

Because Sometimes True Fidelity Lies in the Courage to Dissent

JOIN US AS WE WITNESS FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY IN MINISTRY

Holy Thursday
April 5, 2012 11:15 AM
STANDING TOGETHER
FOR WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Ordination Day
May 19, 2012 9:30 AM
EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY
LED BY A WOMAN

18th & Race Streets
(Near the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul)
Philadelphia, PA
For Information, 215-545-9649

EQUAL

**Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women
and Men in the Philadelphia Area**

Vol. XXX No. 2

MARCH - JUNE 2012

WRITES

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.*

Dear Archbishop Chaput,

First of all we would like to welcome you to Philadelphia. By now you have met many people and are familiar with the issues unique to the Church in our Archdiocese. You may or may not be familiar with our group, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference. We would like to introduce you to our organization and invite you to two of our upcoming events.

On Holy Thursday, the day that the church celebrates the priesthood, we will gather at 11:15 am at 18th and Race Streets. And on May 19, Ordination Day, we will meet at the park across the street from the Cathedral to quietly celebrate a Eucharistic liturgy with a woman celebrant, praying for the seminarians being ordained. At both events we pray for the Holy Spirit to bring her wisdom to the Church so that women and men together can discern the will of God, to know the Jesus of justice and peace.

Our mission statement reads: "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." We wanted you to be aware of our prayerful presence on these two occasions and the significance for us as we witness with the beliefs in our hearts and souls that women and men should stand together at the altar inside the Cathedral on Holy Thursday and Ordination Day. This will be our 32nd year witnessing. We would welcome you if you would come to meet us. We welcome the opportunity to dialogue at any time.

Sincerely,
The Editors of EqualwRites

MARY MAGDALENE AWARD PRESENTATION TO THERESA KANE, RSM



SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2012 at 3PM
Holy Innocents St. Paul's Episcopal Church

7001 Torresdale Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19135

For more information go to hispepiscopal.com
or call 215-464-1319

We are so fortunate to be able to reschedule this event, originally slated for October 30, to June 3 (when we are fairly sure it won't snow!). Please join us in honoring this most illustrious woman, Theresa Kane, and to hear her speak.

You may know Theresa Kane best as the brave, prophetic, woman religious leader who, in welcoming Pope John Paul II when he visited the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC in 1979, publicly called for the ordination of women in the Catholic Church.

One event - no matter how significant and far-reaching its impact - does not, however, define a whole life. And it is for her whole life's work, dedicated to justice, community, spiritual enrichment, and fostering full participation in the life of the church for Catholic women everywhere that we honor Theresa Kane with the Mary Magdalene award.

“Gender is Just Not An Issue” - Gifts of an Ordained Deacon

An Interview with Pat Rubenstein

By Ellie Harty and Mary Whelan

One reason we strive so fervently for ordination of women in the Catholic Church is we know we are missing out on the invaluable gifts for ministry only they can bring. Below is another story in our continuing series on the special richness women bring to the Church and what we are missing when we exclude them from ordained ministry.

Pat Rubenstein is in the process of being ordained in the deaconate of the Episcopal Church. Unable to suppress her irrepressible sense of humor, she quips, “I decided to use my innate stubbornness as a force for good!” That stubbornness, and, we believe, goodness, led her from a secular Jew-



ish upbringing to attendance at Quaker meetings in high school and college to a liberal, highly expressive, social activist version of traditional Protestantism in her early adult years to, finally, the Episcopal deaconate.

“My parents were non-practicing Jews,” Pat explained. “We always said we were ‘Jew...ish’.” She occasionally went to the synagogue with her grandparents, but there women sat in the balcony apart from men, and “I could not accept that role for women.” Her decision about Judaism was cemented at age 13 when her parents asked her if she wanted to have a Bas Mitzvah or new bedroom furniture. “I really enjoyed my new bedroom,” she laughed. In high school and college, she was drawn to the Friends Meetings and later to liberal Protestantism because of the way “social activism, politics, and spirituality converged.” The Episcopal Church added an even deeper dimension: “You get a sense of history and continuity and a right now, this minute, kind of feeling in a beautiful Gothic setting. It feels unchanged and modern at the same time. I was drawn to the sense of tradition, of being tied to all those who had gone before.”

Educated in medical technology, Pat had worked in the medical field and, more recently, as a math learning support specialist in a local school district. “I hadn’t been doing spiritual thinking or even incorporating spirit in my daily life and experiences,” she admits, but she had participated in a four year

program offered through the University of the South on Education for Ministry at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Doylestown. “It was a mentored study group in which we were exposed to thinking theologically.” At the end of the program, Pat found she wanted to keep on learning and interviewed for a Masters Program in Ministry. “I meant just to continue an education I found fascinating, but at my first interview, I suddenly blurted out, ‘I’m thinking of the deaconate.’ No one was more surprised than I!” She describes her own call to ministry as “kicking and screaming into something you didn’t know you should be doing but you can’t think of doing anything else!”

