

PITTSBURGH ORDINATIONS SET FOR JULY 31

On Monday, July 31, 2006, eight US women, including SEPA/WOC member Eileen DiFranco, will be ordained as priests, and four, including *Equal wRites* contributor Janice Sevre-Duszynska, as deacons in the Roman Catholic church aboard a chartered boat in Pittsburgh, PA. The boat, "Majestic," will depart from Station Square at 3:00 pm and will sail on the Three Rivers: the Allegheny, the Monongahela and the Ohio.

The Women's Ordination Conference (WOC), supports these ordinations wholeheartedly as one of the ways women are renewing the Catholic church.




"We support our sisters who are taking prophetic steps to obey God's call to service," stated Aisha Taylor, WOC's executive director. "These ordinations, as the first of their kind in the US, are a momentous event in the struggle for

women's justice and equality in the Catholic church. We pray that they spark continued dialogue, growth and change in our church. At the same time, we affirm the diversity of ministries that women are engaged in to follow God's call in their lives."

The Pittsburgh ordinations follow those of four women which took place on Saturday, June 24, 2006, on Lake Constance between Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

In 2002, Archbishop Romolo Braschi of Argentina and Bishop Rafael Regelsberger of Austria ordained seven women, known as the "Danube Seven," on the Danube River between Germany and Austria. Within two weeks of the ordinations, Pope Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Ratzinger, led the charge to excommunicate the women, who were formally excommunicated in January 2003.

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		Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women and Men in the Philadelphia Area
Vol. XV No. 1		JUNE - AUGUST 2006
		MISSION STATEMENT - <i>As women and men rooted in faith, we call for justice, equality, and full partnership in ministry. We are committed to church renewal and to the transformation of a structure which uses gender rather than gifts as its criterion for ministry.</i>

LET US PROCEED- WITH LOVE AND DELIBERATION

by **Karen B. Lenz**

I know you're set for fighting,

but what're ya fighting for? . . . Phil Ochs

As a member of the SEPA/WOC core committee and editor of this newsletter for the past eight and a half years—and as a deeply committed (although admittedly non-docile) Catholic for far longer than that, I have witnessed, demonstrated, prayed publicly and privately, attended meetings and conferences, written and argued in support of the ordination of women as Roman Catholic priests.

It is so clear to me. I cannot believe that the Jesus of the Gospels (those newly re-discovered as well as those in the official canon), supported and accompanied by women, the Jesus who had an undeniably special relationship with the female disciple from Magdala and who—if the church's strangely belated pronouncements are to be taken seriously—bodily assumed the peasant woman who was his mother into heaven and crowned her queen of heaven and earth, wants women officially barred from the ranks of his priesthood.

That's assuming, of course, that Jesus gives a fig about the composition of the arrogant and authoritative ruling class of the church that claims him—a group at the top of a hidebound hierarchal structure bearing no recognizable resemblance to the free-wheeling and ragtag band that roamed the hills of Galilee with him during his earthly ministry, a group whose

members were women and men, poor and well-to-do, single, married and divorced, alike only in this—that their lives were touched and totally transformed by his call. It was a group we might assume he intends us to model.

And so I watched with interest and growing delight as contemporary Catholic women who perceived such a call grew tired of waiting for the blinders to fall from the eyes of the hierarchy, allowing it to acknowledge and appreciate all of the church's priests. I cheered the string of historic ordinations and episcopal appointments that began in 2002 with the Danube Seven, spread throughout Europe, and added a new chapter in Ottawa last year. And I await the ordinations scheduled to take place in Pittsburgh in July—including that of SEPA/WOC core committee member and *Equal wRites* contributor Eileen DiFranco and *Equal wRites* contributor Janice Sevre-Duszynska—with happy anticipation.

And yet...

I have a few concerns. The biggest, and arguably the most important, involves the role these ordained women will play in the church. And I strongly suspect that those of us who actively support the cause of women's ordination are not on the same page—indeed, even in the same book—about this. That's okay. We don't have to agree. Nor do we want to repeat the grave error of early church leaders who decreed all opinions, all viewpoints that did not correspond with theirs, heretical. We can, indeed we should and must, have different takes on many issues, including the role of ordained women priests.

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Pittsburgh Ordinations

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Recently, four women have been ordained bishops by Roman Catholic male bishops secretly, in order to avoid Vatican reprisal. Bishop Ida Raming, a renowned scholar, ordained to the episcopacy in June 2006, has done extensive research and writing on women's ordination, Bishops Gisela Forster, a philosopher, and Patricia Fresen, a theologian, will join Raming to preside at the Pittsburgh ordinations.

