

Because Sometimes True Fidelity Lies in Dialogue & Dissent

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

Holy Thursday
April 13, 9 - 10 am
PRAYER SERVICE AND WITNESS

Ordination Day
Saturday, May 20, 9:30 - 10:30 am
EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY

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. XIII No. 4

MARCH - MAY 2006

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.*

LOCAL WOMAN'S JOURNEY LEADS TO UPCOMING ORDINATION

by Eileen McCafferty DiFranco

Girls can't be priests. I learned it from the beginning. The guys who ran the show at Nativity B.V.M. parish in Port Richmond would never have wanted to have anything at all to do with me, the recipient of the eighth grade academic excellence award, unless I could wield a hot iron or a mean mop. Expressing interest in the convent might have garnered a bit of interest on Father's part. Otherwise, I was just one of the girls, dutifully adjusting her mantilla before mass, barred from the altar and from being a part of the old boys' network to which I need not bother to apply.

And no, I never wanted to be a nun. The prospect of wearing oppressive, hot, uncomfortable clothing and begging lay people for rides to the doctor for the rest of my life deflected any interest I might have had in the convent. Who could not help but compare and contrast the well-fed, cigar-smoking priests driving sleek black cars with the sisters who had to ask Mother Superior for permission to walk to the corner grocery store? While most of my female classmates wanted to be just like Sister, my seven-year old mind knew without a shadow of a doubt that I would never, ever live in those hot medieval clothes. Later, my twelve-year-old psyche knew it could never offer an unqualified, "Yes, Mother," or "Yes, Father" to the nuns and priests I had come to realize walked on very clay feet at a very young age.

I am sorry to say that disenchantment with clerical imperfection disguised as virtue tainted my relationship with the church. I was angry. Disillusioned. Alienated. Dismayed by the hypocrisy I witnessed again and again practiced by priests and nuns in my blue-collar neighborhood and inner-city high school. I became a religious rebel.

Armed with then unshakable Catholic biases, I went off to

Immaculata College where I, of all people, was placed in an honors theology class! And it was there, compliments of Dr Donald Stevens, in a conservative women's college where we actually had to wear dresses to class during my freshman year, that I learned to read the Gospel with my intelligence on full alert. Evelyn Mattern, then Sister Evelyn Joseph, I.H.M., included selections from the King James Version of

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URGENT APPEAL

Every year, SEPA/WOC asks those of you who share our commitment to full partnership in ministry for money to keep publishing *Equal wRites* and to carry on our various witness and outreaches, including our web site, www.sepawoc.org. This year, we've decided to include an envelope in this mailing rather than to mail a separate letter, and we encourage you to send a check now, as you have so generously done in the past. If we are to keep *Equal wRites* alive, our treasury will require an **immediate** and **substantial** infusion of funds. After we pay for this issue, our balance will not be adequate to send you the next. This will be a busy year in Pennsylvania (see lead article) and we want to use our financial and human resources to support the ordinations here. We also want to work on involving more people, especially younger ones, in all our activities. We don't take much of this world's financial resources (see our annual report on page 7) but we do need some, and we rely on our faithful readers to make this work possible. If the envelope is missing, send your contribution to our treasurer, Marianne Jann, 49 Driscoll Drive, Ivyland, PA 18974. Thanks so much!

Regina Bannan, president

the Bible among our readings in freshman honors English. I was hooked, in spite of myself, and began reading the Bible and devouring theology books.

I maintained an uneasy and critical alliance with Catholicism. I was married in the church, baptized my four children, and sent them to Catholic school. It wasn't until my mid-thirties, however, that the huge abyss separating what I read in the Bible and what I experienced in church began to close. At St. Vincent de Paul parish, I found priests and the people of God working, albeit imperfectly, toward the kingdom of God. Church, for the very first time in my life, actually "worked." It began to make sense. The more I attended church, the more I wanted to attend church. I wanted to learn as much as I possibly could about God. I wanted to live the way God wanted us to live. I felt called to teach and preach the Gospel to the extent that I enrolled in the Lutheran Theological Seminary and pursued a Master of Divinity.

But alas, even at St. Vincent's, something was lacking. Although the priests did care about the girls and women in the parish, and took every opportunity to place them in positions of leadership, they allowed their hands to remain tied by the implacable sexist dictates of the hierarchy. Here I was, like many other women, called to ministry by both God and by members of my own community, and the guys with the mitres and staffs did their very best to exorcise me of a gift from God. My comrade-in-arms Maria Marlowe has called the refusal of the hierarchy to acknowledge the vocations of women "spiritual abortions."

Through my participation with the Women's Ordination Conference, I came into contact with ordained women priests such as Judy Heffernan of Philadelphia, Mary Rammerman and Denise Donato and their Rochester miracle church, Spiritus Christi. I also met Patricia Fresen, a bishop of the Roman Catholic Womenpriests movement. From these brave, fearless, dedicated women, and many other holy and dedicated women, I learned that all things are, indeed, possible with God. I learned that the Holy Spirit will blow where she will, and no man, no imperfect human being, can contain, direct, handle, manipulate or deter God. God will be who God will be. God will act the way God chooses to act.

So, and this is a big SO!!, I, along with eleven other women will be ordained in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. as Romancatholic Womenpriests by Bishops Christine Mayr-Lumetsburger, Gisela Forster, and Patricia Fresen on July 31, 2006. I do this with eyes wide open, knowing well that my ordination will be regarded as both illicit and invalid by many of my brother priests and most of the male bishops. However, I also know that sixty-eight per cent of all Roman Catholics believe that women should be ordained. I derive great com-

fort from this statistic and from the many good and faithful Catholic people I ministered to at my clinical pastoral experience site who, to a man and woman, told me that they saw no reason why women should not be ordained in the Roman Catholic church.

Our church needs to be reformed. It needs to be retrained, retooled, and reformatted so that it "works" for all of the people of God. By not including women in ministerial positions, the church, as described by Joan Chittister, stumbles along on one leg, sees with one eye, and hears with one ear. It is half a church with half a mind and half a vision. An institution cannot be holy without being whole. Ordaining women will restore the original grand vision of the church where there is neither male nor female for all are one in Christ Jesus.

Eileen McCafferty DiFranco is a wife, mother of four, registered nurse and candidate for ordination as a Romancatholic Womanpriest. If you are interested in attending the upcoming women's ordinations, in Pittsburgh, contact her at leotcat@aol.com

SPRING

I forgot grape hyacinth
its communion of little bells

I forgot deep belly breath
under a hopeful sky

I forgot I forgot
wide-legged walk
air in my eyes how could I?
forgot my palms
my whole neck

Re-member me earth
teach me again my life

...Cassie MacDonald

Cassie MacDonald lives and writes in Philadelphia, and practices peace in and with Camden with the Sacred Heart Peace community. To get a copy of her newly-published chapbook How the Light Gets In, e-mail her at peacecatphilly@yahoo.com

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

**“ORDINATION AND APARTHEID”:
A RESPONSE**

Marian Ronan’s *Equal wRites* article, “Ordination and Apartheid,” refers to two speeches in which analogies between racial apartheid and sexism in the church were made. Marian begs to disagree with the speakers who put forth similarities between the two isms. I did not experience either speech, but think that it is valuable to make analogies between racial apartheid and sexism in the Catholic church. For me, using comparisons like this may help to convince the average person in the pew, ordained clergy, and the hierarchy in power, of the serious nature of gender bias or sexism within the Catholic church.

Since my young adult years in the 1960s I have been well aware of the civil rights movement in the US, racial bigotry within churches, schools and the workplace, as well as the misery caused by the law of apartheid in South Africa. Therefore, I easily see correlations between apartheid or segregation enforced by the state and sexism enforced by the church. To me the analogies in question have little to do with the fact that few women of color are members of the women’s ordination movement or whether or not the speaker’s race is relevant when speaking of racism or sexism. Nor do I think it matters that some suffragettes spoke harshly of Christian churches and were racial bigots themselves as they slogged through institutional sexism and all kinds of abuse to procure the vote for women.

But any such discussion does have a lot to do with how the characteristics of apartheid (legalized racism) that she mentions are defined as they apply to sexism in the church: *murder, torture, sexual assault, arbitrary detention, and massive imprisonment*. While Catholic apartheid today—female oppression or religiously sanctioned sexism—is usually less physically damaging than mentally and spiritually debilitating, it hasn’t always been this way. Plenty of women over time have died for being female in a man’s religious world. Though physical pain can be horrific, is it always worse than emotional, mental or spiritual pain? Some who have suffered physical torture lived through it because they retained their self worth and inner connection to the Holy One. If the latter are taken, however, is the suffering comparable to physical torture? Martin Luther King thought long and hard about this very concept when he decided to take the civil rights movement into northern cities. He said, “We are here [in Chicago] today because we are tired. Yes, we are tired of being lynched physically in Mississippi and we’re tired of being lynched spiritually and psychologically in Chicago...”

