

**OF MICHAEL, EUCHARIST, AND GIFT:
A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION**

by *Karen B. Lenz*

It is Advent, and as we prepare once more for the coming of the One who is called the Liberator into a world torn by war and oppression, and into our all-too-human and often broken lives, I am struck again by the magnitude of the gift Jesus gave us in the Eucharist, and of its ever-growing importance to me.

The Eucharist. That re-creation of the Last Supper, when the Teacher and those who had been closest to him during his earthly ministry (almost certainly not just the dozen males who dubbed themselves—with just a suggestion of exclusivity and arrogance—The Twelve) gathered, hearts opening to each other in mingled joy and sorrow, as they realized that Jesus was at once preparing them for his imminent death and assuring them that he would always be with those who loved him, whenever they gathered in his memory to share food and wine, defeat or gratitude, grief or triumph.

Some memorable Eucharists in settings as diverse as the

grand Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi, the closed and gutted St. Edwards Church in North Philadelphia, the Friends Meetinghouse on Arch Street, and the Catholic Worker dining room table, have highlighted my own spiritual journey. Although some were celebrated by magnificently vested official Roman Catholic clergy, including bishops and cardinals, more were non-traditional, led by ordained women like Catholic Worker chaplain Judy Heffernan, married priests, clergy of other denominations, and laypersons.

This Advent I find myself thinking often about Michael whom I first met during another Advent, eight years ago. I was in Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, flat on my back and sporting a large metal cage on my head, anchored by steel spikes literally screwed into my skull, intended to immobilize a fractured cervical vertebra. I had fallen down a killer flight of steps in the Catholic Worker house less than a

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	EQUAL	Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women and Men in the Philadelphia Area
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	WRITES	MISSION STATEMENT - <i>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.</i>

FAILURE IS (IM)POSSIBLE

by *Marian Ronan*

It's hard to imagine more inspiring role models for contemporary feminists than Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Indeed, in the last issue of *Equal wRites*, Susan M. Cedrone reports that at the Pittsburgh ordinations in July, the bishops quoted Anthony's final public words, "Failure is impossible," in their joint homily.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Anthony and Stanton achieved near-iconic status in the women's movement, thanks, in part, to the scholarship of feminist historians Ellen Carol DuBois, Ann D. Gordon, and others. The iconization process reached its culmination in 1999 with Ken Burns' three-hour PBS documentary, "Not For Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony." Widespread notices accorded *The Solitude of Self* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2005), feminist essayist Vivian Gornick's reflections on Stanton's life, suggested that for Stanton, at least, failure really did seem impossible.

Yet we would do well to consider what kind of failure, or success, we are discussing here. In the midst of the Anthony/Stanton revival, Catholic feminist ethicist Barbara Hilkert Andolsen published a study of lesser-known aspects of the movement for women's suffrage under the leadership of Stanton and Anthony. The two women had indeed been tireless laborers for black emancipation and universal suffrage from the 1840s through the Civil War. In 1863, for example, they spearheaded a drive that collected 400,000 signatures in support of the thirteenth amendment to the constitution, extending the abolition of slavery initiated by the Emanci-

pation Proclamation to the entire US. Such an accomplishment would hardly have been within the reach of the mildly committed.

Things got dicier after the war, however. Political realities chipped away at the vision of universal rights fashioned by Anthony, Stanton, and other abolitionists. Ultimately, the fourteenth amendment conferred suffrage on men only and the fifteenth amendment penalized states that denied such suffrage on the basis of race, color, and previous condition of servitude, but not gender.

Stanton and Anthony adamantly opposed the abandonment of the rights of one group, women, so as to secure the vote for another group, black males, regardless of the dire circumstances in which the latter group found themselves. (Attacks against black men became increasingly frequent during this period.) Anthony and Stanton had already led a contingent out of the American Equal Rights Association when that group voted to give priority to Negro male suffrage. With the passage of both amendments, outcomes they experienced as stunning betrayals, Stanton and Anthony began fashioning new tactics for the campaign to secure the vote for women. Central to these was their appeal to the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon, the educated, and the native-born. How outrageous, they proclaimed, that educated, well-born, implicitly white women were denied the vote when degraded former slaves and the immigrant dregs of Europe had secured it.

During the years after Reconstruction, as the US became increasingly racist, positions taken by the national women's suffrage organization became even more egregious than they

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had been under Anthony and Stanton. The organization refused, for example, to address segregation in any form, even when requested to do so by its own black women members. The group's members did this because they knew that the women suffrage amendment could not pass without the support of at least some of the states in the segregated South. Stanton, in particular, said truly scandalous things about "the Negro," as African-American men were then called, and about European immigrants. "American women of wealth and virtue and refinement," she proclaimed repeatedly in different ways, "if you do not wish the lower orders of the Chinese, Africans, German and Irish to make laws for you, demand that women, too, shall be represented in the government." "Patrick and Sambo and Hans and Yung Tung," she called her supposed, and supposedly degraded, adversaries.*

Andolsen argues compellingly that Anthony, Stanton, and their allies were justified in holding out for the original goal, universal suffrage, which preserved within it their own interests. She deems the racist and nativist arguments these white suffragists used to advance those interests highly unethical, however. And she suggests that those tactics laid a racist and elitist foundation for twentieth-century white feminism.

This is all very informative, you may say, and even shocking in places. But what has it got to do with the movement for Catholic women's ordination in 2006, beyond, possibly, the advisability of suggesting that European leaders of Roman Catholic WomenPriests not quote Susan B. Anthony in future sermons? Surely none of us would ever say or even think the kinds of things Stanton and Anthony said and wrote.

Perhaps. But the concerns of very many Latino/a, Asian-American, and African-American Catholics are already far removed from those of the majority of us in the women's ordination movement. How many Catholic women of color have been ordained in the various river-boat ordinations since 2002? How many Catholic people of color attended the Pittsburgh ordinations?

Barbara Hilkert Andolsen spoke about racism in the women's ordination movement at the WOC conference that preceded the 2000 Call to Action Conference in Milwaukee. A second speaker, the African-American Catholic religious studies scholar, Sheila Briggs, raised questions about the socially elitist requirements for ordination in the Catholic church. How would the poor ever gain the education needed to be ordained, she queried. Their talks received considerably lower evaluations from the WOC members and friends in the audience than that given by Paula Nesbitt. Nesbitt, an Episcopal priest and sociologist, wearing a clergy collar, spoke of the intra-ecclesial experiences of ordained Episcopal women, conflicts between them and their bishops, for example. Well, perhaps she was just a better speaker than the other two.

Increasingly, Catholic men of color from the US and abroad

comprise a large percentage of the entering classes of Catholic seminaries in the United States. Here in the Diocese of Oakland, this year's admittedly small entering class was composed entirely of Latino and Asian candidates. Vietnamese-American Catholics increasingly constitute a large percentage of the American Catholic candidates for the priesthood, out of all proportion to their percentage of the US population. African priests are also being recruited to pastor US Catholic congregations. Given attitudes toward women in some African cultures, the prospect of increasing numbers of Catholic parishes being led by African priests can be daunting. And this without even considering the ethical implications of relatively prosperous US dioceses recruiting educated leaders away from poor dioceses in the global South.

