

Because Sometimes True Fidelity Lies in the Courage to Dissent

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

Holy Thursday
March 20, 9 - 10 am
PRAYER SERVICE AND WITNESS
WITH MARY MAGDALENE AWARD

Ordination Day
Saturday, May 17, 9:30 - 10:30 am
EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY
LED BY A WOMAN

Sister Cities Triangle Park
Near Logan Circle
18th St. & Benjamin Franklin Parkway
Philadelphia
For Information, 215-545-9649

EQUAL

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

Vol. XVI No. 4

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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.*

2008 MARY MAGDALENE AWARD GOES TO ARLENE ANDERSON SWIDLER

SEPA/WOC is pleased this year to recognize the achievements of one of its own—long-time member Arlene Anderson Swidler, Catholic feminist writer and educator—with the 2008 Mary Magdalene Award, to be presented at the group's annual Holy Thursday Witness for Women's Ordination on March 20.

The award, established last year when it was given to nineteen! recipients, is named after St. Augustine's "apostle to the apostles"—the female follower of Jesus who has been misrepresented and whose pivotal role in the early church was marginalized for centuries. For these reasons, Mary Magdalene is considered by many to be the patron of women, particularly those claiming their rightful place, in the Roman Catholic church.

Arlene, who is married to Temple University professor of Catholic thought and interreligious dialogue Leonard Swidler and is the mother of two daughters, began her academic career teaching English composition at Valparaiso University in Indiana. Decades of teaching, writing, translating (from German), editing and lecturing were to follow until her career was cut short by a progressive and debilitating illness.

Arlene's religious thinking had an ecumenical slant from the beginning. Her husband Len, who calls her "Andie," recounts in her biography on the couple's web site:

Andie conceived the idea of an American scholarly periodical devoted to ecumenism with Catholic participation (there were none then), recruited Leonard, who recruited Elwyn A. Smith, Professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and then founded the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*... Andie served as Managing Editor (Elwyn and I, Protestant and Catholic, were Co-Editors), a position she retained after we and JES moved to Temple University in Philadelphia...

Arlene remained on the editorial board of the journal for a number of years, creating several special issues on subjects including *Human Rights In Religious Traditions*, see excerpt from her Introduction on p. 2 of this issue which were eventually published in book form.

Equal wRites Annual Appeal

March is the time we publish our financial report for all of you and include an envelope for your annual contribution. The costs of printing and postage have escalated, as any small publication you subscribe to has probably already informed you. We are not immune. We have reduced non-essential costs, but we do not want to reduce our substantial content, so please respond to this appeal as soon as you can. As you can see from our balance at the end of 2007, we only have enough funds to publish this issue. You came through so well all through last year that we were able to publish all four issues, but we worried each time. We'd like a little less anxiety!

As you look at the financial report, you will be pleased that we do what we do with so little, including volunteer labor from our editor, Karen Lenz, our treasurer, Marianne Jann, and all our writers and editors. This is not easy, but we like to think we have a quality publication worth continuing. All of our witnesses and activities are similarly produced by volunteers. Please come out and join us on Holy Thursday and Ordination Day.

And again, whatever you can do, the core committee of SEPA/WOC thanks you so much for your consistent support. If the envelope is missing, mail your contribution to SEPA/WOC, c/o Marianne Jann, Treasurer, 49 Driscoll Drive, Ivyland, PA 18974.

Regina Bannan, President

Her feminism also asserted itself early on. Her husband Len again:

It was at this time [early 1960s] that Andie began consciously to think, act, research and finally write as a budding feminist, especially in the area of religion. She published Christian feminist articles long before Mary Daly or Rosemary Ruether did. Andie broke into "feminist" print with her article "The Male Church" in *Commonweal*, June 24, 1966.

Arlene was also responsible, Leonard Swidler notes, for the creation of an ecumenical feminist group, "The Philadelphia Task Force on Women in Religion," and in 1971 began *Genesis III*, the group's bi-monthly newsletter, which



Arlene Swidler

expanded and grew until its last issue in 1975.

During the 1970's, a steady stream of books, journal and magazine articles and even several translations began appearing, and Arlene found herself in demand as a lecturer. Increasingly, her very distinctive style, so characteristic of her personal approach, revealed itself.

It was not confrontative, or designed to "score points;" rather its aim was to prompt dialogue and critical thinking and raise consciousness on important issues.

Leonard Swidler, commenting on Arlene's work on *Word* magazine, the official journal of the National Council of Catholic Women, which she edited:

Andie knew how far and fast she could lead the Catholic women toward a sense of mature responsibility. She said tough things, but was able to slide them into a velvet glove so that they were not rejected. She was interested in raising the consciousness of women, and men, and moving them in the direction of greater self-awareness and responsibility—not scoring points. She was as radical and penetrating in her analysis and thought as any of the feminists in those days, like our then friend Mary Daly, but wanted her public utterances to effect positive changes in people's, especially women's, lives. Again, this can easily be seen in her books and ar-

titles and public lectures.

Books included, among a number of others, *Woman in a Man's Church* (1972), *Sistercelebrations, Nine Worship Experiences* (1974), *Marriage Among the Religions of the World* (1990) and (co-edited with Virginia Kaib Ratigan) *A New Phoebe: Perspective on Roman Catholic Women and the Permanent Diaconate* (1990).

For several years in the 1970s there were frequent columns in the *National Catholic Reporter* ("Catholic Liberationists: Feminists in the Middle," "The Sexist Church: Women Want Church Jobs;") and articles in periodicals including *Commonweal*, *Spirituality Today*, *The American Benedictine Review* and *US Catholic*.

Len and Arlene spent several periods in Tubingen, Germany and in Japan, at Temple University's Tokyo Campus, always returning to the greater Philadelphia area to live and work.

Yet however impressive Arlene's formal credentials are, they do not tell the whole story.

Gaile Pohlhaus, retired head of the Department of Women's Studies at Villanova, has this to say about her friend and colleague:

Arlene is a good friend and a mentor. From the first day I met her in Rodger Van Allen's class to visiting her in her illness she has been a witness to courage and grit. Despite the interruptions to her formal pursuit of a PhD she has always been a scholar and a lady. Her interest in and successful mode of teaching gave insights that are still in use today. Her love of music still remains.