Those on the short end of the sexism stick know that murder is committed in the church when eucharistic celebrations are left to die for lack of male celibate clergy. Vocations to the priesthood are put to the sword when women (and married or gay men) are forbidden ordination. Parish communities are eradicated when bishops close them in order to pay off lawsuits. Banning inclusive language and the solace it gives is the murder of a just language in the service of power. Biblical female presbyters and Mary Magdalene are killed

by redefinition or defamation. Academic freedom is slain as discussions of gender issues, feminist theology and sexuality are forbidden and loyalty oaths required. Torture in the church takes the form of verbally beating down women, of wounding their spirits, of cutting out their voices (tongues) from official preaching and teaching. Whole communities are tortured when they are required to pay compensation on behalf of sexually abusive clerics even as bishops lie about the presence of pedophiles in those same communities. The male pedophile is given more consideration than the victim or the parish community and “the screws” are put to the victims instead of the bishops or Pope. Many women are in the tortured employ of the church, trying to be true to their service, yet having to be ever watchful of their words and actions so as not to be fired (from their jobs, not burned at the stake).

The enforcement of Catholic dogmas based on the idea that women are incomplete, impure, and a lesser class apart from men is a form of sexual assault. It has gone on for centuries and seems to continue virtually unquestioned by average Catholics. Otherwise how can this go unchallenged? Catholics do not stand for sexual discrimination in the “secular” world now thanks to the bravery of women who endured on-the-job torture while working in “male” jobs during the past thirty years. (I encourage you to see the remarkable movie *North Country*, which tells the story of female mine workers and their landmark judicial suit, one that set a legal precedent for equitable working conditions for women in all types of jobs.) While church communities may turn a blind eye on torture in the church, innumerable girls and women have been and are actually physically sexual assaulted by clergy. Count me among those who have been so assaulted. Yet I cannot prove it to anyone let alone a court of law, so clever was the perpetrator.

Any woman “uppity enough” to step in line to be ordained along with men is always put out of line, detained and removed by police if she resists. Likewise women are restrained from wearing priestly garb. If the numbers of women protesters increased and crossed the line into vocal demon-

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GOOD-BYE...AND THANKS

Equal wRites announces with regret the resignations as of this issue of regular columnist and book review editor **Marian Ronan** and calendar coordinator **Cassie MacDonald**.

Marian’s distinctive, prophetic voice, her intelligence, wisdom, and wry sense of humor, (see p.10 this issue) and her well-organized book review section (pp. 13-15) have been integral parts of *Equal wRites* for the seven years I have served as editor.

Cassie’s carefully-compiled local calendar, in addition to occasional articles and poems (see p. 2 this issue) have been valued and regular features of the newsletter for nearly as long.

EqualwRites thanks Marian and Cassie for jobs well done, and is delighted both have agreed to continue as occasional contributors.

Karen B. Lenz

ORDINATION AND APARTHEID

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strations at male ordinations, I feel sure that they would be handled roughly and detained like those who protested unjust civil laws in the "sit-ins" of the 1960s.

To keep fifty per cent of humanity out of the priesthood in the Catholic church is massive imprisonment. But this number is actually higher since men as well as women are captive inside derelict didactical church walls. Walls that most fail to recognize as a jailing of the mind. Any who do finally see light through the bars often find it difficult to escape. To leave would amount to loss of the sacramental life they know, love and count on. Others can't take the dysfunction anymore, lose hope of positive forward change, refer to themselves as Recovering Catholics, and become embittered unless they find other inclusive nurturing communities.

We have all read suffering stories like these before, but probably have not considered them even remotely as bad as the actual taking of a life or torturing of a body. Maybe the time has come for more of us to equate the deprivations endured by women, whether clothed in a blue Afghan burqa, black Saudi chador or the veil of Catholic sexism, with racism. All these women and more elsewhere around the world do suffer grave harm inflicted under the rule of apartheid sexist laws. It seems past time for Catholics to recognize this suffering, then face the forces of discriminatory power eye-to-eye and demand equity for women in the Catholic church. It seems past time to clean our own house before trying to be a beacon of love and life to the rest of the world.

Rosemary Luckett

Long-time supporter of equality for women, artist Rosemary Luckett lives in the woods near Manassas, Virginia and is represented by Touchstone Gallery in Washington, D.C. In between sculpting and collaging images, she writes, gardens and cuddles new grandbabies.

PARISH MISREPRESENTED?

To the Editor:

Although this response comes well after the publication of Rev. Bernard Callahan's piece about the Church of the Beatitudes and his comments regarding his former parish. I feel a response is necessary to clarify some of his assertions, at least to indicate that his perceptions are not shared by all those who are familiar with the parish. Even though Rev. Callahan does not identify the parish by name, I, and I imagine a number of readers, can readily identify the parish he references.

In regard to Rev. Callahan's assessment that Voice of the Faithful was marginalized, I must point out that significant numbers of parishioners became and remain leaders in VOTF and large numbers support VOTF through membership, financial contributions, and participation in various forums, all of which have been and are encouraged by the parish, so much so that recently an announcement regarding VOTF was made at each of the Sunday masses. Early meetings of VOTF were held in parish buildings, and according to a member of the leadership team, the only reason the venue was changed was because the VOTF leadership, not that of the parish, did

not want to in any way compromise the parish.

As for the response to the Iraq war, the parish as a corporate body did not take a stand; however, it did not because the sense of the parish could not be determined, a problem more with a decision-making process poorly equipped to deal with fast-moving events than a reluctance to come forward. Many parishioners took and continue to take an active role in opposing the war, and the peace and justice ministry is again mounting an educational and motivational series regarding the ongoing abomination. As for making a parish-wide stand, new mechanisms are being developed that will enable a swifter response to emerging issues.

As for the last two assertions neither are substantiated or in any way a full rendering of how things were and are. Yes, the liturgy was changed, and remains a source of pain for some parishioners; however, the motivation ascribed by Rev. Callahan is limited and problematic. And as for failure to be in solidarity with our gay community, I know from my own experience that we strive to be inclusive and supportive in many ways, too many to enumerate in this response.

Are we a flawed community? Yes. Do we always get it right? No, but we are striving to grow in God's love and compassion and to further the Kingdom now.

Mary Ellen Graham

Social Worker, Face to Face

Adjunct Professor, University of the Sciences of Philadelphia

Co-Chair, Singles Committee, Blueprint to End Homelessness Philadelphia

PRO-CHOICE AND PRO-LIFE

Dear Editor,

The Pro Life/Pro Choice debate is an emotional issue. I would like to provide some statistics from the organization that I think is doing the most to prevent abortions. This is the 2005 report of Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas.

"Our 10 health care centers have seen a record 106,000 visits, providing over 58,000 women, men and teens with a method of birth control, breast and cervical cancer screening, and testing and counseling for sexually transmitted infections...In Harris county alone, there are 14,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. Our HIV counselors are out in the community day and night, reaching people who are most at risk for contacting HIV with testing and counseling that could mean the difference between life and death!"

"Just say No" is not an effective means of birth control.

Sincerely,

Mafalda Faillace

League City, Texas

Editorial Board of *Equal wRites*

A Publication of SEPA/WOC

Editor: **Karen B. Lenz**

Regular Columnists: **Mary Byrne, Judith A. Heffernan, Jim Plastaras**

Editorial Assistant: **Magda Elias**

COR (Catholic Organizations for Renewal)/ Philadelphia CORNER

Conventional wisdom has it that if you tell a lie long enough and often enough you forget it is a lie and start believing it yourself.

The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church (the boys in Rome, as Marian Ronan calls them) has been telling a lot of lies for a very long time now.

The biggest (and most arrogant) lie is that the church's hidebound authoritarian and secretive structure and egregious misappropriation of authority are the will of God. Equally outrageous is the assertion that Jesus sanctions the church's cruel and insensitive mistreatment of gay and lesbian members of his body, or wants divorced parents and individuals barred from his table, or desires that women and married men be prohibited from ministering in his name.

Painful and patent lies whose untruth is obvious to anyone with even a nodding acquaintance with the lovingly inclusive Jesus of the Gospel; lies which have inflicted terrible hurt on millions. The most charitable spin we can put on this is that the hierarchy has begun to believe its own lies.