But the black Catholic community in the United States has been without adequate numbers of black priests for a very long time. The infusion of African priests into American dioceses in recent years has doubled the number of black priests in American Catholic churches, from 400 to approximately 800. Some of these men may well be bishops before long. If black Catholic communities welcome the prospect of having a growing number of ordained black Catholic leaders in black and multi-racial Catholic churches, should Catholic women's ordination activists not welcome such a development? How can the white American Catholic women who comprise the group most directly excluded from ordination—because we/they are the ones with the education and financial resources necessary to earn seminary degrees—fail to support these developments that help to meet the pressing need of the millions of black, Latino/a and Asian-American Catholics for ordained leadership from their own communities?

It would seem that the goals and dreams of white Catholic women's ordination activists and those of black, Latino/a and Asian-American Catholics should be the same, or at least sufficiently similar that we could work together to achieve them. But this sort of solidarity cannot be assumed. It can only be forged. And the fashioning of alliances around common goals is hard work, achieved only by those who consciously commit themselves to it. For us, as for Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton before us, this would mean putting our deepest personal interests on hold and becoming accountable to those whose situations are worse than ours. If we do this, failure may still not be impossible, but at least it won't be guaranteed.

During the fall semester, Marian Ronan taught a graduate course on the place of race in US whitefeminist theology and ethics at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA.

*Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, *Daughters of Jefferson, Daughters of Bootblacks* (Mercer University Press, 1987), 31.

LOOK WHO'S ON THE WEB!

For information about women's ordination, and updated information about SEPA/WOC activities, check out our website: www.sepawoc.org.

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A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION

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year after my arrival, resulting in a broken neck and shattered leg. With the prospect of Christmas in the hospital, I was not a happy camper.

A priest-friend, David, announced during one afternoon visit that he had another stop to make before leaving Jefferson. He was going to visit Michael, a friend who was battling an infection in his leg which had been misdiagnosed for years. "He's thoroughly miserable, too" David said and grinned. "I think you two should meet."

I was incredulous. It seemed obvious that I was in no shape to meet and greet people and make new friends. Besides, I was very busy feeling sorry for myself.

David persisted. "He's lonely and uncomfortable," he said. "He's new to this area, and doesn't know many people here."

I did my best imitation of a shrug of assent. Why not? I had nothing but time.

"Good," David said firmly. "There's one thing you should know, though, Michael is a sensitive and gentle guy, and he's just been released from prison."

My interest was piqued in spite of myself. How long had he been in jail, I wanted to know. And for what?

"Nearly twenty years," David said, putting on his coat to leave. "For bank robbery—or revolution—or something. I'm sure he'll tell you all about it." And with that he was off.

A few days later Michael appeared, pale and gaunt, at my bedside. He was navigating clumsily and painfully on crutches and bearing—as I was to discover would always be his custom—gifts: three small baggies of treats. There were crackers of some sort, I think, green grapes, and a handful of Dorito tortilla chips.

I had at this point been on a severely restricted and very bland hospital diet for weeks. The prospect of deliciously salty junk food at any time in the foreseeable future had been beyond imagination. Touched, I offered my guest some of the goodies he'd brought. He declined, firmly. "You go ahead," he said "I have plenty more in my room." I doubted it.

Michael, awkward and physically uncomfortable, did not stay long on that first visit, but long enough to tell me about the two banks he'd robbed decades before with cardboard cutouts of a machine gun pasted to the sides of an unloaded starter pistol. He'd been desperately frustrated with American foreign policy and global economic inequities, and I was to learn later had been regularly helping support a poor South American family. Stealing from the rich seemed to be a small step toward evening the score. One newspaper account called him the Robin Hood bandit.

At any rate, having recognized the craziness of what he'd done, he had paid a heavy price. He was now out on a pre-release program, determined to spend his time volunteering—members of the program were not permitted to work for pay—and to finally, he said, do some good. During that first meeting, we laughed and cried together—Michael cried openly and without embarrassment—and I was deeply moved.

I managed to wait until my visitor left, and then I happily if surreptitiously scarfed down every crumb of the fifteen or twenty corn chips which he'd brought, carefully licking my fingers when they were gone. Never, in all the years before and since, has any verboten delight been so delicious.

There would be many more visits, both in the hospital and then at the Catholic Worker house, during the year Michael was out of prison. He was working as a full-time volunteer for the American Friends Service Committee, packing clothing donations for shipment overseas, and would often join us for dinner or on weekends. He was preparing to paint an

upstairs room—the smallest in our house—in anticipation of the day he could leave his court-mandated housing and become a full member of our community. But no matter how busy his days, Michael was always scrupulously careful to return to his residence by the 8:30 curfew each night.

And then, without warning, he was gone.

After an unexplained absence of a week or so, a UPS truck delivered a large package with a return address of Gratersford Prison. Frightened, I opened the box to find Michael's jeans and shirt and belt. I realized with a sinking feeling that they had sent him back, and he'd shipped his clothes home.

The infraction which returned him to prison for the twenty-one years remaining of his sentence was, for the record—I read the official transcript—being "mouthy" when awakened for the eleventh false fire alarm of the week.

So now we meet with Michael in the visiting room of the Pennsylvania state prison ringed by a fence topped with razor wire, nestled in the wooded hills near Pottsville. Jim and Magda and I were there in October, Jim carrying a small photo album and sharing with Michael his family's stories from the past year—the births and deaths, the happiness and the pain. Michael talked about his spirituality—he is, in his anger at the church he holds responsible for much human suffering, a self-described Pagan. I smiled when he said it. "You're as much a Pagan as I am," I told this gentle man, to whom I feel as close as if he were my brother.

It was an unusually long visit—we are often chased after an hour or so—and a time of deep sharing. We laughed a lot and some of us (Michael and I) cried. As the room emptied of the other prisoners—mostly younger men bidding wistful farewells to their wives and small children, I remembered the end of another visit to Michael several years ago. David and Magda and I were preparing to leave the now-familiar visiting room and there was an uneaten candy bar remaining from the treats—no Doritos, however—Magda had purchased from the vending machines that lined the room. Michael had obligingly consumed all he could, mostly to please us, I suspected, but had reached his limit. Magda looked at the candy bar—prisoners are not allowed to take anything back to their cells—and slowly unwrapped it and broke off a piece. She passed it, and Michael and I did the same. I handed the rest of the candy to David, who is dogmatically macrobiotic and definitely doesn't do Clark bars. He smiled and shook his head no.

"Come on, David," I urged. "It's Eucharist."

"Of course," he said immediately and broke off a piece and we all—hearts aching at our helplessness to change the situation—ate the candy.

This time there were M&M's, and Michael passed me the bag and I took one, looking at Jim and Magda. "Did you have at least one?" I asked. "You have to, you know—because..."

"It's Eucharist." Michael, the would-be Pagan, said. "I remember."

And as we swallowed the brightly-colored candy morsels, Eucharist it was, beyond any doubt, and we were held tight in the embrace of the One who is called the Liberator, and for a few priceless moments the steel bars and razor-topped fences surrounding us had lost their power and we were all truly free.

Christmas 2006 approaches. In what sometimes feels like a very long life, I have received my share of wonderful gifts, but none more precious than the gift of the chocolate-candy Eucharists, and the love of the friends with whom they were shared.

Karen Lenz editor of **Equal wRites**, lives, works, celebrates, and resists at the Philadelphia Catholic Worker. She wishes you all joy and strength for your journeys this holiday season, and throughout the coming year.

