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EQUAL

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

Vol. XIII No. 4

MARCH - MAY 2005

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.*

CELEBRATING WOMEN CALLED

SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
WOMEN'S ORDINATION CONFERENCE

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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

BE PART OF HISTORY

by Regina Bannan

I hope you've already reserved a place at this event so we can give you lunch; I am writing this so far in advance that I can't know. My intention here is to convince you to attend if you haven't contacted us yet — because this will be another important event in the history of women's ordination in Philadelphia, the nation and the world.

Almost two years ago, May 3, 2003, Southeastern Pennsylvania WOC hosted German women priests Ida Raming and Iris Mueller as part of their US tour. This allowed Americans to realize how far Europeans had moved toward ordaining women: a formal ceremony with a bishop. What the Philadelphia event added was the presence of women ordained in this country in very public ways, like at Spiritus Christi in Rochester, and in relatively private ways, by small faith communities and alternative Catholic churches in this area and further away. These ordinations, which might have seemed to be aberrations, were recognized as a real movement, occurring simulta-

neously in various places over the past thirty years. This was historic.

We plan to take this insight further on March 12. We have invited Rev. Dr. Patricia Fresen, a former Dominican sister from South Africa who was ordained a priest in Barcelona in 2003 by the two women consecrated bishops in Europe, Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger and Gisela Forster. Dr. Fresen coordinates the program for preparation for Roman Catholic women priests, which now has 52 students from many countries. Opening ordination widely is the next step. Organizing for it. Not waiting. This is historic. This is what we want to address March 12.

Dr. Fresen's academic credentials for this role are stellar; she has studied in Rome, at the Washington Theological Union in Maryland, and in South Africa, where she completed the doctorate in theology and taught at both the Catholic seminary in Pretoria and at the Catholic University of Johannesburg. Her career began as a teacher and principal in a Dominican convent school; like so many of us, she wanted more and is cre-

continued on page 2

PART OF HISTORY

continued from page 1

ating it for herself and for others.

Responding to Dr. Fresen will be a panel of people the core committee of SEPA/WOC really wanted to meet. Beth Rindler is a Franciscan Sister of the Poor and co-director of NCAN, the National Coalition of American Nuns. When Dr. Fresen had to leave her Dominican order because of her ordination, NCAN spoke out in a piece reprinted in *Equal wRites* (June, 2004) calling for people in religious life to have more imagination about the possibilities of dissent, while recognizing their genuine anguish. Beth is also a member of RAPPORT (see letter p.6), and attended the first Women's Ordination Conference in Detroit in 1974 and every one since.

Let me digress. That conference was HISTORIC in capital letters, because it led to the formation of the organization whose first thirty years we celebrate nationally and internationally this year. WOC's strange name is so appropriate; it recognizes process and change, collegiality and collaboration; it's less institution and more movement. And without its single-issue advocacy, its laser-point attention to the voices of women seeking priesthood in the institution and doing priesthood in the real world, women would not be the center of attention. So come and let the celebration begin! *Laissez le bon temps roulez!*

Oops. Back to the panel. Dolly Pomerleau also began her career working for women's ordination at the 1974 Women's Ordination Conference in Detroit, and she has been central in it forever. She was on the first National WOC "core commission" and is now

on the WOC National Board, and in between involved from her spot in the Quixote Center, a faith-based justice and peace center in Maryland, near Washington, DC. Dolly's humor has made many a meeting memorable, and her insight and organizing skills have always moved WOC forward.

Celia Langlieb will be speaking from her experience co-founding and celebrating with Spirit Rising, a small faith community in New Jersey. She's FCM (Federation of Christian Ministries) certified, and she's developed a variety of ministries as opportunities opened to her: organizing and visiting women diagnosed with cancer; designing a program combining the arts with emotional education for at-risk students; working in drug-prevention programs after school; and, of course, like so many of us, teaching religion for about thirty years.

Rev. Bernie Callahan was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia and is a married priest ordained in the Old Catholic Church. He founded the Church of the Beatitudes parish in the fall of 2003. This peace and justice church is open to all people—gay, divorced, women—in all roles; specifically, the church clergy is open to all with no gender requirements. The parish began holding a regular Sunday mass at the "Garden Church," a United Methodist chapel in Lansdowne, PA, in 2004.

If that were not interesting enough, the afternoon keynoter is Dr. Marian Ronan, whose articles in *Equal wRites* are always challenging. Marian also was at the 1974 Detroit WOC conference, has been on the core committee of SEPA/WOC since 1992, and was on the National WOC Board and president

FINALLY...A HOME

by Maria Marlowe

For the past six years I have shared my incredible spiritual journey with the readership of *Equal wRites*. From disenfranchised Roman Catholic (1999) to a woman called to ministry (2001) to a "wandering and wondering wannabe" minister, it has been a truly unexpected, unpredictable, faith-deepening odyssey. I have wanted to make all of you a part of it.

Now—finally—an answer to prayer, the fruition of the search, a home for my ministry. I am delighted, grateful, and deeply honored to say I will be studying for the diaconate through the presence of the Old (*read true*) Catholic church in the Philadelphia area. A WOC colleague and friend informed me of this small, growing, wonderful community and I am at last...*home*. Come visit this church. It is everything that is good about Catholicism, everything you wish your parish church would be. We have, as Paul advised the early Christians, taken what is good and left behind what is not.

Old Catholic Church of the Beatitudes (Pastor: Rev. Bernard C. Callahan, Jr.) For information and directions, see below.

<http://www.churchofthebeatitudes.org>
e-mail: churchofthebeatitudes@verizon.net

Maria Marlowe is a member of the core committee of SEPA/WOC.

until 2002; she's also a member of the Grail. Marian has been doing and engaging with feminist theology since the 1970s. Her PhD is from Temple and she teaches contemporary theology and re-

continued on page 10

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DIALOGUE BOX

A CONVERSATION

The greatest obstacle to Roman Catholic church reform, so urgently needed again today, as it has been at all-too-regular intervals throughout the checkered history of the church, is not the stubborn intransigence of the hierarchical old guard, at it scrambles furiously to maintain its lock on authority, control, and the church's coffers.

Indeed, the antics of the beleaguered hierarchy are increasingly counter-productive; revelations of the scope of the sexual-abuse crisis among Roman Catholic priests, and perhaps even more alarming, the extent of frantic bishops' and church leaders' efforts to conceal the problem, even at the cost of callously, unconscionably continuing to endanger the children entrusted to their care, have served as a belated wake-up call to some of the church's more somnolent members.

No, the biggest obstacle to church reform is, I think, apathy—the unquestioning acceptance of the ecclesial status quo, as defined by the rules, proclamations and directives of a largely self-appointed authority (How do we know the Pope is infallible? He told us so.) It is the reluctance or refusal of the vast majority of Catholics to closely observe, ask questions, insist on answers, and then to consult their (God-given) consciences and demand

accountability of the church they support and finance.

Which brings us to the statement of our friend and colleague, Marge Sexton, of Jenkintown PA, long-time advocate for women's ordination and church reform, reprinted (in an abridged version) below. It is, we think, the courageous public statement of a painful and intensely personal struggle, which resonates with many of us. Its publication in the January 9 Sunday Inquirer, as SEPA/WOC's Regina Bannan pointed out, sparked (in addition to thirty-eight responses sent to the paper), countless Sunday dinner-table conversations in homes—and just possibly a few rectories and convents—throughout the archdiocese and beyond.

*It is precisely that sort of open discussion and dialogue, so long absent regarding church affairs—far more than the conclusion reached by Marge, ourselves, or anyone else—that must mark the first movements toward reform. It is a dialogue that we at **Equal wRites** are delighted to encourage—post or e-mail your contributions to the editor at one of the addresses on the back cover of this issue; we'll print as many as we can—and join. This dialogue is a gift Marge offers, in leaving, to the church she loved and to all of us who remain.*

WHY I AM LEAVING

by Marge Sexton

This is my statement of goodbye. I am leaving the Catholic church.

My husband, Tom, asked me recently why the church was valid for me earlier in my life but is no longer so. I thought about the question and said that the reason that the Catholic experience was valid then but is no longer is because society has changed but the church has not. I went on to say that I believe that God's revelation is ongoing and that the Holy Spirit speaks and works in many ways. The church hierarchy designates the places where and through whom the Holy Spirit is permitted to work. That may have worked in another time and perhaps in another place. I find that out of place and out of sync with the spiritual, moral, philosophical and psychological evolution that has happened with me personally and with what I believe to be within the human experience.