On July 31, Kathy Sullivan Vandenberg, Eileen McCafferty DiFranco, Olivia Doko, Dana Reynolds, Joan Clark Houk, Kathleen Strack, Bridget Mary Meehan, and Rebecca McGuyver will be ordained priests. Mary Ellen Robertson, Cheryl Bristol, Juanita Cordero and Janice Sevre-Duszynska will be ordained deacons. In Switzerland, Regina Nicolosi, Jane Via and Monica Wyss were ordained priests.

Let Us Proceed

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BUT WE MUST TALK ABOUT IT. We must discern and dialogue and pray together. We must bring our differences out in the light, instead of pretending that they don't exist. We must never be afraid of the truth. Or we shall build a house resting on the treacherous shifting sands of presumed agreement, a structure which will collapse in the first strong wind.

That said, let me begin the discussion. I have to say at the outset that if the aim of the movement in support of women's ordination—or of that part of it that calls itself the catholic womenpriests movement—is church business pretty much as usual, excepting only that some of its administrators are wearing skirts, then the struggle must go on without me.

My vision is quite different. What I ask—what I hope for—from ordained women is nothing less than a firm resolve to lead the body of Christ in a sweeping and overdue renewal—stem to stern—of the patriarchy that calls itself the Roman Catholic church. I think Jesus is speaking as clearly to women today as he did some 800 years ago from a painted crucifix in the Church of San Damiano in Assisi when he told another radical follower to “fix my church.”

It should be clear to anyone not in serious denial how badly his church needs fixing. And who better to undertake this formidable mission than the women whom that church has denigrated and all but disavowed? I think it is important that we follow the example of the Buddhist poet and activist bell hooks, who bases her opposition to the many forms of

oppression that occurs in what she calls dominator societies, on a creative love that has replaced a potentially self-destructive anger. And we must begin at once. We cannot afford to sit back and wait until there are “enough” of us—that time will never come, there will never be enough. But our numbers will grow as we go about the work

The first task of womenpriests must be a redefinition—

ON THE NEED TO TALK TO EACH OTHER

We seldom think of conversation as commitment, but it is. I find that expressing what I feel and telling another person what is really important to me at the moment is difficult. It requires a commitment on my part to do so, and I assume this is true for most of us. It is equally difficult to listen. We are usually so full of our own thoughts and responses that we seldom listen close enough to one another to grasp the full flavor of what the other person is attempting to convey. Creative communication in depth is what allows us to experience a sense of belonging to others. It is the force that limits the destructive potential in our lives and what promotes the growth aspects. Life is a struggle. Coping with a lifetime of change is a struggle, but through a lifetime of change we will experience ourselves as full persons only to the degree that we allow ourselves that commitment to others which keeps us in creative dialogue.

...Mwalimu Imara
in “Dying as the Last Stage of Growth”

clear and publicly stated—of the meaning of priesthood. Priest must stop meaning membership in an elite and privileged class which uncomfortably resembles that which served the temple in Jerusalem at the time of Christ, and begin signifying, literally and simply, servant. Jesus was clear about this. If the women seeking ordination are doing so for any reason other than to embrace their role as servants, they might as well just go back to their knitting (not that there is anything wrong with knitting) for all the difference their ordinations will make.

Having accepted their role as servants, womenpriests must

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then, without delay, begin to serve in ways more deeply compassionate than they have before. Perhaps some or many of them already are. There are of course countless ways to carry out the priestly commission Christ gave when he said, "Simon Peter, if you love me, feed my sheep."

It is my personal belief that the body of Christ today needs fewer seminaries and advanced degrees and more feeding stations and clinics. It needs fewer theologians in (air-conditioned) ivory towers debating arcane points of doctrine, and more people literally binding up the wounds of the victims of war and famine and oppression around the world. The Good News should be carried to the ends of the earth, but the homilies need to consist of our lives and not our words. And the sacraments need to be offered to a world starving for the bread of life—especially those whom the church has ignored or denied—with a eucharistic feast offered as generously as the loaves and fishes with which Jesus fed the multitude.

It just may be that ordained women are already doing these things. If so, they need to let us know about it—to share with the movement that supports them news of their ministries and activities. I have found, even in my role as editor of *Equal wRites*, such information about the womenpriest movement hard to come by, and available only through the internet. There is an e-mailed newsletter, to be sure, but it is neither comprehensive nor impressive. Many individuals who might roll up their sleeves and join the fray have never heard of womenpriests. We must avoid the perception that we are an exclusive, affluent, highly educated, by-invitation-only group. (We're not, are we?)

