

Because Sometimes True Fidelity Lies in the Courage to Dissent

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

Holy Thursday
April 17, 2014 11:15 AM
STANDING TOGETHER
FOR WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Ordination Day
May 17, 2014 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. 2

MARCH - JUNE 2014

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, Ordination Day:

Come All Ye *Still* Faithful

By Ellie Harty

Mary Magdalene 2014 Winner: Ceil Johnson

A Profile by Mary Whelan

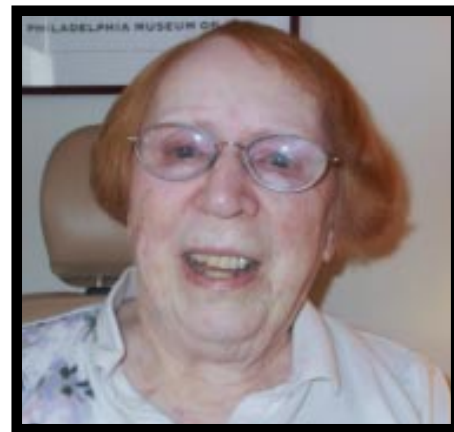
We don't usually make the pitch, "Come for the excitement and adventure!" when we talk about your joining us for this day of witness. Last year, however, we experienced a bit of both. In recent years, as we held our respectful but nonetheless passionate witness, we managed to provoke only a dirty look, head wag, hasty eye avoidance, maybe a fist shake, and occasionally a few disparaging words or lament over our sinfulness. Oh, and we also provoked a bit of traffic diversion: priests who filed (sneaked?) in the back way (the better not to hear us, my dear) and buses parked brazenly in our way (the better not to see us, my dear). It was aggression, yes, but of the passive variety.

Last year, however, marked a dramatic change. A group of protesters stood right nearby and actually protested – or at least attempted to counteract – us!

They were loud and persistent. They resisted our overtures for joint song or prayer or even dialogue and then continued with more strident voices. It was disturbing, but not really discouraging, for what we had that they did not (besides right on our side?) were numbers. Our witness could stay gentle and heartfelt in the midst of all this because there were so many of us who, although moved, were not about to be moved.

That is why we need you more than ever this year. Our strength, of course, is in our mission, in our fervent belief in justice for all, especially for those excluded from full partici-

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The SEPAWOC Mary Magdalene award honoring courage and leadership for women in the church will be presented this year to Ceil Johnson. When I told Ceil this news on a visit to her at the retirement community where she now lives in Northeast Philadelphia, her smile lit up the room.

When asked how she became interested in women's ordination, Ceil commented that she had always thought women should have an equal place in society. As a young person she observed women being barred from many careers and opportunities. She thought, "There must be something wrong with women." Her observations were reinforced by the treatment of women in the Catholic Church. Several times during our conversation she said, "I just don't understand why women

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Responses to Pope Francis' First Year 3, 4, 5 • Book Reviews 8, 9, 11

Holy Thursday *continued from page 1*

pation in the church which on that day focuses on women. But our strength is also in numbers. The new pope may be delighting the world – and there are reasons for this delight – but he is not delighting women and those who support them and those who work for justice in all aspects of our lives. Let's not become complacent because there seems to be progress. It is not progress for women who feel called to priesthood or for a fully inclusive church.

So, come for the excitement. Come for the adventure. Come for the drama. Come because it's April and a new spring has dawned. Come because it's Holy Thursday, a celebration of community and communion that you want all to be able to receive and all to be able to give. You need to be there, for you are our community. We need you to be there to say we have not given up. We will never ever give up. We are the faithful and we have come.

Ordination Day-May 17

Then on a May day – doesn't that sound wonderful? - in front of the same cathedral that excludes us in so many ways, come and celebrate Mass with us. Pray, sing, receive communion. Be nourished for the continuing journey.

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

Mary Magdalene *continued from page 1*

can't be ordained." Years ago in the early days of the "movement" Ceil attended meetings with Len and Arlene Swidler advocating for women's ordination and even held meetings at her home. And where did I first meet Ceil? At a SEPAWOC event, of course!

Ceil, who has written several memoirs and books of poetry, wrote in *Thanks for the Memory* that "The box I had been living in so comfortably began to feel too tight." This could explain Ceil's living the "examined" life—not only observing injustices in the world but acting to change what she thought was wrong. She described her desire to live a deeper spiritual life, a subject she discusses as easily today as she wrote about in the book.

Ceil has had a lifetime interest and involvement in social justice issues including racial justice, Interfaith relationships,

changes in the church after Vatican II (which was a turning point in her faith life). She had the perfect partner in her husband and fellow advocate, Bill. From reading her book it appears that their four children were not immune to their passions and interests!

Ceil and her fellow social justice seekers did not always fly below the radar. Working with a small group, the Catholic Community Relations Council, to bring attention to the issue of desegregation brought attention, not the good kind, from the Archdiocese. Apparently the Cardinal felt CCRC's efforts were not required as "we're already doing that." She laughed as she recalled that incident: "I was always getting into hot water." In her book she wrote, "I was not angry, I was sad. Christ had spoken openly on beaches and hills, not in a bureaucratic whisper behind closed doors. Christ still steps into, through, and around structures that would confine him."

This experience did not slow down Ceil's efforts or advocacy. It would be difficult to list all of her interests and activities over the years. When she saw a need she addressed it. She organized celebrations for the International Women's Day of Prayer in March. When the Grand Jury report on the clergy sex abuse scandal was released in Philadelphia, didn't Ceil and her husband summon us to their home to study, pray and even meet with a victim of clergy abuse?