And Catherine Berry Stidsen shares a warm and personal recollection which says as much about Arlene Swidler as any of her magazine articles or books could do:

One of my fondest memories was being in the Swidler living room for some sort of discussion or other and the wine was flowing and we were having a lovely time and I went out into the kitchen to help Arlene fill up glasses and get more snacks and she stood at the kitchen sink and said, "This is Eucharist. What's going on right here right now is Eucharist. I just want to go in there and say, this is the body and blood of Christ, us, laughing, discussing, arguing, enjoying each other's company, wanting the

continued on page 3

ARLENE SWIDLER ON HUMAN RIGHTS

From the Introduction to *Human Rights In Religious Traditions* (1982):

The term "human rights" is comparatively new. Neither the term nor the concept is traditional in religious thought. Nevertheless, human rights represent what is probably the primary ethical concern in the world today. And, dealing as they do with our basic understanding of what it means to be human, what we are doing on this earth, and how we ought to relate to one another, human rights are at the center of religious thought and practice.

Thanks to Nancy Krody, managing editor of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies, for this reference.

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world to be the better for our having been in it. This is Eucharist.

This understanding of “Eucharist” as gathering for dialogue, conversation, planning, wine and friendship continued in many ways as Arlene hosted numerous meetings with the newly formed WOC and members of St. Joan’s International Alliance, a Catholic feminist group that began in England in the early twentieth century. Many “witnesses” came out of these meetings including the Holy Thursday witness at the Cathedral of Ss. Peter and Paul.

A final Eucharist for Arlene during this past year was the gathering around her bedside with many WOC members singing, praying and remembering her in a gesture of thanksgiving and farewell – a fitting tribute.

And so SEPA/WOC honors the lifework and spirit of its sister, Arlene Anderson Swidler, inspired by her example to continue to stand up, speak out, and “claim your heritage as daughters of God.”

ARLENE SWIDLER: JOINING HANDS, BUILDING BRIDGES *by Jenny Ratigan*

Indeed the Mary Magdalene Award presented to Arlene Anderson Swidler this year is cause for a sistercelebration! As may be known by *Equal wRites* readers, Arlene titled her 1974 collection of nine worship experiences *Sistercelebrations*, and these experiences were both ecumenical as well as interreligious. It is this expansive theme running through Arlene’s life and work that I find profoundly challenging in our time. Whether Arlene was concerned about inclusive language, ordination to diaconate or to priesthood, or any of the justice issues for women in the church/synagogue/mosque or the workplace (and in education in particular) she was always able to recognize that a victory for one is a victory for all.

Long before WOC Arlene was making friends with ordained women in other denominations and traditions, learning their stories and providing opportunity for the critical dialogues that would lead to an understanding of and a forum for Catholic women’s stories and struggles. In her writing and her teaching she dared to call attention to what it was/is like to be a “woman in a man’s church” or the personal need for praying “in the presence of God my mother”. In her suffragette mode she organized for the first Holy Thursday witnesses and began the tradition of inviting clergy and lay women from other denominations around the area to join their sisters in prayer and the drama of gathering and speaking out.

Arlene reminds us today that our work is not provincial

but universal. We stand for and with women from our past and join hands across religious backgrounds in the present. May our witness this year mirror the inspiration of our foremother, Arlene, and may it be a celebration of her wit, wisdom and courage

Jenny Ratigan, Professor emerita of religious studies at Rosemont College, is a friend and colleague of Arlene Swidler, with whom she co-edited A New Phoebe: Perspective on Roman Catholic Women and the Permanent Diaconate (1990).

NATIONAL EMERGENCY!

As this issue was going to press, we heard about the devastating fire at the national office of the Women’s Ordination Conference in Fairfax, Virginia. Everything was destroyed in their suite and four others; the other fifteen in the building also sustained damage. No one was injured, thankfully. Insurance will cover some of the losses—eventually. If you wish to contribute to enable our heroic young staff members Aisha Taylor and Nidza Vazquez to continue their work immediately, send a donation electronically through the link at www.womensordination.org. or enclose it in the envelope you send to us and we’ll forward it right away. I feel a very personal sense of loss; all I worked for as national president was the preservation of the organization in the midst of another crisis—and suddenly it seems so vulnerable again, after such success in recent years. Aisha and Nidza use the phoenix metaphor—rising from the ashes—to describe their work preparing for the Pope’s visit (see page 7) and they need everything from office supplies to banners. I am sure SEPA/WOC will come through.

Regina Bannan

SWIDLER CHAIR FUNDED AT TEMPLE *by Regina Bannan*

In January of this year, long-time WOC benefactor Harry R. Halloran donated the funds for the Leonard and Arlene Swidler Chair of Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University. SEPA/ WOC’s core committee was thrilled to see that Arlene’s contribution to ecumenism was recognized along with her husband Len’s. Together they had created the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* and both taught on the college level, Len in religion at Temple and Arlene in literature and religion at several schools, including Temple and Villanova. Both also began active support for women’s ordination in the Roman Catholic church in the 1960s. Together they edited *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration in 1977*; Arlene’s contribution was “Ecumenism and the Lack Thereof,” a careful examination of the ordination of women in other churches. She critiques the document and other Catholic sources for restricting their consideration to “ecclesiastical decisions, never by either the findings of individual scholars or the reflections of officially constituted church commissions.” In other words, the kind of inquiry she pursued, most notably in her early book, *Woman in a Man’s Church* (1972).

Halloran is CEO of the American Refining Group in Conshohocken and has established the Enlightened World Foundation. He also gave a smaller donation to begin the process of creating a chair in Islamic Studies at Temple when the original donors withdrew their offer after Temple was slow to accept it.

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A Publication of SEPA/WOC

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LISTENING TO GOD:

A LENTEN REFLECTION

by Karen B. Lenz

As I write this on the weekend before Ash Wednesday, I am hoping it finds its way to you well before Easter, perhaps midway through Lent. Lent—a time of prayer, deep reflection, self-examination, perhaps sacrifice. Lent—a time to slow down, become more quiet and listen more closely to the small voice within which is God telling us how we are doing and what she wants of us.

Different people of course hear different divine directives regarding their behavior during Lent. Many folks, guided, I suppose, by the instructions of self-appointed moral authorities who profess to speak for God, hear God saying she would be pleased if they would give up chocolate or caffeine or alcohol or carbs for the next forty days. Some even hear instructions to eat only once a day, or give up meat, or to fast. (I keep hoping God will tell me to abstain from tofu, one of the few foods I totally despise, but so far, no such luck.)