As long as I could rest secure in my own niche church, I could almost pretend at times that my parish was different from the bigger church. "After all," I would frequently say to myself and others, "St. Vincent's nurtures the gifts of women. Okay, it's true, that women can't preside at mass there and that's painful. But women can and do assume leadership positions there as much as the Catholic church permits." And there you have it, *as much as the Catholic church permits.*

In retrospect I believe that the absence of women priests really should have sent me packing my rosary beads years

continued on page 4

WHY I AM STAYING

by Karen B. Lenz

I read Marge Sexton's wonderfully honest statement with empathy and deep respect. Much of what she said, I agree with unconditionally; the issues that led to her departure from the Roman Catholic church, hurt and scandalize me (and countless others) as well, and cry out for action—any action—that says, "No!"

In response to her statement, I offer a different perspective—a little of my own story, *vis a vis* the Church of Rome, with a different starting point, a markedly different (or not) journey, and a different—at this point at least—ending.

That is not to say that I think that Marge's decision was wrong. I do not. I no longer believe, as I did with all my heart when I was twenty, in one-size-fits-all solutions Marge's decision may well be the right one for her—I have no desire or right to try to judge that—but it does not feel right for me.

Furthermore, I strongly suspect that it is in our journeys, in our discussions and dialogues, in our willingness to consider other viewpoints and our openness to change, and—yes—in our challenges and our dissent—and not in our destinations, whether we wind up triumphant or defeated—that the Holy Spirit is most active, and the truth easiest to disarm.

Unlike Marge, I am not a cradle Catholic. My earliest experiences of church took place in the Missouri Synod Lutheran church in Hartford, CT, of which my German immigrant grandmother was a founding member. I found it a stiff, dour

continued on page 4

ago, but it didn't. I stayed, felt the pain, protested and spoke out, thinking that I was making a difference by staying.

The clergy sexual abuse scandal broke open on the national scene and I believed the church would be appropriately humbled and would have no choice but to face its own sinfulness since salvation can only be reached when we are forced to remove the proverbial plank in our own eye. (*Matt. 7:3-5*) Before long it became evident that the hierarchy of the church would not react with all due humility. Their reactions have been disgraceful. That observation alone should have been enough for me to leave. Still, I hung on.

I am privileged to know many gay and lesbian people. Besides cherishing them as friends, I am constantly humbled by their fidelity to their beliefs and the wonderful good humor with which they approach life. My gay and lesbian friends are among the finest people I have ever known. They are wonderful partners, parents and friends. Also, unless Catholics are in serious denial, they must know that rectories and convents are home to vast numbers of gay men and lesbian women. I cannot even imagine how hurt they are by the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that is prevalent in this as well as so many other Christian denominations. The church's anti-gay agenda should have been enough to send me away. But still, I stayed.

I finally found my "final straw" as I watched in horror as the leadership of the Catholic church worked for the election of George Bush and the defeat of John Kerry. I took Kerry's defeat personally because through it I realized that the church rulers also wish to defeat me and all who think like I do.

Many people I know refuse to leave the church they love simply because they believe that people must stay and stand up for what they believe. I, too, felt that way for many years.

Eventually I came to the certain belief that the church hierarchy wants us out. That realization hurt a lot, but I continued to hold on anyway. I will not rehash the election campaign and all of the pro-life issues that the hierarchy chose to overlook so that they could hone in on their pro-fetus campaign, but it was then that I knew my time as a Catholic had finally ended and that I have to leave and leave now.

My latest realizations have made me look at the church and its teaching through new eyes and I am appalled at the things I believed that I now strongly question. For the past year, when we recite the Creed at mass, I cannot speak past "I believe in God.." Also, throughout my lifetime I found great solace in the Catholic teaching regarding Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. I no longer believe that Jesus is more truly present in the Eucharist than he is in any gathering of faithful people. Neither do I believe that the hierarchy believes its own teaching regarding Eucharist. If they did, they would be so humbled before it that they would never, could never use it politically, even if they wanted to. It would be just too sacred.

I truly understand the enormous blessings I have received as a life-long Catholic:

- A relationship to Jesus Christ
- Spiritual roots that connected me to my parents who died when I was a child
- A love of Scripture in my life
- A deep love of ritual
- The joy of the seasons and the sacredness of each one
- A vibrant and conscious prayer life
- Devotion to Mary, mother of Jesus, and the saints
- The Sign of the Cross (I just love to "bless myself")
- The rosary

Finally I take sweet memories of a vibrant, hospitable faith community where people care for each other and the world beyond them. St. Vincent's is a place where people consciously seek to understand the church's best kept secret, Catholic social teaching, and find ways to courageously apply it in the parish community, its inner-city neighborhood and the wider world. A part of me will always be with them on Sunday mornings at 9:00 AM as they gather for mass, even as time passes and other people take my place in "our own pew." Leaving is painful beyond imagining. The only thing more painful would be to remain.

I am deeply grateful, but now I must go.

WHY I AM STAYING *continued*

and inflexible kind of faith, and by the time I graduated from high school, religion played no part in my life.

After a spectacularly unimpressive freshman year at Long Island University—during which I learned far more on the streets of New York City than in the few classes I managed to attend—my father, a fallen-away Catholic, brought me home, consulted with a priest-friend in what he felt was a last-ditch effort to save me, and decided to send me to the nuns.

And so it was that I arrived at St. Joseph College in West Hartford, CT—as my friends made bets about how long I would last—to find, at the hands of the Sisters of Mercy, welcome, respect and challenge far beyond my expectations. It did not hurt of course that this scenario played out against the backdrop of the sixties' surge of Catholic activism—people actually living, not just talking, the Gospel—and Vatican II.

Thus, at the age of twenty or thereabouts, with my eyes at least partially (if not wide) open, I made my first communion in the second-floor chapel of the college's Mercy Hall, and joined the Roman Catholic church.

There have been ups and downs of course since then, including a nearly twenty-five year period during which I did not set foot inside a church. But I am back and it feels likely I am here to stay.

Marge is right of course about the sins of the church to which she points—its misogynist mistreatment of more than half its

members, the mind-boggling horror of the clergy-sex abuse scandal, its insensitive mistreatment of gay and lesbian Catholics, its unabashed politicizing to promote its own narrow agenda during the Presidential election. I could add to the list—the astounding wealth the church furtively hoards in a world where literally millions of children of God are starving; its failure to take the lead in working for peace and putting an end to war; its history, cruel and bloody beyond belief.

But all of this—the greed, the arrogance, the jockeying for power and prestige of its leaders—is of course only part of this story. The other part includes the moral and spiritual leaders of the church who have called it to account throughout the centuries, and inspired millions in their attempts to live the Gospel: my personal list includes Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, Mother Teresa, Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, Thomas Merton, the Berrigans, Roy Bourgeois, Henri Nouwen, John XXIII—and my friend Sr. Peter Claver. And even more than that it encompasses millions of comparatively simple lives of fidelity and great holiness, lives of service given in schools and convents and families, in hospitals and hospices and refugee camps around the world; lives of deep spirituality and prayer, lives close to God.

For every pedophile priest or church official living in uncaring luxury there are thousands of others—professed religious like the Sisters of Mercy who changed my life, or the generations of parents who raised up families of children straight and strong and loving. The Catholic church is their home, their source, their context—quite as much (or perhaps more) than it is the hierarchy’s.

They—Dorothy Day, Liz McAllister, Sisters Maria Ancilla and Mary Joan and Maria Clare of St. Joe’s, Sisters Joan Chittister and Jeannine Gramick, my friends Richard Withers and Judy Heffernan, Peaches and Jackie who live in our house, and others too numerous to mention—and not Cardinals Ratzinger or Law or Rigali—are the heart of my church, and it is well worth the struggle it will take to turn it around.

