

*Because Sometimes True Fidelity Lies in the Courage to Dissent*

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

**Holy Thursday**  
**March 28, 2013 11:15 AM**  
STANDING TOGETHER  
FOR WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

**Ordination Day**  
**May 18, 2013 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. XXXI No. 1

MARCH - JUNE 2013

**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.*

### **Holy Thursday and Ordination Day Witnesses: Tipping Points, Idealism, and the "Heresy of Powerlessness"**

*By Ellie Harty*

I've been struggling with trying to be inspiring.

I so believe in the power and, yes, even glory of the Holy Thursday and Ordination Day Witnesses, I've been searching and searching for something to inspire more people – like you - like you with your friends - to attend. I want us to be enriched together; I want us to make a difference, even if to just one person. I want us, not only just to hold signs, but to *be* signs, of what is right, of what is just, of what is holy.

I know these are lofty thoughts, but I'm not so sure they inspire. So I decided to try to take a more practical approach. I began reading Malcolm Gladwell's book, *The Tipping Point*, to gain more insights on what makes a movement "tip" into an epidemic and how our Holy Thursday and Ordination Day Witnesses might fit in. I wondered if these two actions, which have been happening for decades, could actually, in their small ways, be contributing to what, in time, would become a sudden and momentous "tipping point" in the church when justice and equal standing for women and others would finally catch on and triumph.

I was rewarded. According to Gladwell, three characteristics of epidemics (like justice for women) are: "...contagiousness, the fact that little causes can have big effects, and that change happens not gradually but in one dramatic moment..." Our cause is certainly contagious: more and more women have been ordained, especially in the last twenty years; more people, even more clergy, are speaking out. But most en-

*continued on page 2*

### **MARY MAGDALENE 2012/13 AWARD WINNER – GAILE POHLHAUS**

*A Profile by Regina Bannan*

Gaile Pohlhaus will be the 2013 recipient of SEPAWOC's Mary Magdalene Award at the Holy Thursday witness. The award recognizes courage and leadership for women in the church. Balance characterizes Gaile's style; her courage has deep spiritual roots which allow her to challenge without alienating – mostly! She has a lifetime of working everywhere from the parish to church reform organizations and academia.

Gaile taught religion for many years at Villanova and earned her PhD at Temple. These tasks were not easy for a married mother to balance, especially since she did both at the same time. She was, however, always an innovator, including teaching online courses and directing both the Theology Institute and Women's Studies program. Even now she publishes online reflections on the Sunday scripture readings and maintains the SEPAWOC listserv.

Gaile's leadership in the church has been consistent over the

*continued on page 2*



**Gaile  
Pohlhaus**

**Holy Thursday** *continued from page 1*

couraging for our Witnesses were the last two points. If we can just keep the faith that, if we want an epidemic of justice, a little action can actually have big effects and that change will not happen gradually but in one momentous tidal wave, we can keep coming to witness and not be discouraged.

To reach “tipping points” Gladwell said, we need to have three agents of change: a few powerful “salespeople” or “mavens” who have the charisma and connections to influence others; a message that has “stickiness,” that will not only resound but not go away; the right context or environment for change, small groups discussing, debating, planning actions, rallying around the message and nurturing each other that suddenly connect at the right time and place. I think we’re on our way with all of three if we just don’t give up.

As heady (and much more complex than the space here can relate) as this idea was, however, I wanted some deeper perspective – and I needed to look no further than Joan Chittister! Luckily, at a recent women’s faith group meeting, a friend read to us from a chapter on idealism in Joan Chittister’s book, *Welcome to the Wisdom of the World*.

Idealism (that which fuels our quests and actions for peace and justice in the world), she says, “of all the energies of the soul, may be the most vulnerable. Nothing else within us gives in so easily to failure, to rationalism, to doubt...” There is a reason for this: “Because it is bred more by vision than by likelihood, idealism gives way (more easily)...to hollow desperation (or) to resignation without reward of hope or hope of reward.” Idealism, believing the world can and will be better, needs nurturing if it is to survive. Interestingly for us, that nurturing, she believes, comes through action and gives us the encouraging words: “...if we do a thing often enough, we will eventually become what we do.” It is this internalization of the justice and righteousness of the action that will serve as an antidote to discouragement and disillusionment. But it goes deeper than that. As she points out, we must always keep our hearts open to what is deep inside the action, its essential holiness, for this holiness is what will enrich and sustain us.

Of course, I couldn’t leave it at that, as beautiful – and inspiring – as her message on idealism is. I had to glance at her chapter entitled “What Does It Mean to ‘Make A Difference’?”. She begins by asking what do we do with those niggling doubts about our actions like: ‘What can I do about such huge assaults on justice and equality? I am too small, too powerless, and nobody listens or cares anyway.’ In this context, she even mentions our discouragement with major movements in church reform including women’s ordination in which “efforts to carve out a voice and place for women in the church seems almost risible... (for) David is a comic figure and Goliath is the norm.” We have become the crazy, even laughable, ones. Why bother?

The problem is that doing nothing is really the most deadly action of all, and so we must keep on doing what we can, giving all we have, and making our presence known. And we will have a rich reward: “Whether it works or not, in the end, it will be the very attempt that makes the difference... In the end, the sight of goodness undeterred has more power than all the forces on earth arrayed against it.” For this reason,

she believes, we must persist in overcoming what she calls the “heresy of powerlessness,” seeing it for what it is, an erroneous belief that works to undermine our impulse toward right action, risk-taking, and responsibility toward anyone oppressed in our world. Finally, she notes, it is important that we not only do what we can but we “do it for as long as it takes,” for, more than anything, “it is persistence that is the antidote to powerlessness.”