TALKING TO THE CARDINAL

**COR/Philadelphia Supports
DiFranco Ordination**

In late summer, following the historic ordinations in Pittsburgh of four women as Roman Catholic deacons and eight women as priests, including SEPA/WOC member Eileen DiFranco, Cardinal Rigali declared the ordination ceremony “clearly and simply invalid,” according to an article in the August 16 edition of The Philadelphia Inquirer, and declared his intention to report the activity of DiFranco to the Vatican.

Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of Milwaukee, noting that a local woman had participated in the Pittsburgh ceremony, had made a similar announcement the preceding week, adding that he expected the women to be excommunicated.

COR/Philadelphia, a coalition of local Catholic organizations for renewal, responded to the cardinal’s announcement with the following letter.

Cardinal Rigali:

Catholic Organizations for Renewal/Philadelphia is writing in response to your reaction to the ordination in Pittsburgh on July 31, 2006, of Eileen McCafferty DiFranco as a Roman Catholic priest by bishops in apostolic succession. It is important that you understand that the ordinations were not isolated actions of solitary individuals.

Eileen’s ordination was also the deliberate action of an extensive, deeply committed community of reform-minded Philadelphia-area Catholics who have worked for the goal of women’s ordination for years, supported and participated in the rites in Pittsburgh, and filled the First United Methodist Church of Germantown to overflowing for Eileen’s first mass.

Many of these individuals are active members of Philadelphia archdiocesan parishes and/or reform groups, including the Southeastern Pennsylvania Women’s Ordination Conference, the Community of the Christian Spirit, the Philadelphia Catholic Worker, the Parents’ Network of the Delaware Valley, Dignity/Philadelphia, CORPUS/Philadelphia, FCM/Council for Catholic Reform, and others, which constitute COR/Philadelphia.

We find it absurd—scandalous, to use your terminology—that our archdiocese, which protected male clergy who sexually abused children over a period of years without public rebuke or reprisals, now threatens action against a committed Catholic woman who has been validly ordained.

COR suggests that any rebuke or reprisal contemplated or undertaken against Eileen DiFranco should be directed at all of us.

Respectfully,

Karen B. Lenz

Co-Facilitator, COR

SEPA/ WOC Writes To Rigali In Different Vein

Dear Justin:

You are to be congratulated. Yes, *congratulated*. Why, you may wonder, is an organization, thoroughly disgusted with the leadership of Roman Catholicism, congratulating you? It’s simple: Your recent behavior was very uncharacteristic of Roman Catholic leadership.

We Catholics seeking reform in an institution that spiritually birthed and raised (most of) us, long ago stopped expecting the leadership to “step up.” But you did. And we are—pleasantly—surprised.

To what do you owe this affirmation? The Witness to Sorrow, conducted in September, was definitely a step-up ac-

tion. To acknowledge your “sin by association” and the sins of your brothers is painful and sorrowful indeed. To put such pain and sorrow on the front page goes deeper. And the fact that it was, as the *Inquirer* reported, unprecedented, makes it even more meaningful for those who were waiting—for something.

For once the leadership chose to act admirably. For once the leadership did not run, hide, explain, blame. For once the leadership confronted the evil it created and enabled. Damage control yielded to a recognition of damage done.

But such public sorrow is most redemptive for the victims. Men and women with ravaged childhoods (and many with ravaged adulthoods) *finally* see an attempt to reach out, to become aware, to beg forgiveness. Now the victims and those who need to hear their stories are *finally* face to face and word to word. It is only in the personal telling of it that you can truly begin to comprehend the devastation that has been inflicted. It is only by listening to the horrors—in all their gruesome detail—that sympathy and compassion can begin to swirl. Such reaching out with compassion to the suffering is—dare we say—Christ-like.

Some people look on such action with suspicion or dismiss it as too little too late. We choose not to do that. We choose instead to accept this action as a sincere attempt by Roman Catholic leadership to bring Christ to people whom Roman Catholicism deeply wounded and even destroyed.

And, now that you have begun a dialogue with these victims, would you also consider beginning a dialogue with yet another victim of Roman Catholic rejection? Would you accept her intentions as sincerely as she has accepted yours? Would you see her pain face to face and hear it word to word? Consider inviting the Catholic women whom *Jesus has called to ministry* to a day of dialogue and reconciliation. That one could be called Witness to Truth.

Sincerely,

Maria Marlowe

Southeastern Pennsylvania

Women’s Ordination Conference

This, from a COR member who asks that his/her name be withheld—

I had the opportunity to listen to and watch a tape of part of the “Witness to Sorrow” program orchestrated by the archdiocese. What I viewed was so moving and heart-wrenching, I could not stop the flow of my tears. The mother of a survivor and two survivors told their story. Every now and then the camera would scan the room showing the faces of those in attendance. Like Maria, at first I was so hopeful that the church was going to do something about fifty years of neglect, lies and a callous attitude.

BUT, the following Monday, the Pennsylvania. Catholic Conference, at the last minute and with no warning, voted AGAINST supporting amending the statute of limitations. That same cardinal who looked so mournful while listening to the survivors sharing their pain, may have already known that support for the amendment would be defeated and that the money and abusing clergy, would continue to be protected.

Editor’s Note: On November 29, 2006 Governor Ed Rendell signed into law a package of bills intended to toughen penalties for persons guilty of sexually abusing children. Pennsylvania victims of child-sex crimes now have until their fiftieth birthdays to file complaints. In addition, employers and supervisors can now be held criminally liable if they know of alleged sexual abuse by employees and fail to report it.

NATIONAL COR NOTES

by Regina Bannan

I'm always so excited when I return from the November meeting of Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR) in Milwaukee. This year I was able to attend some sessions as well as two liturgies: the 7:45 AM Roman Catholic WomenPriests (RCWP) and the always-inspiring 10:50 AM Call to Action (CTA) celebration. In the early morning, I was so pleased to see hundreds of people, women and men, sharing with joy the step forward we were so eager to take. I say this because we need to recognize that not everyone is there; national Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) withdrew from the conference because of this mass. I know there is dialogue about this, both within VOTF and between VOTF and the rest of the church reform movement. COR has always had the policy that any organization comfortable enough to belong does not have to sign on to every action. I hope VOTF can get there, too. They need us, as we do them.

And this year there was action, to ask the bishops to withdraw the sudden draft of guidelines about pastoral care of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. Because I had pushed so hard to have COR issue this document, I signed on for SEPA/WOC. It is reprinted elsewhere on page .

The CTA liturgy featured Mary Ramerman as homilist, and she, as Joan Chittister had in the initial keynote, drew us beyond our church reform boundaries to action in the world. I hope to get both speeches and will share tapes (I have a 1994 car!) with anyone who asks. For me, it's time. In my semi-retirement, I am moving beyond church reform.