It is to confront and put an end to these lies, to demand reform, and to reclaim our church, that groups and individuals from the Philadelphia area, including SEPA/WOC, banded together to form the coalition COR/Philadelphia. Other COR groups include: Call to Action-Philadelphia, Catholic Parents Network of The Delaware Valley, CCS, Dignity/Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Catholic Worker, among others.

As Martin Luther King said in another context we must learn to live together as brothers or perish separately as fools.

COR/Philadelphia STATEMENT ON SEMINARIES

COR/Philadelphia issued the following statement at its quarterly meeting on December 12, 2005.

The Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education released the long awaited "Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders" on November 29, 2005. The Pope approved this instruction and ordered it to be published. This is COR/Philadelphia's response to the Vatican statement:

The Pope and the Vatican hierarchy know that gay men have served the church faithfully for generations as priests and bishops. In stating that gay men are not suitable candidates for the priesthood, they discount the contribution of these gay men who are faithful and celibate seminarians and priests, and make them scapegoats. The instruction from the Congregation for Catholic Education, which oversees seminary education throughout the world, states that "the specific question ... whether to admit to the seminary and to holy orders candidates who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies," is "made more urgent by the current situation." The present attack on homosexual people by the Vatican has been prompted by the scandal caused by the criminal sexual activity of Catholic clergy and the subsequent criminal conspiracy by the hierarchy to cover up the devastating crimes. The proposed campaign to purge the seminaries of gay men is a smokescreen and diversionary tactic. It diverts attention from the hierarchy's culpability, and introduces confusion

into the search for the real causes of the sexual abuse scandal among the Catholic clergy. The Vatican instruction on gay men as suitable candidates for the priesthood divides the people of God and wields the swords of discrimination and suspicion, rather than the plowshares of peace and justice.

COR/Philadelphia is committed to uncovering and correcting the real causes of the sexual abuse scandal within the Catholic church. We recognize the effort to blame gay priests for what it is: a diversionary tactic that creates one more group of victims. Cardinal Bevilacqua's own commission concluded that the sexual abuse suffered by the victims of Catholic clergy was not because gay men were priests but because pedophile priests victimized children and teenagers, often after their bishops became aware of their offenses. We will not be diverted from uncovering and correcting the real causes.

The Vatican instruction also states that "one must in no way overlook the negative consequences that can derive from the ordination of person with deep-seated homosexual tendencies." COR/Philadelphia now stands in solidarity with the thousands of gay Catholic priests who are living in faithful and celibate service to the people of God. We stand with you, as you must now stand in quiet solidarity with the hundreds of thousands of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Catholic people who have suffered the oppression of the official Catholic church for generations.

In the concluding paragraphs of the instruction, the Vatican warns that "it would be gravely dishonest for a candidate to hide his own homosexuality in order to proceed ... toward ordination ... such a deceitful attitude does not correspond to the spirit of truth, loyalty and openness that must characterize the personality of him who believes he is called to ... the ministerial priesthood." Ironically, the very spiritual and human qualities that the Vatican demands of gay men who are called to the Catholic priesthood are the very qualities that, when embraced with love and authenticity, have allowed gay Catholic priests to serve God's church with the special gifts God has instilled in them. No gay man who rejects his authentic creation by God as a homosexual person can ever find the spiritual and human happiness and fulfillment that comes from self-acceptance and authenticity. Some gay Catholic men will reject who they really are to embrace the Catholic priesthood in fear, secrecy and with empty souls.

The Gospel of Luke 19: 40 says, "*Some of Pharisees said to Jesus: "Rebuke your disciples; tell them to keep quiet," Jesus replied: "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."*" We shall not remain silent. The members of COR/Philadelphia give voice today to the stones yearning to cry out in pain. What the hierarchy has done to you is unjust and their reasons for forbidding gay Catholic men to become priests are wrong.

Catholic Organizations for Renewal is a community of faithful reformers who come together to find nourishment and support for our own spirituality. We struggle to remain true to Gospel values, and we invite Catholics of integrity, justice and peace to join our struggle to bear witness to the Gospel in light of the recent statements of the Vatican. We look to serve God's people by raising consciousness and inviting discussion on issues where the official teachers have attempted to stigmatize a whole class of Catholic people and to prevent the movement of God's revelation in the goodness and authenticity of openly gay priests and seminarians and their tradition of holy service to the people of God.

COR EVENTS

Individuals and groups interested in church renewal are cordially invited to attend COR meetings at 430 W. Jefferson St. Call 215 232-7823 for schedule.

Call To Action-Philadelphia

Saturday, March 18 and March 25—Lenten Lectures

“How Can Contemporary Theology Relate to Christian Spirituality?” with Fr. Michael Scanlon, OSA, at Collenbrook United Church, Drexel Hill, 8:45-10:30 am.

First Sunday of the Month—Worship

Jean Donovan Maryknoll House, 6367 Overbrook Avenue, 10 am. Information on these and organizational meetings, 215 752-7493.

Community of The Christian Spirit (CCS)

First, Second, Fourth, Fifth Sundays of the Month—Worship Elkins Park, 10:15 am; **third Saturday** at 5:15 pm. Information: 215 572-5623.

Dignity/Philadelphia—Sunday Worship

St. Luke and the Epiphany Church, 7 pm. For information on these and other Dignity programs, call 215 546-2093.

Philadelphia Catholic Worker

Thursdays, Liturgy and Potluck 6 pm, 430 W. Jefferson St. Call to confirm during March, 215 232-7823.

SEPA/WOC (Southeastern Pennsylvania Women’s Ordination Conference)—Monthly core committee meetings with liturgy For information on time and location, call 215 545-9649
Holy Thursday Service And Witness; Ordination Day Eucharistic Liturgy see box p.1 for details

2006 ARCHEOLOGICAL CALENDAR, MAP, CARDS STILL AVAILABLE

“Were women ordained as deacons, priests, and bishops in the early church?” Dr. Dorothy Irvin’s “THE CALENDAR: The Archeology of Women’s Ministries in the Early Church 2006” answers this question again this year with a resounding yes, and backs it up with early church texts and archeological photos of representations of ordained women, as well as articles and biblical commentary. The calendar also features a map locating these women throughout the early Christian world.

Also available: 2004 and 2005 calendars, with different

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY Pilgrimage to Archaeological Sites of Women Officeholders in the Early Church



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photos, the “Rebound,” containing all photos from calendars since 2003 plus maps, articles, and Scripture meditations; as well as notecards, Christmas cards, bookmarks and the map of archeological sites, available in two poster sizes.

For information or order form and price list contact Irvincalendar@hotmail.com.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Friday, March 24

Sixth Annual Romero Lecture, Diana Hayes, JD, PhD, S.T.B. on “The Color of Money: Racism and the Economy” at 6:30 pm presented by the Romero Center at Rutgers-Camden. The day’s events, beginning at 12 noon, include a film screening of *Crash*, workshops, a panel discussion, and a private reception with Dr. Hayes for sponsors. Tickets are \$20/person. For information www.Romero-center.org or call 856 964-9777.

Wednesdays during Lent

“We The People. . . We The Church” Lecture Series with presentations by **Leonard Swidler, PhD**, Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue, Temple University. At Old St. Mary’s Church, 252 S. 4th St., 7:30 pm.

March 1: Can There Be A Spirituality of Democracy?

March 8: Democracy in the Early and Medieval Catholic Church

March 15: The Five “Copernican” Turns of Vatican II

March 29: Creating A “Constitution” for Your Parish?

April 5: An Ideal Parish Constitution Analyzed

For information, 215 923-7930.

ANCHOR FINALE

After nearly twenty years of providing contemporary spirituality programs, ANCHOR (A Non-Denominational Community Harvesting Our Resources) will sponsor its final program on May 19, 2006.

According to the letter announcing the groups’s closing program, “The ANCHOR story began twenty years ago when friends, engaged in the study of Scripture, theology, and faith development, gathered to break bread together and to nurture a quest for a holistic and contemporary spirituality. We shared sacred stories as well as hopes, dreams, and visions. Emerging from these agape experiences was a deepened awareness of the ever-present, creative power of community. This awareness both blessed and challenged our spiritual journey and, consequently, we embraced a dream of creative action...”

“Why, then, are we now ending ANCHOR’s journey? At its inception, ANCHOR was unique in the community in that there existed few interfaith groups offering similar enrichment programs. Happily, times have changed. The number of centers of learning that offer excellent programs similar to our own has grown. For this reason, among others, there is a consensus among our members that it is time for ANCHOR to draw to a close.”