Of course, there is no harm to all of this; it may even be beneficial to our health. But I have difficulty believing that God is as orally preoccupied as most of us. Or that she can think of no more meaningful sacrifice than beer or m&m's.

This idea of God speaking to us is fascinating to me. Millions of men have perceived a “call” to the Roman Catholic priesthood and answered that call, believing that God is pleased by lives of vowed celibacy, loneliness and sexual frustration, with all of their psychological consequences.

This does not seem to be the voice of the Creator celebrated in the *Song of Songs*, who gave some of his creatures the wondrous gift of sexual pleasure—which Tantric Buddhists believe is the closest approximation of the bliss of divine union which can be experienced on earth.

Any number of women throughout history, including St. Therese of Lisieux, have also perceived a divine call to the priesthood from which Marian Ronan's “boys in the back room” would ban them forever. Increasingly they are doing something about it.

I have my doubts about this too.

Although I have worked with the local chapter of the Women's Ordination Conference for nearly ten years now, I have difficulty believing that God is calling women—or anyone—to a role which Jesus did not establish, and which it seems he explicitly warned against. Matthew 23:9

At the same time, I know several irregularly ordained women—including SEPA/WOC's Judy Heffernan, whose liturgies at the Community of the Christian Spirit and that the Catholic Worker have been deeply meaningful to me—and I applaud their determination and do not for a moment

doubt their sincerity.

Ironically, it was Magda, the “butterfly-chasing law student”—as one letter writer, reacting to her article in the Sept-Nov. issue of *Equal wRites* characterized her—who resolved this issue for me. “Perhaps,” she said, “these women are truly called by God—to service, to discipleship—and they, like so many of us, have been so conditioned for so long that they hear that as a call to the church's top position—the priesthood.”

With no disrespect to the impressive commitments and contributions of the women involved, I suspect Magda's view is correct—and it adds a new dimension to her hotly contested article, “What's YOUR Hobby?” which appeared in the Sept-Nov. issue of *Equal wRites* (and may be read at www.sepawoc.org.)

I too feel called to service, which to me has meant working and living at a Catholic Worker house for the last decade. It was a call I first experienced at the Catholic college to which my despairing father dispatched me—and I recall a heated argument with the feisty Sister of Mercy who was the school's librarian over why the library did not have the New York Catholic Worker newsletter. “Just a lot of quotes taken out of context,” she huffed at me. (Forty years later, Sister Regina Mary, I'm surer than ever you were wrong.)

However, it was a call I resisted for many years.

Now that I'm here, God speaks to me with some regularity—often through the children or the grandmothers of the neighborhood, whose generosity and caring sometimes put mine to shame.

And God spoke to me clearly one afternoon in late September, when an immigrant couple from Georgia in the former USSR sat in our dining room, asking for help.

Tim and Teresa (their Americanized names) had lived in this country for a combined total of twenty years during which they worked—he as an automobile mechanic, she as a home health aide—lived frugally and became (due to an American immigration system in desperate need of reform, but that's a discussion for another time) “illegals,” when their visas expired. (I flash to the t-shirt that proclaims, “No human being is illegal.”)

All was relatively well with the couple, however, until the past year when Tim had surgery for stomach cancer, with no health insurance for follow-up care, and Teresa was diagnosed with a rapidly progressive form of MS. Entitled to no benefits, unable to work, they sold their few valuables to pay the rent on the one room they occupy in someone else's apartment and then, desperate at the thought of being evicted, went to a CLS lawyer, who referred them to us in hopes they could live here.

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

It immediately became apparent that the steep flight of stairs leading to our second-floor bedroom made this impossible. Teresa, a warm and friendly woman, had needed considerable help to climb the three steps at our front door.

As I struggled for words to explain to them that we had nothing to offer, God spoke, firmly and unmistakably. "Help them," she said.

But we have no resources to help them, I pleaded silently. There was no money in the bank. Our property taxes were soaring and overdue. There was no way.

God raised her voice. "Help them," she insisted.

And it occurred to me—or did God say it, or is it the same thing—that to turn this couple away would make a fraud of everything our Catholic Worker house professed to stand for.

I was startled to hear myself myself saying, "What if we can raise your rent (a modest \$450, including utilities) for six months?"

The pair stared at me in surprise and Teresa started to cry, hard. "God bless you," she managed.

So I made some phone calls, sent e-mails to everyone in our mailbox (including Magda's dentist) and wrote a letter. And perhaps because it was God's idea in the first place, we have covered the rent, with a little extra for luxuries like toothpaste and toilet paper and transportation to the doctors, for six months, and—without waiting for further instructions from above—extended our commitment for a year.

Therefore, my Lenten practice will consist not of giving up doughnuts—okay, okay, I'll do that too—but of raising money for the couple I have come to call "my Russians." (If you would like to help, call me at 215 232-7823.)

I'll also be outside the cathedral on Holy Thursday for SEPA/WOC's annual witness in support of women's ordination, which to me means in support of reform of a church one symptom of whose malaise is its authoritative and unjust treatment of various categories of people, including women.

I also hope to be present on Holy Friday at the Brandywine Peace Community's Stations of Peace and Justice, and perhaps get a free ride (they send a cruiser onto the lawn to get me these days since I can't easily climb into a paddy wagon) to the police station after getting arrested once more on the grounds of Lockheed Martin, the world's largest manufacturer and supplier of nuclear arms.

And I suggest to you that participating in any of the liturgies or activities of any of the COR/Philadelphia (Catholic Organizations for Renewal) groups, (list and contact information follows) or sending a check in support of their work, might do more to help God's kin-dom come than giving up chocolate. Of course old habits die hard, and there'd surely be no harm at all in doing both.

Karen B. Lenz, editor of *Equal wRites*, protests with the Brandywine Peace Community, prays with the Community of the Christian Spirit, and lives and works at the Philadelphia Catholic Worker.

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.

CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS FOR RENEWAL (COR)/PHILADELPHIA GROUPS, ACTIVITIES AND CONTACTS

Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church (ARCC) Newsletter available by mail or on-line Len Swidler at dialogue@temple.edu.

Call to Action (CTA)-Philadelphia Local chapter of national church renewal group sponsors liturgies, retreats, workshops and social justice organizing. Ctaphiladelphia@comcast.net.

Catholic Parents Network of the Delaware Valley Advocacy and support group for parents of gay and lesbian children. Susanne Cassidy at smcnarb@comcast.net 610-649-0698

Community of the Christian Spirit (CCS) Small faith community devoted to peace and social justice with weekly liturgies, often led by a married priest or a woman. Roberta Brunner or Margaret McLaughlin, 215 572-5623

CORPUS Advocates and works for Inclusive priesthood of single and married men and women. Joe Ruane at j.ruane@usp.edu.