And so I thank you, Joan, Malcolm, all of you who come to witness each year, all of you who are coming for the first time this year. My struggle with being inspiring is over. You are my inspiration.

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

**The Community of St. Mary Magdalene  
Masses**

**Every Sunday at 9am  
Drexel Hill United Methodist Church  
600 Burmont Road  
Drexel Hill, PA 19026**

**Second Sunday of every month at 10:30am  
Holy Innocents St. Paul’s Episcopal Church  
7001 Torresdale Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19135**

**Second Saturday of every month at 5pm  
St. Luke’s United Church of Christ  
125 North Main Street • Lansdale, PA 19454**

**MARY MAGDALENE AWARD** *continued from page 1*

years. She led parish activities and conducted adult education courses around the archdiocese. She was an early leader in national Voice of the Faithful and was on the committee that developed the American Catholic Council.

Gaile has always worked for a more inclusive church. She has been active in WOC forever. In fact, after a fallow period in the early 1990s, Gaile gathered the local group together again and it has been going strong ever since. Soon after the local group reconstituted, Gaile led an effort to edit and publish the national journal, *New Woman/New Church*, right here in Philadelphia. That didn’t work out – but *EqualwRites* began soon after. Gaile and Jenny Ratigan and Arlene Swidler supported each other in leadership.

Loyalty to family and friends is another aspect of the balance that is Gaile Pohlhaus. One of ten Benson children, Gaile entered the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth, after graduating from the college in New Jersey. Then she married Bill Pohlhaus, a wonderful and unconventional teacher and former Christian Brother. They nurtured a loving family, with children Gaile and Bill. Now she is the beloved widowed grandmother who lives with her son and family, holding all dear ones close. She is a true model of wisdom, age, and grace – one of her favorite biblical images.

## Women in Combat and the Priesthood: A Response to Mary Hunt

By Marian Ronan

On January 24, feminist theologian and activist Mary E. Hunt posted an article on *Religion Dispatches* discussing the relationships between the possible ordination of women in the Catholic church and the recent Defense Department decision to allow women in combat.

Hunt begins by expressing her ambivalence about the inclusion of women in combat and the priesthood: "I reject combat as much as I oppose sexism," Hunt tells us, "and the hierarchical, clerical priestly model of the Church as much as I reject exclusion of women from its leadership caste." She goes on to discuss in an even-handed way the reasons for allowing women into combat, and for welcoming women into the Catholic priesthood, arguing that the latter probably favor more fundamental change in the church than the former do in the military.

Ultimately, however, Hunt calls both changes "incremental," arguing that women entering into combat "will reinforce the importance of the warrior...who kills..." and that women in the priesthood "will reinforce the status and role of the clergy." Instead, Hunt is looking for people who want to ask "hard questions about how we humans deal with our differences without war...and how we Catholics organize ourselves for worship and service...."

I have in the past agreed with Mary Hunt and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza in their argument that "ordination is subordination." I am no more eager to be treated like a second-class citizen by female priests and bishops than by male ones. Yet I found myself agreeing with the inclusion of women in combat. If women are already in combat, why should they not be paid for it, and win the promotions that require combat experience? Logic suggests that I should hold the same position about women in Catholic ministry. In his recent, magisterial work, *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America's Largest Church*, Timothy Matovina makes this argument more specific: studies show that paid ministers conduct the most effective ministries to Spanish-speaking Catholics, but the vast majority of Latino ministers are unpaid male deacons and unpaid female lay ministers. Surely the ordination of women and married men to the priesthood would improve this situation.

Ultimately, then, I really am ambivalent, while Hunt is ambivalent at the beginning of her article but, in the end, rejects woman in combat as well as in the Catholic priesthood. Luckily, fifteen years ago the feminist political scientist Mary Fainsod Katzenstein wrote *Faithful and Fearless: Moving Feminist Protest inside the Church and the Military*, a book that offers a complex analysis of women and change in and outside both institutions. I summarized Katzenstein's perspective in a review that appeared in *New Women New Church*, the newsletter of the national Women's Ordination Conference in spring 1999:

"Katzenstein's analysis will be of special benefit to Catholic feminists perplexed over whether women's ordination necessarily constitutes co-optation into a patriarchal institution.

In her presentation, feminists in the military seem initially to comprise pure types of moderate 'interest group' activism while women in the church engage in radical 'discursive' activism. Yet Katzenstein is clear that one kind of activism is not superior to another. Rather, degrees of each are necessary if women's equality is to be advanced in mainstream institutions; feminists in church and military, she believes, will be forced, eventually, to incorporate strategies employed by the other.

Along these same lines, *Faithful and Fearless* reveals that the success attained by each group thus far has depended on collaboration between women inside and outside their respective institutions—religious communities of women, base communities, the theological professions and even parishes in the Catholic case."

I strongly suspect that fifteen years later, regarding actual women in combat as well as potential women priests, Katzenstein would make the same argument. Or to put it another way, in order to change the church, we need women in as many paid positions as possible within the institution and articulate Catholic feminists like Mary Hunt taking radical positions on the outside.

