

Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women and Men in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Area

MISSION - 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 WITNESS**April 14, 2022 at 11 am**

**Sister Cities Park across from the
Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Please join us.**

Do you wonder why we keep doing what we are doing, standing outside, across from but not in the basilica, praying, chanting, singing, testifying in blazing sunshine, drenching rain, chilling winds, or disconcerting combinations of all of the above? Do you wonder why we suffer bus blockades in front of us, cheers and jeers in sometimes equal portions all around?

Do you also wonder, after the description above, why we keep asking you to be one of us? I guess because each Holy Thursday Spring witness brings us an answer, and I'll let Thomas Merton proclaim it far more effectively than I could. In a letter Merton wrote to a peace activist in the 1960's (when acting for peace was most critical), he wrote:

"The real hope is not in something we think we can do but in God who is making something good out of it in some way we cannot see."

And that is far from "cold comfort" as you can see as he continues:

"Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself."

We know the value, we know the rightness, and we know the truth of our work, and so we can also embrace the value, rightness and truth of what he tells us next:

"The big results are not in your hands or mine, but they suddenly happen and we can share in them; but there is no point in building our lives on this personal satisfaction, which may be denied us and which after all is not that important. ... All the good that you will do will come not from you but from the fact that you have allowed yourself, in the obedience of faith, to be used by God's love."

We are indeed doing "apostolic" work, work "to be used by God's love". And that is why we – and hopefully you by joining us in witness – do what we do.

**ORDINATION DAY OUTDOOR
MASS****Saturday, May 21, 9am**

**Sister Cities Park (across from Saints
Peter & Paul Basilica)
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Led by a woman priest**

Someday we will be **inside** that basilica with our woman priest saying Mass!

That is the hope and the promise we show to all who do go inside or who just pass by: This **will** happen; this must happen.

Furthermore, we are saying, look and listen to how beautiful and meaningful and sacred this Mass is when everyone is included in full ministry and it does happen.

Be aware, inside closed doors across the street from us, males only will be receiving the formal, hierarchically sanctioned ordination, a sacrament and, thus, a precious sign of God's grace if you will, prohibited to so many only because of their gender – essentially because of their body parts.

We are asking you to **attend this year especially** when the Church, through its worldwide synods, is vowing to listen to lay people's concerns and visions for the future. **Please help us make a visual statement affirming women's ordination.**

HAPPY 30th ANNIVERSARY TO EQUALWRITES (and to our readers, too!)

We are celebrating by treating you to excerpts from our very first *EqualwRites* from May 1992, followed by brief comments on what has – or has not – happened or become an issue for us since then. Please enjoy these memories from the past, analyses from the present, and insights and inspiration for what the future can be.

Mary Whelan “pauses to reflect” on our first issue:

I was beyond excited when I was able to put my hands on the first copy of *EqualwRites*. Thank you, Judy Heffernan! Just to read that historical document (yes, I believe what we do will have a place in history) was important to me. The quality of topics chosen and writing was there from the beginning. As were some of the same contributors!

It caused me to reflect on my personal journey to SEPAWOC. In the mid-80s a big change happened in the life of my family. We got new neighbors! The Reverend Nancy Wittig moved into the rectory of St. Andrews-in-the-Field Episcopal Church which is on my block. I knew of her because she was one of the women ordained in Philadelphia on July 29, 1974. She had a daughter and a son the same age as my daughter and son. We met through our children (children are always on the lookout for other kids—we always acknowledge their help) and our families became friendly. During the years that followed we frequently attended liturgies at St. Andrews and became familiar with a woman presiding.

Around this time, I heard of the Bishop’s Pastoral on Women in the Catholic Church (commented on by Regina Bannan below). I attended one of the listening sessions at an archdiocesan high school along with one of the nuns I was working with at the time. I sat and listened and as the afternoon wore on, I became “radicalized”. (When I was a young girl, I asked our pastor why girls couldn’t be altar servers—after all, I was training the future altar boys to know their Latin parts).

I couldn’t figure out why the men of the church were studying women. I thought it would be interesting to have a Pastoral on Men, to try to understand what they were thinking. Seriously. I couldn’t figure them out at all. I went home and vowed to go a new direction. My friend, Nancy, “knew people”—who connected me with SEPAWOC. I remember my first meeting. This was the early 90s. I am still here.

This is my story—we each have one. And I am thrilled that we are on the journey together. I welcome anyone who is willing to join us, to walk with us, to do so.