Where did this energy come from? She describes herself as curious and open minded and always anxious to make new friends. I connect her wide ranging interests to her exposure to the news and politics of the day when her father, Frank Dorsey, was elected to Congress (she was a young teenager) during the Roosevelt administration. Her compassion was forged during the Depression which she writes about in Nothing to Fear: A Great Depression Saga.

Ceil has been published in the *National Catholic Reporter* and *America* magazine. She has not "retired" from her life's work, having taught poetry and short story writing to other residents where she currently lives. Her most recent book of poems was published last year.

This grandmother of seven and great grandmother of one continues to inspire us, truly demonstrating courage and leadership for all women.

Mary Whelan *is co-editor of EqualwRites.*

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

Christ the Spouse: Pope Francis and Women's Ordination

By Marian Ronan

Well, what John Allen of the *Boston Globe* calls “pope-mania” continues unabated. On NPR’s “Weekend Edition” a while back, Sylvia Poggioli quoted U.S. and European journalists to the effect that Pope Francis is bringing about the “biggest change in the Catholic Church in a thousand years.” And when I gave a copy of my book, *Sister Trouble*, to Sister Helen Prejean at a celebration of the twentieth anniversary edition of *Dead Man Walking*, she told me that with the new pope, all the trouble between the nuns and the Vatican is going away.

I hope these women are right. I really do. A well-informed nun-friend assures me that the current heads of the Sacred Congregation for Religious are much better than the former head, the one who initiated the “visitation” of U.S. women’s religious communities in 2009. On the other hand, Pope Francis recently made Gerhard Mueller, the conservative prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), a cardinal. The CDF investigated and then subsequently issued a harsh doctrinal assessment of the U.S. Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). And the pope has not ordered the retraction of that assessment.

What really concerns me, however, is not the theo-politics of various Vatican prefects but the words of the pope himself. In particular, I am concerned about the sections on women (103 and 104) of Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG). Francis has, of course, received praise, even adulation, for this document, which, like many of his public statements and interviews, places a long-needed (re)emphasis on justice and love of the poor.

But a number of Francis’ statements about women in EG are troubling. These include what he writes about women’s “sensitivity, intuition and other distinctive skill sets,” as well as their “feminine genius”. These are surely references to John Paul II’s 1988 *Mulieres Dignitatem*, and his ideology of “complementarity,” no matter what the citation in EG suggests. But what concerns me most is the first half of a sentence in section 104: “The reservation of the priesthood to males, as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives himself in the Eucharist, is not a question open to discussion...”

At first, I hoped the word “Spouse” was an intentionally more gender-neutral term than the distinctly gendered “Christ the Bridegroom” that has been used to dismiss the possibility of women’s ordination for decades. Alas, when I examined the versions of EG in Italian and Spanish (one or the other of which is surely the language in which the document was written), I discovered that “Christ the Spouse” is simply another example of bad Vatican translations of English: In Italian and French (and in German), the words mean “Christ the Bridegroom” or “Christ the Husband.”

Now the metaphor of Christ, or God, as the Bridegroom, appears throughout the Jewish and Christian scriptures and in many other Christian writings. It is one of a wide range of metaphors for the relationship between God and God’s

people. What some of us will recall, however, is that “Christ the Bridegroom” played a pivotal role in *Inter Insignores*, the 1976 CDF declaration, approved by Paul VI, that dismissed the possibility of women’s ordination. John Paul II does not use “Christ the Bridegroom” in his 1994 apostolic letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, which declares women’s ordination as contrary to the faith, and which some conservative Catholics believe to be an infallible statement. Francis’ use of the phrase “is not a question open to discussion,” however, is surely a reference to the last paragraph of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, which states that the Church has “no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful.” And in his 1988 apostolic letter on the dignity and vocation of women, *Mulieres Dignitatem*, John Paul uses “Christ the Bridegroom” twenty-eight times. For him, “Christ the Bridegroom” sets absolutely the limits of woman’s vocation.

In 1993, before the publication of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, Elizabeth J. Picken, CJ published a rebuttal of a previous article by the conservative Catholic theologian, Sara Butler, MSBT, “The Priest as the Sacrament of Christ the Bridegroom”; both appeared in *Worship* magazine.* (Butler will lecture on gender issues in the church at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in April). Picken argues compellingly that Butler, following *Inter Insignores* and *Mulieres Dignitatem*, uses “Christ the Bridegroom” as the singular framework for ordination in a way that makes the relationship between God and God’s people essentially gendered.

There are multiple problems with this approach. First of all “Christ the Bridegroom” is a metaphor, but Butler makes it a “primordial symbol” that cancels out, or tries to subsume within it, other equally or more important, metaphors. In point of fact, Picken argues, the primary analogy of the Christian tradition is the relationship between Christ and the Church, the covenant between them, not between husband and wife. The core meaning of this bond is *fidelity*, not nuptials. In the Hebrew Bible, the covenant of fidelity is sometimes represented between God and single leaders of the whole people: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc.; also between womb and infant; between lord and slave; between shepherd and flock; between gardener and vineyard. In addition, sexuality is used in ways that extend beyond marriage to represent the covenant; sometimes the prophets describe the people of Israel as prostituting themselves to foreign gods—breaking the covenant. Similarly, the author of Ephesians says that marriage partners

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IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST ISSUE OF EQUALwRITES, WELCOME!

SEPAWOC has exchanged mailing lists with our sister organization, the national Women’s Ordination Conference, which is why you may be receiving *EqualwRites* for the first time. We hope you like its focus and see it as a valuable complement to the national newsletter. We’d love to continue having you as both readers and supporters. Please consider sending any amount you wish in the attached envelope to help defray printing and mailing costs. Thank you.