Marian Ronan is the Book Review editor for EqualwRites.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

#### SEPAWOC Financial Statement for Calendar Year 2012

Beginning Balance (1/1/12):	\$1,186.66
Revenues (Donations):	\$8,469.00
Expenses:	
• Printing and Postage	\$4,091.00
• Events and Other	\$2,201.00
Total Expenses:	\$6,292.00
Ending Balance (12/31/12):	\$3,363.66

***WE WERE THRILLED...to report over \$3,000 in our treasury at the end of 2012!***

**Thank you, thank you for contributing so generously.**

***Of course, you know what happens in January: The bills come in...and subscriptions to EqualwRites come up for renewal***

**Please renew, or become a new subscriber to *EqualwRites* by making out a check to SEPAWOC for \$10, \$15, \$20...or any amount you wish and mail in the attached envelope or to PO Box 27195, Philadelphia PA 19118.**

**THANK YOU**

## My Story Part 2 – Spiritual At Last?

By *Joseph Schlachter*

I'm writing this on the Feast of the Epiphany, and I would like to share an epiphany of my own that I experienced last week. Recently, over a cup of coffee, a friend lamented that a person she liked very much had such different values from her own. Her friend liked to go to bars and party whereas my friend liked spiritual things. "I am a spiritual person," she said, "very much like you." WOW! I tried to mask my shock...me a spiritual person? I have always equated a spiritual person as a pious person. Certainly, many of the brothers with whom I have lived over the years, who spent a lot of time in the chapel, who kept the rule carefully, men whose lives seemed under control, could be called spiritual men. But me?

From the age of 30 to the age of 55, I was a drunk and often out of control. Parenthetically, those were the days when I was the most successful as a counselor, but I would not have called myself spiritual. In 1986, I got sober and my life started to change. I had been told that Alcoholic Anonymous, with its Twelve Steps, was a spiritual program, but it would take 26 years of weekly meetings for that realization to seep in. Not knowing it, I was actually becoming a spiritual person. You see, I was starting to put into practice things that I had learned at AA meetings: "Let go...let God," "I'm totally powerless," "One day at a time." The support of my fellow alcoholics was becoming invaluable. In fact, my AA meeting was replacing my Sunday Mass. It all made such wonderful sense. We were discussing our personal lives and our spiritual lives. And when a guy or gal would have a slip and go out and get drunk, and then return to the rooms, that person did not have to ask forgiveness, his or her return would re-enforce our own gratitude. We held each other and laughed; we held each other and cried. How wonderful, I thought, to be a member of the human race. But, was I a spiritual person? It just did not fit. Time marched on. In my sobriety, I hit some momentous highs and some absolutely devastating lows. I had AA to help sustain me.

In the fall of 1996, I retired from my professional life and moved to Philadelphia for a quiet life of retirement. Little did I know that I was about to have the FIRST of my "I am not me anymore" experiences. It was sometime around the year 2000 that I became involved with CTA (Call To Action) and thus began another wonderful journey. I learned I wanted to change the Catholic Church. I started to attend meetings in which we discussed the Church and how it affected us...why did I want these changes? I had begun to focus on my spiritual life in a different way especially when our CTA group began having home liturgies...so beautiful...so meaningful. The fact that we did not have an ordained male priest was not even an issue. I felt the presence of God, and She was smiling.

Around this time, tragedy hit Philadelphia...the clerical abuse scandal. I went to a meeting to discuss what could be done to help the victims. The meeting took place at the Catholic Worker at 4th and Jefferson, and my life would never be the same. First of all, I met Karen and Magda and members from about ten various Catholic Lay Groups that were represented. Among those were Dignity, CTA, COR, SEPAWOC, ARCC, VOTF and others. It was a vegetable

soup of Philadelphia Catholics who gathered to help our brothers and sisters in pain. We had many, many meetings. It slowly started to dawn on me that these meetings, where we shared what was going on in our spiritual lives, were really a kind of prayer service. I was so happy, but would I consider myself a spiritual person? No, not yet.

And then, another milestone: I became a member of a parish in Germantown called St. Vincent de Paul. There would be no turning back. I became a member of the parish Liturgical Council and a very active member of the parish. I eagerly looked forward to going to Mass on Sunday morning. What was happening? I was actually excited about going to a parish Mass. Then a former student invited me to attend Dignity's Liturgy on Sunday evenings in Center City. The presider was often a priest not in good standing, but I often felt so close to God there, and She was still smiling. What was happening? I was going to Mass twice on Sunday!! But it did not translate to holiness. Often I was mean, selfish and unkind. A spiritual person? Was I getting there?

My beloved St. Vincent's was about to go through a very hard time. One of our parish members was ordained a Roman Catholic Woman Priest. Her very first liturgy was held a few blocks down the street from St. Vincent's on Germantown Avenue. Since she did not have a parish, a group of St. Vincent's parishioners formed a group called Sanctuary of Peace and rented space on Saturday nights to have a liturgy with her. So, very often I would go to Mass on Saturday night with Sanctuary of Peace, Sunday morning at St. Vincent's and Sunday evening in Center City with Dignity. Surely now I was a spiritual person? I still didn't think so.