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2005 OFFERINGS

Personal Growth Seminars 9 - 11:45 AM

April 26 - Growth toward Integration/Wholeness

June 28 - Growing in Affirmation/Validation

Retreat for Those Dealing with Illness - April 29 - May 1

Healing Day for Women - May 7 - 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Led by Grace Markay, Philadelphia, singer/songwriter

Days of Prayer and Reflection - 9:30 AM - 2:45 PM

March 15 - “The Missing Piece in Our Lives”

Sr. Catherine Charles

May 24 - “Hunger for Healing” -Angie Malmgren

We are located approximately 35 minutes from Philadelphia.

Please call for further information.

RAPPORT URGES AGENDA

Dear Friend of church Reform:

Do you want to see *change* in the church? *Now*? Do you sometimes become discouraged at how things are? Uncertain of how to move toward an inclusive church? If so, please read on.

Of late, we, the women of RAPPORT, have become concerned that reform movements may become divided. All agree that Sunday Eucharist is central to our lives. And, all agree, therefore, that priesthood *must* be opened up. But, some groups emphasize only a change to optional celibacy. Others seek a more inclusive priesthood, open to *all* who are called by God, gifted, prepared, and affirmed by communities they serve. How can we support one another? How can our voices gain greater clarity and strength as we do so?

Here’s what we believe in and propose:

- That we, as church, as the people of God, must claim our right “to receive in abundance the help of the spiritual goods of the church, especially that of the word of God and the sacraments from the pastors.” (*Lumen Gentium*, #37).

- That we, as people of faith, must continue to read the “signs of the times.” As we do so, we continue to acknowledge that there is no “priest shortage,” only an inability within the institution to affirm and ordain those who are called to the priesthood. Many of us know the stories of so many people, women and men, married and single, who have been called by God to ordination, who have responded to that call by preparing for ordained ministry, and who have been affirmed by communities they have served. Most already have appropriate education and formation, as well as years of experience in pastoral ministry.

- Therefore, we *must* discuss the possibility of opening up ordination to *all*, women as well as men, who are called and gifted, among all the people we serve.

- And we *must* challenge the bishops of the United States to do the same, especially during this upcoming year of the Eucharist.

- We who believe in church renewal must come together around these proposals, as much as possible, and support one another’s efforts.

What are we asking of you? We urge you to include the above listed beliefs, in some form, in all your publications, written statements and petitions. We urge you to make these beliefs, and action on them, a priority in the upcoming year. This we do for the vitality and renewal of our beloved church.

Sincerely,

Gloria Ulterino

on behalf of the women of Rapport

A covenanted community meeting since 1985 to effect women’s ordination in the Roman Catholic church.

RAPPORT = Renewing A Priestly People: Ordination Reconsidered Today

COR/PHILADELPHIA WEB SITE

COR/Philadelphia, a coalition of individuals and Catholic Organizations for Renewal, have a new web site that includes a calendar of events sponsored by member groups, which include SEPA/WOC. Check it out at cor-philadelphia.tripod.org.

WOMEN DEACONS AND/OR PRIESTS**Diaconite Is Not Enough**

*The following letter is a response to an article in the last (December) issue of **Equal Writes** entitled “FutureChurch, Women and the Diaconate”, in which Sister Christine Schenk of FutureChurch responds to the misimpression that FutureChurch limits its advocacy for Roman Catholic women’s participation in ministry to the diaconate. Schenk said FutureChurch’s position (to greatly oversimplify) is that the diaconate, unlike the priesthood, is a first, doable step toward full equality of women in ministry. The entire article can be found on www.sepawoc.org.*

Dear Chris,

I have the greatest respect for the work of FutureChurch and the work you are doing to educate Catholics about who Jesus really was, that he included women as some of his closest disciples, that both women and men served in leadership capacities, and that you wish to bring visibility to all the women ministering in the church.

However, even though women were deacons in the early Church, the fact is that today the seminary for Catholic priests and the diaconate are only open to men, as you know. The problem is that this diaconate is a permanent office and these men will not be able to seek the priesthood. In fact, they must sign a document that they will NOT seek the priesthood. Would this not portend an unequal servanthood for women in the future? And lurking among other problems is the focus of the diaconate on married men. Would women have to be married to be admitted?

So we have a situation now that even if women were admitted to the diaconate, they would be subject to the same stricture, i.e. being a permanent deacon unable to seek priesthood. There may, in fact, be women who would welcome this, but we at the Women’s Ordination Conference work for women to be full partners and truly co-equal disciples with men, so that women may choose to move on to priesthood and even the bishopric if they are called to this. WOC is the only reform group specifically seeking full equality of women in answering a call to priesthood based not on gender but on gifts for the church.

We call on all Catholics who wish for women’s full humanity to be respected and honored in the Catholic church to keep the focus and goal of women attaining priesthood, not only the diaconate. Until women have a co-equal place at the table as clergy, WOC will continue to press for the ordination of women priests and yes, even as bishops. We do this not just to end the shortage of priests, but for justice and real change toward an inclusive church.

**Evelyn Hunt, President
Women’s Ordination Conference
Board of Directors**

Not An Either-Or Issue

Dear Evelyn,

Thanks for asking some very important questions .and for your own fine work at WOC. I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss pros and cons of various ways of advancing women’s roles in the church. These are important issues to think through together. I want to clarify however that we have deliberately not used the term “permanent” in our call for opening the diaconate to women. We have left this unspecified because we want to allow for the (inevitable in my view) natural evolution of political acceptance of women’s priestly calls in the wider church.

We are also grateful that, while the ecclesial-political process is unfolding, women deacons could bring a huge new pool of ministers (most of whom are already serving in the church) to meet the sacramental needs of Catholics. I am hopeful that people will not view this as an either/or issue...but instead see the importance of supporting campaigns for both women deacons and women priests.

This being said, I’m sure we all see the importance of supporting women who, for whatever reason feel called only to the “permanent diaconate.” Women should be able to choose to serve in whatever way suits them best. With regard to the “permanency” of the permanent diaconate, I believe there are permanent deacons who have been ordained priests (after their wives died..unfortunately no room for optional celibacy yet either),so that precedent does seem to be there.

Please don’t misunderstand me. I will be delighted if next year, a new Pope calls for Vatican III, which then paves the way for women’s ordination to the priesthood and full ministerial equality for married male priests too. While we wait in hope for that day, I am pragmatic enough to wish for the significant increase in sacramental availability (so desperately needed) that tens of thousands of qualified women could provide as deacons right now, even as the hierarchy struggles to accept the fact of so many of their calls to ministerial priesthood too.

FutureChurch was founded in the midst of the parish experience where Eucharist and the sacraments mean everything. Justice for women and married men called to the priesthood but denied access, is also very important to us, but perhaps does not weigh as heavily on our hearts as the reality of loss of the mass and the sacraments do. This may not be “right,” but it does seem to be our reality. This is why I am so grateful for WOC! You keep pragmatists like us, honest. And I am brash enough to hope that we keep you mindful of some parish-based realities, that even though they may not be ideologically pure, are in fact reality for very many.

With gratitude to *Equal wRites* for encouraging this healthy dialogue!

**Chris Schenk
Executive Director
FutureChurch**

WOMEN AT THE WELL II

by *Marian Ronan*

One of the ironies of my life as a Catholic women's ordination activist is that, in my other life, as a seminary professor, I participate from time to time in the ordination of my American Baptist women students. Last October my husband Keith and I found ourselves in the Boston suburb of Beverly, Massachusetts, for the ordination of the newly appointed co-pastor of the American Baptist congregation there, Susan Beth Criscione. A year and a half previously I had directed Susan's fine feminist MA thesis. Keith and I were both excited to see Susan moving on with her call to ministry. We were also enjoying a weekend together in a comfortable hotel.

On the way from our hotel to First Baptist Beverly for the morning service—the ordination would be later in the afternoon—I noticed a Catholic church on the right-hand side of the main thoroughfare. It was a handsome edifice, a round, Vatican II-looking building made of gray stone with a rectangular suite of offices extending out behind it. There was something strange about it, though: at 10:30 on Sunday morning, the parking lot was completely empty.

The mystery continued as we drove back from worship, as we drove into Beverly for the late afternoon ordination and banquet, and again the next morning as we drove to the airport. The parking lot was always completely empty, and nobody appeared anywhere near the church. I craned my neck to read the sign out front, to see if it might be a priestless congregation with only a Saturday evening or bi-monthly liturgy.