Dignity-Philadelphia Local chapter of supportive community of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals. Weekly Sunday evening liturgies. Norman Simmons 215-755-8724

Federation of Christian Ministries (FCM) Meeting ground for people of various faith traditions and ministries. Joe Ruane at j.ruane@usp.edu.

House of Grace Catholic Worker Hospitality, free medical/dental clinic, newsletter, regular liturgies. Mary Beth Appel or Johanna Berrigan at 215 426-0364

Margaret Roper Forum Small faith community with Sunday morning liturgies and children's and adult religious education. zadoro@aol.com

Philadelphia Catholic Worker Hospitality, after-school (in need of volunteers!) and summer programs for neighborhood children, lunch at the door. Wednesday evening liturgies and potluck. Karen at 215 232-7823.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference (SEPA/WOC) Local group advocates for a renewed church and gender-based equality in ministry. Monthly liturgy/planning meeting and special events, including upcoming Holy Thursday Witness and Ordination Day Liturgy. Also (highly recommended!) newsletter, *Equal wRites*. Regina Bannan at 215 545-9649.

GOD HAS CHOSEN ME

by **Jim Plastaras**

The choir was singing Bernadette Farrell's composition, "God has chosen me, God has chosen me to bring good news to the poor . ." It started me thinking —not so much as to question whether God gives me special opportunities to put my gifts to work—but to ask: How does God call us? How do I know it comes from God? And have I ever really listened?

I thought of the people who are pushed into ill-advised life situations by parents, or by society. These individuals sadly follow a pseudo-calling imposed from without that has nothing to do with discernment of talents and abilities. My thoughts then turned to the some of the Gospel call narratives. Jesus sees something special in particular individuals and calls them to follow him. He calls them by name, or even gives them a new name.

The most prominent example is the call of Simon. The evangelists describe him as being impulsive, quick to speak, but un

reliable when it come to following through. Jesus gives a new name to this man who, to external appearances, was anything but rock-solid. He would become Cephas/Rock/Peter.

Peter boasts that he is ready to follow Jesus to prison and to death, but then collapses when confronted by a slip of a servant girl. Jesus gave this man the mission so serve as Rock for his brethren. Jesus tells him: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (Lk 22:31)

Another poignant call narrative is the story of the Rich Young Man recounted in Mark 10:17-22. Many people have trouble with this passage. Does Jesus address the invitation to sell everything you have and give to the poor . . . and come follow me," to everybody? To me? It might be argued that the invitation is addressed to everybody, but the most obvious reading of this passage is that it describes the interaction between Jesus and this particular right-living young man. Jesus saw the goodness of the man's heart and invited him to join the disciples on the road to Jerusalem. The story does not end well: "The man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth." There was also sadness in Jesus' voice as he turned to the disciples and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

The "call" of Mary [Magdalene] recounted in John 20:14-18 is a narrative that invites questions. Why is Mary unable to recognize the man in the garden as Jesus? The Evangelist does not tell us why. When Jesus addresses her by name – Mary — she recognizes the voice of her Teacher and exclaims, "Rabboni." The mystery of being called by name is a prominent theme in the Fourth Gospel. The Johannine Jesus says about himself as Good Shepherd: "They listen to his voice. He calls his own by name and leads them out. . . They follow him because they know his voice." (Jn 10:3-4) There is no mistaking that this as a call narrative. Jesus calls Mary by name and then gives her the mission to become Apostle to the Apostles: "'Do not hold on to me. . . Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

The most troubling of the Gospel vocation narratives (both for us and for the first Christians) is the call of Judas. Each of the Evangelists present Jesus as able read what was in people's hearts. Did he misread the heart of Judas? Or did he deliberately select Judas to become the Betrayer? (I find this latter explanation repugnant.) The most straight-forward explanation of the mystery of Judas is that Jesus called all the apostles, including Judas, because of special gifts he saw in them. Judas, however, at some point turned away from his calling. A call may be authentic and come from God, but this does not guarantee that the individual will be faithful in responding to the call.

For readers like myself who are middle-aged or beyond, reflections on God's call may lead us to think mostly about the past. In my earlier life, was I listening to God, or to myself? Did I miss my calling and end up wasting my talents? Such thoughts, besides being depressing and unproductive, reflect a narrow understanding of vocation. For most of us, the call is not a once-and-done event. God can call us to put our gifts to work in new and different ways at any point in our lives. God has chosen me and continues to

choose me! I may not have always listened, or may have at times refused to listen, but it is never too late to begin listening and to say Yes.

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.

HERE COMES THE SUN [?]

by Maria Myers

The deadline for publication in this issue of *Equal wRites* coincides with Groundhog Day 2008 and a Chinese New Year ushering in the Year of the Rat. I have just received an e-mail attachment titled "Luck With Rodents" alerting me that Malaysian women are buying red underpants with rats on them because they anticipate the good fortune that the rats will bring. "The stores are selling them like hotcakes," says a trader at a night market in Kuala Lumpur. "Red panties are supposed to bring good luck to the wearer during Chinese New Year. They are also popular with foreigners." [AP]

I know that, according to the Chinese calendar and my birth year, I am officially a Rat, a designation beyond my control. I am also, by choice, a registered Democ-rat, well aware of the historical importance of this exciting election year; I wonder briefly if it might be good luck to purchase, instead, new blue undies. [After all, it's a Leap Year, too.] I recall the irrefutable counsel of that venerable theologian, Lily Tomlin, "The trouble with joining the rat race is that even if you win, you're still a rat."

Even while sitting still, doing nothing, we are destined to live in interesting times, both a blessing and a curse, as the story goes. The timely arrival of spring or dawn has little to do with the earnest efforts of us mammals; it is we [not the Sun] who rise and fall while spinning improbably through space, almost imperceptibly embedded in our amazing, life-sustaining planet, doing our best to make meaning of it all. Verily, the Sun will reappear without our intervention and the vernal equinox will bring with it new hope and familiar promises, ready or not. We evolving, wobbly creatures, teetering on the cusp of emergent language, are the ones entrusted with the unique task of making meaning from our observations and experience. What a dazzling opportunity!