ANCHOR invites its friends to join together on May 19 from 9:30am-1pm for a time of celebration, remembrance and sharing at their final program, which will be held at Abington Friends Meeting in Jenkintown. Sr. M. Elizabeth Clark, SSJ, will speak on “Transformation and Hope in These Challenging Times.” Participants should bring a bag lunch and a dessert to share. Beverages will be provided.

Other ANCHOR spring events in this final season include “The Three A’s of Aging with Grace,” presented by Sr. Anna L. Schuck, SSJ., on March 31, and “Reconciliation: Stones of Race, Reconciliation and Healing,” presented by Rev. Linda Noonan on April 28. For information, call 215 233-4929.

MOTHER-DAUGHTER TEAM PREPARES FOR HOLY THURSDAY

BE A WITNESS

by *Maureen Tate*

I have been a supporter of WOC and its vision of a renewed priestly ministry for more years than I'd like to think. As a young woman I purposefully and hopefully studied theology, worked in campus ministry, was active in youth ministry and facilitated family liturgies and religious education at the parish level, in order to do my part to open up new models for women in ministry. I was convinced that enough study and consciousness-raising work would bring about a real change in the position of women in the church. As one child after another came along I believed that my daughters would someday have ordination among their vocation choices. From their earliest years my three daughters and son accompanied me to the WOC Holy Thursday witness outside the cathedral. We amused family members, parishioners and a series of pastors with this annual tradition.

How many more years? The years have certainly taken their toll. My daughters are now young women and my hope has been transformed into rage at the abuse of power, the sin of patriarchy at the heart of the church, the vacuum of spiritual leadership, the willful rejection of women's gifts and the idolatrous thinking that perverts our eucharistic theology. Enough!

There is nothing new about women's call to ministry. Women have been proclaiming the good news and responding to the call from the very beginning and have faithfully taken up the work of building the community of God. However, the injustice against women, perpetuated by the Catholic church in maintaining its two-tiered view of humanity, has repercussions beyond whether women can take their rightful place behind the altar. The church's refusal to acknowledge the full personhood of women, made in the image of God, has led to oppressions of women around the world. The many forms of abuse of women, from sex trafficking and the spread of AIDS to domestic abuse, needs to be laid at the feet of our Catholic hierarchy and its refusal to embrace the feminine face of God.

Are there others who say "enough!?" We need a "mass"

of those who have had enough. We need to stand and speak together. We do not ask for what is already ours. We are called. We are priestly people. The stakes are now too high and it is time to speak truth to power. Be a witness.

Nothing new! Women RE-Claiming Priesthood

Holy Thursday Witness

April 13, 2006 9am

Across from the Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul.

18th and the Parkway

COUNT ME IN

by *Laura McHugh*

From as early as I can remember, the Thursday before Easter meant following my mother down to the cathedral on the parkway for the WOC Holy Thursday witness. Over the years, my understanding of this annual event has grown and matured. I have since participated in various other sponsored programs, and most recently attended my first SEPA/WOC core committee meeting.

While I have continued to attend the Holy Thursday witness with my mother, I find myself, particularly this year, faced with a very different set of expectations. It is becoming clear to me that I have not given serious thought to my own spiritual beliefs in quite some time.

What I find most disturbing is that I am realizing that there is very little about the traditional Catholic church that I find personally compelling. It seems that the values that I understood and latched onto as a child, values such as community, service and compassion, appear less and less the focus of the dominant Catholic church. Indeed, the message of Catholicism presented to women has become so jumbled, particularly in my own head, that it is surprising to me that anyone of my age group could relate at this point, male or female!

In turn, I find myself responding to opportunities that my mother and groups such as WOC and the Grail present, not only to support my mother, but perhaps to challenge myself to think more creatively, more passionately about my spirituality. While the mainstream Catholic church has become almost untouchable for me in its rigidity, the women's ordination movement continues to evolve and relate to the Catholic faith community on the most basic *human* level. Maybe that is why I will continue to attend the WOC Holy Thursday witness. In the end, maybe that human connection, which I find almost non-existent in the traditional Catholic church, is really what I am searching for after all. Maybe through my witness, through my support of my mother and her struggle, I will recognize and understand my own spiritual calling. Be a witness.

Maureen Tate is a member of the National Leadership Team for the US Grail and director of the Grail Women's Institute for Social Transformation. Maureen is a member of St. Francis De Sales parish in West Philadelphia.

Laura Tate McHugh is director of the Americorps of Youthbuild Philadelphia Charter School in North Philadelphia. Laura lives in West Philadelphia and grew up attending St. Frances de Sales parish.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Southeastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference

As of December 31, 2005

Beginning cash balance 1/1/05 \$2,205

Revenues:

Advertisements 175

Conference 4,034

Stoles 495

Unrestricted 5,328

Revenues received as of 12/31/05 10,032

Expenses:

Conference Expense 4,550

Donations 50

Postage & Delivery 452

Printing 4,749

Web Hosting 95

Expenses as of 12/31/05 9,896

Cash Balance as of 12/31/05 **\$2,341**

GIVING UP LENT

by *Mary Byrne*

Every year it happens like clockwork. Lent arrives and I get confused. On the one hand, I actually like Lent (although *lik-ing* Lent in some purgative circles might furrow a few brows). To borrow the imagery of the poet, David Whyte, Lent is the place of “silence and winter” that bares the soul of its distractions and in the absence makes way for some new sense of presence.

On the other hand, Lent is burdened (as is Christianity) with a two-thousand-year-old obsession with suffering. Although there are many spiritual benefits to accepting the harsh reality of suffering in life, the idea of courting suffering precisely to reap those benefits is ludicrous. One can’t chase after the desert experience; it arrives in its own time. Which is what I like about Lent—surrendering all pretensions regarding self-indulgence vs. self-infliction in exchange for not knowing what lies beyond the desert. How often have I fallen through the cracks of Lenten piety only to finally bow to its mystery and arrive on the other side of my life. I think that is called resurrection.

This year, I have decided to forego the confusion and give up Lent for Lent. That is to say, exchange the “suffering” of Lent that stalks my memory for the less conspicuous “silence and winter” of Lent that stirs my imagination. This is the Lent that recently chased down a friend of mine with a barrage of questions challenging the relevance of Lenten symbolism in our time. In this era of politicized religion, “What do we do,” she asks, “with the profound and familiar images of Holy Week?” What is the meaning of the cross in a political climate that lobs religion like a hand grenade? How do we re-imagine the desert, the loneliness, the temptation, the entry into Jerusalem, the ridicule, the pain, the betrayal, the empty tomb, and the mystery in order to resurrect a gospel of peace and justice?

Unwittingly, my friend put me on the path to the desert. Yes, here was the chance to resist the temptation of blindly giving in to another Lent without meaning. Would I risk the wilderness of desecration for the possibility of re-imagining a new sense of sacred for our times? Without hesitation, I wrote her back immediately daring to take up the cross.

So, what about the cross? One of my least favorite symbols. I once heard a story about a priest being followed down the street, into a drug store, then down the toothpaste aisle by a very old, bent-over Jewish woman. She had apparently followed him right from the church and was determined to get his attention. In a very exasperated voice—as if she had been wanting to say something for a long time she wagged her finger and exclaimed, “I’ve been meaning to tell you about that crucifix ...Great message, terrible logo!”

Ditto on that. Yet, I can’t ignore the pervasiveness of the cross across the generous spectrum of world spiritualities. What does this universal symbol mean and how does it relate to the mission and message of Jesus the Christ?

In Celtic spirituality, the cross represents the meeting place of the human (vertical) and the divine (horizontal). This, I think, gets closer to the truth of both the cross and crucifixion. It symbolizes the intersection of the human-divine relationship. But, more important than the location is the deeper meaning that in order for us to arrive at that point we must surrender. Give it up, whatever it may be, that distracts us

from the path to the divine and from living our lives to the fullest. I am reminded of Jesus’ self-understanding that he is the way to the Way and that way meant accepting the human condition. And, if all this sounds ambiguous, well I have come to believe that therein lies our real “cross”—to live our lives in search of that place within us where the human and the divine are revealed. It is a relentless and flawed adventure made all the more difficult by our insistence on perfection that is not human and on punishment that is certainly not divine.

In the classroom, I don’t speak about “Jesus dying for our sins.” I speak about Jesus dying out of compassion for the poor, the disenfranchised, for the spiritually wounded, for the vagaries and vicissitudes of the human condition. He lived his life to the fullest by walking down the road of prophetic reform right into Jerusalem. When he left Bethany where Mary anointed him, he knew that he was heading toward trouble just as certainly as Martin Luther King knew his fate when he marched into Selma. But he went anyway (as did Martin) because that is what his life required of him. And a few days later, with pain and death approaching footsteps in the Garden, his very human soul leapt across the chasm of fear into divine grace. With the words “Thy will be done,” Jesus surrenders his hesitations and takes up his cross. That is to say, he finds that place where human and divine meets as one.