I was still musing about the ghost-parish when we arrived at the airport, early as usual. I bought the Sunday paper to pass the time, and there, on the front of the metropolitan section, was an article about that very church: "A Church Legacy Finds a Home," read the headline. The church had been called St. Alphonsus, and it was one of the eighty-one parishes closed by the Archdiocese of Boston to settle multiple clergy sex-abuse suits. But the focus of the article was on what the former members of St. Alphonsus had done in response to that closing. The parishioners had decided, rather than protest the closing of their parish as others had done, to fill the void by helping to create a new parish in another part of the world. They identified a village called Santo Nuevo, in the Dominican Republic, that did not have a church. They then transferred \$25,000 of their parish savings to build a church there, and a number of its sacred objects, to equip it. Five members of the former Beverly church, and four from another parish, packed up the crucifix, chalice, sanctuary bells, holy water fonts, Nativity set, vestments, altar linens and other items and flew to Santiago to present them to the members of the new St. Alfonso, in the Dominican jungle.

And clearly, the people of Pueblo Nuevo were deeply grateful to have a church of their own. Before the gift from the Massachusetts parish, they had walked or ridden burros seven miles in each direction to go to another town to mass. The woman who donated the land for the church, Vincenta Gonzalez, had raised eighteen children, and had asked God on many occasions for a church for the village, but she never be-

lieved they would get one. Now the children, who had never seen a Nativity set, were playing with statues of angels and sheep. The new church would open in late December, and it would seat sixty people. Already another Boston parish was raising the money for pews for the new church. There was much about the St. Alphonsus article that I found moving. A group of American Catholics had found a way to express their faith that benefited people far less privileged than they. Probably the visit to Santo Domingo was the experience of a lifetime for the Beverly Catholics. As one of them observed, "These people walked seven miles to go to church... And at home people are complaining that their church is closing, and they have to drive five minutes in their car to get to a new parish?" This puts things in perspective.

But as my eyes scanned the last few paragraphs of the article, something else caught my attention. The hills surrounding the village are lush but life in Pueblo Nuevo can be hard, the reader learns. The road that runs through it is dirt, and the huts the people live in are tiny and wooden. Electricity is spotty. And the women "spend much of their days collecting water to cook and keep homes clean. One woman," the journalist informs us, "balanced a five gallon tin of water on her head as she walked barefoot down a muddy path."

I reacted very strongly to this information. It's not that I object to the building of the new church; if the people of Pueblo Nuevo want a church, they ought to have one. Nor do I object to the people of St. Alphonsus passing on their sacred vessels and relics if this comforts them. Along similar lines, I disagreed with those who argued that the money for the new cathedral in Los Angeles should have been given to the poor. If the US can afford to blow entire nations to kingdom come, we can afford to build a new cathedral in Los Angeles and also make decent lives for the poor.

It makes a certain kind of sense to argue that the Catholics of the Archdiocese of Boston, if they were going to build a church in Pueblo Nueva, should have drilled a well there as well. Assuming that it costs \$15,000 to drill a well in the Dominican Republic, this wouldn't be hard to do. Roundtrip airfare for nine people from Boston to Santiago goes for about \$5000. A gold tabernacle and a statue of St. Alphonso would cost some thousands more. Several bake sales and a special collection or two and the women of Pueblo Nuevo could stop hauling water; their daughters could start going to school.

But if the Catholics of the former St. Alphonsus had drilled a well for Vincenta Gonzalez and her sisters, there would still have been the women of the village down the road, hauling their five-gallon tins. The task facing the Catholics of Boston—and us—goes beyond building a church or drilling a single well. It involves coming to understand why the Dominican Republic has \$7.2 billion in foreign debt, and why the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, on which the United States exerts enormous influence, have imposed crushing financial austerity measures on that tiny country so it can repay that debt. It involves coming to understand as well why the Dominican Republic has entered into trade agreements that cause it to take in \$8.9 billion in imports annually from foreign countries, primarily the US,

continued on page 8

and to export only \$5.2 billion annually to those same countries. After we come to understand these matters, then we need to figure out how to change them, and how to get a majority of our fellow citizens to agree with us on these matters. This is vastly harder than building churches or drilling wells, but it's what we must do if we are to deliver our sisters from hauling water for the rest of their lives.

Marian Ronan will be one of the keynote speakers for the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Women's Ordination Conference to be held at the Friends Center in Philadelphia on March 12.

SACRAMENTAL CLERICALIZATION

by *Jim Plastaras*

People on the periphery of the Catholic faith communion are frequently asked: "Why are you still a Catholic?" The short list of reasons for holding on usually has something to do with the rich Catholic sacramental tradition. Unfortunately, much of the pain they experience also has to do with the Eucharist and sacraments.

The institution's record on sacramental practice has often been a source of scandal. Many of Luther's famous *Theses* were prompted by the rampantly venal and superstitious practices of his day relating to the mass and sacraments. The Catholic Counter-Reformation addressed many of the most blatant abuses of "grace-selling" and sacraments-as-white-magic, but a very basic problem remained. This was the idea that the hierarchy somehow controlled the channels of grace and had power to turn on or off the spigot to the channels of grace. Over the course of centuries, a process took place which transformed these freely-given signs of Christ's presence in the community into tools of hierarchical control. This process might be called the *Clericalization of the Sacraments*,

The following passages from the *New Testament* throw light on the role of the sacraments in the life of the early church:

The *Letter of James* (written toward the end of the first century) tells us: *Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:14-16)*

The first section of the passage shows the leaders of the local community taking a pre-eminent role in the ministry of healing and forgiveness, but the following verse makes the surprising [surprising, i.e., to life-long Catholics] assertion that the members of the community should "*Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed.*" The ministry of healing and forgiveness is entrusted, not just to Elders, but to the entire community.

The power to *loose and to bind* is given not only to Peter (*Matt 16:18-19*), but to the entire community (*Matt 18:18-19*). In *John 20:20-22*, Jesus addresses the following words, not to

the *Twelve*, but to the **disciples** [i.e., the entire community]: "*Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.*"

In *I Cor 5:1-5*, which offers one of the clearest pictures of 'excommunication' in the early church, Paul calls upon the **entire community** to take action regarding the member who had taken his father's wife: "*When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.*"

Unfortunately, during the following centuries, the communitarian nature of the Eucharist and sacraments was obscured. The development of a hierarchical structure borrowed from the Roman Empire brought with it a corresponding *Clericalization of the Sacraments*. The sacraments came to be seen as an adjunct and support of juridical and hierarchical power. These were some of the effects of this change of perspective:

The Eucharist was seen as an action performed by a priest rather than a celebration by the community. Private masses were 'performed' in abundance by solitary priests at side altars [for a stipend given in appreciation of remembrance of the donor's intentions], but it was taken for granted the community gathered for prayer without an ordained priest could not celebrate Eucharist!

The ministry of healing and forgiveness, which had become the exclusive prerogative of the clergy, was no longer looked upon as part of the Christian vocation.

The power to forgive—and more importantly, the power to withhold forgiveness and deny access to the channels of grace—was often used by Popes and bishops as a tool to compel obedience in matters that were often purely political.

The Women's Ordination Conference and advocates of church renewal look for more than simply the removal of exclusionary barriers to ordained ministry. What is needed is a renewal of ordained ministry where the office-holders no longer see themselves as possessors of exclusive powers, but as leaders called to invite and energize the entire community to fuller participation in the church's ministry of prayer, healing, and forgiveness.

Jim Plastaras is a board member of CTA-Philadelphia. He earned his license at the Pontifical Biblical Institute and is the author of three books in biblical theology, including The God of Exodus.

SAVE THESE DATES!

July 22-24—WOW, (Women's Ordination WorldWide,) sponsors its second International Ecumenical Conference, in Ottawa, Canada, with keynoters Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether.

July 14-22—Pre-conference event, Witness Wagon Train, will travel the east coast, from Washington, DC (where riders will witness at the bishops' conference) with stops in Philadelphia, NYC, Boston, Seneca Falls and Rochester, NY. Also in July, four women are scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood and three to the diaconate on the International waters of the St. Lawrence Seaway

For information, www.WOW2005.org.