Regina Bannan, President of SEPAWOC

A Response to Pope Francis

By Maureen Tate

*The need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed, not only for the pragmatic reason of its urgency for the good order of society, but because society needs to be cured of a sickness which is weakening and frustrating it and which can only lead to new crises". ...As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world's problems or, for that matter, to any problems. **Inequality is the root of social ills.** [sic] [Evangeli Gaudium, 202]*

Along with others, I am impressed at how quickly Pope Francis has refocused the church's, and to some degree the world's, attention back to primary Gospel values of love and service, and the mandate to do justice and show mercy to all, particularly the poor and those on the margins of society. It is refreshing to hear once again the phrase "pursuit of the common good" in the same papal document that critiques unfettered capitalism and the pursuit of profit while so many struggle with issues of basic security and livelihood.

I cannot deny that this message is exactly what we need to hear and it is good news indeed. Perhaps I am a glass half empty person, but I am also continually distracted by the mounting evidence of fundamental and profound gaps in our compassionate Pope's vision and message. He does not, or refuses to, acknowledge that the church's stance on women is culpable and embedded in the very structural causes of poverty that he calls us to resolve. When the Pope speaks about inequality as the root of all social ills, does he consider that a woman suffers physical and sexual abuse because the church and society foster attitudes and actions that connote she does not image God as fully as men? When women are treated as less than full human beings at the level of soul worth by the church itself, is it any wonder that women, and the children in their care, comprise the largest percentage of the world's poor? Is this the feminine genius the Pope so admires, the ability of women to eke out an existence while birthing and tending the next generation and caring for elders, even as they suffer the effects of poor maternal health care, severe malnourishment and the threat of personal safety in many countries around the world? The reality that women routinely sacrifice their own health and well being for others is profoundly Christ like. And yet they cannot represent Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist?

The Pope has advocated that the church needs to develop a theology of women. It has already been commented by others that there is in fact much theology of women, written by women, if the Pope cares to consult women or read about their religious experience. However, the very idea implies that women are "other" to men and that men are needed to define them, figure them out once and for all, as if enough damage has not been done to women's psyches by male theologians throughout the centuries who have tried to do the same. What is more troubling about this, in light of the Pope's concerns about structural causes of inequality,

is that we have ample evidence in all societies, that when any population is condescended to and viewed as "other" i.e. immigrant, gay, mentally ill, they are routinely denigrated and oppressed as alien in relation to what is viewed as the normative population. Their status and access to resources, power, security, leadership and other aspects of community life is subject to allowances made by those who would deem them "other". Such otherness is often accompanied by patronizing attempts to define special gifts in the alien population to continue an illusion of equality and respect. "They've got rhythm". "They have passion". "They are so simple and in tune with nature". And now, we are instructed to appreciate the "feminine genius of women".

The root causes of poverty and inequality cannot be resolved without addressing head-on the fundamental inequality of women in church and society. There has been too much suspecting interpretation of the Bible and church tradition perpetuating attitudes about women as not made equally in the image of God. Clericalism and the exclusion of women from full participation in all aspects of church life have become their own sign and symbol for Catholics and non-Catholics alike that women are less worthy before God and man. This has real world consequences for women's ability to access education, justice, food security, equal pay, land rights, physical safety, protection in times of war, and ritual expressions that incorporate women's faith experience. The Church bears culpability for the many forms of poverty, violence and oppression that prevent women from fully actualizing their full potential within church and society. The harm that is done to women as a result is done in the name of the Church, not in the name of Christ.

As this issue of *EqualwRites* goes to press, the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is underway at the United Nations (March 10- 21). At this annual assembly, representatives of member states review, debate and approve statements safeguarding women's rights. This year they will focus on the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls. Thousands of women from around the world, representing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), converge and meet in parallel sessions to lobby member states, network, educate one another and advance agendas that will guarantee the equality, human rights, health, safety, education and general well being of women and girls. The Vatican participates as a member state but is not generally viewed, in this forum, to be a protector of the rights of women. Isn't it ironic?

I am not immune to the charisma of our new Pope. I cel-

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A Publication of SEPAWOC

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Book Review Editor: **Marian Ronan**

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

Pope Francis' First 365 + Days: Some SEPAWOC Members React...

I am so disappointed in some of what Pope Francis says about the church. Many years ago, I saw first-hand the pernicious consequences of the “church as the bride, priest as the groom” theology in seminarians I met from St. Charles. They went on and on about this, in a way that seemed pornographic to me. There are so many other things for seminarians to fantasize about: how to exercise mercy, which seems to be Francis’ cardinal virtue; how to serve the poor; how to celebrate meaningful liturgies; how to treat women respectfully. It seems to me that Francis does think about these things and many other global problems. He could just drop this.

- **Regina Bannan**

Original impression of Pope Francis and an update on present impressions:

When he took office, I was over whelmed with happiness. I no longer would cringe when I heard the word Pope. But, I was very, very cautious...too good to believe. I kept suggesting to my friends that they curb their enthusiasm. Then his remark about being non-judgmental about gay men gave me a lot of hope. On the positive side, I like his “simple” life style and his active concern for the poor. This remains VERY high on my positive list.

Being concerned about the poor is not really window dressing, but I think just about everything else he has done is! He may not judge gay men, but does he support same sex couples? He may think women are wonderful, but why are they not wonderful enough to be priests? (But then, who would want to be a Catholic priest anyway?) He may not judge gay men, but what would he say to a person who confessed to him that he was practicing artificial birth control? What substantial changes have been made or even suggested?

*Back to the gay man: Why are we so excited that the Pope says he is non-judgmental? Are we **all** not called to be non-judgmental?*

- **Joseph Schlacter**

You know, early in the 90’s, although I supported the Women’s Ordination movement, I was not inspired to get involved. There are so many more important issues, I believed, like the plight of poor people throughout the world, racial injustice, war, violence, hunger, the environment. That’s where I planned to (and did, to some extent) put my energy and resources. I would see the purple stoles in our church and respectfully shrug. Like Pope Francis, I had put women’s ordination on the back burner because so many other social justice issues were just so much more important.