When I think of the cross as surrender to the greater reality of fullness of being, I see that it is in my life all the time. Demanding and yet simple, surrender is not maudlin. It is not gruesome. It is not abusive. It is only fearsome for it requires that I step outside the narrow confines of my own certainty into the spaciousness of Holy Mystery. That is a cross I can bear for indeed I have been shown the way.

Mary Byrne is a minister and writer. During Lent, she welcomes your re-imaginings on the meaning of Lent in your life in our times. Please send your reflections to marybyrne@yahoo.com. Thank you.

National Women’s Ordination Conference Membership Application

Name _____

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Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

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I am enclosing the following: Sustaining Member

\$40 Regular \$50 International \$20 Student/Low-Income

I am called to ordination. Yes No Maybe

I am willing to be a contact in my local area.

Yes No Project-specific only

Mail to: WOC, P.O. Box 2693, Fairfax, VA 22031-0693

LET'S TALK—NOT TWO TAKES ON PARISH INCIDENT

WOMEN NOT WELCOME

by *Maria Marlowe*

There are times when you have to think that God is presenting you with a golden opportunity—or, alternatively, an offer you can't refuse. This was one of those times.

A friend informed me that the call was out to Catholic men in Chester county who were considering the priesthood. The parish bulletin said all young adult men and their families were invited to an evening of discussion at, of all places, the parish where I'm registered. My friend asked me if I would go. How could I refuse? It was too easy.

That evening my friend, my daughter, and I drove to the parish center. As usual in these situations, I didn't know what to expect, but I'm getting better at surrendering everything to the Holy Spirit. We walked past an office where a priest, the parish's vicar, was sitting. He came out and asked if he could help us.

I told him that I was there for the meeting.

I honestly don't recall what happened after that, but I do remember my daughter stepping up to the plate and informing him that I was a member of the Women's Ordination Conference.

At that point, this recently ordained young priest became flustered. He explained, very nicely, that the evening was just for men and that he would be happy to talk to me at a later time.

I replied that I was merely going to sit there, not even ask questions or make comments. I only wanted to hear what the discernment process was like for others and how this priest would advise them.

He stated again that the evening was designated just for men and he would be happy to talk to me later.

I FEEL GYPPE

by *Marisa Marlowe*

I remember not wanting to go. It was Christmas break, I was still in my pajamas, my hair was a mess, I hadn't showered, and I was content to spend the evening with my cats and a good movie.

My mother was going to the parish center for a night of discussion about priesthood. Her friend was going with her, and he pretty much begged me to go too, for the sake of his sanity. My compassion got the better of me and I relented. I changed into some "real" clothes and put on a little makeup. (Let's be honest. This was, after all, a night generally directed at young men.)

All went well at first. As we were walking past an office, a young priest appeared, seemingly surprised at seeing two females (albeit accompanied by a man), and then ensued the exchange my mother wrote about. After awkward silences broken by awkward conversation, he sent us away explaining that he was sorry but the night was meant specifically for young men.

What? We were being kicked out?

Now there are a few things about me one should know to fully comprehend my shock (yes, shock). First, I was raised by a single mother who showed me that women have the strength and intelligence to be self-sufficient and, although men *are* great, they aren't necessary. Second, I went to a single-sex school for thirteen years. It was, as I like to call it, a breeding ground for self-confidence and assertiveness. Now I am being told by this priest that I am not allowed into a room where young men would discuss the priesthood.

As my mother and her friend walked away, I asked this

My friend then mentioned that it was not just for men, that the parish bulletin invited the families of these men as well.

That, the priest replied, was a typo. The night was intended strictly for men; families might be invited to another evening.

At that point I asked the obvious... "Does my being here make you uncomfortable?"

To which he replied, "Very uncomfortable."

I agreed to leave, but asked a favor of this man who was obviously caught between a rock and a hard place and trying to handle it as calmly and politely as he could. I asked him to pray for Roman Catholic women like myself who are called to priesthood because it's a lonely, frightening road and Roman Catholicism offers them nothing.

He said he would.

That night as I thought about this exchange, I wondered about an institution where even the presence of a woman "where she does not belong" sends shock waves through a person's system. It's not as though the room were filled to capacity—there were only a handful of men there. It was not as though I were going to disrupt or challenge anything. I made it clear I was there to listen to a Catholic priest talk about being a priest. That's it. Amazing, and sad. *They are all so afraid.*

So here's the promise, Lord: The next time I attend an evening of discussion—and I know there will be others—I promise you I won't stop to answer questions. In fact, I won't stop at all, not until I'm seated in the room—firmly seated in the room. And if I'm asked to leave....well, I'll trust you'll tell me what to do as you have told me so many times before.

Stay tuned. I might be writing about a similar incident again—only God knows from where.

priest if I could have a word with him privately.

I told him that I had never really felt as connected to the Women's Ordination Conference as my mother had. But being excluded from a discussion—a mere discussion—about the call to priesthood brought to light the unfairness with which I was being treated because I am not a man. *I didn't want to be a priest. I've been to discussions on everything from "The Ethics of Stem Cell Research" to "The Saint's Guide to Happiness."* Why couldn't I just sit in and listen? It sounds interesting.

Well, apparently this night was meant for people who were "serious" about the call to priesthood.

Yes, I said, but I have male friends who are considering it. Well, then, they should stop in themselves.

But, I continued, I feel like this is a "boys' only club." Was I in third grade?

Well, he said, I'm sorry you feel this way. OK.

I left feeling frustrated. On my way out, I mentioned to my young priest friend that I am a faithful woman of the Catholic church—and *I feel gyped*. I have never been denied *anything* on the basis of my sex. And now this—the first time—is with the institution that I rely on to foster my faith?

In his defense, he asked for my number so we could further "discuss" this issue and promptly called me a few days later. I have yet to return his call (not out of spite, but rather a packed schedule).

One thing I know for sure. I thank God I am not called to priesthood. That evening I got just a small taste of the anger and frustration I would feel if I were.

Maria Marlowe is a member of the core committee of SEPA/WOC. Marisa Marlowe is a junior at Fordham University.

INSOURCING THE FAITH

by Marian Ronan

In the January 23 issue of *The Nation*, a Tony Auth cartoon appears in which a Hindu holy man in an orange robe holds up a host before several pews full of people. The caption reads “CATHOLIC CHURCH EXPELS GAY PRIESTS. PRIESTLY DUTIES OUTSOURCED TO INDIA.”

Amusing as Auth’s cartoon is, it strikes me that the caption has the situation backwards. Priestly duties aren’t being outsourced, they’re being insourced, with increasing numbers of African and Asian priests, in particular, serving liturgical and leadership functions in US parishes.

I had occasion to think about this a while ago when I visited a parish near Berkeley hoping to hear the noted social activist pastor preach. Instead, a youngish Nigerian priest celebrated the liturgy and delivered a spirited sermon on the commandment to love one’s neighbor. As is so often the case, the majority of the congregation was women, in this case, working-class Latina and Filipina women. A large portion of the sermon focused on the obligation of wives to love their husbands.

I considered saying something to the priest on my way out about the implications of such an emphasis but decided not to. As a highly educated, economically privileged white woman, I was uncomfortable presuming to speak for the women of that congregation, however convinced I remain that it’s oppressive to lay the burden of Christian charity primarily on women.

My reluctance was not, I think, an attempt at political correctness, though it has come to me, during my fourteen years in majority black educational institutions, that knowing when to shut up is an asset. Rather, I suspect, it reflects my increasing awareness of the ethical complexity of the question of how white, middle and upper-middle-class American Catholics, perhaps especially white Catholic feminists, relate to black and brown and yellow priests from the Global South.

Perhaps it’s fair to begin by addressing this complex question from the point of view of the oppression of women. It seems likely that some, perhaps many, priests brought in from other countries to serve US parishes will, like my Nigerian homilist, have attitudes and even exhibit behaviors toward women much like the ones feminists have worked for years to eradicate. Whether these attitudes emerge from ethno cultural backgrounds far different from ours, or from the kind of theological training with which we are all too familiar, it

may be difficult not to perceive these men as patriarchal reinforcements. Since many of them come from countries which themselves have an inadequate supply of clergy, American Catholics may also be guilty of participating in a brain drain of indigenous leaders, though perhaps not one of our own choosing.