Hubris! Hubris! Hubris!

by Mary Byrne

Sometimes you get a gift. There I am, staring at the blank computer screen waiting for this column to take form. Waiting a long time. In writer's lingo—a turtle on its back. I have an idea, maybe even a catchy title, but after that it gets a little fuzzy. I don't feel like whining anymore about the state of the world/church but lately almost everything that has happened in those domains is getting my Irish up. My response has become a wagging mantra—*hubris! hubris! hubris!*—at almost everything and everyone appearing on the front page or the nightly news. At the moment, I am tired of being the spoilsport who just can't seem to join in the fun of nation-building and papacy-preserving. So, I do what any sane person would do trapped in the non-event of writers' block. I flee to the diversions of the e-mail ... And, bingo, it is there waiting for me!

Thank you, Jim Wallis and *Sojourners* for saving my day. There, on your site, as the "quote of the week," is an excerpt from an address by John Paul II on January 10 to an annual gathering of world diplomats:

"The arrogance of power must be countered with reason, force with dialogue, pointed weapons with outstretched hands, evil with good."

I won't quibble with why *Sojourners* chose these words. For me, it was a sign from heaven. We go with hubris!

It has occurred to me that coincidental with hubris is a complete lack of the necessary self-awareness to step outside one's self and agenda. Just to take a peek and see how you relate to the rest of the world. Just on the remote chance that someone out there has something to teach you. Just in case you have sacrificed love for infallibility or ideology. There is, of course, no need to do that when you think that you are right. Right is might in the land of hubris where—at least for a while—it seems that an overinflated sense of power can speak forcefully to an intimidated populace. For a moment, we are cowed or maybe more stunned by the sheer audacity of arrogance unleashed. But eventually, things fall apart even for the self-perceived invincible. And out of the mouth of the utterly self-righteous comes something wildly out of touch with reality. For example, *"The arrogance of power must be countered with reason..."*

Well, here's a reality check. As long as "reason" rules to the exclusion of all other forms of human knowing residing in the multi-dimensional realms of body and spirit, arrogance will prevail. As Robert Johnson, the Jungian psychologist, comments, "The over-identification with the mind has made us disrespectful of intuition, body sensation, and the earth as a path to divine union." We are living in an age where reason, certainly a brilliant idea in moderation, has run amok. It has become the control room for the powerful. A very small room full of very scared people creating either/or scenarios to support their unforgiving formulaic thinking. It is from this room that the very "reasonable" equation emerged: Jesus was a man=All priests must be men. Clearly, no one in that room ever allowed themselves to be completely present—mind, body and soul—to *John 20:1-18*. Then, they would really *know* about priesthood. So, here is a suggestion to the Vatican—sub-

LORD, REMEMBER THOSE OF ILL WILL

Lord, remember not only the men of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted upon us. Remember rather the fruits we have brought, thanks to this suffering: our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, the courage, the generosity, the greatness of heart that has grown out of this. And when they come to judgment, let all the fruits we have borne be their forgiveness

...found on a scrap of paper at the liberation of Ravensbruck Concentration Camp in Germany

stitute "reason" with "wisdom" and what unfolds is a recipe (much easier to digest than a formula) for peace that references a knowing based on equality instead of equations.

"force with dialog..." Dialog. What a good idea! So, let's talk. Where do we begin ... birth control, divorce, same-sex marriages, decentralization of ecclesial authority, infallibility, a priesthood of equals, abortion, inclusive language? What a shame that we, the church, are so divided by silence. That, in fact, the volume has been dangerously lowered to silencing.

Force = Silence. But here is the another perspective: Silence is the womb of the Spirit and many of us are birthing a new sense of church in our ongoing conversation on what it means to be faithful to the Gospel. So, yes, you are right. Force is best met with dialog. Out here, on the so-called fringes, we do it a lot. You have an open invitation to join in on the conversation anytime. Really, our door is always open.

"pointed weapons with outstretched hands..." And so are our hands. The open-hand gesture of the Eucharist, of sacramental blessing, of welcoming all to the table as we continue to do the work of the church. What would it be like if everyone—the orthodox and reformists—came to the table ready to be disarmed by the unexpected movements of the Spirit who works in the absence of power, arrogance, and force? Who works in the presence of anger, of sadness, of silencing? What weapons and wounds do we both have to lay down? I only ask the question because you, John Paul II, have made the suggestion that there is another way. Were you, perhaps, preaching to the choir and giving us a rare glimpse into momentary self-awareness?

"evil with good." Back to hubris. Evil vs .good has gotten top billing for a long time so I don't want to mess around with it too much. It has sold a lot of Bibles, given us a fair share of movie blockbusters, and even elected a president or two. It is just that I worry about the grey area in between the "darkness" of evil and the bright "light" of good. All too often the guy throwing the stones is the very same guy who is protecting his turf, pelting the disobedient, rebellious masses with all kinds of allegations of evil-doing in order to justify his shaky hold on power—which really becomes a kind of evil in and of itself.

Something to think about ...

Well, that feels good. Turtle is right side up. Column is done. Hubris bug is out of my system. Is the world a better place yet?

Mary Byrne is an ordained minister and a writer.

PART OF HISTORY

continued from page 2

ligion at the GTU in Berkeley. Her fierce intellectualism is always grounded in the reality of American Catholic church life, which comes, she argues, from growing up in Chester influenced by the union activism of her father and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. She will reflect on where WOC has been and where it needs to be going. You don't want to miss that.

And of course, you get a chance to talk as well, in breakout groups focused on WOC'S three ministries. Dr. Fresen will lead the Ministry of Walking With Women Called. **Equal wRites** editor, Philadelphia Catholic Worker, and peace activist Karen Lenz will lead the Ministry of Irritation. Mary Byrne, an ordained minister certified by FCM, co-founder of the Spirit Rising Community, and writer about the key role of independent small-faith communities, will lead the Ministry of Prophetic Obedience. Karen and Mary are SEPA/WOC core committee members, as is our beloved Judy Heffernan, who will offer a brief reflection on Detroit in 1974 at the beginning of the day. Also at the opening will be Evelyn Hunt of Cleveland, who will extend greetings as the current National WOC Board president. Evelyn had a career, appropriately enough, as an affirmative action officer and has an MA in pastoral ministry; her quiet leadership style keeps WOC going. Katy Scott of Chicago, who will lead the opening prayer, is treasurer of the National WOC Board, but neither that nor her pursuit of a CPE explains her gifts of prayer, reconciliation, and ministry.

We expect most of the WOC national board to be here, actually, and we won't even allow you to relax at lunch. There will be a book signing by Angela Bonavoglia, whose book, *Good Catholic Girls: How Women Are Leading the Fight to Change the Church* (Harper-Collins/Regan Books, 2005), will be launched at this meeting. You'll want to look at the index to see whom you know, and you'll want to read it if you agree with the premise of the title and subtitle. I've read Angela in

The Nation and always found her accurate and accessible, telling a church story to the mainstream that is not often heard. I don't know if Dorothy Irwin does calendar signings, but she will also be with us, with her superb vehicles for getting the history of women's ordination to the public: calendars, notecards, and bookmarks. Dorothy is the archeologist who is making the visual record widely available. The evidence is convincing. Finally, National WOC and the Philadelphia Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR) will have tables, so you will be able to fulfill your book, bumper sticker, t-shirt and miscellaneous needs at one place.

And all this energy will be lifted up in a concluding liturgy with as much spirit and joy as the one May 3, which we only can describe by saying, "you had to be there." Be here.

I do want to conclude by thanking the other members of the SEPA/WOC core committee who are not on the program; they ARE the program and they are working very hard to make this another day that you will long remember: Eileen DiFranco (recently elected to the National WOC Board), Alice Foley, Marianne Jann (SEPA/WOC treasurer), Maria Marlowe, Bernie McBride and Peg Murphy, the indefatigable general chair of this day. It's at the Friends Center, 15th and Cherry Streets, in Philadelphia. Consult the web site www.sepawoc.org for the full program and directions.

E-mail Marianne Jann right away (mejann@comcast.net) or call me if you don't have e-mail (215-545-9649). We'll see what we can do about getting you lunch, and at least we'll know you are coming to share your joy and commitment with us.

Regina Bannan teaches at Temple University and is part of the Community of the Christian Spirit. She is also the tireless leader of SEPA/WOC and will moderate the March 12 panel responding to Dr. Fresen.

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(ED NOTE: Dr. Irvin has a pontifical doctorate in Catholic theology from the University of Tübingen, Germany and has written many scholarly articles.