I will also get the tape of Mary Hunt's session. Mary made the theoretical move to keep from creating a dichotomy between RCWP and the discipleship of equals. As I heard it, she asked us to look for a continuum of women's ministry, not a polarization between those who want a totally different model from the hierarchy/kyriarchy, and those who are creating a structure around their ministry, as RCWP is. When Patricia Fresen was here, she suggested that this aspect of RCWP—having bishops and deacons—was transitional to a discipleship of equals. I like a continuum better; it's less Marxist (waiting for the structure to wither away), and more present-oriented. I don't want to slow down what's happening now by comparing it to a utopian future. At the same time, I want to recognize that having bishops, priests, and deacons does replicate the structure of the church. What RCWP does with these roles is crucial. At the meeting RCWP presented a more organizational (one of my academic fields, after all) description, by recognizing American regional coordinators, including Jean Marchant for the Northeast (see last issue of *Equal wRites*).

There are so many things I learn from this meeting; I hope others from SEPA/WOC or COR/Philadelphia will join me in Virginia April 20-22. Two standouts: Christine Shenk shared data from the survey FutureChurch conducted about Advancing Women in Church Leadership, and Marissa Valeri from Catholics for a Free Choice presented an analysis of younger and Latino Catholics. I'll be sharing these with the SEPA/WOC core committee, which meets Monday, December 4, at 6 pm at the Philadelphia Catholic Worker. Join us.

Finally, I want to recommend to you the "Save Our Parish Community" project from FutureChurch. There is a sign-on at <http://www.futurechurch.org/sopc/donotstiflethespirit.htm>, and there is also a lot of information about church law and recent church history when parishes close or merge. If they are left open with a lay administrator (and most are women),

the number of families served increases; close or merge, and families disappear. We are in the midst of a great tragedy in our church.

And in our world. Share those tapes and think about something you can do to bring church to world, the original thrust of Call to Action, which celebrates its thirtieth anniversary. A reprint of the original document was distributed (pleasing every historian present, like me!), with pictures of bishops and priests among the laity. I met a priest from my hometown, slightly older than I am, who was always my hero. He lamented how few regular clergy were there—maybe twenty priests and no bishops. But this is where I started—there were lots of priests at 7:45 AM.

Regina Bannan is former national president of WOC.

BISHOPS PASS GUIDELINES DESPITE COR RECOMMENDATION

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), meeting in Baltimore in November, voted overwhelmingly (194-37, with one abstention), to adopt a set of "pastoral guidelines" for ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics, despite the recommendation of COR, a national forum of twenty-three Catholic reform groups meeting earlier that month, that they withdraw the proposed guidelines.

The document, entitled "Ministry to Persons With a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care," professes to be welcoming toward homosexual church members, declaring that gay people possess "an innate human dignity," while reaffirming the traditional Catholic church teaching that "homosexual inclinations" are inherently disordered, and homosexual activity is a sin.

The bishops' premise that homosexuality is a *choice* rather than a deeply ingrained emotional and psychological attraction for members of the same sex that is a part of one's basic humanity has caused much harm, church reform leaders agree.

"The bishops' latest guidelines begin with the premise that homosexuality is an inclination towards same-gender, genital activity and it denies the well-known existence of homosexual orientation as a normal variation of human sexuality," members of COR said in a letter to the USCCB committees that drafted the proposed pastoral guidelines.

Because of the committee's mistaken premise and a failure to consult widely with affected and knowledgeable lay members of the church, the group says the guidelines are "deeply flawed."

Further, the proposed guidelines are not at all pastoral but rather harmful because they repeat the same "spiritually violent language" used over the past twenty years, describing homosexuality as "objectively disordered" and labeling same-gender relationships "inherently evil."

"We bear witness to the physical and spiritual harm done to the Catholic community—ourselves, our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters—specifically because of this language," the letter says.

Noting that under church law (Canon Law 212, 3), Catholics are encouraged to make their concerns known to the bishops, especially in areas where they have special expertise, the groups urged the bishops to withdraw the proposed guidelines and begin anew with consultations with members of the church at large, including those most affected by the document—homosexual Catholics.

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BISHOPS PASS GUIDELINES DESPITE COR RECOMMENDATION

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Catholic Organizations for Renewal is a forum of twenty-three church reform and renewal organizations in the United States and Canada, which usually meets twice annually. The letter to the bishops was drafted and approved at the group's Nov. 1-2 meeting in Milwaukee prior to Call to Action-USA's annual meeting, which drew more than 3,200 participants.

At their semiannual meeting the bishops also adopted "Married Love and the Gift of Life," which urged Catholics to observe the church's ban on artificial contraception.

Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City said that gay Catholics who are not celibate and married Catholics who use artificial birth control should not receive Holy Communion.

DIGNITY GUIDELINES

Dignity/USA, a national organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered Catholics, drafted a "Letter on Pastoral Care of LGBT People 2006," in response to the bishops' proposed guidelines. The full text of the Dignity letter can be found at www.dignityusa.org.

IRVIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CALENDAR, CARDS AVAILABLE AGAIN THIS YEAR

An archaeological calendar focusing on the ministries of women ordained in the early church is available again this year from Scripture scholar and archaeologist Dorothy Irvin.

Calendar illustrations include reproductions of an image preserved in a Roman catacomb and tombstone and coffin carvings and inscriptions featuring early Christian female leaders.

Also offered are all-occasion cards, Christmas cards and bookmarks of various design, as well as a map of locations in the ancient world where frescoes, mosaics, and tomb carvings of female deacons, priests, and bishops were found.

This year's calendar honors the growing list of contemporary ordained Roman Catholic women, including SEPA/WOC founding member and *Equal wRites* Scripture commentator, Judith Heffernan

To order, and for more information, see order form .

CELEBRATING A LIFE- GRIEVING A LOSS

by Judy Heffernan

Othello was a beautiful, black Labrador retriever who had a wondrous life of thirteen years, four months and eleven days.

Othello began life as a "Seeing Eye" puppy, but was medically discharged after nineteen months. He then became a registered therapy dog—a "Comfort, Caring Canine." He visited hospitals, hospices and nursing homes on a regular basis for over ten years.

Othello was an honorary member of SEPA/WOC. Throughout his life he rode with me at various hours of the day and night to deliver my (usually overdue!) *Equal wRites* reflections to assigned editors and printers!

Othello attended SEPA/WOC witnessess, and, as one very special Catholic Worker child once said about our witnessess, "Othello's like me. We don't really know what is going on, but we sure love being with all these nice people!"

Othello also loved being the guest of honor at every Catholic Worker celebration.

I do celebrate his life, as I grieve his loss, so will you pray with me: Loving Creator, I thank you for Othello, for his life, his beauty, his strength, his intelligence. I give thanks for his trust, his spirit of adventure, his courage and for his life of service.

I give thanks for his enthusiasm, his responsiveness and his joy, which he showed FROM ONE END OF HIS BODY TO THE OTHER!

I give thanks that Othello taught me that every day is a new day, that all people are worthy of a happy greeting and an open heart and that unconditional love really is life's meaning.

I give thanks for Othello's magnificent being and his beautiful death.

When that moment comes for each of us may we, too, be surrounded by love, and one day may we all be joyfully together again.

I love you, Othello, and I give thanks for you. Amen.

IRVIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CALENDAR

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THOUGHTS ON THE MEANING OF ORDINATION

by Joe Sannino

Ordaining is a process of ordering and empowering someone for something. It is social—not private.

Why be ordained? Who ordains anyone? What are people ordained for? Why should women be ordained? Why would any baptized woman want to be ordained?