On the other hand, participating in a parish led by a priest from the Global South will constitute, for a good number of us, one of our first experiences of receiving pastoral leadership from individuals of a racial/ethnic background other than our own. And our brother and sister American Catholics of color, who have also often been deprived of the opposite experience—pastoral leadership by those of their own racial/ethnic background—may welcome it despite the attitudes of insourced clergy on sexuality and gender. It could be especially hard for white feminist Catholics to accept that some American Catholics, women included, consider racism to be more significant than, or at least no less significant than, gender oppression. The four hundred or so African priests currently ministering in the US is more than double the number of native-born African-American priests.

But the importing of Asian and African priests to serve US parishes is about more than the need of American Catholics of color to be ministered to by clergy of their own racial/ethnic background. It also signals one of the greatest changes in the history of Christianity, at least since the Reformation: the shift from a Euro-American to a global Christianity, and within that, a global Catholicism. Priests coming into the US from countries in the Global South are witnesses to this massive shift, reverse missionaries to what was once the Christian heartland.*

To grasp some of the implications of this new situation, consider these statistics: in 1900, eighty-two per cent of people professing to be Christian were European or American; in 2005, only thirty-five per cent of them are, and that figure would be even lower were it not for the forty million Latin American immigrants in the US. In 1960 there were between fifty and sixty million Christians in Africa, but in 2005 there were 380 million, almost half the population of the continent.

The reasons for this shift deserve an article of their own, but it seems that there is something about Christianity’s ability to be translated into diverse cultures that makes it especially useful to tribal and regional peoples struggling to come together in a larger political unity. The translation of the Bible in Nigeria by an English-speaking missionary created Union Igbo, the common language of that country today. Catholicism, because of its mediational/ sacramental theology, would seem to be especially good at integrating local cultures into its liturgy and pastoral care.

When many American feminist and reform Catholics think of the church in Africa or other parts of the Global South, we are perhaps primarily aware of the way that Catholic sex/gender teaching works to deprive the poor of reproductive choice, as well as condoms in the face of the AIDS epidemic. And make no mistake: these are serious problems. But this must not blind us to the fact that Catholic communities in the Global South are vibrant and growing. In majority Muslim countries, the roles played by women in Catholic congregations, though admittedly limited, are downright radical compared to those available to Muslim women at the

IN MEMORIAM

With gratitude for the lives of four extraordinary women—for their prophetic ability to tell the truth, for their courage in standing up (or sitting down) for what they knew was right, and for the ways in which their faithful witness changed our world. May their example strengthen our determination to do likewise.

PATTY CROWLEY	1913-2005
ROSA PARKS	1913-2005
BETTY FRIEDAN	1921-2006
CORETTA SCOTT KING	1927-2006

local mosque.

John Paul II, the man who dashed the hopes of so many women in the Catholic heartland, offered visionary leadership in the establishment of Catholic Christianity as a world religion. One of the tasks facing the church in this new century is to mediate between heartland Catholicism and burgeoning global Catholicism.

In the midst of this challenge, some priests from the Global South, insourced to staff American parishes, may very well hold positions on sexuality and gender that some of us will find troublesome or even intolerable. But they will also be experts in something many American Catholics need desperately to understand and value. Tony Auth's cartoon may make us laugh, or groan, but we ought to consider the possibility that we do, indeed, need to insource some aspects of the faith. God may know better what God is doing than we realize.

*Much of my discussion of global Christianity is drawn from Lamin Sanneh, "Why is Christianity, the Religion of the Colonizer, Growing so Fast in Africa?" The Santa Clara Lecture, Santa Clara University, May 11, 2005.

Marian Ronan is associate professor of contemporary theology and religion at the American Baptist Seminary of the West in the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA.

ARE YOU THEN A KING?

by *Jim Plastaras*

The title *king* applied to Jesus at the feast of Christ the King and different points in the liturgical year sounds quaint and anachronistic in an age when the few remaining kings are mostly figureheads. The point of this meditation on the Scriptures is to question whether the title Christ the King was ever without problems.

Jesus is called *king* in twenty-nine places in the Gospels, but the words always come from the mouth of others. Most of the occurrences are found in the account of the passion where the soldiers, chief priests and Pilate, accuse/mock Jesus for the claim to be King of the Jews. In two passages Jesus seems to accept the title, but with an understanding of *kingship* that is very different from that of his interlocutors.

When Pilate repeated his question, "Are you then King of the Jews?" Jesus answered: "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, *to testify to the truth.*" He describes his mission as that of *prophet* rather than *king*.

Upon entering Jerusalem before the passion, he acquiesces to the acclamation of the bystanders who cry out, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" When the Pharisees asked Jesus to silence them, he responded: "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." (Lk 19:40)

"This took place," Matthew explains, "to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, humble and riding on a donkey.'" (Mt 21:5) He comes a very different sort of king than the kings of the world.

In earlier Gospel passages, Jesus had unambiguously rejected the offered kingship:

Satan showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world, and said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.' Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only. (Lk 3:5-8)

[After the feeding of the five thousand,] "Jesus knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself." (Jn 6:15)

The ambiguity of the title *king* is really ambiguity about the meaning of the primary title: *Christ/Messiah/Anointed-One*. Popular religion looked for an *anointed king*, successor to the throne of David, who would restore the kingdom:

On hearing his words, some of the people said, 'Surely this man is the Prophet.' Others said, 'He is the Christ (Anointed One).' Still others asked, 'How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?' Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. (Jn 7:40-43)

In passages where Jesus does acknowledge himself as *Anointed-One/Christ/Messiah*, he is not talking about anointed *kingship*. Jesus presents himself at the beginning of his ministry as the Lord's *anointed prophet*: "He found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because *he has anointed me* to preach good news to the poor.'...He began by saying to them: 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'" (Lk 4:17-21)

When Peter acknowledged Jesus as the "*The Anointed One of God*," Jesus warned them not to tell anyone and began to speak of the suffering which the *Christ/Son of Man* must endure. (Lk 9:20) This is then followed by the Transfiguration, where Jesus appears together with—not David and Solomon—but Moses and Elijah, prototypes of the suffering *prophet*.

The fact that Jesus descended from David—which brings with it the association with kingship—was clearly of great importance to the early Christian community.

Paul begins his letter to the Romans saying that God had set him apart to preach the Good News "regarding his Son, who *as to his human nature was a descendant of David*, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead." (Rm 1:1-4)

Matthew and Luke, writing twenty to thirty years later, introduced their Gospels with genealogies and birth narratives to affirm that Jesus was indeed a descendent of David.

The head of the Jerusalem church during the early years was James, brother of the Lord. This is surprising since James was **not** one of the Twelve appointed by Jesus to be leaders of the new Israel. It would seem that James, as brother of Jesus and descendent of David, had prior claim to leadership over the mother church.

This stands in contrast to Jesus' own attitude toward his Davidic ancestry. Nowhere in the Gospel narratives does he present himself as *Son of David*, and he states quite clearly that community based on faith is now more important than family blood-line.

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother. (Mk 3:31-35)

Jesus was rejected by most of the Jewish people because he did not meet the expectations of the royal theology; he did not conform to their reading of messianic prophecies. The Gospels document how resistant the disciples were to give up dreams of shared glory with Jesus the Messiah-King.

When Jesus began to speak of the suffering and rejection, Peter took him aside to scold him: “Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!” (Mt 16:22).

They did not understand—or want to understand—what Jesus was telling them. They were concerned about who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Mk 9:34), and when James and John, the sons of Zebedee, asked Jesus to “let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory,” Jesus told them:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. (Mk 10:42-44)

These words should have put an end to the royal theology. Sad to say, the triumphal pretensions of the royal theology just won’t go away. When Christianity became a state religion, the church would not only adopt the empire’s hierarchical governance structure, but its leaders would adopt a lifestyle similar in many aspects to that of kings and princes. Privileges of office and titles of distinction would flourish, even though Jesus had said clearly:

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees . . . love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’ But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant.

The goal of the Women’s Ordination Conference must be not just the removal of exclusionary barriers, but the renewal of ordained ministry through return to the pristine model of servant-leadership given us by Jesus.

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.

BENEDICT XVI ON LOVE

by Gaile Pohlhaus

When reading through Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical “Deus Caritas Est” I was reminded that contemporary theologians use Thomas’ writing method and certainly it is found in the encyclical. (Retirement is wonderful; you can read things right away!)

Here are my reactions. The encyclical is Augustinian by way of Aquinas. The emphasis is on love as both feeling and choice. Although I am not a biblical scholar it seemed to me that the Pope was doing real theology and used exegesis as opposed to isogesis. He claims that the church first recognized the need for service with the appointment of deacons as recorded in *Acts* indicates that Christ did not found the church but the church in its reflection on its experience of Jesus saw that service (*caritas*) was essential. I wish the Pope had broadened his argument for the need of eros by recognizing that “man {sic} cannot live alone” means (in my opinion) that a community is necessary, not simply the community of heterosexual marriage.