Meet her at "Celebrating Women Called", March 12 in Philadelphia.

SEPA/WOC FINANCIAL STATEMENT	
As of December 31, 2004	
Beginning cash balance 1/1/04	5,528
Revenues:	
In-Kind Contributions	124
Advertisements	195
Unrestricted	491
Fall Fundraiser Campaign	3,025
Revenues received as of 12/31/04	<u>3,835</u>
Expenses:	
Conference Expense	650
Fall Fundraiser Campaign	124
Donations	100
Dues & Subscriptions	262
Postage & Delivery	1,202
Printing	4,639
Web Hosting	181
Expenses as of 12/31/04	7,158
Cash Balance as of 12/31/04	<u>2,205</u>

Movie Review

WHALE RIDER

reviewed by Rosemary Luckett

Nominations for the Academy Awards are in the news again and I am reminded of the 2003 nominations for best actress last January. I had seen Niki Caro's movie *Whale Rider* and was hoping that the fifteen-year-old nominee Keisha Castle-Hughes would walk away with that Oscar. Alas, an older woman playing a serial killer in another movie won the prize. Still I hope that a lot of people saw *Whale Rider* after the Oscars, because it is an excellent movie and the story, although it takes place in New Zealand, is apropos to our own culture and, in particular, to long-held customs and gender restrictions Catholic women bump up against in the church.

Keisha plays Pai—a twin Maori girl who survives the death of her mother and twin brother in childbirth. That alone should have been enough to make her endeared to her grandfather, the clan leader, but it was not entirely to be. He had high hopes that the boy twin would do what his own son, an artist, had chosen not to do: become a traditional leader of a clan that has lost its way. Pai's grandmother cares for her

and, after initially shunning her, the grandfather loves her too. Pai realizes she is called by the whales and the ancestors to learn the native ways and adeptly begins to do so. Yet the grandfather who pedals her to and from school each day on a bicycle cannot grasp the jewel that he holds in his hands. He banishes her from tribal training and teaches her ambivalent male classmates instead. The intense interactions between the grandfather, his two sons, his wife, Pai, the young boys of the clan, and beached whales could have settled into a tale populated by stereotypical characters, but happily that does not happen. In this beautifully filmed and acted story, each person is portrayed with depth of character. Each demands our sympathy, and each gets it.

Although *Whale Rider* first strutted its stuff so well on the big screen, viewers now will necessarily see it at home on DVD or video. By all means rent it and enjoy this stirring tale of a young woman caught in the bonds of a tradition that resists change. Better yet, view it with friends. You'll have a lot to talk about after the show.

Rosemary Luckett is a poet and multi-media artist, and a long-time supporter of women's ordination.

Book Reviews

SOR JUANA: JUSTICE AND BEAUTY IN THE AMERICAS by Michelle A. Gonzalez.

Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003. 200 pp. \$20.00.

reviewed by Marian Ronan

It may come as a shock to those of us involved in feminist theology since the early 1970s that not one but two generations of feminist theologians have emerged since then. A noteworthy member of the third generation is Michelle A. Gonzalez, a Cuban-American Latina theologian currently teaching at Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles. Gonzalez's first book, *Sor Juana: Justice and Beauty in the Americas*, explores the relationship between the literary opus of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, a colonial Mexican nun, and a renewed interest in beauty within Christian theology.

It is difficult to overstate the significance of Sor Juana in Mexican history and Catholicism. *Equal wRites* readers may be familiar with Sor Juana through Octavio Paz's groundbreaking biography, or Pamela Kirk's 1999 theological study.* Gonzalez adds to this literature by situating Sor Juana's work within feminist theology and in relation to the "turn to the beautiful" in Latin American liberation theology, in Black and womanist theologies, and in the theology of the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Gonzalez begins her study by elaborating on the interrelationships between these four discourses. The retrieval of Sor Juana's writing comprises the second phase in feminist theological method, the recovery of marginalized women's voices. African-American/womanist theologians such as Katie G. Cannon and Delores Williams have made formative contributions to theological aesthetics by modeling the use of literature as a theological resource in which the symbolic and poetic merge with rationality. According to Latin American

liberation theology, Latino/a Christianity draws on the particular as a way of discovering the universal, so that, for example, the "little stories" of Guadalupe lead to the "big story" of Christian faith. And Balthasar's methodology puts literature in explicit conversation with theology. Thus Gonzalez engages Sor Juana's strongly literary work as an alternative theological vision, a transformation of the very nature of theological discourse.

After a useful chapter on Sor Juana herself, Gonzalez engages the classic theological transcendentals (the Good, the True, and the Beautiful) in Sor Juana's writings, especially in her plays and poetry. The priority of aesthetics in this section is immediately apparent because the author reverses the traditional order by addressing Beauty first. But even in the chapters on The Good and The True, Gonzalez makes clear the formative role of beauty in Sor Juana's hermeneutic. Yet, as the subtitle of Gonzalez's book suggests, this same beauty is shown to be intimately related to social justice. Significant portions of the plays and poems praise distinguished women and defend the rights of women to pursue intellectual work. They also include black and indigenous voices as a means of highlighting the strengths of pre-Christian religion and the problematic linkage between evangelism and violence. In her conclusion Gonzalez uses her examination of Sor Juana's work to call for a return to Beauty as the heart of theology, but one that is by no means divorced from goodness and truth.

Gonzalez is to be commended for expanding access to the religio-literary writings of this significant figure in Mexican, women's and Catholic history, and enhancing the

continued on page 12

Ronan continued from page 11

conversation between feminist, womanist, and Latino/a theologies. I have some questions about the strong emphasis in *Sor Juana on Beauty* (with a capital B); however, Gonzalez demonstrates convincingly that the theological concept of the beautiful is central to Sor Juana's body of work. The implications of the "turn to the beautiful" for our time is less clear, however. While Gonzalez links "the turn to the beautiful" to Latin American liberation theology and Black and womanist theologies, "the turn to the beautiful" has also played a role in the move to the right within American Catholicism. Gregory Wolfe, the editor of the journal *Image*, whose work appears in liberal Catholic magazines, uses the notions of the beautiful and the imagination as a means of transcending the divisiveness of economic and political struggles. Contributors to Richard John Neuhaus's conservative journal *First Things* likewise invoke the beauty of Catholicism as far superior to the "nihilism" and "relativism" of mere political and cultural issues like sexuality and gender. Even Latin American liberation theology, because of its strong neo-Thomist heritage, contributes more to the polarization between the material and the spiritual than is sometimes recognized. Gonzalez's retrieval of a (somewhat) marginalized Mexican woman's voice and her construal of Sor Juana's literary works as an alternative form of theology is an effort to correct these problems, of course.

It's not clear to me, however, whether Gonzalez's work will or will not ultimately support economic, political and social liberation. First books by academics are frequently strongly influenced by their mentors' ideologies, and Gonzalez's PhD work with a Balthasar scholar—Balthasar being a seriously conservative force within contemporary theology—suggests that this may be the case for *Sor Juana: Justice and Beauty in the Americas*. But in a recent article on connections between Balthasar's theology and contemporary feminist theologies, Gonzalez seems to use Balthasar to recommend a veiled form of gender essentialism, that is, unambiguous distinction between male and female.** If this is, in fact, what she is doing, I find such a recommendation troubling, as will gay, bisexual, and intersexed individuals and their friends. Nonetheless, *Sor Juana: Justice and Beauty in the Americas* asks some very important questions. I am eager to see which of them Michelle Gonzalez pursues in her future work.

*Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana or the Traps of Faith*. The Belknap Press, 1990. Pamela Kirk, *Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz: Religion, Art, and Feminism*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1999.

**"Hans Urs von Balthasar and Contemporary Feminist Theology." *Theological Studies* 65.3 (Sept. 2004), 566-596.

Marian Ronan, book review editor of Equal wRites teaches feminist theology and American religion at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA.

MARRIED CATHOLIC PRIESTS: THEIR HISTORY, THEIR JOURNEYS, THEIR REFLECTIONS

by Anthony P. Kowalski. Mequon, Wisconsin, Caritas Communications, 2004. 264 pp. 419.95.



reviewed by Joe Ruane

Taking a tack different from that of the early genre of angry, exploitative books by Roman Catholic priests who married, Anthony Kowalski writes an argument for the restoration of married priests to their official status within the church. He documents the two-thousand-year-long ambivalence of the hierarchy toward a married priesthood that has continued to exist nonetheless.

