying on the floor, when I told God, "Yes," yes I would be a priest, yes, Lord, yes, I will do this. Will you help me? And I felt awe, lying on the floor in a synagogue in an old warehouse on a side street in Philadelphia, up on the third floor, sacred space, surrounded by women I respect and people I love, all there singing, "All you holy men and women pray for us."

### You Holy Men and Women Prayed for Us

And I sing it into the carpet hearing the names being sung above me... Mahatma Gandhi... Dorothy Day... Oscar Romero... Sylvia Kozmin... Mary Doyle-Feder... Maureen Neilsen... Francis and Clare of Assisi. All you holy men and women, pray for us. When it is over, the bishops begin to pray. They pray and pray, and it's beautiful. They pray that as a deacon I will care for the poor and the sick. They pray that I will model an inclusive church. They pray and pray, and I think this will be a meditation for me for a long time to come, to read their prayer again and ask for help in doing this work, being this deacon.

### The Sacramental Moment

And then I kneel, and bishops, Andrea Johnson and Patricia Presen, lay hands on my head to consecrate me a deacon... and a long line of priests and friends, ministers of other faiths, lay people, taking it in turn to pray, to offer their blessing as a part of the body of Christ, part of the people of God, the church universal, calling yet another person to service. The moment of ordination, I am told, the sacrament itself is in the touch, the laying on of hands, not in the prayer – bishops, priests, laypeople, friends... friends in their Baptist Minister robes: the world beyond Catholicism, the church that goes past the reformation divide, that loves the same God and follows the same Jesus. We need each other. And we are here in Jewish space, our cousins whom we as a faith have wronged so long and so badly, who nevertheless open their arms and their worship space to us today. It is a beautiful thing.

### Yes!

The bishop gives me my study Bible, because now I am called to preach. Before giving it to one of the priests to hold, I kiss it – and in that moment all my reverence for the Word of God – for the accumulated history and wisdom and

failure and "Yes!" of the people of God – all that love and hope and dogged persistence – all of that is there, and I kiss the book, and one of the priests said later, "I knew then that – you got it." Oh, there was more, much more to the day and the ceremony. It was a blessed, blessed day. I am so grateful to those who drove twelve hours – to Philadelphia and back in a day, a lot of them! – What a gift, to have such people with me on such a day. In the ceremony for some reason the deacon gets the last word. Go figure. But I'll say it again: Friends, go in peace. The Mass is ended, but the service has just begun!!!

Chava Redonnet

April 28, 2009

### Statement from Cardinal Justin Rigali issued April 24, 2009, on the Invalid Ceremony of the Ordination of Women in Philadelphia posted on the Archdiocese website

It is most unfortunate that this pseudo-Ordination has occurred within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. I am concerned pastorally for the souls of those involved and for the Catholic faithful who may be confused. Those who present themselves for ordination at such an invalid ceremony, as well as those who falsely claim to be ordaining the women, are, by their actions, automatically excommunicated from the Church. (General Decree regarding the delict of attempted sacred ordination of a woman, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, December 19, 2007).

Such a ceremony is in violation of the constant teaching of the Church, based on Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Both clearly indicate that Jesus called only men to follow Him as Apostles, and the Church has always regarded His choice in this matter as normative for all time. Therefore, she has always followed Jesus' example by choosing only men for the ministry of Holy Orders. This teaching has been confirmed by the supreme authority of the Catholic Church as definitive and irreformable. Consequently, the Church is not authorized by Christ to confer Holy Orders upon women, and cannot do so, no matter how ardent a person's desire may be.

All Catholic men and women bring different yet equally valuable gifts to the Church. The Church is strongest when the gifts given by Christ to all her members are celebrated and respected. Our late Holy Father, Pope John Paul II said, "The presence and the role of women in the life of the Church, although not linked to the ministerial priesthood, remain absolutely necessary and irreplaceable." (Ordinatio Sacerdotalis, 1994)

God's gifts, however, are never given to individuals merely for their own fulfillment, but for the unfolding of His plan of salvation in the Church for the benefit of the whole community of the faithful, and no one's true personal dignity in the Church can be fostered in opposition to the will of Christ himself. Consequently, such a pseudo-ordination ceremony denigrates the truth entrusted to the Church by Christ Himself, and demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of the respect and dignity accorded to women by Christ and His Church.