In our Catholic mind-set, someone is set apart to effect something inside the community. All of this is in reference to human relationships to the divine, creative/sustaining source; in order that the community can come to fulfillment and the individuals in the community can experience fulfillment. It is a political and mystical dynamic. The set-apart person is empowered and authorized by the community and by the divine source of the community, to affect other individuals in the community and therefore the community as a whole.

We as Catholics consider that the Sacramental sign of Orders empowers the deacon(server), the priest (elder), and the bishop (overseer) to orient the body towards its goal. It has become our belief that there is an “order” and a baptized person is put into that “order” when he or she perceives that Jesus and the Holy Spirit need or want or welcome that person in the “order.”

In our ministries, elders/priests are ordained (put into the order) to heal, to inspire, to counsel by using memories and signs of divine power. Some ordained are good at creating these spirit events with words and by prophecy. Some are not effective this way. Some are skillful in facilitating faith-filled actions, creating emotional, faith-healing events.

All of this becomes confusing to us because the existing two-thousand-year-old Christian community’s structures have acculturated themselves to human postures and human history, which always tries to reformulate divine activity into human form. People are ordained (put into the order) with the hope of bringing the world into the divine reign. But after ten years, each ordained person is on track to be an administrator in the religious organization called “the Church.” The running of the business is the realistic reason why overseers ordain elders, why the order of specialists is created: to run the organization. The poetry of idealism is all well and good, they say, but it does not keep the roof on the church building.

There was a time when the baptized identified their own leader and laid hands on that person in a faith-filled way. The community used the ordained person’s gifted-ness to glue the community’s energies together.

But as the Called moved from an inspired movement into a political force, doctrines became bullets and the “strong”/the “right” were those who had the most bullets. Those who were put aside (put in the order) were those who understood and fostered the organization. Sometimes they were holy people, sometimes not. Reflecting the personhood of Jesus was not the most highly-valued trait.

It can be very confusing to be ordained in this age and even the Christ-based community is challenged. Our mind-set still uses words like He, His, Him, Lord, Master, King. The Source of our Being is described in masculine terms and language.

Why would someone want to be called to a life which is supposed to be inspiring but which, in many ways, disrespects the origin of our being. Running the organization may be necessary but the organization is not the reign of love that Jesus proposed as our meaning.

Should women want to follow this path? I think “yes” but as a fifth column. The validation of the Jesus-life position is not the Roman Catholic church and its leadership. It more closely resembles Teresa of Calcutta’s life. The validation of the Jesus life-position in most Roman Catholic parishes is the woman-force that kneads the people together as a friendship, a bonded people.

Our organization of leaders, which establish the historical “order,” has yet to move on from yesterday. It is very difficult to be a “fifth column” here and now when the “order” is defined as an ex-clusive dynamic by our leadership. So blind are they that the head of the group insists that the “presbyter” must be configured to the Jesus-person. Their norm is a physical male, forgetting that the Jesus-person embodied dedication, sensitivity and a loving support of life.

It is a sad reality for us in the reign of Jesus that the sacramental life of our community has been stylized, under the control of males. These elders know how to read formulas but do not always know how to share meaning. Women are able to configure and make present the person of Jesus more clearly and poignantly than men.

In my old parish a woman called Cathy preached “friendship at the door” that reformed the parish’s ability to receive the Hispanic community as equals. In my new parish Monica melds many loving events into a oneness of community. I do not deny that the ordained on the altar and confessional stage moments of inspirational call; but they are often not there to give the supporting warmth which the body of Christ needs at the door, in the car and in the home. It is the Cathy’s and Monica’s who make Jesus real among us.

Should women seek the “order?” Yes. There will be no future to us, the church, if they don’t make the offer to make Jesus real to us. If most bishops refuse to hear the knocking, should the sisters hold back? No. Will their call be complete after some bishops say yes and go ahead and ordain? Complete? No, to be a member in an order which refuses to accept you, which disrespects the power of the Creator in your hands, will be a life of pain and prophesy. Satisfaction will be limited. But such ordinations are steps in the process of making Jesus’ plan more real in the correction of the sinful state of the world.

Joe Sannino was a Vincentian priest for eleven years. He is now married and has one son.

MEET, DISCUSS, AND CONTRIBUTE TO WOMEN’S JUSTICE COALITION

Talk about the Women’s Justice Coalition of national COR, with Rea Howarth, coordinator; Regina Bannan, a founding member; and others at Regina’s home in Rittenhouse Square on Sunday, January 7, 2007, 3 to 5 pm.

The group’s report card on women’s status in American dioceses is in preparation, so the discussion will be lively, comparing Philadelphia to other places. Rea is also one of two We Are Church–North America delegates to the international group, so you can ask questions about what’s going on abroad as well.

You have to be able to climb stairs to the third floor to get to the condo, but that’s the only requirement. Regina is asking anyone who can contribute to the Women’s Justice Coalition (based at CSO) to bring a checkbook—the event is for sharing whatever resources we bring—but more for socializing. Let Regina know if you are interested in coming or contributing (bannan@temple.edu). Invitations will go out in December.

THE WOMEN IN JESUS' GENEALOGY

by *Jim Plastaras*

The *Gospel According to Matthew* originated in the community of believers of mostly Jewish background and reflects their attitudes on the subordinate role of women. In his two accounts of Jesus' feeding of the multitudes, Matthew gives the crowd count as "5,000 men, not counting women and children" (14:21), and "4,000 men, not counting women and children" (15:38).

Matthew takes from his source Mark three accounts of Jesus' interaction with women—the woman with the flow of blood (9:20), the Canaanite woman (15:22), and the woman who anointed Jesus head and feet (26:7), but this is all. The material proper to John or Luke would include a number of other narratives describing Jesus' interaction with women. John included the stories of Jesus with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:7) the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:3), Martha and Mary at the tomb of Lazarus (Jn 11:4-42), and Mary in the garden (Jn 20:11).

The Lukan material includes five other narratives: Jesus with the widow of Nain (Lk 7:11), the woman who was a sinner (Lk 7:37), Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38), the bent-over woman (Lk 13:10), and the daughters of Jerusalem (23:27). Matthew includes this postscript at the end of his account: "Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs." (27:55), but the evangelist has little else to add to the picture of women in the ministry of Jesus.

In light of the evangelist's **dis**-interest in the role of women the ministry of Jesus, it is striking that Matthew begins his gospel narrative with a genealogy that includes four women of decidedly checkered backgrounds:

Rahab, who was a professional prostitute

Tamar, who posed as prostitute in order to seduce and have a child by her father-in-law

Bathsheba, who was accomplice to David's sin of adultery

Ruth, the only one with genuinely "good girl" credentials, who came from Moab, which was definitely the wrong side of the tracks

What do these four have in common? Why did Matthew bring them into the story?

A case could be made for presenting three of the four individuals as strong women and role models:

Rahab, the Canaanite harlot, believed that God was with the Israelites, and acted according to her belief. When Joshua's spies visited her house as cover, rather than handing them over to the authorities, she hid them and helped them escape (Josh 2:1-21). The *Letter to the Hebrews* praises her faith (Heb 11:31), and the *Letter of James* her good work in saving the Israelite spies (James 2:25).