The author demonstrates the failure, over the next five centuries, of the law of celibacy mandated at the Second Lateran Council in 1139. The abuses and scandals of the period led to the Reformation and a continuation of a married priesthood among the reformers who sought a return to the married life exemplified in the *Pastoral Epistles*. Even after the rigid canons of the

Council of Trent of 1563 anathematized the very idea of married priests, over 3500 French priests were married at the time of the French Revolution three hundred years later. The persistent fight since the third century to retain the apostolic tradition of married priests continues in efforts to renew the priesthood over the last hundred years. Hierarchical ambivalence toward married priests may be seen in Pius XI's 1930 pronouncement in *Casti Connubii* of the sacred principle that "No human law can take away from people the original human right to marry," followed by his glorification of priestly celibacy five years later in *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* (*On the Catholic Priesthood*).

Kowalski continues to document the ambivalence of the church through excerpts from controversial Vatican Council II directives that stifled discussion of celibacy but led to later bish-

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ops' meetings that encouraged hope among tens of thousands of priests that the law would change. Many of the priests who first left to marry were veterans of civil rights marches of the 1960's and understood marriage for priests as a social justice issue, part of the rising expectations of change from the council. The development of organizations of priests at this time led to the formation of activist groups on the diocesan and national levels such as the National Federation of Priests Councils and the National Association for Pastoral Renewal. Eventually the networks formed in these official groups transformed into organizations of married priests and their wives such as the Federation of Christian Ministries (FCM) and CORPUS.

While the Society of Priests for a Free Ministry (SPFM) began in 1968, it did not become the Federation of Christian Ministries until after the bishops' synod of 1971. SPFM considered freedom in the church a fundamental problem and optional celibacy a main concern. By supporting *Humanae Vitae*, the bishops had created a conflicted situation for many priests facing the task of counseling the laity who were confused by the edict. Jurisdictional freedom and personal freedom became organizational problems as these groups germinated.

In 1971 the Synod of Bishops voted 107 to 87 against changing the current discipline of celibacy. Interestingly, the theologian Edward Schillebeeckx in analyzing the arguments noted a fear of escalation if change occurred: it might open the door to the ordination of women. A number of European and Latin American cardinals and archbishops questioned the church's failure to make use of married priests. Recognizing the role of wives in decision-making, the Society of Priests for a Free Ministry (SPFM) in 1973 changed their name to the Fellowship of Christian Ministries (FCM), and soon thereafter to the Federation of Christian Ministries; this change also acknowledged the significance of the many base communities in which members were active. Following William Powers in *Free Priests*, Kowalski distinguishes this approach from efforts by NAPR and CORPUS to maintain relations with church leaders as a strategy to bring about change within the structure. Similarly, a later group, Celibacy is the Issue (CITI), better known as "Rent-a-Priest," aims, to some extent, toward an image of preserving the male priesthood to gain favor with the church should renewal take place. Kowalski ends his earlier historical chapter with a reference to the many Protestant clergy, who, without separating from wives and children, have been admitted to the Roman Catholic priesthood.

Another strength of *Married Priests* is its compendium of the lives of women as wives of priests in the early centuries and in the present time. It delineates as well the terrible history of the

church's abuse of priests who persisted in marriage, and the harsh treatment of their wives. Such anecdotes about these many couples make *Married Priests* unique within the genre of books about married priests. The history of the camaraderie among married priests and their support of resigned priests and nuns in job hunting also enriches Kowalski's narrative.

Tony Kowalski writes as he lives. He is a person of great integrity and tries to be fair in all his comments. He does not write to bash the church but points to the historical facts that impinge on church policies regarding priestly celibacy and on the impact such policies have had and continue to have on the men and women of the church, whether priests and their wives, men and women who aspire to be priests or priests who are called to marriage. The one omission that stands out for this reviewer, while probably unintentional, is the absence of any mention of the women priests of the first century (see, for example, www.godtalktv.org/wparticle.html). Despite its inclusion of a chapter about Kowalski's life, *Married Priests* is no vanity book, but rather a tribute to the countless priests and their wives over the centuries who demonstrate that one is called to priesthood, not necessarily to celibacy.

Joe Ruane, a married priest, is professor of sociology and acting chair of the Department of Social Sciences at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. He has been active for many years in the Federation of Christian Ministries.

‘NOVA SAD STORY GETS SADDER

Although this issue of *Equal wRites* is packed with thought-provoking articles and news of exciting and historic upcoming events, we could not go to press without finding space to comment on Villanova University's incredibly spineless action in reversing what was a laudable, compassionate and deeply Christian decision to allow a small bronze plaque to be placed in its library in honor of beloved professor Mine Ener, whose life ended in unspeakable tragedy in 2003.

Disabled by a severe post-partum depression, Ener killed her baby, who had Down Syndrome, and then committed suicide while in jail awaiting trial.

Installation of the plaque was met with an outcry from well-heeled alumni, parents, some students and even a conservative news commentator and a radio talk-show host, accusing the university of "honoring a murderer."

Villanova officials, who clearly knew better, buckled to the pressure, removing the plaque in just eleven days.

Shame!

...Karen B. Lenz

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

CALENDAR

Centers for Spiritual Growth and Support

*The following centers and groups offer programs and activities of interest to progressive Catholics. If you would like to include events in the **Equal wRites** calendar, please contact Cassie at 215-467-8898 or peacecatphilly@yahoo.com*

ANCHOR (A Non-Denominational Community Harvesting Our Resources) is a group of Christians committed to living creatively and reflectively. Its mission is to engage in the holistic exploration of contemporary spiritual/religious/moral issues. Communal prayer days and discussion groups, one each in the fall and the spring, address relevant topics of religious and social concern. The Ecospirituality Study Group meets monthly—or join a discussion of the Bill Moyers *Genesis* series. In March, explore the shared Passover and Paschal mysteries by Embracing Our Jewish Foundation at the Basilian Spiritual Center; in April, learn more about Church as Koinonia of Salvation, a discussion of ecumenical dialogue at the SSJ Center for Spirituality; and in May, journey Toward a Spirituality of Medicine at the Medical Mission Sisters Center. For particulars on any of the above programs, call Ginny at 215 233-4929 and request a calendar of events.

Franciscan Spiritual Center, a contemplative place of simple beauty, respectful of creation, and reflective of the Franciscan values of hospitality, mutuality and Gospel living, offers programs that are holistic, ecumenical, collaborative in nature and supportive of nonviolence. The center provides accommodations, space for spiritual direction, prayer, study, art and exercise on a beautiful, handicapped-accessible campus. Clare House is a quiet place for contemplation, guided retreat weekends and directed prayer. This season, the center invites you to Come Away and Rest Awhile; enjoy a Lenten retreat day by Entering the Heart's Depth or Discover Our Hope for New Life during Holy Week. Join in a Universal Dance for Peace; Face Fear and Find Love or walk the Labyrinth path of prayer. For more information on these or other programs, call 610 527-4813 or check the web site at www.fscaston.org. The center is at 609 S. Convent Rd. in Aston, PA.

Kirkridge is a retreat and study center rooted in Christ close to the earth where people of diverse backgrounds find community and experience the transforming power of the Spirit for personal wholeness, reconciliation and justice in the world. Its work is based on the understanding that the life of faith requires not only action to transform the world toward greater shalom, but also the cultivation of a deep spirituality to sustain that compassionate action. This spring, celebrate the creative sap rising with a women's singing circle, "Trouble and Beauty;" nurture Deep Leadership within yourself and your community; or Wake Up to the Inner World by exploring your night dreams. For more information on these among many other programs, check www.kirkridge.org, call 610-588-1793 or e-mail kirkridge@fast.net. Kirkridge is located at 2495 Fox Gap Road in Bangor, PA.