His principal thesis that love of neighbor is grounded in love of God is compellingly and rigorously laid out. I am sorry that he did not include just as rigorous an argument to show that love of God is grounded in love of neighbor. The

encyclical is quite linear.

The encyclical also seems to be individualistic in that its emphasis on love of neighbor is more about individuals loving and having responsibility for other individuals. There is certainly reference to the more than one hundred years of social justice encyclicals but I saw very little mention of communities having such responsibility.

The official translation uses British, not American spelling which doesn’t really matter. For an encyclical which on the face of it is encouraging mutuality it would have been more appropriate to use non-gender-specific language. The original German and Latin use non-gender-specific words so in this case it is the translator who is at fault.

The encyclical is worth reading in its entirety, about thirty-four pages if you cut and paste from the official translation.

Gaile Pohlhaus is an independent theologian in the Church of Philadelphia.

SCHUSSLER-FIORENZA: WOMEN’S ORDINATIONS REINFORCE SYSTEM

First, a disclaimer. Much as I would have liked to, I did not attend the WOW (Women’s Ordination Worldwide) Conference last July in Ottawa. I did not hear the keynote presentations by Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether. And—here I take responsibility—I did not bother to obtain and read copies of their talks.

SEPA/WOC, which puts out *Equal wRites*, was well-represented at the conference however, and the September issue of this newsletter, ably guest-edited by attendee Mary Whelan, featured a lead article on the conference and a separate article with a detailed report of Radford Ruether’s presentation. “A split in the ranks” over the ordination of women—nine women were ordained, five as deacons and four as priests, on a boat on the St. Lawrence Freeway the day after the convention—was alluded to in the main article.

Still, I was startled—perhaps “shocked” is not too strong a word—to read last month excerpts of Schussler-Fiorenza’s talk.

The struggle of women to move into the present hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic church (by ordinations), the renowned feminist and Harvard professor said, runs the risk of reinforcing the very structure it confronts.

“BY CO-OPTING THE RITES, VESTMENTS, SELECTION PRACTICES, TITLES OF THE HIERARCHY, WE RISK TO RE-INSCRIBE THEM,” she said.

WOW. (No pun intended.) Strong stuff indeed.

I have two thoughts here. First of all, I rather agree with her. Women banned from the pulpits and halls of power need to use their enormous gifts to envision and practice new and better ways to be faithful followers of Jesus; they need to examine and thoroughly explore the notion of priesthood (I am not sure that we have done that on either a local or global level) before deciding to pursue, adapt or abandon it.

My other thought is that *Equal wRites*—and hopefully our entire movement for full equality in ministry—should be as much about open dialogue, about providing a forum for multiple points of view and opinions, and about the growth that results from such openness, as the institutional church is not. We must not ever be guilty of ignoring or shying away from opinions that do not fit our own agenda. To the extent that I did that by not investigating the total message of both keynote speakers at the Ottawa conference, I apologize.

*Karen B. Lenz, editor
(Audiotapes and DVDs of the presentations can be purchased online at www.wow2005.org.)*

Book Reviews

Acts of Faith, Acts of Love: Gay Catholic Autobiographies as Sacred Texts by Dugan McGinley. Continuum, 2004. 246 pp. Paper. \$26.95.

reviewed by *Mary E. Whelan*

Acts of Faith, Acts of Love is a scholarly yet readable book that uses the autobiographical writings of forty gay Catholic (or once Catholic) men as narratives. Dugan McGinley elegantly weaves these narratives together to provide a multi-dimensional picture of what it means to be gay and Catholic, a perspective that is sorely missing in the official teachings of the Catholic church. He attempts (and succeeds) in portraying what is meant by the term “gay Catholic identity” and yet manages to convey the “multiplicity and complexity” of this identity.

Acts of Faith, Acts of Love is part of a body of literature that is bringing “gay experience to bear directly on the ethical and theological assumptions underlying official church positions on homosexuality.” McGinley’s historical framework is that of the past thirty-plus years “since Vatican II and the Stonewall riots.” The work is born out of the author’s “quest to have my life experience taken seriously by my church, as I have taken the church seriously throughout my life.”

McGinley’s book explores in depth the schizophrenic nature of the current teachings of the Catholic church. However, it is not a diatribe. It is a balanced exploration of the “problem”: the mixed messages the Catholic church has sent to the Catholic faithful regarding homosexuality and how this impacts gays as well as the whole church community. While the church “respects” homosexual individuals, it “deplores” homosexual behavior. In the 1995 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* homosexual acts are described as “gravely disordered.” How has this come to be? McGinley addresses the complexities of this issue, the history and current state of affairs. I admire him for never becoming strident or despairing. He is firm, persistent, and never backs down from his premise: “My analysis of these texts reveals that Church teaching on homosexuality is not just inadequate but also injurious in the way it bifurcates human beings.”

I loved McGinley’s chapter “Orbiting the Catholic Axis.” The first sentence of this chapter is awesome: “Talking about religious identity is no less complicated an endeavor than talking about sexual identity.” The author tackles these topics which seem too unwieldy and massive to nail down and makes sense of. What does it mean to be Catholic, where does our identification originate, what does it mean to be gay and Catholic? Why is it so difficult to escape our identity? He universalizes this subject and helps me to sort out my own ambivalence about my identity as a Catholic, belonging to a church that marginalizes gays and women. What does it say about me that I continue to go to such a church? More about that later.

Why is it important to read this book? After all, if you are

reading this publication and this book review, chances are you already understand the ugliness of the sin of prejudice and exclusion. “In taking these stories seriously, as true respect demands, we Catholics come face to face with our own failures as the people of God.”

McGinley urges gay Catholics to “open the eyes of the church community to its own sinfulness, and thereby participate in a sort of institutional ‘examination of conscience.’” He holds us all to a higher standard, a responsibility to be part of the solution.

This is what I love so much about this book. As I personally teeter on the edge of leaving the church, I feel after reading this book that leaving is a cop out. McGinley does not really discuss this as an option as this is not the focus of the book. “Whenever the church excludes people from the eucharistic table, or communicates that there is a hierarchy among us in terms of gender, sexuality, vocation, lifestyle, etc., it runs the danger in participating in societal sins of injustice, the ‘sin of the world’... (which) prevents us from recognizing the other... as gift.” How profound.

The author makes a point of stating that he is looking for “a dismantling of oppressive categories...” He is not looking for the imposition of a homosexual or heterosexual norm but for full inclusion. Is this not what Catholic feminists have advocated? The current regime must be completely overhauled.

The two words that come to mind when I think of the current hierarchy are “fear” and “power.” The church basically fears “homosexual acts” just as it fears the feminine. Those who currently hold power, the (supposedly) celibate males, are not going to give up that power anytime soon. In reading this book, I became very agitated at the thought that some can exclude others from full participation. Who really does have that power? Where does that power come from? Am I participating in the corruption by standing by? What is my responsibility? While the author never points the finger, I have to ask myself these hard questions.

I wish I could be objective about this book. But I cannot. It is just too special. And I wish I could do it justice in this short space. So read this beautiful book yourself. Listen to the stories. This book is timely and important. It conveys a language and a point of view that you will not hear in other (official) places. It tells the truth that some are not willing to hear. *Acts of Faith, Acts of Love* convinces me that we ought to be a voice and witness for this truth, not keeping it to ourselves, but remaining persistent and convinced as Dugan McGinley is that “things can and eventually must change.”

Mary Whelan, a member of St. Vincent’s parish, is a social worker in the criminal justice system.

Good Catholic Girls by Angela Bonavoglia. Regan Books, Harper Collins Publishers, 2005.
328 pp. Paper. \$15.95.

reviewed by Joe Ruane

The subtitle of Bonavoglia's captivating book, "How Women are Leading the Fight to Change the Church," accurately identifies the theme of this history of the movement for the rights of women and laymen in the Roman Catholic church. The author wastes no time in the introduction positioning herself as a woman in a man's church, noting as well the failure of the secular feminist movement to see the fight of women in various religious traditions as part of women's fight for equality.

Good Catholic Girls gives voice to this struggle, introducing it with the courageous stand of the Erie Benedictines supporting Joan Chittister's right to speak at the Women's Ordination Worldwide conference in Dublin. The pages of this book are alive with friends I have come to know in the effort to reform the church. I see this review not as an opportunity to express my biases but to measure the objectivity of the author.