I find it helpful, in the practice of this peculiar vocation, to keep my balance by drawing from a vibrant collection of notes and quotations gathered like firewood over a lifetime of faithful noticing and questioning. Some of the sources of this cherished kindling are long gone but, happily, not forgotten. Others are still generating warmth and light in the form of new books, talks or public appearances, possibly even e-mail and quiet conversations, all vital sources of renewable energy for me and others. The seasonal resurgence of the Sun and the convivial receptivity of the Earth bring these to mind:

Daniel C. Maguire's Presidential Address to the Society of Christian Ethics, published in *Christianity and Crisis* [3.15.82] as "The Feminization of God and Ethics," draws insightful parallels and distinctions between ways of knowing developed from men's and women's experience, acculturation and moral sensibilities. Worth tracking down for rereading/discussion.

Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* establishes relationship rather than self as the foundation of women's psychological and physical states. Gilligan was recently in Philadelphia to discuss a book she is co-authoring, tentatively titled *Darkness Visible: The Psychology of Loss, Patriarchy and Democracy's Future*, in which she examines how the suppression of social and emotional intelligence underlies patterns of ethical injustice. "Without that voice," she says, "you sow the grounds for various kinds of social injustice. You lose the ability to work out conflict without resorting to violence."

Toward a New Psychology of Women, by the late Jean Baker Miller, M.D., is invaluable in examining the inevitability (and unexamined fear, especially among women) of conflict, as well as its constructive potential. Her ground-breaking collaborative work, including *Women's Growth In Connection* and the JBM Training Institute [jbmtraining.org], is chronicled by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Christina Robb in *This Changes Everything*, the story of "pioneers who took monumental risks and broke institutional taboos to learn the ways that relationships affect our every experience of the world."

Women's Ways of Knowing, edited by Belenky et al, brilliantly illuminates the developmental aspects of our individual abilities and shared contexts as we learn how to learn and discern across a lifespan.

It's good to be reminded that, despite variants of gender, race, politics or lingerie, we're all in this together.

Maria A. Myers taught (and thought) as a member of the faculty of the Religious Studies Department and interdisciplinary Women's Studies Program at Villanova University. She continues to think.

Third Gathering Of Intentional Eucharistic Communities

Hold the date: May 15-17, 2009—yes, 2009— for a conference in Chevy Chase, Maryland, of small faith communities. So many more have formed, many around women priests, in the years since the second gathering in 2001, which I attended representing the Community of the Christian Spirit. This Network of Intentional Eucharistic Communities reaches very widely to many groups not explicitly identified as Catholic, though most members were originally part of the Roman tradition. I loved going to this last time. So many creative liturgies and bonded faith-people all over the country! This year they are thinking of a theme relating to the Dutch theologians' call for a people-centered parish and liturgy—just what many of us do. Thinking about how we are both inside and outside the church—can the institution really say we are not?—with others similarly situated is so challenging and rewarding. They are seeking other suggestions at this point. The two co-chairs are from *communitas* in Washington (DC) and the Catholic Community of Greenbelt (MD). The total number of groups they have identified is 115 but I bet there are many more not on their list. If that's yours, contact Ellen Radday, eradday@verizon.net and she will send you information and an appeal for seed money. Be happy to give it. Your community will benefit from this deep contact with so many others sharing this journey.

Regina Bannan

PRAYER FOR THE AMERICAS

by Regina Bannan

You have the opportunity to continue the tradition of Sister Theresa Kane, who asked Pope John Paul II in 1979 in Philadelphia to consider the question of women's full acceptance into all church ministries. Pope Benedict XIV is coming, not to Philadelphia, but to New York and Washington, DC.

National Women's Ordination Conference is organizing a mass in Washington on the evening of April 14, just before the Pope arrives, to be celebrated by as many ordained women as can attend. The theme will be a Day of Prayer for the Americas, and they have put together an inclusive prayer service which you can download from <http://www.womensordination.org/pages/WDOP/WDOP08Liturgy.htm>. National WOC will work with its partners in Latin America to celebrate on this date with us. This represents a joining of women's struggle for justice in the church to the struggle of the Latina/Latino population in our hemisphere. Praying together recognizes the contributions of all to the life of our church.

This celebration replaces WOC's traditional Day of Prayer for Women's Ordination. Please contact Nidza Vazquez at nvazquez@womensordination.org or Regina Bannan at bannan@temple.edu if you would like to participate in Washington or if you will use the liturgy in your own celebration here.

Some SEPA/WOC members and friends will be going to Washington to support Judy Heffernan as she joins the other celebrants of the Mass on Monday, April 14. Some may stay to demonstrate around the Pope's visit; others will return home Tuesday morning. Contact judyando@aol.com or bannan@temple.edu if you want to join them.

On Wednesday, April 16, the Philadelphia Catholic Worker, located in the heart of Latin Philadelphia, invites all to attend an evening liturgy celebrating the Day of Prayer for the Americas. Contact pclaverhouse@aol.com for more information.

SEPA/WOC Endorses Statement

On Labor Practices

SEPA/WOC, at its January Core Committee meeting, endorsed a statement by the National Coalition of American Nuns, regarding the labor practices of the St. Joseph Health System.

The statement said in part:

As Catholic organizations committed to justice and fairness within, as well as outside of, our church institutions, we are saddened by the reluctance of the St. Joseph Health System (SJHS) to follow Catholic Social Teaching in regard to their workers' right to unionize. The SJHS is a multi-billion dollar system consisting of 14 hospitals in California and Texas.

Over the past decade, SJHS has waged an aggressive campaign against workers seeking to form unions. Pro union workers have been fired, threatened with firing and suspended. They have been required to attend mandatory meetings that cast the union in unfavorable light. . .

We appeal to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, who operated the SJHS, to sit down with union supporters to negotiate fair ground rules for a union election process for their service workers.

FREEDOM FROM THE TYRANNY OF THE PRESENT

by Jenny and Jim Ratigan

Several months ago we went to Milwaukee for a visit during the first days of November. During that time we attended the annual meeting of CTA (Call to Action) which had as its theme “From Racism to Reconciliation: Church Beyond Power and Privilege.” Our experience of being at the CTA meeting formed the basis of our reflections in the last edition of *Equal wRites*.

Of all our impressions of the CTA meeting, one comment jumped out immediately and has remained with us more than anything else. Peggy McIntosh, a landmark in the academic environs of Harvard and a leading figure in the arena of women’s rights, has also become one of the more outspoken critics of “white privilege.” She described the discovery of her own racism and her participation in and benefiting from “white privilege.” She tried to reconcile this fact, being a racist with all the other positive impressions she had of herself, as a nice person. “How,” she wondered, “could I be a nice person and also be an oppressor?”