I am so happy that there are young women and men who are embracing this challenge, I have met them and I am impressed with how articulate they are, their energy, and willingness to confront the powers that be. At the same time, I am honored to be in the company of the brave women and men who have been doing this work longer than I have.

Regina Bannan reflects on two articles (the first of which she authored):

BISHOP’S PASTORAL ON WOMEN (1992)

Is this the best paragraph I ever wrote?

“[T]he pastoral should be about sexism, not women. Doing it that way brings in a lot of moral and family concerns that do not belong here. The Bishops wrote about racism, not about African-Americans. They wrote about economic justice, not about the various traits and problems of the rich or the poor. The leadership for the most recent pastoral on racism was provided by African-American bishops, an opportunity denied to women because of the Church’s ban on ordaining them. The clarity with which an oppressed group can see its own situation is missing from this document.”

In 1992, I was urging SEPAWOC’s membership to write to the five Philadelphia bishops about the third draft of that pastoral on women and use the points from National WOC Coordinator Ruth Fitzpatrick: “who cooked, who cleaned up, etc.” to “Break the stained glass ceiling!” Thirty years ago it was all so new.

We attended and generally praised the three regional meetings arranged by the Archdiocese in 1988 for women to give feedback on the first draft, but there’s something here that I had forgotten. Rome called Bishops to the Vatican, and the second draft, the draft that incorporated women’s feedback, was then withdrawn.

The only phrase I quote from the third draft “says that if a seminarian shows ‘an incapacity to treat women as equals,’ he should not be allowed to become a priest. But the whole Roman Catholic Church shows the same incapacity.” That third draft was sent back again for revision and the fourth draft was so bad the whole thing was given up. I do give a shout out to the Bishops on the Committee as “genuinely concerned about women...” But it’s not enough.”

“EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE”

If the above dampens your enthusiasm for the 2022 Synod process, be forewarned but participate anyway. In *EqualwRites*, Vol. 1, No. 1 in the “Experience Elsewhere” column, Carol Geary wrote about encouraging both her daughters and sons to be altar servers, possible in Michigan where they grew up. Carol’s back in Michigan now, but there’s been change in Rome and change here, maybe not enough, but last Sunday I imagine you saw girls on your parish altar and women priests in any number of small Eucharistic communities. The latter would not have happened without SEPAWOC, and maybe not even the former.

Ellie Harty reflects on two articles:

“HOLY THURSDAY WITNESS” (1992)

“Sixty supporters”, the article reported, gathered for the witness and prayer service that year. Four guitars accompanied their songs; men and women religious, a local minister and even several priests joined them!

Participation at the Holy Thursday witness now, 30 years later, is less than half that number; fewer men and women religious attend (but then there are fewer numbers of religious who actually could attend), occasionally a minister, but no traditionally ordained practicing male priests gather with us. Fortunately, however, thanks to over 30 years of progress, ordained women priests do attend, and it is they and you who give us the courage and hope to go on.

Where 30 years ago participants sang, prayed, and chanted in full view of the myriad of parish priests parading in to receive the Easter holy oils, priests now file in via a side door out of view of us and we of them. Also, we suppose, because some of the lay attendees at the Mass could still see and hear us, the powers-that-be now line up large buses on the street between us and the cathedral to block views both ways. They also quickly shut front doors once left open and welcoming to all.

All of these reactive steps over the years, however, have actually had a powerful effect on us. They have made we who faithfully witness each time feel inordinately important and powerful. Why else would they be so defensive? Is injustice just too hard to look in the face? Well, look or not look, we’ll be there until full inclusion is attained and proclaimed.

“DID YOU KNOW...”

In many of our issues, SEPAWOC’s Core Committee member, Marguerite Groves, wrote a regular column “Did

You Know” compiling facts, figures, and anecdotes from the current Catholic scene. I quote some here:

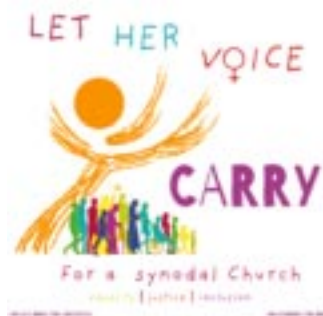
- “Canon lawyers have only in very recent years revised canon law on the principle that women can no longer be treated as minors.” (I did not know that and am appalled to think it took them until 1992! No wonder we work so hard for women in the Church.)
- “U.S. Catholic magazine said that 76% of readers responding to a survey would welcome women priests in their parish and that a third believe that perpetuating the male-only priesthood is sinful. 69% of respondents said they thought if Jesus were living today in the U.S., he would ordain women.” (Thankfully according to more recent polls the number of affirmative responses is higher than ever. I hope our work has helped make that difference and that people speak out in local Synodal meetings for ordination of all genders!)
- “In addition to a new hat, Anthony Bevilacqua (then Archbishop of Philadelphia) must have received a crystal ball when he was elevated to the College of Cardinals. On the next day, he stated there would not be women priests next year or in the next thousand years.” (The ensuing years’ sex abuse scandal severely scarred his reign, and so he had much more real threats to his orthodoxy and resulting cowardly actions to contend with than making snarky predictions about our unpromising future. He should have been more worried about the future of his Church and its and his own legacy.)

SEPAWOC Financial Statement Calendar Year 2021

Beginning balance (1-1-2021)	3747.93
<u>Revenues</u>	
Donations	7961.61
Beginning Balance + Revenue	11,709.54
<u>Expenses</u>	
Printing newsletter	5,375.00
Website fee	99.50
Postage, permits, mailbox rental	779.00
In Memoriam	50.00
Memberships (COR, WAC, WC-C)	175.00
FutureChurch ad	100.00
Total Expenses	6578.50
<u>Ending Balance (12-31-21)</u>	\$5131.04

Prepared by Mary Whelan, Treasurer

FROM THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S ORDINATION CONFERENCE!



If you click on this icon on the website www.womensordination.org, you will find extraordinary options to participate in the Pope's "Synod on Synodality" and make your voice heard.

What *does* the Synod Mean for Ordination Justice Advocates?

By filling out independent feedback forms available on the website, participating in the "Let Her Voice Carry" Facebook group, or joining online forums scheduled throughout the year, together we will find an answer. Pope Francis wants "an inclusive, participative process of engaging all voices in the Church, including those that have been marginalized." That sounds like us!

Please make your voice heard. SEPAWOC encourages us to join with WOC to proclaim the changes we most long to see in our Church.

A full set of resources, including a "Synodality Examen", is available to download.

Together, we will ensure that there will be no synod about us without us.

SAINT MARY MAGDALENE COMMUNITY

Join us for Sunday Zoom Masses at 9:00 am

More information at: smmcommunity.org.

COMMUNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT

We welcome you to join in via Zoom our Sunday 10:30am liturgies in the Catholic tradition which explore Scripture and contemporary readings.

Call 267-277-4022 for more information.

PLEASE KEEP GIVING!

Your generous donations have enabled us to produce *EqualwRites* for these past 30 years! We thank you for the part you played in our stated mission and hope you will join us as we move forward.

Please send any donations to: SEPAWOC, P.O. Box 52046, Philadelphia, PA 19115. There is now a link for PayPal at our website sepawoc.org. And if you designate SEPAWOC as your charity through AmazonSmile we will receive donations that way as well. We look forward to another fruitful year—no gift is too small or too large!

GOD, OUR MOTHER

A Poem by Mary Tarantini

Everywhere I breathe in God
Her spirit - emanates
From trees, from grass, from sky, from sun
To where can I escape?
Were I to hide inside my room
Her spirit closes in
I cannot hold my breath forever
I breathe - and it begins

Were I to look right or left
Or anywhere below between
God's spirit is the height and breadth
Of every atom ever seen
Were I to peek inside
And see with eyes reminiscent of
A time before Eden not even imagined
There - in the all - resides love

She looks upon the earth so ravaged
By madmen and rising waters
And dips her hand into hollow hearts
And fills the breasts of all nursing mothers
May God's spirit saturate every soul
So that all may wear upon their sleeves
The suffering of centuries long forsaken
Like a beggar begging in a den of thieves

God, our Mother, is a circle
Rest in her womb and be free
For all life is divine and eternal

EqualwRites is a publication of SEPAWOC

Editors: Ellie Harty, Mary Whelan

**Contributors: Judith Heffernan, Eileen DiFranco,
Marian Ronan, Regina Bannan**

Here's a "slide show" of all SEPAWOC has done over the years presented by Maureen Tate. Enjoy!

Southeastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference

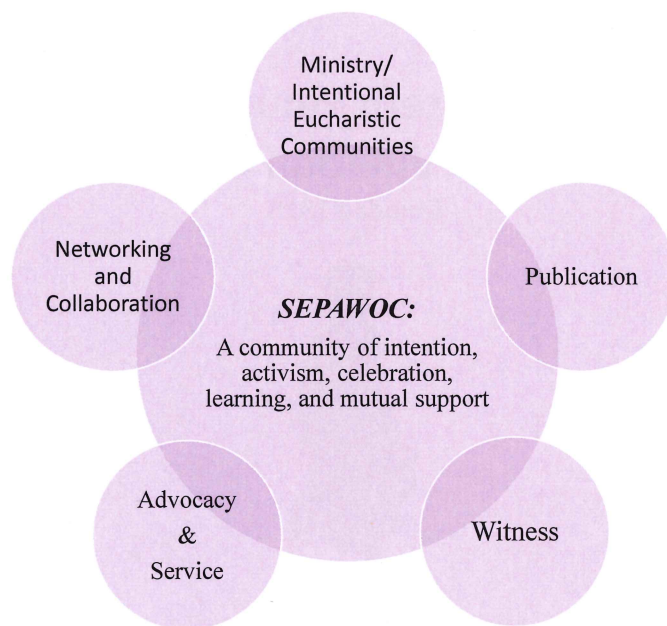
founded 1975



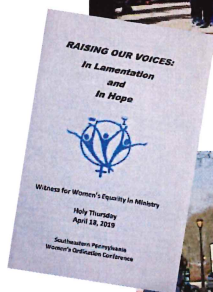
sepawoc@sepawoc.org



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Holy Thursday Witness



1980 - Present

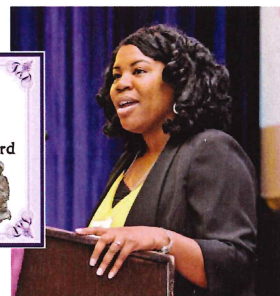
Ordination Day Witness



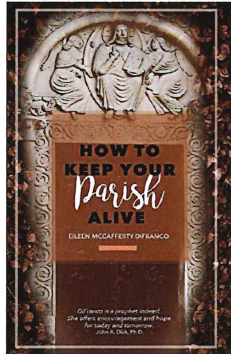
Witness



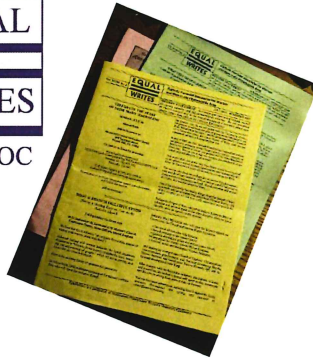
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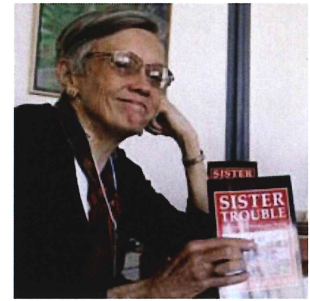
Publication



EQUAL
WRITES
SEPA WOC



Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women
and Men in the Philadelphia Area
June, 1992 - Present



the
Table

We Will Stay at the Table
[Ellie Harty](#)

Images of Leadership
[Regina Bannan](#)

Leadership and Ministry - Intentional Eucharistic and Interspiritual Communities



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7
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Advocacy and Service

SEPAWOC Core Committee

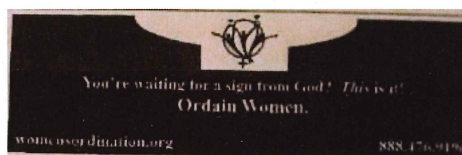
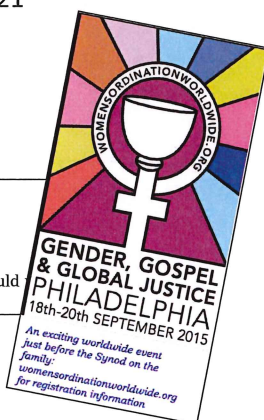
Service on Boards and Committees – COR, WOC, W-CC
Meeting with Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez
Speaking Engagements to colleges and groups
Women’s Ordination Worldwide Conference – local hosting
Billboard campaigns in 2001 and 2021
Nun justice – Nuns on the Bus
Women’s March



Support the Sisters!
Philadelphia Vigil
Tuesday May 22



The Vatican has issued a mandate against Catholic sisters that could works of justice with the poor and marginalized.