That brings us to now. One night a week, I go to an AA meeting and at least one other night a week I am in a small faith sharing group; at least twice a month there is a CTA or a SEPAWOC or Liturgy Council meeting. A great deal of my time is spent going to prayer meetings or meetings dealing with spiritual issues. I still often view my life as full of contradictions, but that is okay, for I now finally do consider myself as a spiritual person, one who is far from perfect but filled with gratitude and a strong desire to help others, like those wonderful homeless people in Kensington I spend time with each week in a "Just Listening" ministry. At 82, I am at a great place in my life realizing, as Che Guevara's friend called to him in the *Motorcycle Diaries*, "I am not me anymore." At least not the me I used to be – and that is very much okay.

**Joseph Schlachter** is a member of the SEPAWOC Core Committee and many other spiritually enriching groups.

### Editorial Staff of *EqualWRites*

A Publication of SEPAWOC

Editors: **Ellie Harty, Mary Whelan**

Book Review Editor: **Marian Ronan**

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

**AH, SPRING (OR ALMOST  
SPRING!)... A TIME FOR:**

**FEBRUARY - MARCH**

**Lenten Solidarity with the Sisters – Tuesdays in Lent (and beyond) at 8am and/or 8pm**, spend time in stillness and prayer listening to God's voice.

**The Church in the Modern World Series: Monday, March 11 7-9pm**, Sister Simone Campbell presents "*Doing Justice*"...**Saturday, May 4 10am-2pm**, A worldwide symposium on "*Bringing Forth an Environmentally Sustainable and Socially Just Presence in Our World*" and Mary Beth Hamm, SSJ, Diane Guerin, RSM, Donna Korba, IHM present "*Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream*" all at Mount St. Joseph Convent Auditorium. RSVP for each session to Kathy Sekula at 610-664-6650 x564 or [ksekula@mercymidatlantic.org](mailto:ksekula@mercymidatlantic.org).

**Transformation in a Time of Uncertainty An Intelligent Reflection and Action Plan on How to Practice Our Faith in the Present Age": Saturday, March 16 9am-3:30pm** Nancy Sylvester, IHM is the presenter at Chestnut Hill College Sugarloaf Center. For information, contact Joe Boyle 484-480-8311 [josephboyleoil@comcast.net](mailto:josephboyleoil@comcast.net).

**Holy Thursday Witness for Women's Ordination: Thursday, March 28 11pm** at the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul, Philadelphia.

**APRIL**

**The Irrepressible Energy of the Spirit—Vatican II and Beyond, April 12-14**, to be chaired by Dr. Marian Ronan. Panel discussion on April 13<sup>th</sup> (*Vatican II: Women Are Also the Church*) by Jeremy Daigler, Regina Bannan and Margaret Susan Thompson. Contact Barbara Crawford, Chestnut Hill College at 215-248-7129. Mary Jeremy Daigler, RSM will have copies of her book available. (Payment by check \$33.75). See ad below.

**MAY**

**Ordination Day Eucharistic Liturgy (led by a woman) Saturday, May 18 at 9:30am** Sister Cities Triangle Park at Logan Circle across from the Cathedral, Philadelphia

**CORPUS National Conference – Becoming Human and Christian Together: May 31-June 2** at Ramapo College, Mahwah, NJ. Sister Simone Campbell, Episcopalian Bishop John Shelby Spong, Anthony Padovano are featured presenters. [www.corpus.org](http://www.corpus.org).

**ONGOING**

**WOC Women-Church Convergence – 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month:** Call in conferences on a variety of topics, list of times and topics at [www.womensordination.org](http://www.womensordination.org).

**THE RESIGNATION OF THE POPE**

*As we were preparing to publish this issue, we learned that Pope Benedict had resigned. We had many reactions, some of them thoughtful, some admittedly snarky. In the end, however, we thought WOC Executive Director, Erin Saiz Hanna's February 11, 2013 message to WOC members and this press statement beautifully summarized our best thinking and our fondest hope. The Editors*

**Statement from Executive Director, Erin Saiz Hanna**

**Washington, D.C.**

"The Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) respects Pope Benedict's decision to resign from leadership. We are saddened to hear of the deteriorating health of the pontiff and hold him in prayer.

During his papacy, Pope Benedict XVI used his power to take significant steps backwards for women. A staunch opponent of women's leadership, during Pope Benedict's tenure he declared women's ordination the gravest crime against the Church, excommunicated all Roman Catholic Womenpriests, and personally had Fr. Roy Bourgeois dismissed from his Maryknoll community for supporting women priests.

As Roman Catholics worldwide prepare for the conclave, we are reminded that the current system remains an 'old boys club' and does not allow for women's voices to participate in the decision of the next leader of our Church. WOC members plan to host vigils and raise "pink smoke" during the conclave as a prayerful reminder of the voices of the Church that go unheard.

The people of the Church are desperate for a leader who will be open to dialogue, and will have the courage to create systems that will address the sexism, exclusion, and abuse in our Church. The Catholic Church needs to be a voice for justice in the world. We pray for a leader who can truly minister to all of the people of God."

Blessings,  
Erin Saiz Hanna

**Incompatible**  
**with**  
**God's Design:**  
**A Hisotry of the Women's Ordination**  
**Movement in the U.S. Roman Catholic Church**  
**--Mary Jeremy Daigler, author**

**for more information:**  
**Contact: [mjdaigler@comcast.net](mailto:mjdaigler@comcast.net)**

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## Book Reviews

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*Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith* by Barbara Brown Taylor. New York: HarperOne, 2006. Hardback, \$9.58; e-book, 9.78. 256 pp.