The ordained deaconate is different from the priesthood. “It’s a service order; you serve the parish and work in a community other than the parish.” She did not choose the priesthood because, she said, “I’m too old; it’s too expensive, and I don’t like being in charge.” She clarified, “Let me put it this way: The priests are the shepherds; the deacons the sheepdogs,” and being a sheepdog suited her perfectly (and proved a perfect metaphor since she also raises and trains dogs who are used in nursing homes and other facilities for therapeutic purposes). After a grueling pre-admission process consisting of many interviews, essays, psychological tests, and defenses of her call, Pat was admitted and completed twelve courses to earn a master’s degree in Ministry.

The gifts we Catholics have lost in not having an ordained deaconate in which someone like Pat can minister became clear as she described her current position. She is serving as chaplain at Indian Creek Foundation, a sheltered workshop for mentally disabled adults. “I could have chosen to act as chaplain in a hospital or other facility, but I knew I belonged here, and I love it,” she said enthusiastically. “I’ve found my people. We relate!” Ministering to this population has its challenges, ones many others have been reluctant to take on, but Pat was undaunted. “I’ve always been very verbal and so I chose this ministry because I knew I would be uncomfortable. All learning, I’ve heard, is done on the edges, and this learning comes with special blessings.” She explained, “It’s a ministry of presence. Many are non-verbal, but we are learning a new way of communicating. I’ve found that each person has his or her own language and ‘speaks’ it without masks or filters, without judgment and with full acceptance. I have been profoundly enriched.” And so, we believe, are the people she serves.

The special blessing that is Pat’s ministry will, alas, be lost to the Catholic Church unless we work even harder for women’s ordination. In 1974, the Episcopal Church ordained 11 women before ordination of women was officially accepted by the church in 1976. (Take note all “unofficially” ordained Catholic women priests!) Hearing Pat’s story – and many others – we should at least push harder for women officially ordained in the deaconate. When we pointed out that the Catholic liturgy and so many other aspects of worship, sense of history and tradition, and commitment to social justice are like the Episcopal Church’s and asked whether she ever considered choosing Catholicism, Pat answered, no. The hierarchy, the authority of the Pope, puts her off as does the official stand

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I AM NOT ME ANYMORE

By Joseph Schlachter

Editor's note: We very much welcome Joseph Schlachter's (Some of us know him by a different first name!) article on how he, a male member of a religious order, came to so ardently support women's ordination. We also very much admire his courage in publicly telling his story to us. The article he wrote below does relate how he "is not me anymore," but we wanted to know a bit more about the "me" before the change and interviewed him at his residence.

Joseph Schlachter grew up as a very traditional Catholic, attending Catholic schools and college, earning a master's degree in religion, entering the religious life, and teaching religion. "I was really your average complaisant Catholic," he says and then adds with his characteristic twinkle, "I went into religious life to save my soul; I'm still not sure I did a good job of it!" He also entered religious life to serve the poor and did so for over 50 years, and, as those who knew him then and now can attest, did a very good job indeed.

In the mid-1960's, the Catholic religious world changed, and religious life as a vocation ended for many. Joseph remained in that life but could not help questioning certain aspects of his faith. "The people who changed with Vatican II reforms were the ones waiting for that change," and he found he was one of them.

"I am not me anymore."

When I arrived in Philadelphia in the mid 90's, I did not know who I was to become. I was 65 years of age and content with the direction my life was heading. I do not remember how, but I found my way to CTA (Call To Action) and I found myself very much at home. I was, once again, in a totally new place in my life. Soon after, I became very involved with CTA when their national convention was held here in Philadelphia. My eyes were opened to a different Catholic Church. I remember seeing a large billboard ad for WOC (Women's Ordination Conference). I had no idea what it meant.

I attended the monthly meetings of CTA at the Sister Jeanne Donovan House (formerly, Maryknoll House). I was asked to represent CTA at a meeting of a new group named Voice of the Faithful (VOTF). This group was formed as a result of the clerical abuse scandal. The meeting was held at one of the Catholic Worker Houses in Philadelphia. There were representatives from ARCC (Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church), Dignity, VOTF, COR (Catholic Organizations for Renewal) and a group called SEPAWOC, Southeastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference. At this meeting COR was revived, and I was on a life changing course. I was given the opportunity to play an infinitesimal role in changing the Catholic Church. I realized that changes would not occur during my lifetime, but I was satisfied to be among those who are laying the groundwork. On this new course I became a member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, and I was certainly influenced by several retreats I made with Dan Berrigan, S.J. and John Dear, S.J.

It became more and more obvious to me that sharing my story might really be my way of praying. So, I became involved in many different small groups. For many years, this

confused me until I was given a quote written by Macrina Wiederkehr, "To break the bread of our lives with one another through any form of sharing is prayer." It was all beginning to make sense. So, I became even more involved with groups that just happened to be trying to change certain policies of the Catholic Church.

I had been very impressed with several programs offered by the SEPAWOC group and wanted to know more about their mission. And, after learning more about them, I wanted to be a part of the organization; I wanted to help them and pray with them. Although I am not at all interested in being ordained, I think NOT to allow women to be ordained is an offense against social justice. It continues to infuriate me that the official Catholic Church continues to treat women as second class citizens.