Then I had my “duh” moment. Someone pointed out that the inequality of women in the church, especially their actually being denied one of the sacraments only because of their gender for heaven’s sake, was not only a profound injustice in itself but impacted all of the other injustices that had so grabbed me. At that moment, I became a champion of the women’s ordination cause. Now I wonder: Could Pope Francis, with his truly grace-filled emphasis on social justice

also have a “duh” – or better yet an “aha” moment and see a major injustice in his own church and do the same?

I think having our current pope seemingly (I’m still hoping it was just posturing to placate the curia for the time being) close the door so tightly on the topic hurts more than any previous pope’s doing the same. I could say to myself, they’re just unenlightened old fuddy duddies (Okay, I may have said something a bit worse than that.), but this pope seems to be enlightened in so many ways. It so warms and inspires my heart to see and hear his love for social justice; it so torments and breaks my heart to see and hear him exclude me and my sisters from that love. Other popes have forced me to look at them and see this exclusion as *their* failing. This one, who seems to have my own values, has compelled me to look at myself and ask, what is wrong with *me* and those of my gender that we are not worthy of just treatment from a seemingly just man? Even more profoundly, why are we not worthy to receive all of the sacraments in this justice and grace-seeking church? That is what is truly heartbreaking.

Maybe in our more optimistic moments we can let ourselves think that, with this pope, this particular injustice is only temporary, that equality for women in the church is just on the “back burner”, ready to be brought forward, heated up when the time is right. But I wonder if he has thought about what it feels like to be on a “back burner”? That is the place for something less important, a place of sometimes interminable waiting. That is the place where things spoil, get cold, and, eventually, thrown away.

- **Ellie Hart**

The reflection on Francis that has resonated most with me is Erin Saiz Hanna’s: “When Francis stated that he readily acknowledges that women share pastoral responsibilities with priests...and offer new contributions to theological reflection... I was filled with hope. In the next paragraph he would break my heart.”

Still, I have great hope that Francis, who reflects so beautifully and courageously on the sufferings of war and injustice will come to realize that injustice is all one piece.

- **Judy Heffernan**

I am slightly mystified as to why the Pope is seen as such a big change merely on the basis of his personality. I am pleased that his rhetoric is inclusive and his focus is on social welfare. However, these assertions of Christ’s message are not so radical nor do they accomplish much except for sprucing up Rome’s image.

On two issues that concern me Pope Francis has done nothing of substance. First, he has done nothing to bring to justice the clerical perpetrators of sexual abuse and their protectors. Second, he has done nothing to bring about equality for women within the church; indeed, some of his remarks carry a whiff of traditional male chauvinism (a theology of women?).

So, I give the pope an A on style and an F on substance.

- **Marianna Pulaski Sullivan**

While Pope Francis has made it clear that we must reach

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Reflections *continued from page 5*

out and embrace and include the marginalized I am so puzzled by his disconnect with the “women problem.” We are marginalized because we are not seen as equal, equal enough to be ordained and equal enough to sit at the table with the men where decisions are made. What a revolution it would be if we were full participants. What a message that would send to the world!

I do believe Pope Francis is part way there. And we are going to continue our persistent presence as advocates for inclusion for all, though we are currently situated by history and tradition and willfulness by the men in power, standing at the margins. If he can see others, will he see us? Can he see from where he stands that it is only half a church? Believe it or not I really do have hope that his eyes will be opened and his heart will be softened. I believe he must hear and listen to the voices of those who urge full inclusion— that is why we will never stop speaking, witnessing, writing, advocating.

- Mary Whelan

Both Sides Now - A Tribute

Joni Mitchell’s song has been echoing in my mind since Larry DiPaul’s funeral. Larry lived both sides of the church. He was an ardent reformer supporting Call to Action, especially, and also the nuns and Helmut Schuller and SEPAWOC. When he could be there, he was, and when he couldn’t, he worked by himself to bring both sides together. Yet he remained in the heart of the church; there were more priests than I have seen anywhere except Holy Thursday at his mass, all vested and concelebrating. The heart of the church is signaled by the cry of the poor and the marginalized, and Larry responded to that call in every position – his brother joked that he couldn’t hold a job; we all knew that his career followed the path of justice and honesty – from the minority parishes he served as a priest to the Camden Diocese office of Social Justice which he led in recent years. He was a married priest, a widower, and the proud fiancé of Jenny Fair, an amazingly strong woman who supported Larry in all his works. You can get the flavor of Larry’s personality in his blog, <http://wordandwine.org/author/wordandwine/>, which is still active as I write. Read the May 22, 2013, entry, part of which was printed in the mass booklet.

Larry’s living on the other side now. May his life inspire us.

Regina Bannan

St. Mary Magdalene Community

Mass schedule

Every Sunday at 9AM

Drexel Hill United Methodist Church
McBurney Chapel

600 Burmont Rd • Drexel Hill, PA 19026

We have two satellites that meet on the second weekend of the month:

Saturday at St. Luke’s UCC Church, 125 North Main St., North Wales, PA 19454 at 5PM.

Sunday at 10:30 AM at St. Luke/Holy Innocents Episcopal Church,
7001 Torresdale Ave. • Philadelphia, PA 19135

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sunday, March 30, 4PM

St. Luke and the Epiphany Church

330 S. 13th St., Philadelphia

Marian Ronan (author of *Tracing the Sign of the Cross* and the just released, *Sister Trouble*) will present

“*Gender Trouble: Catholic Sisters, Women Priests and LGBT Catholics in Pope Francis’ ‘New’ Church*”.