Reviewed by Maureen Tate

*Leaving Church, A Memoir of Faith* is not a recent publication. Published in 2006, it only recently came to my attention and I felt it deserved comment. My reading priorities are often determined by how a topic or title speaks to me at a moment when I am working through some personal question or quandary, and I know exactly why I chose to read *Leaving Church* at this time. Over the past year, it has been difficult to navigate the barrage of assaults by Catholic hierarchy on the sensibilities of not only Catholic women but all women and many Catholics who thought the cornerstone of their faith was the Gospel and Jesus' liberating message of love and forgiveness. Rather, the Vatican Church continues to reflect in word and action its deep seated obsession with all matters of sexual morality and politics, patriarchy and clericalism. These are times that literally try Catholic women's souls and why many are once again considering "leaving the church."

The author, Barbara Brown Taylor, is a popular writer, speaker and professor of religion and Christian spirituality. She writes in accessible prose and often expresses, with a simple turn of phrase, something you have thought or felt but didn't dare verbalize. An Episcopal priest since 1984, Brown Taylor explores her journey to ordination, her ministry as the only priest in a rural parish, and the process leading up to her decision to leave active parish ministry for a college teaching position. The book has three parts: Finding, Losing and Keeping. I found part one, Finding, thoroughly engrossing and felt I was reading a version of my own story. Brown Taylor's family did not belong to one church. From a young age she was fascinated with church and the experience she describes of being held in a Great Presence, one she also encountered in nature. She occasionally attended churches and synagogues with friends or family and describes a childhood sensitivity, dreaminess and curiosity about this mystical presence that sounds familiar. There was no passion in her family for religion and so she charted her own course. We shared similarities in that we immersed ourselves in communities of faith and action in high school and college, read Bonhoeffer and Tillich, and discovered a language to speak about the God experience that was exciting and all consuming.

Ironically, we both applied for ministerial fellowships in 1973 and were accepted into Divinity programs. However, that is where our paths diverge. My Catholic faith did not provide a self-evident path. Yet, I believed that with enough study and experience it was only a matter of time before the Catholic Church would see the wisdom of embracing the full participation of women. Brown, on the other hand, went on to Yale Divinity School though not at first to pursue ordained ministry. Brown writes about her dilemma, "At what point did a person decide that he or she was holy enough to do something like that? Being a priest seemed only slightly less dicey to me than being chief engineer at a nuclear plant. In both cases, one needed to know how to approach great power without losing great danger and getting fried in the process." She was happier in the pew, that is, until she met a congrega-

tion committed to urban ministry. There, "the holy danger" she once experienced at the altar was experienced in ministry to the homeless and hungry where she encountered "divine Presence in human faces, and especially in those that least resembled mine. . . . At the communion rail, people knelt to let themselves be fed. . . . where one fully exposed human being rested for a moment in the presence of another." She was drawn to this ministry, wanted to keep on doing it and, through a call that manifested itself in fits and starts, was later ordained.

There is a very amusing passage in which she describes in great detail receiving her clerical collar in the mail, trying it on in at the bathroom mirror and realizing that the collar will change her because it will change how people respond to her. This insight ultimately comes into play again in part two: Losing. This section focuses on her search for her own congregation after serving in pastoral support roles. She finds a church that she believes she was destined to serve. It is a productive ministry in a rural community but it is not without significant challenges. She tells the story of how her ministry developed within this congregation. I found this section somewhat tedious due to some repetition and detailed descriptions of her ministry. However, she is very articulate about the temptations and drive she experienced to be the "perfect priest" requiring an exhaustive and depleting effort to meet everyone's needs but her own. It is a very honest and personal critique of the priesthood, in which form, with its clerical trappings and underpinnings, overwhelms substance. As one committed to women's ordination, I found it a cautionary tale.

Keeping, the third and final section, however, was gratifying and uplifting. Having wrestled with confusion and doubts about her priestly vocation, Brown Taylor focuses anew on the faith of Jesus. She reconsiders Jesus, not as founder of a new religion but as "an exemplar of a new way of being human" by which love of God and one another is the primary vocation, not maintaining the religion and church structures that formed about Jesus.

I was moved and challenged by so much in this final section that I found myself highlighting most of it. Brown Taylor is provocative and articulates what many of us are thinking. "The way many of us are doing church is broken and we know it, even if we do not know what to do about it. We proclaim the priesthood of all believers while we continue living with the hierarchical clergy, liturgy and architecture. We follow a Lord who challenged the religious and political institutions of his time while we fund and defend our own." Brown Taylor realized that she had a chance to be a different kind of priest in a new vision of church that captured my imagination. She queries, "What if people were invited to come tell what they already know of God instead of to learn what they are supposed to believe? What if they were blessed for what they are doing in the world instead of chastened for

*Continued on page 9*

***Sacred Dread: Raissa Maritain, the Allure of Suffering, and the French Catholic Revival* by Brenna Moore. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013. Paper, \$30; e-book, \$21. 293pp.**

***Raised by the Church: Growing Up in New York City's Catholic Orphanages* by Edward Rohs and Judith Estrine. Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2012 Hardbound, \$22.95. 238pp.**

***Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America's Largest Church* by Timothy Matovina. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012. Hardbound, \$29.95; e-book, \$16.19. 312pp.**

*Reviewed by Marian Ronan*

In recent years, what with attacks by the Vatican and the hierarchy on U.S. sisters, affordable health care, and LGBT equality, it hasn't always been easy to remain Catholic. But as the three books reviewed here demonstrate, the Catholic tradition, past and present, is no less enriching for all of that—growing, changing, providing insight into vital issues.