Shortly after the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, I was attending a meeting of the Catholic Peace Fellowship at St. Malachy's Parish. Before the meeting, Charlie Bauerlein, in a joyful spirit declared, "Barack Obama has been elected president!" We now had a black president. It occurred to me that one of my dreams came true in my lifetime. Would there be others?

When I asked if I could attend the regular meetings of SEPAWOC, I was warmly welcomed. What I found was a group of women and men who were followers of Jesus. They lived the Beatitudes. Two of the women had already been ordained. Although these ordinations have not been recognized by the Vatican, I had long ago lost my respect for the hierarchy of the Church when I learned that the Vatican had decreed that it is forbidden to even discuss the issue of women's ordination. As an educator, I consider this to be outrageous. How could the discussion of anything be banned? Many church attending Catholics blatantly ignore many of the basic Church teachings, such as the use of artificial birth control, observation of the Holy Day of obligation, and even attending Mass on Sundays.

The Church's ban on women being ordained is not a women's problem. Offenses against any social justice issue are everyone's problem, just as racism, homophobia, immigrant oppression, etc. are not the problem of a particular minority but the responsibility of all members of the human race. When one member of our society is hurting, it affects all of us. I believe this is what is meant by the Communion of Saints. We are all responsible for injustice against any member of our society. If one person is chained, none of us is free.

One of the things that attracts me, a man, to the Women's Ordination Conference is the fact that the hierarchy has given them so much power. It amazes me the fear that women create in the hierarchy. WOC has been around a long time, and I have learned from their experiences and studies. WOC is not simply interested in finding a bishop who will legally ordain women but concentrates its efforts against pernicious clericalism. It is my belief that clericalism is at the base of many of the problems of the Church, including the sex abuse scandal.

Since men have created this terrible injustice hundreds of years ago, I think it is men who should participate in repairing the harm caused by our brothers.

Joseph Schlachter is retired from his career in education but very involved in creating positive change in the Church. He is a member of the SEPAWOC Core Committee.

Whose Religious Freedom? A Catholic Woman Speaks Out on the Contraceptives Ruling

By Regina Bannan

Since January 20th we have heard a great deal about the Health and Human Services decision to stand by the Affordable Care Act mandate that all employers except churches and church associations include contraception and sterilization in their health care coverage. Much of the discussion has been focused on the Catholic Church, specifically that the mandate is a violation of the religious freedom of “Catholics.”

But which of the 77.7 million Catholics in the United States are protesting this ruling, and whose religious freedom is being violated? As an American Catholic who has fought for the rights of women in the church for thirty years, I can assure you that claims by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that the ruling draws a “line in the sand,” tell only half the story. And it’s not the half that belongs to the vast majority of U.S. Catholic women.

At the most basic level, the majority of Catholics does not believe that the HHS ruling constitutes a violation of their religious freedom. A recent tracking survey from the Public Religion Research Institute finds a majority of U.S. Catholics—58%—believes that employers should be required to provide health care plans that include contraception, though only 52% of Catholic voters report such a position. Furthermore, higher percentages of Catholic non-whites, women, and Millennials, approve the contraceptive mandate than Catholic white males, and senior citizens. For example, 65% of Catholic Millennials—the church’s future—approve the mandate.

But that isn’t all there is to it. While 62% of US Catholic women approve the mandate, 98% of them report having used contraceptives at some time in their lives. This is one percentage point lower than the general population, but a good deal higher than the percentage of Catholic women who approve of the HHS mandate. The cynical among us may wonder if repentance after menopause is easier when one has not had ten or twelve children, as many Catholic families of earlier generations did. Or perhaps white Catholic women, whose families finally made it into the middle and upper middle classes after World War II, are more likely to favor the autonomy of Catholic hospitals and universities than are non-white or younger Catholic women who grasp what paying \$50 a month for contraceptives means.

I myself was surprised—and disappointed—that the percentage of U.S. Catholic women expressing approval for government-mandated contraceptive coverage is not higher than it is. I am surprised because Catholic women, in this country and around the world, have had their rights as equal members of the church violated for centuries, and particularly since the Vatican condemned artificial contraception in 1968. As some will remember, the Pontifical Commission on Birth Control established by Pope John XXIII during the Second Vatican Council, and expanded to include lay members by Pope Paul VI, recommended in 1966 that the pope approve at least some form of artificial contraception for married

couples. This recommendation was unambiguously rejected in the 1968 papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Eight years later the rights of Catholic women to have any significant input into church teaching regarding their own reproductive health was even more emphatically vetoed when the Vatican issued a letter forbidding the ordination of Catholic women to the priesthood. (Only the ordained exercise doctrinal decision-making power in the Catholic Church.)

In the ensuing decades, no matter what the bishops and the Vatican say about it, the American church has become cynical about contraception. U.S. Catholics invented “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” long before the Clinton administration gave it a name. When people register in a Catholic parish, they are not asked about their use of contraceptives. Neither are they asked such a question in confession—though, in point of fact, very few U.S. Catholics go to confession with any frequency any more. If they had been asked, would the 98% of Catholic women who use artificial contraceptives confess?