*Response by Eileen DiFranco, ordained Roman Catholic Womanpriest, to Cardinal Rigali's Statement on the Ordination of Women in Philadelphia*

## **On the Silencing of the Lambs**

In refusing to recognize the priestly vocations of women, Sister Joan Chittister said quite accurately that the Roman Catholic Church forces itself to see with one eye, hear with one ear, and walk on one leg. The "constant teaching and tradition" Cardinal Rigali cites came into being because clerical men turned and continue to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the voices, the life experiences, and the aspirations of their sisters in Christ. Even now, adult women with full moral agency have been directed by men who sadly, have very little life experience with women, not to speak about the deepest desires of their hearts – to serve the people of God. When women try to speak, they are silenced; their motives questioned. When they act according to the dictates of a well-formed, adult conscience, they are excommunicated. This is in stark contrast to the treatment of the ordained male priests who caused terrible confusion within the Body of Christ by sexually abusing children and vulnerable women.

The Pontifical Biblical Commission stated in 1976 that there is no scriptural reason why women should not be ordained. This is based, of course on Galatians 3:28 which states that there is no male or female in Christ Jesus. Paul also wrote of the Deacon Phoebe and the Apostle Junia. He clearly uses the words "deacon" and "apostle" to refer to these women – the same words he used to describe himself. Then, of course, there is the archeological evidence of women priests, deacons and bishops, which tell their own stories if one has eyes to see and read and understand.

Jesus himself believed in the full agency of women when he directed Mary Magdalene rather than Peter to "Go tell!" Mary, then, is the very first person in the New Testament to preach the Good News. Thus, Jesus our Emmanuel, God with us as us, quite obviously did not feel that choosing a woman as the first apostle denigrated Himself, His image, His message or the Kingdom of God.

Jesus, whose companions were the least among us, did not have a vocabulary that included the words "denigrate" or "excommunicate." Instead, Jesus, the Good Shepherd sought rather than excluded, enfolded rather than cast away. Jesus, the penultimate pastor, never drove people away from His table. He said that we should find rest in Him, not banishment.

Excommunication is unscriptural and it is uncharitable. It is unbecoming to those who consider themselves to be pastors and shepherds. The ordained women who have pledged their lives, their futures and their sacred honor to the Lord God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth in whose image they were lovingly fashioned, have relied upon that God to guide them every step of the way. They have come this far by faith and hope and love. They will continue to do so as they model a church that sees with two eyes and hears with two ears and walks on two legs.

*Eileen McCafferty DiFranco, RCWP*

*Response to Cardinal Rigali's statement on the Ordination of women in Philadelphia by Judy Heffernan, member of the Community of the Christian Spirit, via letter to the Archdiocese.*

Dear Ms. Farrell,

It is with deep sorrow that I have meditated on this statement. As a woman who has known the call to ordained priestly ministry since I was 6 years old, my heart is aching.

As a charter member of the Women's Ordination Conference, as a founding member of the local chapter and as a woman with a Master of Divinity degree from a Catholic Seminary (one of my classmates is now a Bishop, one a Director of Vocations, and all others ordained in good standing, serving the Church in many states and countries), I must disagree with some of the premises in this sincere letter from the Cardinal.

Yet, it is impossible to dialogue with any member of the clergy, as they are not permitted to discuss women's ordination—that is, of course, with any one in favor of women's ordination—there seems to be MUCH discussion with those who are against it !!!!!

As a Philadelphia Catholic who attended Philadelphia Catholic Schools for 16 years, it is difficult for me to write to the Inquirer with my criticisms of the hierarchical position on women's ordination. I believe we must first try to dialogue together. If only someone from the Archdiocese would dialogue with us, come pray with us...if only someone had come as a fellow pilgrim to the ordination ceremony, it would have been impossible to be there without being touched by the One, Holy Spirit. The prayerfulness, joy and reverence of the ordaining Bishops, the visiting clergy, the ordinands and all the assembled people of God would surely stir anyone's soul.

Soon we will hear Jesus saying that He will send the Spirit, as there are things He cannot tell the disciples, and the Spirit will guide us. Many of your brothers and sisters in Christ believe deeply that the Spirit is calling - has been calling - women to ordination. Some of those women believe that they must follow that call, no matter what the consequences.

The automatic excommunications are mean spirited, at least. The condemned should be able to meet the accusers!

I am in turmoil about this letter, and my feelings and responses to the philosophy therein are brimming over from the depths of my heart. Some of us would like to discuss this with the Cardinal.

Is there anyway this can be arranged?  
Thank-you.