I begin with *Sacred Dread*, Brenna Moore's study of the French philosopher, mystic, and Jewish convert to Catholicism, Raissa Maritain, and the French Catholic Revival (1905-1950) of which she was a part. Moore is one of a cadre of young Catholic feminist theologians and historians here in the New York metropolitan area (among them, Jeannine Hill Fletcher, Elena Procaro-Foley, and Julie Byrne) making significant contributions to Catholic studies. Moore's book introduces readers to the extraordinary work of a woman who has, for the most part, been eclipsed by her husband, the French Catholic neo-Thomist philosopher, Jacques Maritain. I was reminded throughout the book of how much the female member of this pair has been overshadowed by the male: whenever I read "Maritain," I would think of Jacques, and then remember that the book is actually about Raissa.

The central question of *Sacred Dread*, as Moore tells us, is "How did suffering and anguish achieve such a prominent presence in so many French Catholic revival works, and how can this fascination with suffering be understood." Feminist theologians like Rebecca Parker and Rita Nakashima Brock have in recent years condemned the Christian doctrine of vicarious suffering. But the French Catholic Revival, spearheaded by figures such as Leon Bloy, Charles de Foucauld, Charles Peguy, Simone Weil, and Maritain herself, had an enormous and in many respects positive impact on American Catholicism, suffering and all.

Moore's analysis does not ignore the problematic side of the Revival's focus on suffering and abasement, for example, its use of Jews and women as the primary figures of such suffering. But it also places this focus in an historical and social context that does the phenomenon far more justice than do blanket liberal feminist condemnations. Even before the hor-

rors of the two world wars, French Catholics were turning to the suffering of Jesus and Mary as an alternative to the naïve optimism of nineteenth century Romanticism and scientific positivism. Maritain was a Russian Jew who emigrated to Paris at the age of ten and turned, at the Sorbonne, from liberal secularism to a vision of this "sacred dread" that sustained her through the extermination of European Jewry. Moore's reading of the life of this remarkable woman adds much-needed nuance to liberal feminist scholarship on Christianity.

In 1946—not long after Maritain and her husband returned to Paris from their exile in New York City—the unmarried mother of newborn Edward Rohs left him on the steps of a Sisters of Mercy orphanage in Brooklyn. *Raised by the Church* is a memoir of the next nineteen years of "Ed's" life, as he moves up through the post-war Catholic orphanage system, and of what becomes of him after he leaves. Intertwoven with this personal narrative is the history of the child welfare system in New York.

Compared with Brenna Moore's sophisticated analysis of Raissa Maritain, Rohs's memoir is almost innocent, but I enjoyed every word of it. A resident of five different orphanages in the gender and age-segregated New York Catholic orphanage system, Rohs shares his experiences in a moving, deeply personal style. Early in the narrative, for example, he reports his shock at the disappearance of mother figures when he moved up from orphanages staffed by Catholic sisters to those staffed by brothers. For the rest of her life, he treated one of the Sisters of Mercy from his childhood, Sister Johanna McLaughlin, like the beloved aunt he never had.

Perhaps most striking, for me, are the stories Rohs tells of an experience of physical and sexual abuse by a lay counselor in one of the orphanages and of attempted sexual abuse by a visiting Catholic brother at another orphanage when he was a bit older. Although Rohs admits to experiencing both trauma and rage in response to the first case, (less so to the second), he is ultimately forgiving, if not of the perpetrators, then of

*Continued on page 9*

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## Book Reviews

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*My Journey from Silence to Solidarity* by Roy Bourgeois, M.M. Edited by Margaret Knapke. Yellow Springs, OH: BEAR, 2012. Paper, \$7.00. 42pp.

Reviewed by Judy Heffernan

How ironic that as I begin to type this review, the announcement has been made of the Vatican dismissal of Roy Bourgeois from the priesthood. Fr. Roy has been a priest for 40 years, a Maryknoll for 46 years. His dismissal certainly is a sad appendix to this book, but it is far from the end of his story!

Fr. Roy begins his story by reflecting on his journey from segregated (even when in church) Louisiana to war-torn Vietnam. He knew he had to change course in his life and joined Maryknoll because of its work for justice and equality. His assignment as a newly ordained priest was to work in Bolivia. The people he met there taught Fr. Roy about solidarity- walking with each other and making another's struggle his or her own. He learned solidarity so well, in fact, that he was arrested by the military for speaking out with the poor for justice and was forced to leave the country! Fr. Roy's next stop was El Salvador where he was overwhelmed with the discovery that the poor were being slaughtered by a U.S. trained military. He knew he had to do something.

Whenever we know we have to change course, whenever we know we have to do something, Fr. Roy encourages study, reflection and prayer, and he practices what he preaches. Reflection and prayer can enable courage, and several shared highlights of his life shine with that courage. I especially love two stories:

Roy and two companions entered Fort Benning in army uniforms and, under cover of darkness, near the barracks of the 525 Salvadoran soldiers, climbed a tree with a boom box and played Bishop Romero's last sermon. "Lay down your weapons. Disobey the orders of your superiors. Do not kill your fellow *campesinos*..." Soldiers with rifles ordered them down. They were arrested, charged, and went to prison for a year and a half.