Bonavoglia takes a quick look at the ebb and flow of women's roles in the church from their devoted status at the time of Christ and the denigration and rise of Mary of Magdala, through their power and influence in the Beguines, to their degradation after the 1139 imposition of celibacy. She notes that the accomplishments of the fourteenth century female Doctors of the Church were discounted in the 1976 *Inter Insignores*, in which John Paul II's limited vision of women in liturgy resulted in the prohibition of women priests. In 1994 another scalding negative letter reserving priesthood to men only, *Ordinatio Sacerdotis*, further demonstrated the hierarchy's myopic fear of women as rule after rule, whether on birth control, infertility treatment, ordination of women, inclusive language, or whatever, drew major attention and condemnation. Despite its preoccupation with some aspects of sex, Bonavoglia tells us, the church failed to give the same attention to its own pedophile priests who were transferred from parish to parish to hide their transgressions. The church lost what little moral authority it had when episco-

pal cover-ups became the most profound level of the scandal.

Bonavoglia perceives VOTF, Voice of the Faithful, as conservative; her discussion of VOTF actions calls to mind Martin Luther King Jr.'s statement that "Gradualism is 'do nothingism.'" VOTF may well be changing, however, fighting for the right to have the Eucharist at its convention, to meet on church property, and to sit at the table in discussion with the hierarchy. These demands for a voice for laypeople echo Joan Chittister's identification of declericalization as the foundation for the church's renewal. Bonavoglia finds the work of women more critical than that of lay groups in the struggle for a systemic change in the American Catholic church.

In her chapter on "Sex, Priests, and Girlhoods Lost," Bonavoglia discusses the dispute regarding numbers of victims, especially female victims, of sex abuse by priests. Suffice it to say, she finds the numbers sickening. The crimes perpetrated by some four percent of the Catholic clergy against young boys and girls are truly an indictment of the hierarchy and clerical culture. Further, in Bonavoglia's view, the ambivalence of the hierarchy in condemning priests' sexual advances toward older female teens and women is consistent with actions of a church that sees women as second-class citizens. When a priest is having sex with a woman or making advances, there is always a power imbalance in the equation. The same chapter provides a solid history of SNAP (Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests).

In her discussion of the current situation of Catholic priests, some of Bonavoglia's observations are more helpful than others. She does not mention the morale problem that the sex abuse crisis has caused, or exacerbated, for many faithful priests.

Joseph W. Ruane, Ph.D. is dean, bachelor of religious, Global Ministries University, and professor of sociology and health policy, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia.

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This is My Story: Testimonies and Sermons of Black Women in Ministry. Edited by Cleophus J. LaRue. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005. 204 pp; \$24.95.

reviewed by **Marian Ronan**

Perhaps the creation of this volume was a penitential gesture by its editor, Cleophus J. LaRue, associate professor of homiletics at Princeton Seminary. LaRue acknowledges in his introduction that he himself, as a pastor, “did all in (his) power to see to it” (2) that black women were denied the pulpit. Recognizing his error, he now brings together life stories and sermons by thirteen distinguished black women in ministry in Protestant churches. His purpose in so doing is to inspire all women, to educate male pastors, and to inform seminary students and professors of “the courage, fortitude, and determination” of black women who have experienced God’s call (12).

The women in ministry profiled in *This is My Story* come from a wide range of locations and experiences. Nine of them are pastors serving Baptist, AME, UCC, Disciples, COGIC and independent churches, with a range of theologies to match. Four are professors or chaplains at seminaries. Several started out as military or prison chaplains. Though a number currently serve in the Northeast, others hie from Virginia, the Midwest, and Texas. While some pursued the ministry early in life, others turned to it from secular careers—publishing, engineering, and operatic singing, among others. And although a number draw support from womanist theology, a few bring a fairly androcentric hermeneutic to their ministry, albeit one that allows room for women preachers.

These diverse characteristics notwithstanding, certain themes run throughout the life stories collected in this volume. The first is that of call. This may seem a no-brainer: they’re women *called* to ministry, aren’t they? And for thousands of years, the God of Jews and Christians has worked God’s will by calling messengers. Yet it is striking how intense, central, and sometimes literal the sense of being called is for many of these women. So although for LaVerne M. Gill, the experience of “call,” as she writes it, was gradual, it came to Alison P. Gise as a voice that proclaimed, “Stop reading; I have called you to be a prophet” (142). And Alyson D. Browne received her call by falling to the floor unconscious as the voice of God told her that she would “preach or die.”(62). As the feminist theologian Mary McClintock Fulkerson has observed, knowing that a call is God’s doing and not one’s own is a much-needed support for women in a church or denomination opposed to their ministry.

The second theme that stands out in *This is My Story* is mentorship. For woman after woman, the inspiration and support of a mentor was crucial to achieving the ministry to

which she was called. For some, this meant role-modeling and encouragement from towering figures like Katie G. Cannon, Jacquelyn Grant, Samuel DeWitt Proctor, and Gardner C. Taylor; for others, from a parent, a pastor, or the wise women of a congregation. Some also detail the impact of counter-mentors who put debilitating obstacles in their way. In all cases, however, these women are quick to acknowledge that they did not get where they’ve gotten on their own.

The third theme that draws together the autobiographical pieces in *This is My Story* is the importance of seminary in the development of black women in ministry. In his introduction, Cleophus LaRue explains that because of the many roadblocks to the recognition of black women in ministry within black churches, an increasing number of black women undertake formal theological study. In 2003-04, for example, the number of black men exceeded the number of black women in accredited US seminaries and schools of theology by a mere nine per cent (350 students) (9). But seminary provides not only accreditation but also affirmation for black women seeking ordination, as a LaRue observes (9). For Claudette Anderson Copeland, for example, Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta was “the best opportunity of (her) entire life” (107), while Cynthia L. Hale “fell in love with ministry” at Duke (152). Furthermore, for a number of these writer-ministers, so significant was seminary that they stayed on for a second master’s degree, or a Ph.D. And the well-being of black women in ministry is influenced not only by going to seminary, but also by the presence there of black men as well; as LaRue observes, seminary-educated black pastors are more likely to welcome black women into ministry than are pastors who lack such preparation.

This is My Story will be of interest not only because of the self-portraits of distinguished black women in ministry that comprise its larger part but also because of the sermons that accompany each story. Besides being exemplary in themselves, these sermons are integral to the accomplishment of the volume’s stated purpose because black women are excluded less from ministry in general than from “preaching the gospel message and being a pastor to God’s people,” as Cecilia Green Barr puts it (36). Hearing these sermons preached would likely be an even more memorable experience than reading them. In manuscript form, however, they offer valuable alternative views of the individuals who crafted them. They also fill the reader with gratitude that no one has been able to prevent their distinguished authors from taking the pulpit and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Marian Ronan is associate professor of contemporary theology and religion at the American Baptist Seminary of the West in the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA. A slightly altered version of this review appeared in the winter 2006 issue of the journal, *The Living Pulpit*.

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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.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Holy Thursday April 13, 2006

Amos 5:24

by Judith A. Heffernan

Holy Thursday has always been my favorite holyday. The blending of Eucharist, ministry, and community has always renewed, inspired and challenged me.

For much of my adult life I have begun Holy Thursday by being at the Christ mass at the Cathedral in Philadelphia—or, more precisely—outside of the Cathedral/Basilica!

Each year I have been with people of all ages—from babes in arms to elderly needing some assistance and everyone in between. We have tried to witness to the church universal that the call of women to ALL ministries of the church should be recognized and affirmed.

We pray, sing, share, bless, reflect, cry and laugh. We honor the past, we celebrate the present and we make a leap of faith in the future.

We lovingly welcome everyone to join us and spend much time preparing a meaningful morning.

This year during our preparations for Holy Thursday we

learned of the death of Coretta Scott King.

I draw such great strength from her because my deepest fear is that I will become a bitter old lady who falls off the long-haul faithfulness wagon.

This week I read all I could about her, listened to many tributes. I am uplifted to learn that to her very last days she was an international advocate for peace and human rights; and, as the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* adds, Coretta promoted the rights of the powerless and poor, advocated religious freedom, full employment, health care educational opportunities, nuclear disarmament and AIDS awareness. Yea, Coretta! And I will especially remember on Holy Thursday this year that Coretta's DAUGHTER is an ordained minister!

When we began our Holy Thursday witnesses I certainly did not believe we would still be here in 2006. However, I now realize that we will be here "until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

Please join us. We need you.

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.

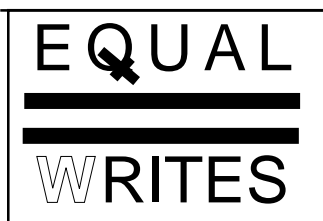
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