The publisher Frank Sheed (of Sheed and Ward) once said in a presentation that if you are reading a book and there is a sentence, a phrase, or even a word, that just jumps out at you, it is probably best to simply close the book at that point. That sentence or phrase or word is what is intended for you; it is what you will recall over and over again, and you will probably not even remember anything else from the book.

Perhaps it is a confirmation of Sheed’s insight that we recall so clearly his comment but cannot recall anything else about his presentation. In much the same way, it was clear that Peggy’s comment was a key insight from the CTA conference. Since that time there is another comment that has just jumped out when reading it—the statement “Education is freedom from the tyranny of the present.”

While we were in Milwaukee it was also the date for the annual Santa Clara Lecture. The speaker in 2007 was Gary Macy on the topic: “Diversity as Tradition: Why the Future of Christianity is Looking More Like Its Past.” The reading of the text of Macy’s lecture became the basis for this reflection about choices and change as an inevitable dimension of life.

Macy begins by making some important clarifications about history. He respectfully dismissed the notion that history is what happened in the past, pointing out how history is always being written or rewritten for the needs of the present. He further makes a vital point that there is not really “a history” but many stories, many histories, of anything that happened or happens. Readers who are familiar with the work, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* by James Loewen, will be familiar with the critique of history books as simply relating “what happened” but rather always presenting a limited perspective, a specific point of view, sometimes to the point of deliberate misrepresentation of available evidence.

Macy describes how one school of thought can gain prominence, become mainstream and then designate all other approaches as invalid or simply diminish them as less than fully acceptable. Thus one can study Feminist-Theology or Black-Theology, or one can simply study Theology. And does one not study material in these hyphenated theologies, precisely because their rightful place has been excluded from the offi-

cially accepted version because it did not fall within the accepted point of view? Perhaps a parallel might be our experience of Black History month or Hispanic Heritage month. Perhaps consider again Loewen’s work.

A large part of Macy’s lecture is devoted to the diversity of opinion within the Catholic tradition about the issue of ordination, the subject of his latest book: *The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West*. (Oxford, 2007). Until the twelfth century ordination referred to numerous leaders and not merely the priestly offices, and priests as well as most other leaders were married people. After the twelfth century that understanding of ordination changed to the concept with which most of us are currently familiar.

As Macy points out, the power to consecrate bread and wine, to hear confessions, and to preach were restricted to the ordained priest only after the twelfth century. But most Catholics are only vaguely aware, if at all, that this approach of limiting the sacramental power to the priest is a latter development in the history of the church. For most of its time on earth, the Catholic church did not operate in this manner. According to Macy the impetus for this change in the another change in the church may already be underway. A veteran nun who now serves as a hospital chaplain comments aloud, “Why do I need to get a priest to come to this patient whom he does not know for her to receive the sacrament of Penance?”

In an area where there are few priests, a woman goes to the bishop and asks for someone to come and hear the confession of a dying woman. The bishop replies that he has no one to send. So he says to the woman, “You go and hear her confession.” The woman goes and they hear each other’s confession.

A Trappist monk is asked, in a need to tell their sins (or failings, or whatever) to a priest, or to a group in the Twelve Step program, or to a good friend. To keep your faults locked within yourself makes you sick (spiritually and then perhaps physically) but to confess your sins allows healing. In each of these situations the reality is that the church is, in fact, acting in accord with the most ancient part of its tradition; a tradition which may be better suited to today’s needs than the medieval system which is still officially accepted.

Citing statistics from sources such as the *2006 Official*

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Catholic Directory, Macy contrasts the continuing decline in the number of ordained priests in the United States with the greatly increasing enrollments in ecclesial ministry programs. By the year 2003 the number of lay ecclesial ministers working in parishes was greater than the total number of diocesan priests in the country. Macy contends that the laity has already taken over the running of the church in the United States though they, nor most of the bishops, have realized or accepted this new development.

In claiming all of Christian history Catholics inherit many traditions and are free to choose their own history. According to Macy, “Catholics, who claim to be traditional and then fixate on one period as normative for all times and all places, are not really ‘traditional’ at all; they are merely historical bigots who would exclude all but a tiny portion of our ancestors the right to be Christians.”

Tradition, according to G.K. Chesterton, is “democracy extended through time.”

And for Elizabeth Johnson “dialogue with history has given us light to steer by” as we explore so many contemporary issues.

If Catholics choose to honor the longer tradition of a lay church which values all vocations rather than the briefer tradition of an ordained priesthood with special power and privileges, then there is no shortage of leaders or vocations.

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying that no problem can be solved by the same consciousness that created it. The ordination problems of today: not enough priests, women priests, married priests, etc. also seem as if they cannot be solved by the same mind-set that has caused them to develop. Perhaps only by re-examining our traditions and seeing the richness of choices can we make a good selection for our needs and not keep using yesterday’s outmoded tools to address today’s living and changing challenges.

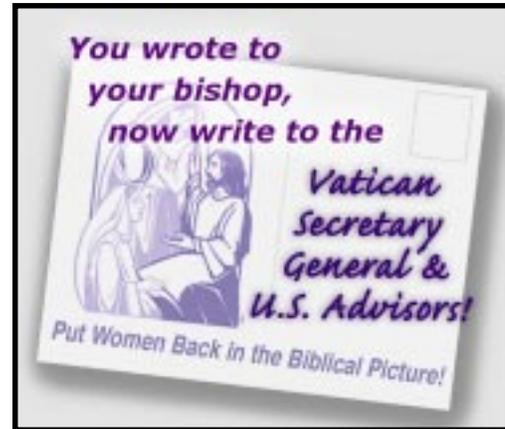
These reflections lead us to honor the dialogue that Karen Lenz has invited us to—including the perspectives and history of WOC as well as the current developments in the RCWP movement. Can we invite women from both of these perspectives (and histories) to discuss the key issues that their respective groups represent? We must. Eileen DeFranco has been our local voice in this dialogue but we do need to expand the participation of RCWP as we move along. In addition we might do well to invite some women from other denominations who have been occupied, and continue to struggle with, the ordination issue, to join us. We rarely make room for those voices from the broader Christian church.