Fr. Roy was invited to speak about the School of the Americas at a conference in Rome and was invited by Vatican Radio to be interviewed. All went well, and there were two minutes left. Roy recognized the opportunity and said, "We have been discussing injustice, and I want to say that there will never be justice in our Church until women can be ordained." The interview abruptly ended, and they replaced his interview with Gregorian chant!

Fr. Roy's journey from silence to solidarity, his total commitment to women's ordination, occurred because he met women who shared with him their call to ordination. He realized their experience of being called was like his own call years before in Vietnam. He came to the clear conclusion that our church's teaching that excludes women from ordination cannot stand up to scrutiny. He wrote to Pope John Paul II asking him to change the policies which are causing so much needless division and suffering; he wrote to his brothers in Maryknoll and

later called upon all Catholics, priests, bishops and the Pope to speak out loudly on this grave injustice of excluding women from ordained ministry. Fr. Roy is convinced that this teaching is rooted in sexism and is not the way of God.

Then in a defining moment in August, 2008, Janice Sevre-Duszynska, after much soul searching, knew it was time to say yes to ordination. Janice Sevre-Duszynska was devoted to the School of the Americas Watch, the organization that Roy founded; she had spent time in prison for her peace activities, and Roy was her dear friend. She invited him to attend her ordination and be the homilist. He did not pretend his invitation got lost in the mail—he joyfully agreed and this chapter of his story has changed almost everything for him. Less than ninety days after the ordination, Fr. Roy received a letter from the Vatican stating that he had thirty days to recant his support for women's ordination or he would be excommunicated. He has since also been dismissed from his order and from the priesthood. Fr. Roy has been asked to sign and return a copy of the formal dismissal as a proof of acceptance of the dismissal. He has chosen not to sign and will continue to speak out for women.

The women's ordination movement is glorious, though difficult, work. For some, like Fr. Roy Bourgeois, the sacrifice is great. But whatever we can say or do is an important part of the mosaic. We just can't be silent or so afraid that we don't do anything. This whole story of Roy Bourgeois' journey reminds me of Robert Kennedy saying that each time we stand up for an ideal, or act to improve the lot of others, or work against injustice, we send forth tiny ripples of hope. These ripples cross each other from a million different centers of energy and daring; they build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

I have had the joy of meeting Roy and listening to his story. I can hear his quiet, beautiful voice in every word of this book, and now I can say that I have read a complete book in one sitting!

Let's all order a copy of this book. Enclose at least the \$7 suggested donation and send Roy a personal note: Father Roy Bourgeois, P.O. Box 3330, Columbus, GA 31903.

Finally, I am really not one for titles, but I was very struck that the statement from Maryknoll regarding Roy's dismissal used "Mr. Bourgeois" four times (it seems mean-spirited to me); therefore, I celebrate the statement of support from the Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas in which they use "Father Roy" five times!! Thank you, sisters!

**Judy Heffernan** is a Catholic priest and a member of the *SEPAWOC* Core Committee.



## *Leaving Church Review* continued from page 6

not doing more at church?" She reimagines church as station rather than destination in which the church's job would be "to move people out the door instead of trying to keep them in, by convincing them that God needed them more in the world than in the church."

Brown Taylor introduces what is, for me, a new way of thinking about salvation which she defines as the "divine spaciousness that comes to human beings in all the tight places where their lives are at risk, regardless of how they go there or whether they know God's name." She ends the book with a beautiful reflection on a question that she asks of herself and indirectly puts to the reader, "What is saving my life right now?" She names with simplicity and honesty some of the things that were life-giving for her at that time such as: living in relationship with creation; observing the Sabbath; seeing the presence of God in other people, becoming more fully human; being kind; and finally, keeping faith – "in God, in God's faith in me, and in all the companions whom God has given me to help see the world as God sees it – so that together we may find a way to realize the divine vision."

So, I invite you to ask yourself, as I did, what is saving your life right now? Might we all have a chance to be a different kind of priest in a church found in the spaces opened up for us by that question? I am pleased that I read this book at a moment when the question of whether to stay or leave the Catholic Church is being asked all around me. But where would I go? If I seek God's presence in those around me, if God needs me to work in the world as a force for love, justice and forgiveness, and if others are working God's grace in my life, then I am already home. The answer to the question of whether or not to leave the church seems simply to continue on the journey of keeping faith as defined above. That much I can do. Barbara Brown Taylor says it best: "I may have left the house, but I have not left the relationship."

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

## *Sacred Dread et. al. Reviews* continued from page 7

the institutions in which they acted. With regard to treatment by the sadistic lay counselor, Rohs writes, "These memories are wrapped within the larger context of a child being raised in an environment that lacked sufficient staff trained to listen and respond to me." Rohs went on to work in the Catholic orphanage system himself, and later, as a professional in the New York State Office of Mental Health. Writing of the violence experienced by young people in the New York state system, Rohs describes his own isolated incidents of abuse at the hands of people who were supposed to protect him as "peanuts."

The chronological structure of this review, and even the subtitle of Timothy Matovina's book—*Transformation in America's Largest Church*—might lead a reader to assume that "Latino Catholicism" is a contemporary phenomenon. And indeed, that's what many of us think: all these Hispanic immigrants came to the U.S. in the twentieth century, the way the Germans, the Irish and the Italians did in the nineteenth. But as Matovina clarifies immediately, there were

Spanish-speaking Catholics in the territory that is now the U.S. four decades before the English founded Jamestown, and seven before the first English Catholic settlement in Baltimore. And nativists were killing Spanish-speaking priests in the Southwest even as they were burning down white-ethnic Catholic churches and convents in the Northeast before the Civil War.