So whose religious freedom is being violated by the Affordable Care Act contraceptive coverage mandate? The freedom of the American Catholic bishops—430 of them—as well as the middling numbers of U.S. white male and senior citizen Catholics who agree with them? To be sure, the religious freedom of U.S. Catholic women is not being violated because the vast majority of us were never consulted about the church’s position on contraception in the first place. But maybe, just maybe, if the Obama administration stands behind the original mandate, Catholic women will acquire some religious freedom on the matter of contraceptives at long last.

Regina Bannan is President of SEPAWOC.

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Further Thoughts on the Church and the HHS Contraceptives Mandate

By *Marian Ronan*

As the deadline for this issue of *EqualwRites* approaches, the conflict between the U.S. Catholic bishops and the Obama administration over mandated provision of contraceptives under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) continues. So I can hardly offer a final word on any of it. But there are two aspects of the controversy to date that have not, in my opinion, received sufficient attention. The first is the failure of a wide range of journalists and commentators, including white male liberal Catholic commentators, to so much as hint that the question of contraceptives coverage has anything to do with Catholic women.

Before I examine what these commentators have said, let's clarify a few points. Not only do 98% of U.S. Catholic women report having used contraceptives at some time, a significant majority of Catholic women—62%—support the Affordable Care mandate that religious hospitals, universities and charities provide free contraception coverage as part of their insurance coverage. Indeed, a majority of U.S. Catholics across the board support that mandate.

But the commentators, even Catholic commentators, have, until now, rarely addressed this reality. Early on there was Michael Sean Winters's article, "J'accuse," in the *National Catholic Reporter*. Let's set aside Winters's outrageous comparison of the contraceptives mandate with the first in a series of anti-semitic events, the Dreyfus affair, that culminated in the Holocaust. Only once in the entire article does Winters use the word "woman," and that in reference to Sister Carol Keehan, the head of the Catholic Health Association. Instead he states, in typically binary language, that "it is a mistake of analysis to see this as a decision about contraception. The issue here is conscience." No reference is made to the National Institutes of Medicine ruling that contraception coverage is an essential part of preventive health care for women, never mind to the millions of actual U.S. Catholic women's whose health, and sometimes lives, depend on such care.

And Winters isn't the only one. The *NCR*, in its February 9th editorial, echoes Winters's claim that "conscience, not contraception, is the essential issue," while not using the word "women" once. And on the *PBS News Hour*, Mark Shields and David Brooks likewise managed to reject the HHS mandate two weeks in a row without uttering the word "women." On *Weekend Edition*, NPR's Scott Simon, apparently oblivious to the statistics on U.S. Catholic women's support of the mandate, opined that just because Catholic women use contraceptives doesn't mean that they support the denial of religious freedom to their church. And in their February 24 editorial, the more moderate *Commonweal* also rejected the mandate on the basis of religious freedom, though it does at least nod in women's direction in the last paragraph.

A few Catholic women—Gail Collins in the *New York Times*, and moral theologian Lisa Fullam on the *Commonweal* blog page—have indeed spoken out. And by the time you read this, perhaps more will have done so. By and large, however, this is a phallic struggle between older white Catholic men, bishops and lay journalists, on one side, and the Obama administration. The majority of U.S. Catholics and even larger

majorities of Catholic women, people of color, and Millennials, support the mandate. This struggle may be about conscience, but it's even more about anyone daring to tell older white guys what to do.

The other dismaying aspect of the so-called "Catholics against the HHS mandate" brouhaha is that it feeds into a growing right-wing effort to undermine access to contraceptives in the U.S. and around the world. As Mark Oppenheimer explains in a January 20th *New York Times* op-ed piece, after decades of supporting the use of contraceptives, increasing numbers of U.S. evangelicals are now joining Catholic conservatives in their opposition to them. One aspect of this is the "Quiverfull" movement, which advocates large families, as exemplified by the Duggar family, the enthusiastic Santorum supporters featured on the reality show, "19 Kids and Counting."

All these kids jumping around can seem rather jolly, but there's scary stuff underneath these developments. One is the increasing support for the argument—also advanced by the institutional Church—that most contraceptives, including IUDs, the drug Plan B, and a new contraceptive, Ella—are abortifacients. This is so, it's claimed, because they make the endometrium less receptive to embryonic implantation. Or, as the American Association of Pro-Life ObGyns puts it, "There is an unarguable logic connecting the contraceptive act and the abortive act."

But as Jamie Manson argues convincingly on her *NCR* blogpage,* even Catholic Health Association ethicists have acknowledged that neither the IUD nor Plan B work by preventing implantation; instead, they prevent fertilization. At first, the argument against Ella seems more compelling, since its "chemical structure is similar to that of RU-486," an acknowledged abortifacient not covered under ACA. But Ella comprises a much smaller dose of the chemical similar to the one in RU-486. Like the IUD and Plan B, it functions to delay or prevent ovulation. Drawing from an article in the British medical journal the *Lancet*, Manson explains that only if Ella is given in a dose far beyond that allowed under the ACA can implantation be impaired.

Scientific evidence does not deter those who are determined to deprive women of reproductive health care, however. In November the "Personhood Amendment" will be on the ballot in four states, and if it passes, laws against "abortifacients" will follow quickly. And Republican members of the House Foreign Affairs committee voted eleven times last October to block funding for the United Nations Population Fund, which provides reproductive services to women, men, and young people in 150 countries around the world.