The symbolism of holding ordinations on boats on the Danube River or in international waters at the base of the St. Lawrence Seaway is wonderful, but the price for a spot in the limited deck space of the boats—\$85 plus transportation and hotel for Pittsburgh, dinner included—is not. Far too many mothers with limited resources and professed religious and others striving to lead simple lives are excluded. The movement simply cannot afford their loss.

Further; the road to ordination should begin with a careful selection and formation process. We cannot in our enthusiasm afford to overlook this. The headlines of recent years have made that painfully clear. We must use all available resources to insure that women seeking ordination are motivated not by frustration, or rage, not vengeance; nor by over-inflated egos, or even outright pathology. There must be competent spiritual direction and—yes—psychological testing, or we will pay a heavy price.

Bell hooks cautions that activists must not be so attached to a goal, whether the goal is racial equality or nuclear non-proliferation or saving endangered species or women's ordination, that we become embittered and hopeless when the goal is not achieved within a specified time frame. It is essential, she insists, to recognize that it is the process of resisting injustice that is personally transformative, whether or not the goal is achieved.

And so let us proceed to Pittsburgh—with joy and celebration, but also with a clear vision of what we are about and where we are headed, and a firm resolve to begin the work to which we feel called. Let us grow beyond our anger and proceed in love. And let us be open to—no, let us seek out—fel-

low travelers different from us in age, education, ethnicity and socio-economic status.

If we can do that, there will be no stopping us.

*Opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author. What do you think? Whether you agree or disagree, if you would like to join the discussion, send your views, double-spaced, to **Equal wRites** at one of the addresses (e-mail or snail) on the back cover. We will print as many as space permits.*

Karen B. Lenz, who lives and works at the Philadelphia Catholic Worker, is the editor of **Equal wRites**.

ONE SORT OF SUCCESSION

There was once a Buddhist zendo so small and poor it consisted only of an elderly abbot, seven postulants and a simple old man from a nearby village who tended the garden that supplied the monks' food.

When the abbot became ill the question arose of who would succeed him. On the day the announcement was to be made, the monks filed into the room where the abbot waited each with his own most pious expression, each secretly certain he was the most studious and holy, and certain to become the next leader of the community.

The abbot bowed to the assembled monks, smiled, and appointed the gardener.

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THE CHURCH AS BRIDE OF CHRIST: TWO VIEWS

AN INADEQUATE METAPHOR

by Eileen DiFranco

The March 10, 2006 issue of the *National Catholic Reporter* quoted then-cardinal-designate William Levada, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine for the Faith, as stating that a priest who publicly identifies himself as a homosexual "...makes it difficult for people to see him (the priest) as representing the bridegroom of the bride, the church."

Levada went on to say, "Homosexuality is at odds with the spousal love as revealed by God" and described God's love for people as the same kind of love that a husband bears his wife. Although the cardinal was talking about homosexuals in this article, two things reveal the strength of the Roman Catholic church's current reliance upon nuptial imagery as a symbol of God's love. First of all, the cardinal seems to be saying that everlasting, munificent love of God is limited to a finite human relationship that often sours over time. Secondly, the cardinal has declared a metaphor a reality.

Only the naive would discount the use of imagery, poetry, metaphors, and symbolic language in speaking about or trying to understand God. Symbolic language is, indeed, one way of describing God and God's relationship to the world. If God is, as St. Augustine said, beyond human understanding, human words and concepts that are used to describe God are but paltry things, words written in the sand by a child with a seashell. If God is relegated to the status of bridegroom and God's love merely the expression of spousal love, then that god is simply not God.

How did Jesus get to be a bridegroom instead of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world by laying down his life for his friends? In the convoluted and torturous papal letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the late Pope John Paul II explains that there exists a "great analogy" between the love of a man and woman in the "primordial" sacrament of marriage and the "divine love in the Trinity;" this in spite of the fact that the first two members of the Trinity are referred to as Father and Son and not husband and wife. Moving into the New Testament and Ephesians, John Paul says that the "truth" about the church as the bride of Christ is rooted in the "biblical" reality of the creation of the human being as male and female. Thus, when "Christ acts as the groom to the church (the bride), he (Christ) desires that she (the church) be spotless and without wrinkle."

After lifting up John 13:11 as an example of Jesus' supreme love for his friends, the late Pope switches gears and says that the "heart of the Paschal mystery" reveals not a man who sacrifices his life for his friends, but instead, a groom, who gives his body and pours out his blood for his bride, a rather strange commentary on what is supposed to be an expression of love. The Eucharist is, according to the late Pope, the sacrament of the bride and the groom, where Christ unites his "body" with the church. If the late Pope is correct, then as theologian Tina Beattie wrote, the Eucharist is more a celebration of sex than it is a memorial of our redemption.