Tuesday, April 1, 7PM

East Parlor, Chestnut Hill College

9601 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia

Fr. Emmanuel Katongole (member of the Kroc

Institute for Peace & Justice, Notre Dame) will

present “*Resurrecting Faith in Rwanda: 20 Years After the Genocide*”.

Sunday, April 6, 2-4PM

Martino Hall, Chestnut Hill College

9601 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia

Michelle Leshner, SSJ, Seth Jacobsen, Lori Baccuzzi
present a panel discussion on “*What Young Catholics*

***Want from, and Desire for, their Church: An Invitation to Listen*”.**

Sunday, April 6, 2 PM

St. Vincent De Paul Church

109 East Price St., Philadelphia

Dr. Diana Hayes (The first African American woman
to earn a Pontifical Doctorate and receive the U.S.

Catholic Award for Furthering the Role of Women in
the Church) presents “*The Many Faces of the*

***Church: How Parishes Are Overcoming Racial, Gender and Cultural Divisions by Implementing the Spirit of Vatican II*” .**

Monday, April 7, 7PM

Sugarloaf Center of Chestnut Hill College

9230 Germantown Pike, Philadelphia

Dr. Diana Hayes will present *Pope Francis and the*
***Future and Reform of the Church*. Reservations are**
requested. Call Joy at 215-848-1139.

Saturday, April 12, 10AM – 3PM

Cranaleith Center

13475 Proctor Avenue, NE Philadelphia

Margaret Farley, RSM will present “*A Crucified*

***Love: Forgiveness as the Work of Mercy of Our Time.*”**

To register, call 215-934-6206 or e-mail

info@cranaleith.org

Christ the Spouse: Pope Francis and Women's Ordination *continued from page 3*

are to model themselves on the pattern of Christ to the church. But Butler, and the papal documents she defends, have got it all tuned upside down. Christ's fidelity to the church is the model for marriage partners; marriage partners are not the model to which Christ and the church should conform.

Picken also details other ways in which the theology of Christ the Bridegroom is reductive, profoundly narrowing of the tradition. Butler, and the documents from Paul VI and John Paul II, limit the whole question of ordination to the framework of Christology. They fail to take into account the Christian anthropology (theology of the human being) and pneumatology (theology of the Spirit) that are also essential parts of the meaning of ordination. For example, using Christ the Bridegroom to argue that the priest must be male draws on one view of Christian anthropology, complementarity, that presumes opposite roles for men and women. But there are also Christian anthropologies of differentiation that understand sex roles to be interchangeable. Butler, and those in her camp, believe that if a pope draws on the theology of complementarity, that settles the question. But complementarity is not an infallible doctrine; quite the contrary.

Similarly, pneumatology, and ecclesiology in relation to the Eucharist and the church is almost ignored in these documents, making them a primarily medieval interpretation of ordination. (I am using the word "medieval" literally here.) Picken draws on the great twentieth-century theologian Yves Congar to make her point here: "Christ, 'by his Holy Spirit, builds up the Church and raises up and institutes its ministries.' If it is Christ by the Spirit that builds up the Church," Picken asks, "is it required that the ordained minister be of the same gender as Christ?" Or to put it more baldly, is the Holy Spirit also a bridegroom?

Lest we be too disheartened by Pope Francis' use of the theologically and scripturally reductive symbol favored by his predecessors to limit women's roles in the church, I refer you to a critique of *Evangelii Gaudium* that appeared on the *America* magazine blogpage last December.** It was written by another Jesuit, Francis X. Clooney, the brilliant professor of comparative theology at Harvard Divinity School. Clooney expresses disappointment with two sections of *Evangelii Gaudium*: 254, on "non-Christians," Clooney's own area of expertise, and 103 and 104, on women. With regard to the latter, Clooney stresses that "the language of Christ as 'Spouse' 'giving himself in the Eucharist,' while a beautiful image, is out of place in this Exhortation, an echo of another view of Church."

Clooney's post is well worth reading.* What particularly strikes me, however, is its title: "Pope Francis: Still Finding His Own Voice?" Clooney argues that the whole section on non-Christians "is not sufficiently integrated with Francis' more exciting vision, in the rest of the exhortation," of "an outward looking Church that is in the streets, with the people, soiled and wounded in the work of justice, combatting the

real enemies of economic and political degradation and the deprivation of human dignity." He argues as well that the sections on women seem to be "in someone else's voice." What's needed, Clooney tells us, is for Francis to speak about these questions in his own voice and not just as the successor to John Paul II and Benedict.

From Father Francis' lips to Pope Francis' ear.

*Picken, Elizabeth J. "If Christ is Bridegroom, Must the Priest Be Male?" *Worship*, 67:3. May 1993, 269-278; Butler, Sara, "The Priest as Sacrament of Christ the Bridegroom." *Worship*, 66:6 Nov. 1992, 498-517.

** <http://americamagazine.org/content/all-things/pope-francis-still-finding-his-own-voice>

Marian Ronan will discuss these and related questions and sell copies of her book, *Sister Trouble, on Sunday, March 30 at 4 PM at St. Luke and the Epiphany Church, 330 S. 13th St., in Philadelphia.*

A Response to Pope Francis

continued from page 4

celebrate with others that ears, minds and hearts are opening and tuning in to the call to give radical witness to Gospel values. I know that change does not happen overnight. Yet I will not deny that I am profoundly discouraged by his declarations that some matters regarding women remain closed for discussion. As humans we all embody contradictions. I pray for the Pope's conversion as he does ours. May he come to know and love women "as oneself", as most fully and wonderfully made in God's image. If the charisma and platform of Pope Francis were put at the service of a global campaign to lift up issues of equality and justice for women and girls, just imagine the possibilities.