*Judy Heffernan  
Master of Divinity*

*To date, Ms. Heffernan has received no response.*

## **BREAK THE SILENCE** continued from page 1

one cannot address injustices outside the church without dealing with those within, remarking that "there will never be justice in the Roman Catholic Church until women are ordained." The broadcast was promptly terminated.

Later, when a good friend and SOA activist, Janice Sevre-Duszynska, asked him to attend and concelebrate at her Roman Catholic Womenpriest ordination in August 2008, Roy remarked about how pleased and grateful he was to be able to attend and that the day itself was full of joy and the presence of the Spirit. Not long after, however, he was summoned to meet with Maryknoll leadership and received a difficult letter from the Vatican putting him on notice of excommunication if he did not recant his views on the right of women to be ordained. After much soul searching weighing probable risks, and upon receiving the blessing of family as well as support from his Maryknoll community, Roy decided to stand with the women who had stood by him. He said he felt a tremendous sense of peace, joy and gratitude, words used repeatedly by a man who had walked by way of conscience into the center of controversy once again and was able to affirm that it is the right place to be. He asserted that the call to the priesthood is first and foremost a call from God. Who are men to say they cannot accept women testifying to such a call? By stating that it is time for men to refuse to be silently complicit in such an injustice, Roy named and began another important shift that is a new and larger crack in the stained glass ceiling.

Roy Bourgeois is a plain spoken man who uses the correct terms, sin and sexism, to name the injustice of the Church's stance toward women. I appreciate that he calls it "silly" to think that Jesus would say to women, "No, you are not welcome." He says that when the women were sent to share the good news of the Resurrection, the men did not believe them. They are not believing them still.

It was gratifying and affirming to continue the evening with an inclusive celebration of the Eucharist in which we prayed "dangerous" prayers, raised voices in liberating song, and extended blessings to continue the work for justice and to live Gospel values to all. SEPAWOC was pleased to grant its annual Mary Magdalene Award to Aisha Taylor and Roy Bourgeois. In gratitude for their joyful service and steadfast pursuit of justice, we extend our continued blessings to both. *Maureen Tate is a member of SEPAWOC Core Committee*

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## **HALF A HERITAGE**

*By Bernie McBride*

On February 19<sup>th</sup> of this year, Justin Rigali announced, "HERITAGE OF FAITH-VISION OF HOPE, a [\$200,000,000] capital and endowment campaign that will support the charitable, educational and pastoral needs of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia." Even more, he asserted he was announcing it "with confidence" in its success.

At the start of the list of six campaign goals, one might be encouraged. The first is "...revitalizing...parish life..." That's a good thing. The second is "...to enable access to...Catholic education..." Sounds noble enough - but then the problems begin. Number three: "...renovate the Cathedral..." That would be the place where the most exclusive events take place. And then the fourth: "Invest in priestly formation...St. Charles seminary..." And the fifth: "ensure dignified retirement and health care for retired priests." Finally, dead last: "...providing vital human services."

We have to wonder how a Church based on loving our neighbors as ourselves could place our neighbors' needs dead last on our list of stated priorities. We should wonder also how many city parish closings might be avoided for what it will cost to renovate the Cathedral. But let's focus on how this latest articulation of the Cardinal's agenda, investment in male "priestly formation," affirms the hierarchical Church's neglect, exclusion and abuse of women.

There have long been and still are at least three Religious women at work in our Archdiocese for every priest. In fact, it's more like five for every Diocesan priest. These women have been the backbone of Catholic education in America and have led the operations of many of our healthcare facilities and systems. And where is the commitment to their "dignified retirement"?

In addition to the many Religious women, so called 'lay' women have staffed rectories and parish centers, taught in parish schools and otherwise served Catholics and others through the many ministerial activities that must make Christ proud. And what about their "dignity"?

Nothing the Cardinal wishes to support with our money is hopeful for women. Here's my two cents: Invest in WOC or Roman Catholic WomenPriests or any of many other organizations and initiatives that are far truer to the real and complete goals of Christ's church.

*Bernie McBride is treasurer and member of  
SEPAWOC Core Committee.*

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***The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation.* by Kirsteen Kim, Orbis Books, 2007. 210 pp. \$25**

reviewed by **Marian Ronan**

In *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation*, the young British missiologist Kirsteen Kim offers a galvanizing vision of the Christian faith for the twenty-first century. We know immediately that her book is not some abstract Western theology: she begins it with the controversy over the shamanistic ritual danced by Korean woman theologian Chung Hyun Kyung at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Canberra, in 1991.