Words, whether they appear in Scripture or on the pages of the local newspaper, are rarely neutral. Words from Scripture or from tradition are loaded bombshells when taken out of context. Those words that have become "buzzwords" of dominant societies are particularly dangerous because they

overwhelm and engulf their denotation. Thus, Cardinal Levada and the late Pope divinize the words bridegroom, bride, spousal love, and marriage when they use these words to describe God or Jesus. Jesus is not a bridegroom any more than God is a man or a rock or a fortress. A metaphor is a pretty picture, not a reality. It is a figure of speech rather than gospel truth. Yet, Cardinal Levada's statements in the *NCR* indicate that the Roman Catholic church has taken poetic language to a concrete level and baptized it with dogma. What should be regarded as a general equivalence between two unrelated ideas has become univocal, a literal one-to-one correspondence.

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AN INAUSPICIOUS BEGINNING

by Marian Roman

In February, then-archbishop William Levada, the recently-appointed head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, preached the homily for the installation of the new rector of the North American College in Rome. In this homily, soon-to-be-Cardinal Levada informed the assembly that a priest who publicly announces his homosexuality "makes it difficult for people to see the priest as representing Christ, the bridegroom of his bride, the church."* A number of responses to this announcement spring to mind. First of all, now-Cardinal Levada may be right; this may, in fact, be one effect of the public acknowledgment that some priests are gay. Yet the cardinal shouldn't be too quick to underestimate the imaginative capacities of the Catholic laity; we have, after all, managed for centuries to visualize a Christ who is married to the church in the persons of men who are most emphatically not married. Maybe the Catholic imagination is less literal than the cardinal thinks.

Another response is to suggest that the cardinal may want to read up on the pronouncements of the Vatican officials who came before him. One such predecessor received so much scorn for a similar anatomically fundamentalist argument about who is or is not able to be ordained that the argument soon disappeared from Vatican documents. At first, women couldn't be ordained because, it was implied, they lacked a certain body part that Jesus, presumably, possessed. After a while though, the argument shifted, though the earlier one was never really retracted: women couldn't be ordained because God just hadn't authorized it. If the cardinal's homily is a trial balloon on the exclusion of gay men from the priesthood, it's about as ill-advised as that earlier rationalization for the exclusion of women.

A third response might be to ask, "Why, exactly, should we be thinking about Christ as 'the bridegroom of his bride, the church?'" If homosexuality makes it hard to visualize Christ, isn't the idea of a male bride of a church that is more or less half male also not very helpful? Admittedly, the figure of Christ as the bridegroom is a biblical image (Rev. 21:9), and as such, enriches our faith. But it's a literary image, one that interacts with a wide range of other images of Christ: Christ as Wisdom, as the Good Shepherd, as the

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Inadequate metaphor
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In their insistence upon marriage as the “primordial sacrament” and spousal love as a fitting vehicle to describe God’s love, both Levada and John Paul II have chosen to ignore the fact that marriage has not been an unmitigated boon for countless generations of women who were essentially sold by their fathers as slaves to their husbands for a pig, a cow, or a kingdom. These brides, who had no voice in the selection of their life’s partners, were then urged by documents such as Ephesians to obey their husbands who stand over them as Christ stands over the church. John Paul II calls the marriage/bride/groom/Christ set-up in Ephesians “a great mystery.” It is, indeed, mysterious that both Cardinal Levada and John Paul II persist in understanding God, the entire Trinity, and Christ’s relationship with the church in terms of a social relationship with which they are not remotely familiar. Such is the power of buzzwords.

Jesus is called many things in the Scripture: Messiah, King of the Jews, Savior of the World, Son of God, Son of Man, the Lamb of God, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth and the Life, and yes, a bridegroom. The first set of titles led to the foundational creedal statements of the Christian church. The term bridegroom is, by comparison, but a pretty picture, a theological fancy dreamed up by a group of celibate males who have no idea what it means to be a bridegroom or to have a bride. It is a most unworthy term and should be sparingly used to describe Jesus the Savior whose love for the world was so great that he was willing to lay down his life to save it. This is the kind of love that we celebrate at the Eucharist. Spousal love does not even begin to explain this wondrous love.

Eileen McCafferty DiFranco is a core member of SEPA/WOC who will be ordained on July 31 in Pittsburgh.

Inauspicious beginning
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Human One, and so forth. Gay priests might in fact enable Christians to relate to the Jesus who deeply loved his male disciples, just as women priests might help Christians to better understand Jesus as Wisdom. The ticket would seem to be to ordain priests who emerge from a wide range of categories, thus making a wide range of Christ-figures accessible to a diverse church.