In his writings St. Paul refers to the Gospel as scandal to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. It is important to look at the structure and structures of the church and to use our powers of intellect and spirit to be involved in the process of continual reformation. However, as in Paul’s time it is all scandal and foolishness, if we do not sense the presence and operation of the Spirit. The church has already passed a critical point and significant change has occurred. As Christians, we believe that a most significant change occurred at the time of the Pascal Mystery, yet most people, even the disciples of Christ, seemed not to be aware of what was happening and had, in fact, already happened.

If we keep opening ourselves to a number of views of history, of the church and of the world, and resist the temptation of making our view absolute, we can move in the life of the educated and not just in the life of the trained, no matter

how skillfully informed. Then in the midst of apparent confusion and frustration we will experience what is meant by the insight, “Education is freedom from the tyranny of the present.”

Jenny and Jim Ratigan have spent their careers in higher education. They presently conduct Spirituality and Healing workshops in the greater Philadelphia area.



Visit www.futurechurch.org <<http://www.futurechurch.org>> and send a new e-postcard to Synod Secretary General Nikola Eterovic and automatically copy Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl bishop advisor to the synod, Cardinal Francis George, OMI, President of the US Bishops, and Pope Benedict XVI asking them to:

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- * Give pastoral attention to Jesus and St. Paul’s inclusive practice
- * Expand opportunities for women preachers
- * Restore women leaders to lectionary texts.

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Beginning Cash Balance 1/1/07	\$2,652
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Revenues received as of 12/31/07	6,735
Expenses:	
Bank Charges	95
Donations	50
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Printing	6,153
Web Hosting	<u>30</u>
Expenses as of 12/31/07	<u>7,391</u>
Ending Cash Balance as of 12/31/07	1,996

Book Review

Feminist Theologies: Legacy and Prospect, edited by Rosemary Radford Ruether. Fortress Press, 2007. \$20.00. 175 pp. Paperback.

reviewed by **Marian Ronan**

The articles collected in this volume are based on talks delivered at a conference marking the closing of the Center for Women and Religion at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, a consortium of seminaries and centers for the study of religion where the author of this review has taught since 1999. The CWU had been an important resource for feminist theology and religious studies since the beginning of the second wave of feminism, and its passing marked the end of an era. The conference was also a tacit acknowledgment of Rosemary Radford Ruether's retirement as the Carpenter Chair in Feminist Theology at the GTU. Ruether planned the conference, invited the speakers, and edited the volume, so it seems appropriate to begin by addressing her role in feminist theology in the US and internationally.

As Rebecca Chopp, arguably the dean of the generation of whitefeminist theologians who followed Ruether and Elisabeth Schuessler Fiorenza, argued in a 1989 critical review, Ruether has been the Christian feminist teacher. She has shown us how to zero in on the portrayal of women throughout history as evil, tangential, and insignificant. Since 1989, her massive body of work—more than forty authored or edited volumes and still counting—has continued to school us in these crucial questions and to envision possible solutions.

In that same critical review, Chopp also notes certain problems with Ruether's work, without suggesting that they detract in any way from the incalculable contribution Ruether has made to Christian feminism. Chopp singles out Ruether's correlational method, which assumes the existence of an authentic humanity which is not so much altered as expanded to include female experience in a universe previously exclusively male. While this liberal humanist methodology allows for the inclusion of additional multiple units of humanity,—people of color as well as women as well as the poor—it does not enable the analysis of the thick and complex interactions between these categories that is essential to the subversion and reconstruction of social and religious reality. Ruether's vision, Chopp tells us, points beyond her methodology.

The same critique can be applied to this collection. After a history of the Center for Women and Religion that sets the context, the essays included in the volume offer a rainbow of feminist theological positions. Few of these theologians address the complexity of their own social locations, beyond identifying the very broad racial/ethnic or religious group they purport to represent. Instead, many of the articles present information about the subject at hand from a sort of transcendent scholarly location.

Nayereh Tahidi's article, "Muslim Feminism and Islamic Reformation: The Case of Iran," for example, presents Islamic feminism, as "one of the various ways and means of women's struggle" in the context of "global patterns of women's rights," and as something that emerges, in general, among highly educated middle class urban professional women. She refers to readers as "we," in a universalist expression of assumed commonality, and reminds "us" that "Islam, like all other religious institutions, is a human or so-

cial construct," a position shared by very few of the women of the world, perhaps especially Muslim women.

Her discourse contrasts strikingly with Saba Mahmood's careful documentation and analysis, in her groundbreaking study, *The Politics of Piety*, of what a specific group of pious Muslim women in the Egyptian Mosque Movement say about themselves.

Similarly, Rita Nakashima Brock's "Pacific, Asian and North American Asian Women's Theologies" is a very broad survey of the history of Asian/American feminist theology as a way of affirming "various (Asian) cultures and religious environments" (46).

Brock's global statement that "postcolonial theories point to hybridity as a way of conceptualizing porous religious, ethnic and cultural boundaries" contrasts strikingly with Wonhee Anne Joh's careful analysis, in *Heart of the Cross*, (see review in the December issue of *Equal wRites*) of the Christological significance of the Korean concept of *jeong* as a specific instance of hybridity.

Now to be fair, talks and articles that are invited for a special theme issue of a journal or for a conference can sometimes be less good than unsolicited works in which the author is genuinely invested. And it's hard to know exactly how the topics were presented to the speakers before the conference from which these articles were drawn; perhaps the framing of the topics contributed somewhat to making a number of these articles sound like encyclopedia entries.

Indeed, in a collection on the theology of tradition edited by Orlando Espin in 2006, Nancy Pineda Madrid clearly identifies her own complex social location, writes in the first person, and engages secular Latina theory in a way that she does not in her article here, though she does make some helpful distinctions between Chicana, Latina, and Mujerista theologies in her article in this volume.

Similarly, Stephanie Mitchem's recent book on African-American folk healing is based, in part, on interviews with actual African-Americans, as her womanist article in this collection is not.

Speaking generally, however, it seems fair to say that none of the articles in this volume break new ground; it is more legacy than prospect, so to speak. Readers would do better to read the works of Saba Mahmood, Traci C. West, W. Anne Joh, Mayra Rivera, and other members of the next generation whose work is transforming religious scholarship on gender and sexuality.

Marian Ronan teaches contemporary theology and religion, including women's studies in religion, at the American Baptist Seminary of the West in Berkeley, CA. She is book review editor of *EqualwRites*.