The story of **Tamar's** conflict with her father-in-law, Judah, is told in *Genesis* 38. By Levite law, Judah was obliged to give his youngest son, Shelah, in marriage to the twice-widowed Tamar that she might raise up an heir for the deceased brother. Judah, who had no intention of allowing her to marry his third son, kept putting her off, until in desperation, Tamar took matters into her own hands. Disguising herself as a prostitute, she waited at the crossroads to offer her services to her father-in-law, Judah. The stratagem worked! Tamar spent the night with her father-in-law and conceived. Three months later, when the young widow was found to be with child, Judah ordered her death in accord with the law: "Bring her out and have her burned to death!" (Gen 38:24) When Tamar offered Judah irrefutable proof of the father's true identity, Judah was forced to acknowledge, "She is more righteous than I."

Ruth is the only woman who is presented as being thoroughly admirable, save for the shortcoming of her country of origin, Moab. *Deuteronomy* had declared:

"No one born of a forbidden marriage, nor any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation. No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation." (Deut 23:2-3).

Ruth, like Tamar, faced a bleak future as a childless widow. Rather than abandon her destitute mother-in-law, Naomi, she declared: "Wherever you go, I will go...Your people will be my people and your God my God. Wherever you die I will die, and there I will be buried." (Ruth 1:16-17) The story

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ends happily when her mother-in-law, Naomi, steered her towards a nice older kinsman named Boaz. She advised Ruth: "When Boaz lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do." [author's note: 'Feet' is a euphemism for 'private parts.'] All's well that ends well! Boaz marries Ruth; Ruth gives birth to Obed who would become the grandfather of King David.

Bathsheba, the fourth woman of the genealogy, cannot be said to be a role model. The wife of Uriah the Hittite, she enters the narrative as passive accessory to King David's great sin of adultery. She then figures prominently in Solomon's succession to the throne, (1 Kings 1-2), but her role remains mostly passive. She carries out the instructions first of Nathan, the prophet, and then of her stepson, Adonijah.

So what, if anything, do the four women have in common? The only common factor would seem to be that all were foreigners. Tamar's family of origin is not specified, but the context suggests that she, like her mother-in-law, was a Canaanite.

The inclusion of foreigners in the genealogy would be consistent with other aspects of Matthew's infancy narrative that point toward the ultimate goal of Jesus' mission, "to make disciples of all nations." (Matt 28:19). Matthew's gospel explicitly limits the pre-resurrection ministry of Jesus to the lost sheep of Israel: "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.'" (Matt 10:5-6) But he does prepare the reader for the climax of the Gospel when the Good News would go out to all nations.

Matthew begins the genealogy with Abraham rather than David, since it was to Abraham that God had said: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Gen 12:3)

He concludes the infancy narrative with the story of the Magi as a foreshadowing of the revelation of Jesus to the nations. The inclusion of foreign women in the genealogy would, therefore, be consistent with the evangelist's pattern of foreshadowing the universality of the Gospel message.

Matthew may have had another reason for including foreign women in the genealogy. By the seventh century B.C.E., and certainly by the time of the exile, official Judaism had enacted an absolute prohibition against intermarriage. *Deuteronomy*, written many centuries after the time of Joshua, states abhorrence of intermarriage is the reason for destroying the Canaanites:

"You must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you." (Deut 7:2-4)

At the time of the return from the exile, attitudes on intermarriage had hardened to the point where the returnees' foreign wives and their children were forcibly sent away:

Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women, adding to Israel's guilt. Now make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives." The whole as-

sembly responded with a loud voice: "You are right! We must do as you say." (Ezra 10:10-12)

The permissibility of marriage to non-Jews may well have been a live issue for the Jewish-Christian community for whom Matthew wrote. Was it permissible for a believer of Jewish origin to marry a gentile woman? Matthew's answer suggested that the supposed prohibition against intermarriage really had no basis in history.

Having presented all this as background, I still might have a hard time coming up with a main theme and practical application, if I had to give a homily on Matthew's genealogy. Here are some unsatisfactory random thoughts that occurred to me:

Take pride in your our family tree. Like that of Jesus, it may include heroes/heroines as well as a skeleton or two. Choose whom you wish to emulate!

When times are tough, when caught between a rock and a hard place, imitate Rahab, Tamar, or Ruth: trust in God **and** take action. Don't equate trust in God with passivity!

Jim Plastaras earned his license at the Pontifical Biblical Institute and is the author of three books in biblical theology, including The God of Exodus.

ON CHURCHES AND LOVING GOD

Grand cathedrals and hushed, dimly-lit churches should not be where we go to show our love for God. And no priest—male or female, celibate or married—has any particular power to mediate between God and us. Churches are where we go because—hopefully—the rituals, the sacred art and music, the incense, the homilies, the communion (in the largest sense) help some of us feel the presence of God, with which we are of course surrounded every second of our lives, wherever we may be.

Where we need to go to show our love for God is anywhere any of the creatures God loved to life is suffering or in need—ravaged by war or famine, poverty or prejudice, loneliness or despair. Only they—"the least of these, my brethren"—have any power whatever to mediate between God and us. Anyone who claims otherwise is arrogant or deluded, or both.

...Thaddeus F. Scott



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Book Reviews

Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center by bell hooks. South End Press: Boston, MA, 1984, 174 pp. \$15. ***Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*** by bell hooks. South End Press: Boston, MA, 1989, 184 pp. \$16. ***Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*** by bell hooks. South End Press, Cambridge, MA, 2000, 123 pp. \$12.

Reviewed by Magda Eliasova

Why would you want to read a book on feminism (and here are three, take your pick) if your primary focus is the women's ordination issue? The answer depends, among other things, on an individual's position within the church. A priest enjoys a higher degree of authority than a nun or a layperson. And then, one can of course define the church in various ways and thus approach the subject from different perspectives. However, it is precisely this melting pot of ideas and approaches that benefits from bell hooks' critical analyses.

Bell hooks, a Buddhist African-American woman who is also a respected social critic, posits that everyone's existence is embedded in interconnected systems of domination. All these systems rely on a hierarchical structure within which each position carries specific privileges and/or disadvantages. Some of these positions are linked with permanent physical attributes, such as gender and race, though some of these are, to a certain extent, negotiable.

A white male may align himself with a black male to dominate a white woman. On the other hand, a white male may align himself with a white woman to dominate a black person of either gender. This mix-and-match game may be used to dominate in different situations and circumstances. However, the impact of different kinds of domination depends on random factors in an individual's life. For bell hooks, the segregated communal living she experienced as an African-American in the 1950s mostly shielded her from a direct experience of the viciousness of state-sanctioned racism. A more intense experience of domination came from the patriarchal authority of her father whose job description as unquestioned family monarch included duties like corporal punishment, which not only served to keep her and her sisters in line but also set an example for any male offspring. Her mother, herself a victim, perpetuated this patriarchy by validating her husband's rights to dominate. Domination is any activity which aims to control the free agency of another being.

The Roman Catholic church is a patriarchal system which operates on the premise of gender inequality. However enlightened anyone of either gender might become in his/her personal and professional dealings, the system remains in place. Women will not change the system merely by occupying positions of power.

All three titles speak to a necessary component of feminism. The centrality of feminist theory for the deconstruction of domination rests not in the feminine characteristics of gender politics but rather in the insistence that, regardless of one's gender, individuals must engage in dialogue with their fellows as well as with opponents. They must talk back (an especially important factor for lower-status persons whose educational and/or economic variables may place the challengers at a vulnerable psychological position and endanger their economic survival). These individuals must force the equality agenda into the center of the political arena. And finally, they must systematically push for systemic changes.