Kim sheds light on this controversy by reviewing the Western history of the theology of the Holy Spirit ("pneumatology") exploring the Catholic tendency to limit the Spirit to the church and the Protestant tendency to locate the Spirit within the human heart. She also examines the meanings of the Holy Spirit in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and the critical place of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the division between the Eastern and Western churches in 1054. For many American Catholics, this chapter alone will make buying the book worthwhile.

Kim also probes the ways in which the theologies of Barth, Tillich, and Rahner moved Western Christianity toward a new understanding of the Holy Spirit. Though Kim is a Protestant theologian with evangelical roots, she argues that Rahner, by characterizing the human being as "spirit in the world," contributed more than the other two to a new more inclusive post-modern pneumatology.

Yet Kim finds even Rahner's theology too focused on the church's ownership of the Christ-event and not enough on the encounter between Christ and the wider world which the Spirit generates. For this, she turns to twentieth Christian missiologists of whom I myself had barely ever heard before reading this book: Roland Allen, David Bosch, and John V. Taylor. From their experiences in non-western Christian missions, these theologians helped generate a recognition that the Spirit is present in all human hearts. Kim's delineation of their efforts undercuts the liberal tendency to tar all "missionaries" with the same brush. By the post-World War II period a new Christian paradigm of mission, "*missio Dei*", was flowering in the West, stressing the church as the one sent, not the sender (John 20:21), and mission as continuing God's work of creation through Christian presence to others.

Kim expands on this *missio Dei* paradigm in theologies of the Holy Spirit in India and Korea. In India, she highlights the work of the Protestant ecumenist Stanley Samartha, the Indian Catholic sister Vandana, and the Jesuit liberation theologian Samuel Rayan. Kim praises their pneumatological contributions, especially their shared conviction that the wisdom and justice of all faiths are a result of their practitioners' encounter with the Spirit. She is less enthusiastic about the "one Universal Spirit" cosmology that characterizes their work. Although this "one Spirit paradigm" has helped to unify India's extraordinary social diversity, she finds it less useful when dealing with the fragmentary reality of the postmodern period.

For a more fertile model, Kim turns to the "One Spirit along with many spirits" cosmology that undergirds Korean Christian pneumatologies. She acknowledges that there is something paradoxical about finding this model in Korea, since mainline Protestant Christians there tend to resist the Western enthusiasm for the "pagan" religions they themselves renounced. But Kim maintains the impact of these religions on Korean Christianity cannot be denied. The Confucian tradition, for example, underpins the patriarchal style of precisely this rejection of religious pluralism by mainline Korean Christians. And Shamanism—in which shamans interpreted the messages that the spirits carried from the High God to the Korean people—is evident in the diverse terminology for spirits used throughout contemporary Korean culture.

Kim traces a "One spirit along with many spirits" paradigm in the work of four Korean theologians: the liberation theologian Suh Nam Dong, the Pentecostal theologian Cho Yonggi, the cultural theologian Ryu Tong Shik, and Chung Hyun Kyung herself. If, like me, you know almost nothing about Korean Christian theology, this chapter is valuable in and of itself. But Kim's goal is to expand Christian pneumatology to take into account the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit in the twenty-first century. For this purpose she finds Chung's theology most helpful because of its greater concern for liberation, its more thoroughgoing response to Korean culture, and its maternal spirit language. Kim likewise welcomes Chung's insight that repentance is a prerequisite to receiving the Spirit and her portrayal of the Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus

*Continued on page 7.*

## TRACING THE SIGN OF THE CROSS:

### Sexuality, Mourning, and the Future of American Catholicism

by **Marian Ronan**

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## THE SIGN OF JONAH

by Jim Plataras

The Book of Jonah is a deliciously subversive story. Most scholars believe it is the work of an anonymous author living in the post-exilic period. The leaders of the re-constituted community were convinced that intermarriage with foreign women had been the great sin that brought God's punishment upon Israel. The Book of Ezra documents the brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing that took place following the return from the exile. The community leaders complained to Ezra: "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices. They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness" (Ezra 9:1-2). Ezra's response was a campaign of ethnic cleansing to rid the community of impure blood. The priests and others who had married foreigners were forced, under threat of property forfeiture, to send away their foreign wives together with their children.