SEPA/WOC E-MAIL LISTSERV

If you would like to receive and share information related to the women's ordination movement, and engage in dialogue with others committed to the cause of full equality in ministry in the Roman Catholic church, you are invited to join the SEPA/WOC listserv. To do so, contact Gaile Pohlhaus at gaile.pohlhaus@villanova.edu.

Book Review

Merton and Buddhism, edited by Bonnie Bowman Thurston, Fons Vitae, 2007.

271 pp. \$26.95

reviewed by *Mary Louise Birmingham*

Arnold Toynbee famously asserted that the coming of Buddhism to the West may be seen in time as “the most important event of the 20th century.”

Whatever the merit of this judgment, the Buddha has been a subtly enriching presence in the Catholic community for many decades. People governed by an infallible monarchy need such mellowing now and then.

Anyone who is attracted by the title should find this book as rewarding as I do. It is a well-planned collage of voices and viewpoints, each with a special focus.

The first of two introductory chapters provides an intelligent overview of Buddhism by Roger Corliss, co-founder of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies. Bonnie Thurston suggests that her essay, which follows Corliss, is a kind of “Merton and Buddhism 101.” She adds: “This essay is the ‘Freshman Survey,’ the subsequent ones are the ‘Senior Seminars.’”

Merton’s experience with Theravada Buddhism is the subject of the first “Senior Seminar.” As its author, James A. Wiseman, O.S.B., notes, we tend to associate Merton with the Mahayana schools—with Zen and with Tibet. But he met several prominent Theravada monks during his travel through Southeast Asia. And the most dramatic moment recorded in his *Asian Journal* was surely his visit to the monumental figures at Polonnaruwa in Theravadan Sri Lanka.

These are magnificent carved images of the dying Buddha and his disciple Ananda, which Merton saw within weeks of his own death. Their numinous beauty moved him to write, “I was suddenly, almost forcibly, jerked clean out of the habitual, half-tied vision of things. . . .”

The encounter with Tibetan Buddhism in the last months of Merton’s life was amply documented in the *Asian Journal*, but Judith Simmer-Brown includes further details in her account. For example, the following derives from an interview with Harold Talbott, an American student of the Dalai Lama.

When Merton arrived in India, he was steadfastly opposed to meeting His Holiness, saying “I’m not going. I’ve seen enough pontiffs.” Given his years dealing with authority and obedience in the Trappist order, Merton “didn’t trust organized religion and he didn’t trust the big banana,” remembers Talbott. “He did not come to India to hang around the power-elite of an exiled central Asian Vatican.” But, with Talbott’s encouragement, Merton agreed [and the meetings] were a delightful surprise, as was immediately evidenced when they met.

How each remembered the other in subsequent writings suggests the quality of their rapport. Merton’s journal called the Dalai Lama “most impressive as a person. . . strong and alert. . . energetic, generous, and warm. . . .” The Dalai Lama noted in his autobiography that “more striking than his outward appearance, which was memorable in itself,

was the inner life that he manifested. I could see he was a truly humble and deeply spiritual man.”

Five of the remaining essays are concerned with Merton and Zen—with his Zen experience in general; with its expression in his art, his photography, and his poetry. The most provocative of them critiques “The Limits of Thomas Merton’s Understanding of Buddhism.” Its author, John P. Keenan, says that Daisetz Suzuki, Merton’s correspondent and mentor, taught “export Zen” and lacked “formal transition in a Zen lineage.” Keenan maintains that “we cannot look to Merton for any adequate understanding of Buddhism,” given Suzuki’s influence. Perhaps this is so, but neither can we dismiss the wisdom and creativity of these men because their version of Zen may be a “20th century construct.”

The symposium concludes with some “Footnotes to the Asian Journey of Thomas Merton.” One of them was contributed by Harold Talbott, the young American who introduced Merton to the Dalai Lama. Talbott recalls Merton’s advice to him as a fellow convert: “The Church is a very big place; always go your own way in it.” Amen to that.

Mary Louis Birmingham has reviewed books for *Commonweal*, *Cross Currents*, and *The New York Times*.

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SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Lent/Easter Vigil 2008

Mt.28:1-10

On the Sundays of Lent this year, we hear of the power of temptation, the power of transfiguration and transformation, the power of faith and vision, the power of love and resurrection and the power of proclamation.

Proclamation. At the Easter Vigil we hear Jesus tell Mary of Magdala, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell..."

Go and tell. When I hear these words, I think of our 2008 Mary Magdalene Award to Arlene Swidler. Arlene felt it was important for all of us to keep speaking, doing, witnessing and writing. I named her "God's Nudger"!

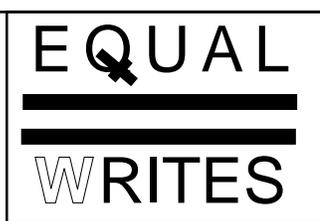
Go and tell. Arlene did just that in her strong, resonating, soul-touching voice when she joyfully proclaimed from *Hebrews* at the ordination of a woman so long ago now, "The law of the priesthood is not determined by physical descent...but by the power of a life which can never be destroyed."

Go and tell. There is a power in Arlene's life of working for justice and understanding, a power from her life, which also can never be destroyed.

Go and tell. Father Marek Bozek, a St. Louis priest, publicly proclaimed, "...I could not remain indifferent to the injustice being done to all those women graced by God with the priestly vocation..."

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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.



SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
WOMEN'S ORDINATION CONFERENCE

c/o Jann
49 Driscoll Drive
Ivyland, PA 18974

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Go and tell. Robin Morgan, feminist activist and award-winning writer, has recently proclaimed that sexism is everywhere...women have endured sexual, racial and ethnic hatred, invasion of spirit and flesh, being the majority of the poor, the illiterate, the powerless... no one should be forced to remain silent for fear of religious persecution...

Go and tell. Robin Morgan adds that the US First Lady, defying the US State Department and the Chinese government at the 1995 UN World Conference in Beijing, proclaimed that for too long the history of women has been a history of silence... women's rights are human rights, among which are the right to speak freely and the right to be heard...

Go and tell. Joan Chittister tells us of the latest UN report which states "the unequal status of women is all too often taken for granted as 'normal.'"

Go and tell. The Catholic Peace Fellowship reminds us of Blessed Franz Jagerstatter who refused to be silent in the face of injustice and war.

Go and tell. Reflect on Rumi's words which Joan Chittister shared with us...Live where you fear to live...be notorious...I have tried prudent planning long enough.

Please stand with us on Holy Thursday morning. Go and tell.

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 June 2008. 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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