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

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Book Reviews

***Sister Trouble: The Vatican, the Bishops, and the Nuns.* By Marian Ronan. Amazon: 2013. 119 pages. \$9.99 Kindle, \$11.06 paper.**

Reviewed by Regina Bannan

You lived through it. Now you can relive it in this tidy, engaging book that gathers various short pieces about the nun crisis in the Roman Catholic Church over the past couple of years. Many of them appeared in *EqualwRites*. The accumulation of incidents is distressing, shocking, like looking back on a little war. “Shall We Give Up on Rome?” “Support our Sister\$”. You can predict what those are about. “The Church is Lucky It’s Just Same-Sex Marriage” considers the variety of issues that are raised by transgender and intersex people as well as other issues: the Affordable Care Act, the new English translation of the liturgy, the treatment of Elizabeth Johnson and Margaret Farley, both sisters and theologians.

Ronan presents even deeper insights in “Understanding the Conflict.” She argues that religious women in congregations “have destabilized the clear boundaries between genders, and especially between women and the clergy, by their ministries, their claims to agency, their scholarship, their heroic virtue (85).” Examples from almost the very beginning of the church illustrate this instability. Then Ronan launches into the post-Vatican II experience, concluding that Rome is trying “to force the only female bodies over which they any longer exercise control to conform absolutely (86).” Ronan concludes this section with East African Jesuit Angbonkhianmeghe Orobator’s description of AIDS ministry there – done exclusively by women, religious and lay, not by priests. “By their performances of mercy, their ministry to the dying body of Christ, however, these women subvert the all-male priesthood, whether they intend to or not (87).” This is powerful; it predates and yet affirms Pope Francis’ emphasis on mercy.

The concluding section is more personal; Ronan explains “Why I Care.” As a Philadelphia-area Irish Catholic, Ronan was educated in Catholic schools – for free, like many of you, I would guess – for twelve years. That experience was formative, as much because of the relationships with the sisters as the curriculum. Some nuns used corporal punishment, and Ronan has sympathy for as well as questions about this practice. The most influential sisters, however, were those who inspired: really seeing who their students are over their lifetimes, confronting church authority because of sexual abuse, setting high intellectual standards, teaching social justice so it comes right through the bones. Ronan mourns the deaths of many of these women who influenced her and thinks about the future of religious life. It’s not maudlin; it’s honest, and many of us have shared that experience.

All this in 119 pages? This little book is available on Amazon.com, and is a great Lenten/Easter gift for sisters, priests, laity: for anyone who wants to think about gender issues in the church and in life. Male and female God created them – but what did God mean by that? *Sister Trouble* stimulates provocative thoughts as we face a papacy that wants to

develop a theology of women. Lots of the work has already been done. It’s just a matter of communicating it. Marian Ronan does that well.

Regina Bannan is enjoying her first semester in twenty years not teaching at Temple University. Portions of this review appeared in the Irish Edition.

Gender Trouble: Catholic Sisters, Women Priests and LGBT Catholics in Pope Francis’ “New” Church: A Talk by Marian Ronan

When: Sunday, March 30, 4PM

Where: St. Luke and the Epiphany Church, 330 S. 13th St., Philadelphia

With copies of Marian’s book, *Sister Trouble*, on sale.

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Sister Trouble: The Vatican, the Bishops, and the Nuns

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A GREAT EASTER GIFT

***Hidden Voices: Reflections of a Gay, Catholic Priest.* by Gary M. Meier. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012. 140 pp. \$10.80.**

Reviewed by Dugan McGinley

The first thing that must be said is that this is a book of great honesty and sincerity. It is not an academic project with any kind of grand argument; rather, it is exactly what it claims to be in its subtitle, "reflections." Meier does outline a few themes he discusses throughout the text: negotiating gay and Catholic identity, the movement "from silence and shame to hope and forgiveness," and the struggle with oneself and the hierarchy of the church. But this is first and foremost an autobiographical work. In light of my own study of gay Catholic autobiographies, we should treat such a memoir as a sacred text because it reveals dimensions of God's truth that challenge the Christian community to grow in love and inclusiveness. Because of the personal nature of this book, I want to structure this review more as a dialogue than a critique. As a gay Catholic myself, I can offer a few reflections of my own in light of what Meier has to say.

Let me start with a quick summary. He begins by charting the cognitive dissonance he experiences holding the official position of priest in an institution doing damage to gay people through harsh teachings and political actions. He then moves into a discussion of the negative impact of the clergy sex abuse crisis on the priesthood as a whole. He yearns to be out and public with his sexual identity, I think almost to prove that gay priests are not the problem. He shares his own history of conversion moments, when he came to accept his sexuality and overcoming his addiction to alcohol. This eventually led to his becoming a priest and he is proud of the gifts he brings to people in this capacity. But he feels bashed by the hierarchy when they try to deflect the sex abuse crisis by scapegoating gay priests. Feeling "used" by the church, he ends with his desire to speak his truth and stand as a beacon for other gay Catholics to let them know they are "beautiful and holy" just the way they are. (110)

At the heart of these reflections is the struggle between remaining a priest in good standing but keeping his sexual identity hidden, on the one hand, and coming out publicly but leaving the active priesthood, on the other. Apparently, he first published this book anonymously. With this new edition, however, his name is on the cover and he is no longer "in the closet." He is also taking a leave of absence from the priesthood, at his own request, to pursue a Master's degree in counseling and to assess his relationship with the church. I applaud him for taking this step. He admits in his text that the silence of gay priests "might just be our biggest enemy when it comes to gay rights." (115) I could not agree more! This is something I have always felt when I encountered gay priests in my years of activism concerning gay Catholics. It seems like they are getting all the perks of the position without having the honesty and integrity that should go along with it. (For a more academic treatment of this problem, see Mark Jordan's *The Silence of Sodom*.) I give Meier a lot of credit for his integrity and willingness to take a risk.