### Three Significant Characters

This is the background for the anonymous author's slyly subversive tale about Jonah, the prophet. The story revolves around just three actors:

1. **Jonah** is the sole representative of the chosen people. The recalcitrant self-centered, self-pitying prophet is hardly an attractive person. He is the opposite of what we might expect to see in a genuine prophet of the Lord. When Jonah is commanded to go and preach repentance to the hated people of Nineveh, he runs away from the Lord and heads in the opposite direction, boarding a boat for Tarshish. When God offers him a second chance, rescuing him from the belly of the great fish, Jonah obeys, but only grudgingly. When, against all expectations, the people of Nineveh repented and were spared by God, Jonah, instead of rejoicing, was "greatly displeased and became angry... Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

2. All the human actors in the story, other than Jonah, are gentiles, and without exception they prove to be more noble than the cantankerous prophet. The pagan sailors go the extra mile to spare Jonah. When they finally have no choice but to throw Jonah overboard, they pray: "O LORD, please do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man." The people of

Nineveh respond immediately to the preaching of Jonah and become models of repentance.

3. The third actor is the Lord God. God not only shows mercy to the Ninevites, but is incredibly patient with Jonah. To Jonah's complaint: "I knew it! You are a gracious and compassionate God," the LORD replied, "Have you any right to be angry?" And when Jonah moans about the loss of his shade-tree, the Lord asks him "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine? . . . You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

### The Truth of the Book of Jonah

The literary genre of Jonah is not history. The Book of Jonah is a parable, a captivating tale with all manner of hyperbole, all in the service of bringing home the truth that God's love extends to all humankind. Jonah has barely hit the water when God sends a great fish to swallow him up. After a suitable period for reflection on the error of his ways, Jonah is vomited onto dry land by the great fish. When Jonah comes to the "divinely large" city of Nineveh — it would take three days just to walk across the city — the Ninevites immediately respond to the call to repentance.

The 'truth' of the Book of Jonah is not about the historicity of Jonah's improbably successful mission to the Ninevites. Its 'truth' is about the wideness of God's mercy. Jonah is one of the easier books of the Hebrew Scriptures to comprehend. It is hard to miss the point of the story. This is what Jesus has to say about the Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites: "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation (for)... now one greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. (Lk 11:29-32)

### The Sign of Jonah

This is the central theme of Luke and Acts: Jesus, the prophet, would be rejected by his own people, but accepted by the outsiders. Luke 11:29, as well as other Lukan passages, refers to the great paradox, that the chosen people — who had

continued on page 7

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**The Holy Spirit in the world** *continued from p.5*  
tortured and killed on the cross.

In her final chapter, Kim builds on these many insights to offer her own global Christian theology of the Holy Spirit. For her, the Spirit cannot be confined within the church or the individual because if it were, mission would be impossible. The Indian and Korean visions of the Spirit to which we have been introduced encompass the whole of creation. But for Kim, the Korean Spirit among many spirits paradigm is most helpful because it reflects the postmodern insight that unity can only be achieved in relation to local contexts and requires respect for the irrational and intuitive aspects of the Spirit's mission that is less than evident in rational Western theology.

As envisioned in this moving and powerful book, the ultimate goal of a new mission theology of the Holy Spirit is reconciliation, not triumph, or conversion, or even liberation. It begins with an intuitive sense of the Spirit's presence and activity in many movements, spiritualities and individuals. Yet this trust must be accompanied by discernment, and for Christians, discernment undergirded by the Christian belief that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Such a theology enables steering a course between *a priori* rejection of other traditions and a naive embrace of them all. It allows for Christian cooperation as well as differences with other groups, but in the confidence that all will be reconciled in Christ: "whoever is not against us is for us." Where once Christian theology was abstract, speculative, rational, and controlled, now it is driven by the action of the Holy Spirit, that multi-colored bird of fire in whose power the cultures, regions and religions of the world move toward healing and reconciliation.

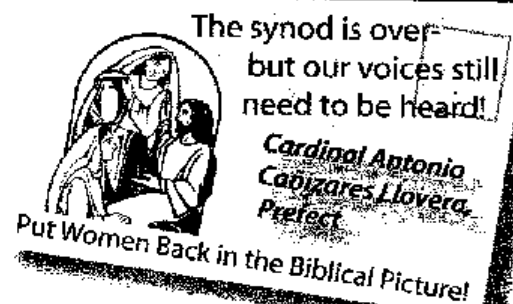
*Marian Ronan was recently appointed Research Professor of Catholic Studies at the Center for World Christianity, New York Theological Seminary, New York, NY. She is the author of Tracing the Sign of the Cross: Sexuality, Mourning, and the Future of American Catholicism (Co-*

### Thanks So Much!

Gratitude is the only emotion possible for me as I enter into Excel the contributions from our appeal in the last issue of *EqualRites*. A third of what we need to support our web presence and our newsletter came in right away; another third before this issue. So many: some known to me, some not, some former activists, some current ones, some readers making contributions from \$5 to \$200. It is such a joy to see your names.