Forums

PLEASE JOIN US
Catholic Tipping Point Tour with Marie Collins
of Culture. Seeking Justice to Reclaim the Church



Thursday, September 12, 2019 at 6:30 PM
The Commonwealth Chateau at SugarLoaf
9220 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA
Ample Parking Available
For more information and recommendations you might take to ensure an
enjoyable experience, please contact the Philadelphia Office of Chestnut Hill Coll

With more words or promises,

SEPA WOC presents
"Break the Silence - Shatter the Stained Glass Ceiling"
 an evening with

Roy Bourgeois, M.M., and Aisha Taylor

May 29, 2009 @ 7:00 PM

Collenbrook United Church
5200 Trenchin Line Road

Drexel Hill, PA 19026

Donation - \$10 to \$35

Fr. Bourgeois has been a Catholic priest for 36 years, is the founder of the School of the Americas Watch and an ardent peace activist. Though threatened with excommunication, he proclaims "There will never be justice in the Catholic Church until women can be ordained."

Aisha Taylor is the Executive Director of the National Women's Ordination Conference and a tireless campaigner for women's rights in the Church.

THE COMMUNITY OF SAINT MARY
MAGDALENE AND SEPAWOC
INVITE YOU TO A PRESENTATION BY
DR. PATRICIA FRESEN
"Transformation by Compassion"
Friday, April 15
Collection

CELEBRATING WOMEN CALLED

SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
WOMEN'S ORDINATION CONFERENCE

Proudly Hosts

REVEREND
PATRICIA FRESEN, Ph.D.

Coordinator, Program of Preparation for
Women Seeking Ordination

MARIAN RONAN, Ph.D.
Professor of Contemporary Religion and

Theology, Former President,
WOC National Board

Saturday, March 12, 2005
The Friends Center

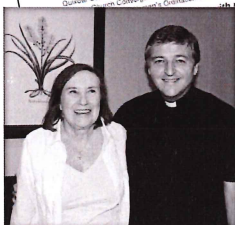
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
IN A GATHERING TO HONOR

THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
WOMEN'S ORDINATION CONFERENCE

EXPLORE WITH US
WOC'S CALL
TO PROPHETIC OBEDIENCE

TO WALKING WITH WOMEN CALLED
TO THE MINISTRY OF IRRITATION

Grand Event: Rev. Ida Raming & Rev. Iris Mueller - May 2003
Fr. Roy Bourgeois, M.M. - 2009
Dr. Patricia Fresen, RCWP - 2005 and 2011
Jamie Manson & Sr. Carol Zinn SSJ, Nun Justice - 2012
Fr. Helmut Schüller - 2012
Fr. Tony Flannery - 2014
Marie Collins - 2019





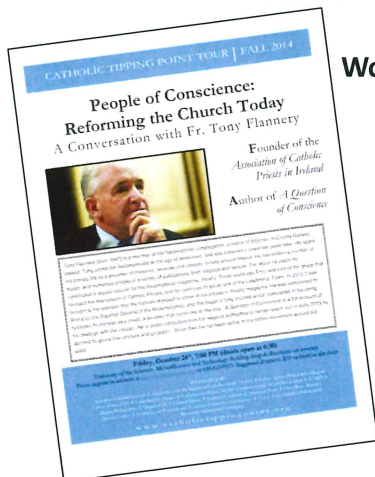
Networking and Collaboration

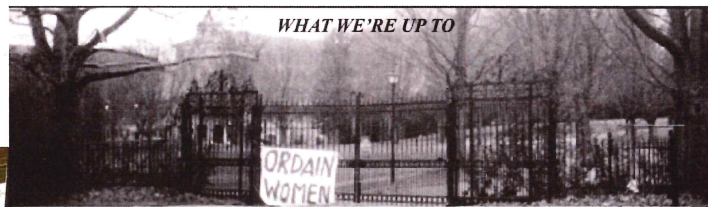
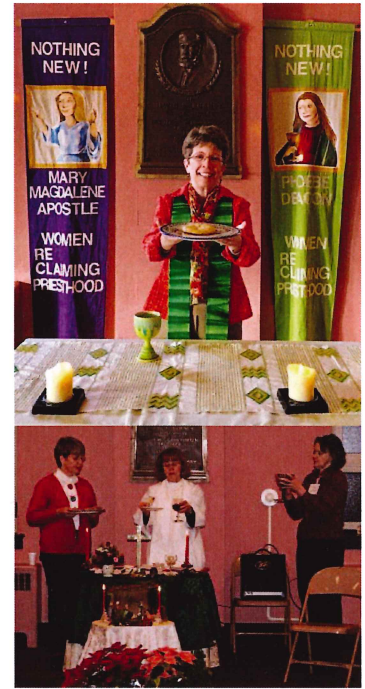
U.S. Women's Ordination Conference