Hooks' choice of the second title deserves closer inspection. She explains early on that speaking up as a child when no one had spoken to her first was an act of courage. Just as blacks in general did not enjoy the same equal legal and civil

rights as whites, women did not operate on the same footing with men. Children were not only supposed to subscribe to a 'respectful' code of silence but also follow the gender labor division. A girl was supposed to fit the "listen and take orders" model in exchange for the physical protection half of the equation. A boy was trained to eventually rule and give orders and be physically strong (with the explicit potential for violence when a perceived need arose) enough to offer protection, which is the other side of the deal. Any girl children with so-called masculine characteristics, such as leadership or organizational skills, and boy children with so-called feminine ones, such as the ability to empathize, listen, and *feel*, were seen as deviant and incapable of fitting in and appropriately functioning in society. Both men and women can be believers in and perpetrators of these cultural norms. This hierarchical positioning damages all involved, including boys who are forced to suppress any expression of feelings and foster a physically overpowering approach to problem solving. The industrial-military complex is only a more developed and sophisticated cover for the "I am the one with the biggest muscles" model.

Speaking out from a position on a lower rung of the pecking order always carries the potential of being identified as an act of resistance (whether intended or not) and resulting in unpredictable consequences.

Hooks brings another level to this conversation: the convergence of diverse causes. Even though she was analyzing family interactions and driving forces in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (chap.4), she might as easily have been dissecting the civil rights or women's movements. Due to individual and collective interests, movements for change often challenge different forms of domination. Movements' members become caring and supportive of other members by identifying with the common goal. The membership simultaneously demands loyalty and provides support of the structure which serves as the vehicle for advocacy of that particular issue. If a person happens to have several issues she is simply asked to prioritize and choose one, as though being a lesbian negates her blackness, for example. In this case, the different causes lie within the framework of identity politics in which a black person may be supported and cared for, at the same time she is pressured to deny another essential aspect of herself.

However, hooks does not focus primarily on identity politics. Her many personal stories serve as the connection between everyday people's experiences and feminist theory. She claims that the synthesis of these two dimensions may lead to the creation of new models for change. The personal must contribute to the direction and substance of the theoretical but one must not mistake the testimonial nature of the contribution with confessional lamentations.

The effects of domination are ubiquitous and no one is free of its fallout. Hooks suggests each person start thinking about educating others regarding the consequences of their participation in oppressive settings. She suggests people start thinking about language in order to formulate new, inclusive, and radical strategies which can then be utilized to transform first the community and eventually society.

continued on page 11

Evangelical Feminism: A History, by Pamela D. Cochran, New York University Press, 2005.

253 pp. \$19.00

Reviewed by Sarah Knoll-Williams

Pamela Cochran's *Evangelical Feminism* chronicles strands of feminism that emerged out of American evangelical communities from the 1970s to the present. By "evangelical," Cochran is invoking American Christian groups sharing beliefs in "the authority (often inerrancy) of Scripture, the efficacy of Christ's atonement on the cross, the necessity of a personal salvation experience, and the importance of evangelism and a transformed life," (7). In speaking about evangelicals generally, Cochran also marks evangelicals historically as groups who parted from fundamentalism after World War II in order to incorporate the higher biblical criticism and be more culturally relevant.

The structure of Cochran's history comes in three stages: a unified evangelical feminism beginning in the 1970s, a split over homosexuality in the 1980s, and a resulting parallel development of two distinct strands of self-identified evangelical feminism, progressive and traditionalist. Eventually, Cochran's research led her to conclude that progressive evangelical feminism is no longer considered evangelical and has been subsumed by the wider, more generally feminist community. Traditionalist evangelical feminists, she insists, have maintained their commitment to biblical authority and been a force for change from within the evangelical community. Cochran states that she undertook the project not only to chart the history of evangelical feminism, but also to see how that history would shed light on American religion and evangelicalism in general.

Cochran locates this three-part history in discussions of biblical authority and interpretation (hermeneutics). In much of her book she traces divisions among evangelical feminists to changes in biblical authority and interpretation. Cochran boils the conservative evangelical feminist position down to a proclamation of the primacy of scriptural authority. By proclaiming this, conservatives self-locate within evangelical communities rather than the outside culture. Cochran emphasizes their work reinterpreting notorious scriptural passages dealing with the husband as head of the wife (Ephesians 5) and head coverings (1 Corinthians 11). According to Cochran, liberal evangelical feminists raised evangelical eyebrows when they began portraying Jesus as one who "interpreted Scripture with an awareness of culture" (55). Like other evangelicals, liberal feminist evangelicals focus their attention on the Scriptures, but they insist that the primary themes of Scripture are unity, love, and human justice, and emphasize the importance of scripture's cultural contexts. Cochran says that many evangelicals question whether this hermeneutic for determin-

BELL HOOKS

continued from page 10

Bell hooks contributes to the women's ordination movement by providing a mirror in which a group's own struggle may be viewed within a larger and more complex context. What the reflection can offer the women's movement depends on the range and inclusivity of whatever is positioned in front of the mirror.

Magda Eliasova is a graduate student who recently earned an MLA degree from the University of Pennsylvania. She lives and works with North Philadelphia children at the Philadelphia Catholic Worker.

ing cultural limitations is legitimate and if it upholds biblical inspiration (57). Cochran agrees with them, depicting the liberal/progressive strand as abandoning the evangelical fold altogether for the wider feminist community.

The split between the liberal and conservative trajectories within evangelical feminism became visible at the Evangelical Women's Caucus Conference in 1986. Though Virginia Ramey Mollenkott and her colleague Letha Scanzoni, both considered liberal evangelical feminists, had published *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* in 1978, disagreements about homosexuality among feminist evangelicals seemed primarily confined to their magazines such as *Daughters of Sarah* and *Update*. At the Caucus Conference in 1986, however, a "lesbians and friends" contingent finally demanded official recognition and that EWC take a firm stand for the civil rights of homosexual people. As a result, several whole chapters left the EWC and many of the executive council resigned. The re-alignment over the issue of homosexuality resulted in the formation of Christians for Biblical Equality as a conservative feminist evangelical organization. Why was feminism at least marginally accepted if homosexuality was not? Cochran's final analysis is that within the culture of American evangelicalism, limited exploration of feminism was permissible but that homosexuality proved too threatening to be contained in intellectual discussions.

The remaining portion of the book deals with theological questions and organizational changes in evangelical feminism. The theological questions emerge from both camps within evangelical feminism and include: Christology, Sophia and inclusive language, atonement, ecclesiology and women's leadership, and further interpretive work on those notorious Pauline scriptural passages. It is in this theological section that Cochran also traces the backlash among male evangelicals in organizations such as the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.

Cochran provides a great historical document for anyone interested in how feminist theologies did and did not influence American evangelicalism in the latter half of the twentieth century. However, I suggest her conclusion that traditionalists remained biblical and evangelical when progressives did not is far too simplistic. The "inclusive" vs. "biblical" model that she uses to represent progressive and traditionalist strands she seems to lift directly from American evangelical rhetoric. Cochran acknowledges how central questions of biblical interpretation were for all evangelicals. Why did she then not explore the ways in which rejecting evangelical feminism was in fact a means that some male evangelical leadership used to sidestep the larger problem posed by certain emerging trends in biblical interpretation? If Cochran's goal is truly to use evangelical feminism to explore larger trends within American evangelicalism, she misses her opportunity to explore the connection between the sexism of American evangelicalism and its unofficial but very powerful authoritarian structure.