As you may be able to tell, however, that's only two thirds of what we need for regular operations. Special events like the Roy Bourgeois/Aisha Taylor talk have to bring in their own support. So if you have not yet contributed in 2009, please send your check made out to SEPAWOC to **Bernard McBride, Treasurer, SEPAWOC, PO Box 27295, Philadelphia, PA 19118.**

*Regina Bannan, President of SEPAWOC*



Write to **Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera, Prefect, Congregation for Divine Worship** asking him and the synod committee to:

- ◆ Open an examination of the Lectionary as recommended by Synod Proposal 16.
- ◆ Restore women leaders such as Phoebe, Lois and Eunice to Lectionary texts from which they have been deleted.
- ◆ Include stories about other women leaders such as Shiprah and Puah, the midwives who saved a nation of Hebrew boy-children, perhaps even Moses.
- ◆ Convene a gender-balanced group of biblical scholars to decide which new women's Lectionary stories would be most fruitful for prayer, preaching and catechesis.

*E-Postcards, Women and the Word parish strategies, resources and paper postcards available at [www.futurechurch.org](http://www.futurechurch.org) or call 216-228-0869*

### The Sign of Jonah *continued from p.6*

the benefit of many centuries of advance preparation — would reject the Word, while the Gentiles, the people in outer darkness, would accept and come to the light. Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry says to the people of his hometown: "I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his hometown."

This is a recurring theme in Jesus' teaching: "People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last." (Lk 13:29-30)

This was the Sign of Jonah, the miracle that the Risen Christ would be accepted among the nations. This was an even greater sign than Jesus' wonderful works of healing during the public ministry. This was the *Sign of Jonah*, the great mystery, that Jesus "appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world (1 Tim 3:16)."

*Jim Plastaras is the author of The Witness of John: A Study of Johannine Theology. He is also author of The God of Exodus and the Creation and Covenant.*

## SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Summer 2009 Jn 6; Mark 5-7

By Judith A. Heffernan

This summer we will hear Jesus saying in John 6, "I am the Bread of Life...those who come to me shall not hunger...whoever eats this bread will live forever." We will celebrate that we are a Eucharistic Community, one bread, one body. In May, I had the splendid experience of attending the 2009 Conference of Intentional Eucharistic Communities. IECs are defined as Eucharistic, small faith communities who strive for equality, mutuality, inclusiveness and more expansive concepts of God. They are interconnected with other communities and the church universal (they claim it, reshape it and reform it!) They also believe that Vatican II is the foundation rather than the limit- "the vision must be followed by the venture!"

This summer we will hear in Mark 5 that the Apostles and Jesus were going to rest awhile and went off in a boat—yet, when they disembarked there was a crowd waiting to see Jesus, and he was moved with pity for them. This reminds me of Bill Callahan, S.J. at the IEC Conference. Bill shared with the assembled that although he is living with Parkinson's, instead of resting in his retirement, he hopes to rebuild *Priests for Equality!* (I also learned during a mealtime at the Con-

ference, that as a young Jesuit, Bill preached retreats throughout an East Coast state. When it was discovered that Bill was inviting women around the altar, Bill was uninvited from every retreat house! )

One reason I went to the Conference was to thank Christine Vladimiroff, O.S.B for respectfully informing Rome that, no, she would not stop Joan Chittister, O.S.B from addressing "Women's Ordination Worldwide". At the IEC conference Christine reflected on creative fidelity in challenging times, she stated that the current Vatican theology of priesthood isn't the only theology of priesthood and she believes the integrity of the church is currently at risk. Christine reminded us that while we must speak our truth with love, we are a Pentecost people and we must not mute the prophetic edge.

This summer we will hear in Mark 7 that Jesus empowered the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.

And as Roy Bourgeois reminded us, Archbishop Romero proclaimed, "Let those who have a voice speak out for the voiceless!"

*Judy Heffernan, member of the Community of the Christian Spirit, original member of WOC.*

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**AFFILIATION:** *Equal wRites* 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.

**MANUSCRIPTS AND CORRESPONDENCE:** If you would like to contribute an article, letter, or anything else to *Equal wRites*, please send it double-spaced, with your name, phone number, and a short biographical note. The next issue will be October 2009. Final deadline for submissions is September 15. Send to eharty43@yahoo.com or mail to SEPAWOC P.O. Box 27195, Philadelphia, PA 19118

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