Along the way, Meier notes the risks gay priests face in coming out, especially those who have been priests for a long time. It would likely mean they would have to leave active ministry.

They would have no unemployment or retirement benefits and they generally have little savings and low social security benefits because their salaries are low. Plus, they would have difficulty getting jobs for which they are most qualified because they are no longer functioning as priests. But the fact is, these risks are not entirely unique to the priesthood. Many people today face these kinds of challenges if they want to make a career change. I find myself in similar circumstances as a lay employee of the church. Gay priests should also remember that they had the opportunity to become priests in the first place, considering the many people (like all women) who feel called to priestly ministry but are excluded. Leaving active ministry in the name of being honest about one's sexuality could be viewed as an act of solidarity with all the others who feel called to priestly ministry but must find other ways of realizing this calling because of the obstacles the institutional church puts in the way.

I recall having a little argument once with a gay priest whom I was challenging for his secrecy. Of course, he was defensive and he told me he does so much good in his capacity as a priest. He said he is able to counsel gay people and give them religious affirmation when the church and society are condemning them. Meier says the same thing in his book and even shares some very compelling stories of people he has been able to help with this issue because he is a priest. He is actually quite eloquent in his presentation of this conundrum. I have to admit that it meant the world to me when I was first coming out and found a priest who affirmed me, so I know what Meier is talking about. That being said, I was pretty angry at that priest when I found out years later he was gay. Here I was suffering the losses of coming out to everyone in my world while he was safely ensconced in his respected position. I felt betrayed, yet he had still made a significant difference in my life.

Part of the problem behind all of this is the Catholic tendency to "valorize" priests. I've worked at many parishes and the priests are often put on pedestals exaggerating their importance. Meier talks about how difficult it is to be a priest in the midst of the sex abuse scandal, but I am amazed at how

Continued on page 10

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

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deferential and trusting many Catholics remain toward their priests. Parishioners love it when a priest gives them attention, and as I shared above, it can feel very good when a trusted priest helps us through a personal issue. I realize this is in part due to the sense of confidentiality that goes with talking to a priest; keeping secrets is part of their job and it feels safe to confide a spiritual crisis with them. But this can also become rather intoxicating for the priest. It reinforces their uniqueness and it ends up keeping them in a psychologically immature place. Ultimately, the combination of this aura with the power of the position is toxic for both priests and the church. I think one of the main reasons why a gay priest perceives his coming out risk as greater than others' is that he knows he will lose this status. We need to stop reinforcing the caste system that elevates priests over laity, and dismantle the understanding of Holy Orders that makes priests feel they are ontologically different from the rest of us.

Fortunately, Meier had the integrity to overcome the factors that were holding him back. As he notes several times, privacy is one thing but secrecy is quite another. I am grateful to him for taking the leap and being honest and open. He is now focusing on working as a counselor, the very aspect of the priesthood he seems to value the most. Even so, according to church teaching, he should still be able to function as a priest as long as he is celibate. We should push the church to be true to this teaching by actively supporting gay priests who come out. As he notes, the number of gay priests is significant enough that it really would make a difference if more of them came out. We can support Gary Meier by reading his story and taking his insights to heart. So thank you, Fr. Gary, for your courage and sincerity, and for being a model for other gay priests like you.

Dugan McGinley is the author of *Acts of Faith, Acts of Love: Gay Catholic Autobiographies as Sacred Texts* (New York: Continuum, 2004). He is also a pastoral musician and lecturer in the Religion department at Rutgers University.

from the poem LENT

**Forget sacrifice. Nothing
is tied so firmly that the wind
won't tear it from us at last.**

**The question is how to remain faithful
to all the impossible,
necessary resurrections.**

- Lynn Ungar

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Why The Catholic Church Must Change: A Necessary Conversation, by Margaret Nutting Ralph. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013. 209 pp. (hardback). \$30.60

Reviewed by Jim and Jenny Ratigan

The word “church” for many weighs more heavily toward the magisterium (pope and bishops defined by their teaching authority). For others the word includes expressions of church such as the prophetic, mystical and liturgical, as well as the pilgrim church, which became a popular understanding after Vatican Council II.

In *Why the Catholic Church Must Change*, Margaret Nutting Ralph wrestles with the magisterial church while the many other dimensions nip at the edges of each chapter. She writes from inside the Roman Catholic Church as a critical member and not as an outside critic. Ralph makes clear from the outset, however, that “the Catholic Church is not the whole Church, not the whole Body of Christ. Catholics must be in dialogue with other Christians.” Ralph envisions her audience to include the pope and bishops, people who need more information about the history and process of “change” in the Roman church, and people who are open to dialogue.

To set the stage for dialogue Ralph begins by asking the question “WHY NECESSARY?” The key for her is found in the November 2011 Address of Cardinal Timothy Dolan to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in which he exhorts them to remember that “love for Jesus and His Church must be the passion of our lives. Dolan speaks of the pastoral challenge of restoring and renewing the “credibility, luster and beauty of the Church . . . renewing the Church as the face of Jesus.” It should be an “urgent pastoral priority to lead our people to see, meet, hear and embrace anew Jesus in and through His Church . . . Because, as the chilling statistics we cannot ignore tell us, fewer and fewer of our beloved people – to say nothing about those outside the household of faith – are convinced that Jesus and his Church are one.” If, as Archbishop Dolan insists, “the Church is the ‘face of Christ’” then that “face” must be seen in the whole church, magisterium, and people of God. There is further looking (and seeing) to be done.