Surely Michael Sean Winters, Mark Shields, the *NCR*, and the rest, in their opposition to HHS mandated contraceptives coverage by Catholic universities and hospitals, do not intend to support the drive to make contraceptives illegal. I fear that by eliding women, and especially Catholic women, from the conversation, they have done so despite their good intentions. *<http://ncronline.org/blogs/grace-margins/what-abortifacient-and-what-it-isnt>

Marian Ronan is a member of the SEPAWOC Core Committee and has worked for women's equality in the Catholic Church since 1975.

Hope in the Dark

By Sharon Browning

Hope is the bird that sings in the dark before dawn: *Tagore*

It's excruciating to read the newspaper or listen to the news these days. I often find myself breathless with a mixture of astonishment, rage, and grief as our country and our world spin in a vortex of indifference, deception, and outright greed. I'm tempted to itemize the ever-growing list of horrors that are being generated by our leaders, governments, corporations, and ourselves, but the list is not enlightening; we're all well acquainted with the fear and self-absorption that now characterize our society. It's easy to flirt with despair in the midst of such overwhelming, humanly-generated and perpetuated suffering.

So *now* is the best possible time to hope. Hope seems elusive even in the best of times, but it is only a virtue when exhibited in the worst. Hope is not a virtue unless all logic indicates that our situation is hopeless. A word on the nature of hope here: our common notions about hope are not those that characterize the genuine virtue. In our egocentric striving, we think of hope as the eventual fulfillment of our desires. We have "hope" that, even though things look terrible right now, in the future they will more nearly resemble what we believe to be the correct order. That's not hope; it's wishful thinking. Hope is about the fullness of the present moment, right here, right now, not some imagined future.

To hope is to live fully conscious of the knowledge that the outcome of life is certain: we're all going to die. And then to embrace the moments that are ours *now*, completely, intentionally, dancing on this razor's edge called life. Hope, predicated on faith, is knowing that all is well right now, appearances notwithstanding, because we live every moment enfolded in the heart of God. In Hebrews 11:1, Paul articulates the relationship between faith and hope. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen," and that hope arises from our deep and conscious connection to the Source of all Life, the indwelling God.

I believe it is not we who hope, but God hoping in and through us, providing us with "evidence of things unseen." Just as we are not good, but the God in us is good, and just as the Love we bear each other is the God in us loving, so it is with hope. God's hope is manifested in us. Our work is to get our egos out of the way and allow the infinite power of God to wash through us and out into the world. This is the challenge of our lives and our common purpose: to connect with God within and then be a unique conduit through which that goodness and love and hope flow into a thirsting world.

I would like to suggest a simple method for nurturing hope, some salve for weary hearts tempted to despair: focus first on Being, then on Doing. We have our priorities reversed. Our tendency in the face of difficulty is either to jump immediately into Doing Something or to edge toward inertia and paralysis, overwhelmed by the enormity of both personal and social trauma. I would like to urge us all to spend a bit more time Being, reflecting on the deep and vast connection between ourselves and God, and ourselves and each other. All stress and suffering spring from the illusion that we are sepa-

rate from God and from each other. Much good would result from our deliberate and prayerful consideration of inter-dependence and connectivity.

In her book *Hope's Edge*, Frances Moore Lappe describes the cultivation of hope as embracing the dissonance we experience in our own lives and in the world, and then searching our own hearts and souls for the 'disconnects' that may, in fact, be part of the problem. Having looked into our own hearts, we then live in hope, which she describes as "conscious risk." This resonates with my own experience of hope. I have been graced with multiple instances in my own life when the surfacing of hope has had a profound and healing effect on my tendency to be paralyzed by fear or judgment: a deep peace and surety that all was well in the midst of sorrow, the experience of unconditional love and impossible kindness in the midst of suffering, a sudden transformation of anger into compassion, a baffling, illogical knowing in the midst of both personal and political storms that a Power greater than my ability to imagine flowers in and through everything that is.

As Lappe also suggests, when we act affirmatively to uncover and become conscious of the multiple ways in which we are complicit in the creation of suffering, we have taken the first step toward hope. Can we confess our own complicity, our lack of love, our dabbling in and use of the same energies that create injustice and suffering? On both micro and macro levels, we persist in our conscious perpetuation of the very problems we decry, judging others as greedy, but being parsimonious in our personal lives. It is an act of both humility and hope to recognize that the energy of judgment itself is toxic, adding to the atmosphere of blame, anger, condemnation, and intolerance that has become warp and woof of our social fabric. To paraphrase Shakespeare, the problem, Dear Ones, lies not in others, but in ourselves.

We will have taken huge strides toward peace and justice in our world when we recognize in our own personal lives and interpersonal dynamics the very attributes of which we complain. And this causes hope to arise in us: There IS something we can do, a threshold response we can affirmatively make to help end the vast suffering in our world; we can humbly acknowledge our own participation in the manufacturing of the energies of war and social dysfunction, and then prayerfully act to change ourselves. A Sufi prayer says it all: "Oh, God, change the world by changing me."