But it's the present as well as the past that drives Matovina to call for—and enact—a remapping of American Catholicism in light of the mutual transformation of the U.S. Church by Anglo and Spanish-speaking members. For, as we learn, forty-five per cent of all Millennial Catholics (born between 1979 and 1987) are Latinos, as are two-thirds of Catholics under the age of thirty-five who attend church regularly. If we are concerned about the future of the church, then, it is crucial to absorb what Matovina tells us about Hispanic church leadership; parishes and apostolic movements like *Cursillo*; worship and devotional practices to Our Lady of Guadalupe and others; Latino involvement in Catholic networks of education, health care, social service, ministry, pastoral training and publications; as well as how Hispanic Catholics are passing on the faith to the next generation.

It is impossible, in a review of this length, to do justice to the sweeping and comprehensive study of the Catholicism of Spanish-speaking Americans past and present that Matovina offers in *Latino Catholicism*. I was struck, however, as I worked my way through his nuanced arguments, by the extent to which the future of Latino Catholicism is threatened by problems that also undermine the rest of the American church. Matovina argues convincingly, for example, that the future of U.S. Latino Catholicism, in large part, will be determined by the quality of Hispanic ministry, especially to Hispanic youth—*pastoral juvenil*. And studies show that the most effective youth ministries are led by paid pastoral staff. But the vast majority of Latino ministers in the U.S. Catholic Church are deacons who are, by definition, not paid, and by women who, for the most part, earn lay ministry certificates because they can't afford the academic ministry degrees generally required for paid positions. In 2006 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops likewise replaced its Hispanic ministry office with a less well funded office of "cultural diversity."

Why all this underfunding of the future of U.S. Catholicism? Perhaps it's because of the costs of the sex abuse crisis as well as the lost contributions of alienated former Catholics and of Latino Catholics who are joining evangelical churches in significant numbers.

This depressing conclusion is not what you may have anticipated from a review that begins by referring to the "enriching" Catholic tradition. But difficulty, and even betrayal, has always been part of that tradition. I can do no better, then, than to close with the final lines of *Latino Catholicism*, the words of Latino Bishop Patricio Flores:

" 'Let us not falter,' the Lord told his apostles when they struggled against the winds. He tells us, now that we are in mid-sea, 'Courage, do not be afraid. It is I' . "

**Marian Ronan**, EqualwRites book review editor, blogs at <http://marianronan.wordpress.com>.

## SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

### Holy Thursday Chrism Mass

Luke 4:16-21

By Judith A. Heffernan, M.Div.

Jesus read from the Prophet Isaiah...let the oppressed go free!

Fifty years ago, on Holy Thursday 1963, John XXIII gave us *Pacem in Terris*. I was sixteen and deeply felt the call to ordained ministry, so I was quite fond of John's sentence which read that human beings have the right to choose for themselves the kind of life which appeals to them, whether it is to found a family or embrace the priesthood or religious life!

John XXIII and Vatican II have been on my mind because the *Catholic Coalition for Justice and Peace* is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Vatican II with a marvelous series. At the first event of the series, Carol Zinn, S.S.J. (President Elect of LCWR- yea, Carol!) described for us how the Council was expected to last about three weeks—but then the Spirit happened! (The Council lasted three years and two months!) Sister Carol encouraged us to reflect on *Gaudium et Spes* and to realize how powerful a vision of the church it really is. It was unprecedented when it was written. It calls for dialogue, collaboration, and participation. It is addressed to all of humanity, and it says the world is good. *Gaudium et Spes* — Joy and Hope!

I later read in this document that all the faithful, whether

clerics or laity, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry as well as freedom of thought and freedom in expressing those thoughts. Hmmm.

Father Roy Bourgeois has been dismissed now from priestly orders and from his community after forty-six years of loving service. We know why. (See *EqualwRites* review of Roy's *My Journey from Silence to Solidarity*.)

Father Tony Flannery, a sixty-six year old Irish Redemptorist, has announced (see *NCR*) that he faces excommunication and dismissal from his religious congregation (which he joined in his TEENS) because he advocates open discussion about church teachings—including the ordination of women. Father Tony has said that he is troubled by the Vatican denial of any meaningful role for women in ministry. He writes, "How much longer can this policy be sustained...we must be the last institution in the Western world that continues to hold such blatant discrimination against women. I have no doubt that there is no theological or scriptural basis for this position, but that it is a fairly barefaced and primitive desire for male domination."

This Holy Thursday please join us outside the Cathedral. We pray, sing, celebrate and witness that John XXIII and Vatican II proclaimed alternate models of church than what the Vatican is now promulgating. Through the Spirit we have heard the words of Isaiah proclaimed by Jesus. We know we are no longer to be oppressed. We are free. We continue to witness on Holy Thursday to help let the oppressors go free!

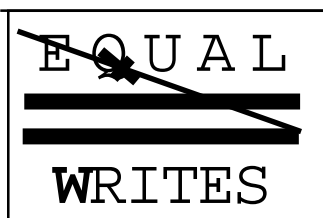
**Judith Heffernan** is a member of the *Community of the Christian Spirit and SEPAWOC Core Committee*.

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