Sarah Knoll-Williams is a Master of Divinity student at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, CA. From 2003 to 2006, she served on the Episcopal Church's Nominating Committee for the 26th Presiding Bishop, which resulted in the election of Katharine Jefferts Schori, the first woman Presiding Bishop and first woman Primate of the Anglican Communion. Sarah hopes to become an Episcopal priest.

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 Karen at 215-232-7823 or equalwrites2005@aol.com

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 which 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 offers a quiet place for contemplation, guided retreat weekends and directed prayer. Reiki training, grieving support and Taize prayer are also ongoing. For more information, call 610 558-6152 or check the web site at www.osfphila.org. The center is at 609 S. Convent Rd. in Aston, PA.

Jesus House Prayer and Renewal Center is a Roman Catholic center that is open to people of all faiths. The mission of Jesus House is to offer programs, prayer support, spiritual direction, and hospitality toward all God's people. Its quiet, reflective atmosphere fosters reconciliation for those who are separated from church or society. The center offers a variety of retreats, personal growth seminars, book studies and days of reflection. Groups are also welcome to use the center's facilities for their own programs. Come to the center in December for an Advent Evening Prayer. For more information, call 302-995-6859 or check the website at www.jesushousecenter.org. The center is located at 2501 Milltown Road, Wilmington, DE 19808.

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. Kirkridge hosts a *Working for Justice Through Putting our Stories to Song* in December, *Knitting Into Compassion*, a knitting and contemplative prayer retreat, in January. Other programs in January include: *Peacemaker Training Institute*; *Soul Struggles: Losing Your Religion to Find Your Faith*; *Of One Heart and Soul: Christian Community, A Retreat for Gay and Bisexual Christian Men*; *Prayerful Decision Making*. For more information on these and other programs, call 610-588-1793, check the site at www.kirkridge.com or e-mail kirkridge@fast.net. Kirkridge is located at 2495 Fox Gap Road in Bangor, PA.

The **Lourdes Wellness Center**, a ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegheny, New York, is sponsored by Our Lady of Lourdes Health System. The center hosts a wide variety of wellness workshops, offering programs on yoga, meditation, feng shui, hypnosis, aromatherapy, guided imagery for pain management, Feldenkrais method, reiki, shiatsu and reflexology. The center also offers special programs for older adults through its 50-Plus Club or experience poetry as a spiritual exercise at the once-monthly Poetry Circle. The center will host an Advent Retreat Day for young adults called *Prepare Your Heart for Advent Christmas*. The Lourdes Wellness Center is on 900 Haddon Avenue, Suite 100 in Collingswood, NJ. Please call 856-869-3125 for information, or check the website at www.lourdeswellnesscenter.org.

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

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

all who have accepted the responsibility to form and care for future generations and who desire to share their burdens and joys with others. For information about upcoming programs at Mary's Vineyard, please call 856 428-5495 or check the website 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 winter, join with others in early December for two workshops *The Light and My Voice in Community* and *Exploring Dreams: Transforming Ourselves/Transforming the World*. Choose from "Arts and Literature", "Peace and Justice", "Quakerism", and "Spiritual Development" workshop themes to begin the new year. Social Action and Social Witness Internships support and encourage young people who are, or wish to be, actively engaged in social justice work. For more information on any Pendle Hill programs, call 610 566-4507 or check the website 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 these and other 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 followed by a spiritual discussion group. Come to Temenos for ongoing Yoga classes, for Mindfulness Meditation or to join the Course in Miracles. For information call 610 696-8145 or e-mail programs@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.) Upcoming events this winter: December 22 *Christmas Candlelight Vigil for Peace* at Lockheed Martin and January 15 *MLK Day of Nonviolent Resistance to the War and the Warmakers*, both in King of Prussia, PA. For information, call 610 544-1818 or e-mail brandywine@juno.com. For updates, see the site: www.brandywinepeace.org.

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. For information, call 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.

House of Grace Catholic Worker holds a liturgy and potluck the first Monday of each month September through June at 1826 Lehigh Avenue. Contact the house for details: 215 426-0364.

Philadelphia Catholic Worker hosts liturgy and potluck every Wednesday at 6 pm at 430 W. Jefferson Street. The Philadelphia Catholic Worker is a community striving to follow in the footsteps of Dorothy Day. 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.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

by *Judith A. Heffernan*

This has been a time of great sadness for me. As one sympathy card read, "A special love with four legs and a waggy tail has quietly left you behind."

This weekend also I was feeling sad because I was not able to be at Call to Action and hear Mary Ramerman's homily at the closing liturgy. However, I had a solution! I listened to a CD of Spiritus Christi homilies, and as usual Mary spoke to my heart.

Mary talked about her life's journey and referred to the Magi—sometimes you have to listen to a different voice, go a different route and even commit civil disobedience.

Then I thought of the women who have been excommunicated or put under interdict because of their ordinations and I felt sad again.

I also read that MaryJo Weaver, a highly respected theologian, has retired from Indiana University after thirty years. I felt sad that our church is not very open to MaryJo and others imbued with the spirit of Vatican III.

So I re-read her keynote address to gathered WOC members in 1985 and felt the same power in her words as I felt that day when I opened my heart and experience to the assembled. "We are called to a new territory in the historical landscape of Roman Catholicism...sometimes this requires courageous acts and daring refusals."

FINE POINTS

SUBSCRIPTION: To receive *Equal wRites*, send a contribution and your name and address to our treasurer, Marianne Jann, 49 Driscoll Drive, Ivyland, PA 18974. We deliberately did not set a specific fee because we wanted people to feel free to contribute what they felt they could afford: \$5, \$10, \$15, or more. If that's really impossible for you, just send your name and address and we will start your subscription.

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.

In the midst of my sadness Peg Murphy sent me an article by James Martin, S.J. about our newest American saint.

Mother Theodore Guerin, in rural Indiana in the mid 1880s, founded a religious order and started several schools and a college. The local bishop was not pleased that she had done this independently and ordered the sisters to elect a new leader. The sisters held an election and re-elected Mother Theodore! The sisters were not willing, they said, to obey a dictator!

Martin closes by reminding us of the long history of faithful dissent and that some saints are noisy prophets who speak truth to power.

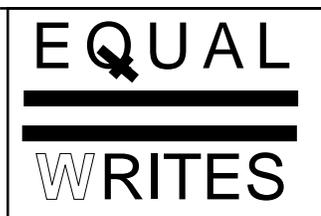
May we all learn from the Magi and keep searching together on our journey.

P.S. The feast of the Epiphany is also my retirement date from my life's work with the School District of Philadelphia. I really only ever wanted to be a parish priest, but the journey took some grand detours. How blessed I have been to spend my life with children. From them, as from Othello, I learned that every day is a new beginning. Today is the first day of the rest of my life. Please pray for me.

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.

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 March 2007. Final deadline for submissions is January 15. Send to the editor: Karen B. Lenz, 430 W. Jefferson St., Philadelphia, PA 19122 (215) 232-7823, equalwrites2005@aol.com.

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