Ralph notes that the “chilling statistics” are provided to us by the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey of the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life. “This research tells us that one out of every three people raised Catholic in the United States no longer identifies himself or herself as Catholic.” Many of us at one time or another has echoed her warning about these statistics: “If the U.S. Bishops, not to mention the Magisterium, want to understand and reverse the reasons for the exodus, they must be in conversation with those who have left. The credibility of the Catholic Church will not be reclaimed unless the Catholic Church opens itself up to conversation and possible change.”

Ralph is right on the mark here. Further, this means that the hostile climate for any legitimate questioning frequently demonstrated by the magisterium must be changed to one of listening and hearing the voice of the people (also the church). Although there are some bishops who have been open to a deeper listening, let’s imagine, for example, the nuns boarding a bus at Da Vinci Airport in Rome and riding on over to the Vatican for a heart to heart with Pope Francis. Or we could imagine the Pope welcoming leading Brazilian feminist theologian, Sr. Ivone Gebara (*Out of the Depths: Women’s Experience of Evil and Salvation*), who would gladly share her experience and insights with him.

The ten chapters of the book are divided into three sections. The first three chapters are devoted to setting the groundwork addressing the role of the “Teaching Church” and then the role of “Experience” and “Scripture” in our search to know God and God’s will. She touches upon the understanding of “natural law”, the critical role of Paul (as in the disagreement with Peter) in the early formation of the church’s identity, and the basic centrality of the church’s acceptance of the primacy of individual conscience. Finally she indicates how Catholic Church teaching has, in fact, already changed in areas ranging from the interpretation of scripture to the role of ecumenism.

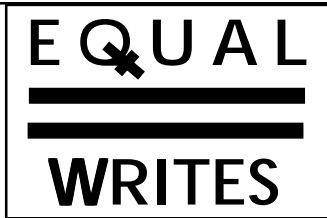
In chapters four to six Ralph addresses the three areas of contraception, ordination and women’s role in the church, and finally homosexuality. She speaks of the historical aspect and the scriptural basis of each issue and indicates the reason why there needs to be conversation on and openness to change by the “Magisterium” on each of these issues. The “reasons” the magisterium offers to support the current “official” position on these issues are judged to be invalid and cause the church to lose credibility with its members and with the world.

The last four chapters address the topics: abortion; marriage and annulments; teaching social justice and treating employees justly; and unity in the body of Christ. In each of these areas Ralph does not propose any change in official church teaching, but rather argues that the church’s approach to each of these topics is counterproductive. For example, she argues that, instead of trying to enlist civil authority (by outlawing abortion) to oppose a practice which is contrary to its religious beliefs, the church should spend its efforts more positively by working to alleviate causes of a person’s choosing abortion—shame, poverty, lack of health care, etc. In this way the church could avoid being experienced as bullying imposing its belief on all people whether they agree or not, and more effectively fulfill its role as a teaching church. All in all Ralph does a good job of opening up topics that have been discussed for years by those both in and outside the Roman church.

We have learned in reading and discussing her book that it is important to look carefully each time the word “church” is used to check the meaning intended. Perhaps the title might have been: *Why the Magisterium to Must Change*. In fact, the church – the people of God – has been changing and the Spirit continues to move in the whole church. The latest *Rolling Stone* Special Report (Feb. 13, 2014) features an article on Pope Francis. The headline reads: “The Times They Are A-Changin’”? Just maybe there is hope that the “necessary conversation” will begin to take place.

Writing this review in conversation with one another has been helpful. The book would make a good selection for a reading circle or readers’ forum.

Jim Ratigan is retired from Thomas Edison State College. **Jenny Ratigan** is Professor Emerita in Religious Studies, Rosemont College. Together they have offered workshops and retreats in Spirituality and Healing.



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SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Luke 4:16-21

By Judith A. Heffernan, M.Div.

It has been a difficult winter... cold, snow, illness, loss, more discouragement about women in the Catholic Church. I take consolation from Sister Chris Schenk's reflection in her *NCR* column. She tells of the challenging early years of *Future Church*. Many times she was so discouraged she wanted to quit. Invariably, something good, something encouraging would happen. She learned to trust in the Spirit - as the Quakers say, "a way will open."

This year more than ever I am looking forward to Easter, and, before we get there, I will read two of my favorite Gospels: The woman at the well, and Jesus with Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

Mary Lynch, my friend, seminary classmate and founding convener of WOC told me of going to the catacombs with Joan Morris. Joan loaned her expertise to the official guide (though not exactly invited to do so!), and told all of the myriad meanings regarding the women of the catacombs!!! I thoroughly enjoyed meeting Joan on her Philadelphia tour for her book *The Lady was a Bishop*. How clearly I remember she shared with us that Jesus was not afraid to go against custom. She explained that the longest private conversation recorded in the Gospels is Jesus' speaking with the Samaritan woman at

the well; further, it was to her that Jesus declared openly for the first time that he was the Messiah - and my favorite insight: when the woman asked Jesus where God was to be worshipped he did not reply that she should leave the liturgical questions to men! Joan also writes in the *Lady was a Bishop* that Jesus later proclaimed to a woman- his dear friend Martha- that he was the Resurrection, and that those who believe, even though they die, will live.

As someone who celebrates the value of tears, I have always loved this Gospel. I also know now what it is to lose a brother. The depths of love, loss, trust and hope in this story never fail to touch my being; I am so moved that Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters so much that he wept, and I love when he says, "Unbind him and let him go free!"

Outside the Cathedral on Holy Thursday and Ordination Day, I imagine Jesus saying to the hierarchy, "Unbind them and let them go free" about the pastoral call and gifts of women they have buried alive. This year I will also think of Jim Wallis' reflection about Nelson Mandela. Mandela said, "There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair...Something always seems impossible until it is done..." and Jim Wallis concludes "Hope is believing in spite of the evidence and then watching the evidence change."

Judy Heffernan is on the SEPAWOC Core Committee.