Mary's Vineyard welcomes people of all faiths. All those alienated from the traditions of their upbringing will be given opportunities to continue their search for meaning. Although primarily focused on the needs of women, the center is open to all who have accepted the responsibility to form and care for future generations and who desire to share their burdens and joys with others. Enjoy one of the ongoing programs: Weekly Yoga on Mondays; QiGong or Pilates on Tuesdays; Reiki Healing on Wednesdays; Meditation on the third Saturday and Peace Prayers on the eleventh of each month. For information about these and other upcoming programs at Mary's Vineyard, please call 856 428-5495 or check the web site at www.marysvineyard.org. Mary's Vineyard is located at 1812 Haddonfield-Berlin Road in Cherry Hill, NJ.

At **Pendle Hill**, education is envisioned as the transforming of people and society. Programs offer the resources and time for integrated spiritual, intellectual and personal learning. Guests come to Pendle Hill to study, learn more about Quakerism, seek an experience of community living, deepen prayer and spiritual life, or discern a future direction. This season, Find Your Strong and Compassionate Heart with mindfulness meditation; learn how to reclaim your life by Making Time and Taking Time; join in the International Sacred Dance for Well-Being and Connection; delve into T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*; or learn from John Calvi about the spiritual discipline of receiving. For more information on any Pendle Hill programs, call 610 566-4507 or check the web site at www.pendlehill.org. Pendle Hill is located at 338 Plush Mill Road in Wallingford, PA.

The **SSJ Center for Spirituality** is a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill rooted in the charism of unity and reconciliation. In a spirit of hospitality, the center welcomes individuals and groups for spiritual direction, retreats, and other opportunities for deepening one's relationship with God, self, and all creation. For more information on upcoming programs, call 215 248-7231. The SSJ Center is at 9701 Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill, PA.

Temenos, an outreach ministry of the Swedenborgian Church, is a nonprofit conference and retreat center. It exists to facilitate renewal and transformation in human lives in the Swedenborgian spirit of inquiry and personal growth and the belief that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life. Programs are open to persons of all spiritual traditions and the sacred space of Temenos is also available for private individual retreats and for groups wishing to reserve space for their own programs or events. Visitors are welcome at worship Sundays at 10:30 a.m. at the Farm House chapel followed by a spiritual discussion group at 12:15 p.m. Other ongoing programs include classical yoga, monthly meditation and the Course in Miracles. Stressed-out sisters are invited to join in the women's retreat in April, featuring mindfulness, movement and reflection. For information on all programs, call 610 696-8145 go to www.temenosretreat.org. Temenos is at 1564 Telegraph Road in West Chester, PA.

Local Groups Working for Peace, Justice and Equality

The **Brandywine Peace Community** continues its peaceful resistance to the manufacture of weapons by Lockheed Martin and to America's presence in Iraq. Join the community for a monthly potluck supper and program on the second Sunday of each month, 4:30 pm, University Lutheran Church, 3637 Chestnut St., Philadelphia (bring a main dish, salad, or dessert to share.) The March potluck program features professor Paul Lyons on the rise and fall of the new left in Philadelphia and April's program will mark the 30th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam war. Special events include A Trail of Mourning and Truth: The World Still Says No! To This War, on Saturday, March 20, the second anniversary of the Iraq War, beginning at 2pm in the courtyard of Friends Center, 4th and Arch; and Good Friday Stations of Justice and Peace with nonviolent civil resistance at Lockheed Martin in King of Prussia.

For information, call 610 544-1818 or e-mail brandywine@juno.com.

Call to Action/Philadelphia, a group committed to church renewal, serves southeastern Pennsylvania, south Jersey and Delaware. For information on organizational meetings and programs, call 215 345-1176.

COR/Philadelphia (Catholic Organizations for Renewal) is a coalition of individuals and groups, including SEPA/WOC, sharing a commitment to a renewed church. All are most welcome to attend planning meetings. Information: 215 232-7823.

Dignity Sunday Liturgies are at 7 pm at St. Luke and the Epiphany Church, 330 S. 13 St. in Philadelphia. The church is wheelchair-accessible. For information on these and other Dignity programs, call 215 546-2093.

The **House of Grace Catholic Worker** participates in faith-based resistance to the war and all forms of violence while offering health care to our neighbors in need. Contact the house for details on events that you can join: 215 426-0364.

The **Philadelphia Catholic Worker** hosts liturgy and potluck every Thursday at 6 pm at 430 W. Jefferson Street. The Philadelphia Catholic Worker is a community striving to follow in the footsteps of Dorothy Day. A newsletter, "Common Life," is available upon request. For information, call 215 232-7823.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference core committee meetings with liturgy are held monthly, and all are welcome. For information on time and location, call 215 545-9649.

Women of Faith, a ministry of the Metropolitan Christian Council, is an ecumenical community in the greater Philadelphia area that celebrates women's gifts in Christian ministry and seeks justice and equality for all women in the church and the broader society. Women of Faith endeavors to foster Christian unity through worship and education, bringing together persons from diverse cultures and backgrounds for mutual nurture, support and service to the larger community. Join Women of Faith for a monthly potluck supper. For information, contact the Metropolitan Christian Council at 215 836-7784.

Spirituality and Healing Workshop

Level 2

*Understanding and Benefiting from the Connection between
the Spiritual and the Physical*

(Prerequisite is level 1 or equivalent)

Whether you are a professional in a "helping field" (health care, counseling, teaching, clergy, for example) or are on a journey for personal growth, this workshop is for you! We will be exploring ancient traditions and learning contemporary applications for everyday living.

Saturday, March 19, 2005

9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

To be held at the
St. Joseph's University Carriage House
261 City Ave., Philadelphia, 19131

Presented by:

The Time Out Center

Jenny and Jim Ratigan, Facilitators

If you would like further information or if you would like registration materials please contact us at 610-695-9780 or info@thetimeoutcenter.com.



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SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Easter

Matt 28; Mark 16; Luke 24

by Judith A. Heffernan

Thirty years ago Paul VI was Pope, Gerald Ford was President, we were still reeling from Vietnam and Watergate, yet we were hopeful people in a post Vatican II church.

Thirty years ago Mary Lynch invited thirty-one people to a meeting in Chicago and asked, "What do we do next about women's ordination in the Roman Catholic church?"

From that meeting a grassroots gathering was planned, and from that gathering WOC was born!

When we took that first step, we all believed that the call of women to ordained ministry would be recognized and affirmed. Although the path has been somewhat different than we had dreamed and imaged, we honor and respect all rainbow-splendored expressions of renewed priestly ministry.

In preparation for WOC's thirtieth anniversary, three ministries were identified: Walking with Women Called, the Ministry of Irritation and the Ministry of Prophetic Obedience.

On March 12 in Philadelphia we will celebrate our past, present and future, and reflect on WOC's three ministries.

As I read the Easter stories again, I am reminded of those three ministries. Mary Magdalen and the others walked together to the tomb, they were called to proclaim the Good News, and they did so; yet, their story seemed like nonsense and most of the disciples refused to believe them. Still, they told the story and did not waiver. They proclaimed the Good News and celebrated the presence of Jesus. We are an Easter People!

Last weekend I read the story in *NCR* about Cokie Roberts. She has written a book, *Founding Mothers*, and has dedicated it to the Sacred Heart Sisters. She speaks lovingly of their foundress, St. Philippine Duchesne—a feisty woman who was always pushing the church and kept at it and kept at it. Cokie goes on to say that we have broken ground as part of an entire generation of women who made it easier for others to follow.

In the Spirit, may we keep at it and at it. Let it be so.

Judy Heffernan has a Master of Divinity degree from a Catholic seminary. A member of the Community of the Christian Spirit, she is an original member of the Women's Ordination Conference.

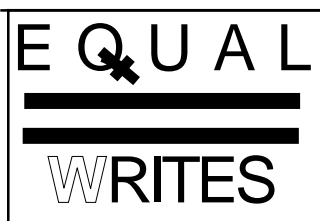
FINE POINTS

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AFFILIATION: *Equal wRites* is published by the core committee of the Southeastern Pennsylvania chapter of the Women's Ordination Conference. We are inspired by but independent of the national office of the Women's Ordination Conference.

MANUSCRIPTS AND CORRESPONDENCE: If you would like to contribute an article, letter, or anything else to *Equal wRites*, please send it double-spaced, with your name, phone number, and a short biographical note. The next issue will be June 2005. Final deadline for submissions is April 15. Send to the editor: Karen B. Lenz, 430 W. Jefferson St., Philadelphia, PA 19122 (215) 232-7823, or e-mail her at equalwrites2005@aol.com.

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