And then, as Lappe suggests, we can live in hope, choosing conscious risk. Having prepared the soil of our lives through reflection, whatever action we take will grow from the depths of our Being, from our conscious connection to God. Our responses will be as individual as we are; there is no single "best" or "right" way to live the Gospel. But the world is transformed little and little, each of us manifesting the Spirit within us as only we can. Light-bearers all are we. If that isn't hopeful, I don't know what is.

It's much easier to access hope in this season of spring and Easter, when all creation and our sacred rituals cooperate in demonstrating that the darkness is always overcome by the Light. Simply paying attention, being conscious, yields the high dividend of Hope. Full absorption in a single blossom

reveal the loving universe to us and dispel the pessimism and fear that take root when we forget that we are God's. Buds, translucent light, blossoms with scents to make you swoon, all of this can stir the hope slumbering in our hearts. Dawn, sun, spring, love, always come, always triumph; life is victorious over death again, and again and again. Although our world seems very dark at the moment, let's summon our courage, examine our lives, expand our hearts, loosen our tongues, open our mouths, and sing. Sing.

Sharon Browning is an attorney and spiritual director and is currently working with Philadelphia's Just Listening Program.

Did You Know?

New Venue for Magdalene Community

St. Mary Magdalene Community, led by Roman Catholic Womanpriest, Eileen DiFranco, now celebrates Eucharist on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 8 AM at Holy Innocents St. Paul's Episcopal Church at 7001 Torresdale Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19135. For more information go to www.marymagdalenecommunity.org or emdifranco@aol.com.

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An Evening with Roy Bourgeois Stop the Killing Honor the Dignity of Women

Saturday, May 5, 7-9 PM
Unitarian Universalist Church of Cherry Hill
401 N. King's Highway, Cherry Hill, N.J.

Roy Bourgeois, was a recipient of the 1997 Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace Award and has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. He has faced censure by the Vatican and his own order for refusing to be silent concerning gender injustice in the Catholic Church.

Free will offering for the work of SOA Watch will be gratefully accepted. For more information call 856-488-3044.

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Changes in Roman Missal Continue to Concern Roman Catholics

Regular church goers have noticed a change in our Mass prayers since the beginning of Advent. For those of you who continue to study this issue consider visiting the site www.misguidedmissal.com. An action step is found under the heading "Putting Pen to Paper." Also of interest is an article in the upper right hand section of that home page under the heading "What Can I Do Now?" Please check out "One pastor's experience" in that section; this pastor tells why, in good conscience, he must use the 1998 Missal. It's our hope that other priests will hear about this, consider it, and make a few more cracks in the wall.

Calling All Artists

Are you passionate about the inclusion of the gifts of women in the Catholic Church? We would love you to share an expression of that passion with the readers of *EqualwRites* through your writing, prose or poetry, or artwork, especially if you are a cartoonist. Please contact Mary Whelan (mewhelan@comcast.net) or Ellie Harty (eharty43@yahoo.com) to discuss your ideas or mail your submission to SEPAWOC P.O. Box 27195, Philadelphia, PA 19118.

Gender Is Not An Issue

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on issues like homosexuality, choice, and contraception. "We say our foundation has three legs: scripture, tradition, and reason. I think that third leg is often missing in Catholicism. Also, our presiding bishop (currently a woman) only makes suggestions, not pronouncements."

Not held back by pesky pronouncements by hierarchy, Pat reiterated what she saw as the unique gifts of ordained women to the church. "Women tend to be less agenda-driven, more outwardly focused toward care giving and nurturing. As women are feeling more comfortable with themselves, they know they can take on leadership in the church. It's exciting to see feminist theology more listened to. The (Episcopal) deaconate is ordained and, as such, a full and equal order with the priesthood. We are getting more and more away from the hierarchical model. Bishops, priests, deacons just do different things. Gender is just not an issue."

Community of the Christian Spirit

Committed to peace and social justice, CCS welcomes you to join in our Sunday morning celebrations, liturgies in the Roman Catholic tradition which explore Scripture and contemporary readings.

For information, call Roberta Brunner or Margaret McLaughlin, (215) 572-5623, or write P.O. Box 353, Abington, PA 19001

Book Reviews

***Clericalism: The Death of Priesthood* by George B. Wilson, SJ. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008). Paperback. 158 pp. \$19.95.**

Reviewed by Marian Schwab

George Wilson's book, *Clericalism: The Death of Priesthood*, was not what I expected. It was instructive, challenging and even moving in its depth of insight and hope.

Having worked my whole professional life in Catholic church settings, I thought I knew something about clericalism. As a young administrator of a seminary program thirty-five years ago, I had written what I thought was a straight-forward portrayal of the contrast between the lives of lay women working in ministry and their priest co-workers. After it was published in the now defunct *Priest* magazine, I was shocked at all the letters to the editor dismissing anything said by "the angry woman."

Through the years of working for five bishops in succession, I had seen the arrogance, the assumptions about privilege and entitlement, the lack of accountability, and especially the destructive impact on the people presumably served. On the other hand, I had also seen the dedication of countless individual priests who related to lay people with simplicity, grace, and a powerful sense of servanthood, somehow retaining their humanity despite the tentacles of the clerical system in which they were caught.