Catholics Organizations for Renewal (COR)

Women-Church Convergence

Women's Ordination Worldwide





St. Charles Borromeo Seminary
Feast of the Annunciation, March, 2002



Amazon Synod, Rome October, 2019



HONORING OUR PAST - APPRECIATING OUR PRESENT

HITTING THE STREETS! - Showing up

Persisting

Building community

Bringing in new people and energy

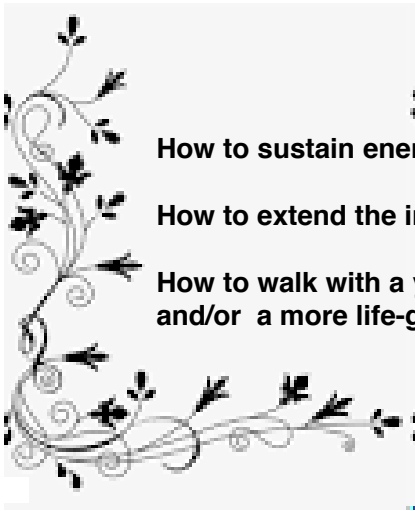
Being a stepping stone

FUTURE CHANGES

How to sustain energy and involvement to bring a new generation forward?

How to extend the invitation to join us in the struggle?

How to walk with a younger generation searching for a more inclusive church and/or a more life-giving spirituality?



EQUAL WRITES

SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
WOMEN'S ORDINATION CONFERENCE

SEPAWOC
P.O. BOX 52046
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19115

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

Scripture Reflections

Psalms 103:8, 1 Cor:15:58, Psalm 92:14, Micah 4:3

By Judith A. Heffernan, M.Div.

During the Liturgical Seasons of 2022, we have heard stirring refrains such as "God is gracious and merciful, abounding in kindness."... and "Be steadfast and devoted to God's work; know your labor is not in vain."

Another stirring refrain for me is Karl Barth's advice to preach with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Today I celebrate that for 30 years I have been able to preach with the Bible in one hand and *EqualwRites* in the other!

Thirty years of traveling on the road of renewal-all of us together-near and far. Thirty years of collaboration for equality and justice. Thirty years of support, care and mutual respect. Thirty years of openness to the Spirit-led journey to be an inclusive church community; indeed, as WOC proclaims: a church that welcomes, empowers and accompanies! ..."Know your labor is not in vain!"

During these thirty years, the road to renewal has had some real roadblocks! The most recent has left me both dumbfounded and crazed...let me explain: Some Catholics around the country have been informed that their baptisms may not be valid because the wrong wording was used at their Baptisms.

Celia Viggo Wexler, author of *Catholic Women Confront Their Church; Stories of Hurt and Hope*, explains: It seems the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a doctrinal note that priests and deacons who altered the text broke Church law,

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 July 2022. Final deadline for submissions is June 15. Send to elliehart65@gmail.com or mail to above address.

ADVERTISING: Advertising helps us support *EqualwRites* and helps you find people who support us. Our ad rates are \$30 for one issue, \$75 for three issues. To place an ad contact mewhelan@comcast.net. Find us online at sepaowoc.org.

and the Baptisms they performed were not valid. This started a domino effect and people are being notified they need to be re-baptized, re-married and re-ordained!

Our dear theologian Mary Hunt, MTS, M.Div and Ph.D reminds us clearly, as usual: The words at Baptism are decidedly secondary to the intention to be baptized, the public expression to be part of a faith community; secondary as well to the water, blessing, welcome and grace. Mary also reminds us that Baptismal formulae have indeed changed over the centuries.

Another theologian, Thomas Reese, SJ, Ph.D., phrases it this way: To say that someone using different words from the prescribed formula makes the baptisms invalid--- is just nuts!

Celia adds that baptismal reversals represent what Pope Francis has termed "one of Catholicism's greatest errors- clericalism". Celia concludes by saying that in these terribly challenging times for the human race, there is something very wrong about pronouncements that wreak so much havoc; she wonders if the Vatican's readers of the fine print actually believe that "God is gracious and merciful, abounding in kindness".

So let us recommit to "being steadfast in God's work, knowing our labor is not in vain" -- and rejoice because "the just shall bear fruit even in old age"!

(And a postscript: As Lent begins we hear the stirring refrains of war echoing; but we also can hear Micah: "Let us walk with God on the path of peace. Let us transform our swords into plowshares and not train for war anymore".)