George Wilson's presentation of clericalism as both a cultural and social system, I realized as I read, corresponded to my own but went much further. Wilson contends that clericalism is not restricted to those ordained but is a virus affecting professions widely, and not those just within the church. In his view, Directors of Religious Education can exhibit the same clericalist attitudes because of their superior position and specialized education as can priests, but so can doctors, lawyers, and others in secular professions.

Throughout his book, Wilson posits the corporate character of the priesthood, and, therefore, a single, collaborative mission for the church. Challenging lay people who put all the blame for clericalism in the church on the clerics, he points out how lay people themselves contribute to the system by their exaggeratedly deferential way of treating priests. Parents' attitudes toward priests have necessarily infected their children whose lack of defenses against abuse by priests thereby makes them even more vulnerable, and their recourse to other adults more complicated.

A major section of Wilson's book deals explicitly with clericalism within the explosive child sex abuse crisis in the Catholic church. But even apart from that, the author's analysis of clericalism would be worth reading, especially by those who care deeply about the gospel.

Lay people willing to trust the loving manner in which it is offered will be challenged by Wilson's critique of attitudes that totally hand over to priests the responsibility for leadership within the faith community. Similarly, he challenges bish-

ops for acting like corporate executives instead of priests, seminaries for instilling clericalist attitudes in seminarians, and vocations directors for touting privilege and "special-ness" as they recruit potential seminarians.

Perhaps most basically, Wilson calls for a deeper commitment to enacting priesthood – what he calls "priesting" – by all those called to priesthood by virtue of their baptism. Internally within the church then, this implies much greater dialogue and consultation especially between bishops and lay people, recognizing that no ordination (to the presbyterate or episcopacy) bestows the gift of unerring wisdom.

Wilson admits his treatise does not address various "hot-button topics," including women's ordination. He says he has chosen to focus on interpersonal relations between clergy and laity because he sees them as foundational for a healthy resolution of policy issues – as those within the church set aside parent-child relationships and put on the mind and heart of Jesus Christ.

My favorite section of the book is the final chapter, containing a truly hopeful vision of a de-clericalized church, founded not on pious dreams but on practical advice to clergy, laity and church institutions. It is a satisfying conclusion to an insightful work.

Marian Schwab, PhD, is a member of the International Grail movement, serving currently in several national and international roles. Her studies in theology, organizational development and adult education provided background for thirty years of diocesan-level work in lay ministry development and priest continuing education in Ohio and Louisiana.

March is the time to renew your annual subscription to *EqualwRites*!

Your contribution of \$10...\$15...\$20 or more ensures we can continue to print this newsletter and hold events such as the one honoring Theresa Kane on June 3.

Please continue your invaluable support by mailing your contribution in the envelope enclosed for your convenience. Thank you.

New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views. Edited by Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2010. Hardback, \$24.99; eBook, \$14.99. 350 pp.

Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology: Shoulder to Shoulder. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009. Paperback, \$29.00. 260 pp.

Reviewed by Marian Ronan

With U.S. Christian feminism almost half a century old, a person might think that everything to be said about it has already been said. But don't make up your mind until you take a look at two fairly recent collections of articles.

The editors of the first of these volumes, *New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views* (*NFC*) are veterans of the second wave of Christian feminism, Diann Neu and Mary Hunt. In their collection, Neu and Hunt, cofounders and co-directors of WATER (The Women's Alliance of Theology, Ethics and Ritual) draw together essays by Christian feminist scholars and activists across a wide range of subject areas, including theology, scripture, ethics, liturgy/the arts, and ministry.

Some of the writers represented in *NFC* are well known to *EqualwRites* readers. In one essay, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza restates her historic interpretation of feminist biblical studies and lays out her agenda for the future. In another, Rosemary Radford Ruether reviews the history of feminist theology beginning with her own 1968 talk on male chauvinist theology. She concludes that feminist theology has been something of a success, but warns Christian feminists against assuming that this progress is irreversible. Latina theologian Maria Pilar Aquino challenges feminist theologians to devise new tools for the much-needed work of peace building. And Kwok Pui-Lan calls for postcolonial spiritual practices to underpin new feminist Christianity.

The anthology is not limited to essays by members of the older generation of feminist theologians, however. Newer voices enrich and often advance the conversation. Among my favorites in this category is the nuanced and beautifully written analysis of imperialism and personhood in this era of "remix" culture by Asian/Pacific American (and former WOC board member) Rachel A.R. Bundang. I am also encouraged by the inclusion of an essay by black feminist ethicist Traci C. West, one of the finest minds currently working at the intersection of anti-racism, feminism, and gay rights.

Limited as it is to essays and responses by nine members of the next generation of Catholic feminist theologians, *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology: Shoulder to Shoulder* (*Frontiers*) may be perceived as a less ground-breaking endeavor than *NFC*. Indeed, even the subject areas addressed can seem more conservative than those in the Neu-Hunt collection, limited as they are to three central doctrinal loci, the nature of the human, Christ, and the church.

But once again, it's worth taking a second look. First of all, the tone of the *Frontiers* essays is different from that of a number of those in *NFC*. Perhaps it comes from these authors having inherited their Christian feminism rather than having had to fight to establish it. But the theologians in *Frontiers*

virtually never resort to the language of absolute direction that afflicts the work of so many feminist theologians of the previous generation, for whom "should" and "must" are pivotal terms. (Schussler Fiorenza's article and *NFC*'s conclusion are classic examples of this kind of—dare I say?—kyriarchal discourse.) By contrast, the theologians represented in *Frontiers* give few orders but go out of their way to acknowledge their debt to the previous generation, as their subtitle (*Shoulder to Shoulder*) indicates. The Indian Harvard Divinity School professor, Susan Abraham, for example, thoroughly engages Schussler Fiorenza's work in her nuanced delineation of a Catholic justice ecclesiology. Indeed, what may seem the narrowness of the book's focus—*Catholic* feminist theology—comes across as modest in comparison with the first collection's claim to encompass all of feminist Christianity.

Nor is the significance of *Frontiers* limited to its tone and modesty of scope. It also ventures into new subject areas and utilizes theoretical methodologies that are less evident, though not absent entirely, from *NFC*. Striking with regard to subject matter is the engagement of the experience of motherhood by three of the younger theologians—Michelle Saracino, Jeanine Hill Fletcher and Rosemary Carbine—a topic of which my own generation of feminist theologians was, I think, wary.

Methodologically *Frontiers* embodies a shift in feminist theological training from the more liberal perspective of the previous generation to the more sophisticated theoretical engagement of difference—postmodern, postcolonial, third wave, literary/cultural/gender—that came into its own in the 1990s. You get a picture of this shift from the structure of the two books. *NFC* presents "many voices, many views," organized under general headings, with two white editors offering their own introductions and conclusions. In *Frontiers*, all nine of the authors, forty-four per cent of whom are women of color, offer joint responses in teams of three to each unit of articles written by their colleagues. It's no longer enough to have "many voices," as liberals once believed. With "many voices," one often-unacknowledged mega-voice inevitably becomes dominant, or chaos ensues. The challenge, as Janet Jacobsen argues compellingly, is to build "working alliances." *Frontiers* demonstrates this approach.

In conclusion, let me acknowledge that this review is out of sync with the "shoulder to shoulder" approach adopted by the *Frontiers* feminist theologians. But engaging differences is also part of the new feminist paradigm, and there are definitely some differences between these two collections.

Marian Ronan lives and writes in Brooklyn NY.

Scripture Reflections

Lent 2012

Gn.8:21; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:1-3; Acts 2:13

By *Judith A. Heffernan, M.Div.*

The very first reading for the first Sunday of Lent is from Genesis and assures us that the covenant was made with *all* of creation. This brings me much consolation as I grieve the loss of a beloved friend—a big bundle of love with four legs. One gift Casey certainly gave me was a new perspective on Rottweilers!

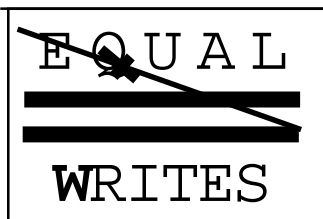
A new perspective...isn't this the Lenten call?

We have also lost Vaclav Havel. He had a new perspective on revolution—it can be velvet. Havel told us that hope is not the same as optimism; it is not the willingness to invest only in enterprises that are obviously heading for success. In a deep and powerful sense, hope is the ability to work for something simply because it is good.

SEPAWOC has witnessed on Holy Thursday and Ordination Day for thirty-two years. We still witness and work in hope for a new perspective: for a discipleship of equals, an inclusive community where equality is a fundamental principle, where the equal dignity of all persons is respected and celebrated as Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza reminded us recently, and, as Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests, we witness

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and work in hope for a change in the elite, masculine structure.

Our witnesses this year may *really* have a new perspective because the last time I passed the park where we gather across from the cathedral, it was under construction—there was a fence around the entire site—sidewalks and all! How symbolic, I thought, of how we are treated by the diocese—shut out! Then I remembered Markham's poem and applied it to us... You drew a circle that shut us out; heretics, rebels, things to flout; but love and we have the wit to win; we'll draw a circle that takes you in!

Today at church I sat in a new seat. I had a new perspective. I saw a poem by Dora E. McQuaid which has always been on that wall. Parts of it describe how I feel about SEPAWOC witnesses: have learned that hope is communal...hope is the light that has lit our long way...join us...we've all got an eye to the children and the future...open hands, empowered and clasp, and voices rising together, claiming community, claiming revolution...

Please join our Holy Thursday and Ordination Day witnesses. Each year they are joyous, uplifting and renewing. Each year they give a new perspective. Each year you leave knowing that you *are* working for something good.

Judith Heffernan is a member of the Community of the Christian Spirit and SEPAWOC Core Committee.

MANUSCRIPTS AND CORRESPONDENCE: If you would like to contribute an article, letter, or anything else to *EqualwRites*, please send it double-spaced, with your name, phone number, and a short biographical note. The next issue will be June 2012. Final deadline for submissions is May 15. Send to eharty43@yahoo.com or mail to SEPAWOC P.O. Box 27195, Philadelphia, PA 19118.

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