All of these responses suggest that Cardinal Levada’s pronouncement is less than compelling. But the new watchdog of the faith may in fact have a more fundamental reason for speaking unfavorably about homosexual priests, one that is linked to the basically homosocial structure of the institutional church and of modern western society. By describing the church and western society as “homosocial,” I mean that the not-necessarily-sexual but certainly social, political and economic bonds between men make it possible for them to control a wide range of institutions and groups, especially women. My analysis is drawn from Eve Sedgwick’s study of the function of male homosexuality in modern English literature, which is in turn based in Heidi Hartmann’s pioneering work on patriarchy. The problem created by the increasing public visibility of male homosexuality is that it makes this homosocial structure visible; because of our awareness of the relationships between gay men, it becomes more obvious than it once was that a society or institution is structured in this way. Homophobia often emerges in response to such a threat.

The repression of public gay male homosexuality is essential if it is not to become apparent that a particular institution is run by men. Christ as the heterosexual spouse of the church suggests that the church is female. Seen from this other angle, though, the church is unarguably homosocial, governed by collaborations between the higher male clergy. Cardinal Levada, I would suggest, is attempting to prevent this reality from becoming apparent by denigrating the ability of gay priests to represent Christ. In point of fact, it’s the exclusion of a wide range of men and women from ordination that “makes it difficult” for an increasingly diverse world to recognize Christ and the church as mediators of God’s unbounded love.

*Cindy Wooden, “Doctrinal Chief: Openly Gay Priests Make It Tough to Represent Christ.” *The Catholic Voice* 44.5 (March 6, 2006): 6.

**Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (Columbian, 1985).

Marian Ronan is a member of the faculty at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA. Portions of this article appeared previously in a letter to The Catholic Voice, the newspaper of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Oakland, CA (4/3/2006).

DON’T JUST STAND THERE

The core committee of SEPA/WOC, which publishes *Equal wRites*, believes that this newsletter makes an important contribution to the renewal of the church we love by fostering dialogue on a number of issues, including the ordination of women.

If you agree, you can help.

Write a refection or a letter and mail it to one of the addresses on the back cover. Call the editor with your ideas or suggestions for articles. Take out an ad at the nominal rates listed on the back cover, or encourage someone you know to do so. Renew your subscription, give a gift subscription or two, or simply send a donation of any size to help us meet the rising costs of printing and distribution. Volunteer to pick up a stack of copies and leave them in the front of your church. Or come to one of SEPA/WOC’s regular liturgy/core committee meetings and help us discern ways to move toward our goal.

The first step toward a renewed church, a church of which we can be proud, is recognition of the need for change. But that is not enough. Until all of us who share the vision of a church which, like a beacon, reflects the love and mercy of Jesus into today’s world, are willing to pitch in and join the effort, that glorious vision will remain just that—a vision.

Editorial Board of *Equal wRites*

A Publication of SEPA/WOC

Editor: **Karen B. Lenz**

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COR (Catholic Organizations for Renewal)/ Philadelphia CORNER

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. COR groups who would like events listed may contact the editor at the addressess on the back cover.

CALL TO ACTION PHILADELPHIA

First Sunday of the Month—Worship

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

CATHOLIC FAMILY NETWORK

Fall Retreat

The Catholic Parents Network, a project of New Ways Ministry, will sponsor *Images of Hope: New Pastoral and Spiritual Approaches*, a workshop/retreat for lesbian and gay Catholics, parents, and pastoral ministers, September 29-October 1, at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston, Pa.

Fr. Paul C. Crowley, SJ, associate professor and chairman of the department of religious studies at Santa Clara University in California, will present the retreat. For further information, contact New Ways Ministry at 301 277-5674, or e-mail NewWaysM@verizon.net.

COMMUNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT (CCS)

First, Second, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of the month—Worship

Elkins Park, 10:15 am; **third Saturday** at 5:15 pm. Information: 215 572-5623.

Jesus Chose a Woman to Proclaim the Gospel...When Will Our Bishops?

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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

Mary of Magdala Liturgy

The Philadelphia Catholic Worker will sponsor a liturgy in honor of Mary of Magdala, the "apostle to the apostles" and patron saint of the women's movement in the church, on her feast day, Saturday, July 22, at 430 W. Jefferson Street, Philadelphia, at 11 AM, followed by a potluck barbecue.

Come join us, rain or shine! Bring your reflections, poetry, friends and/or kids—and something to put on the grill. For details, call Karen at 215-232-7823

Summer Program

And School Supply Drive

The Catholic Worker's summer program is in full swing, taking busloads of North Philadelphia children out of their severely challenged inner-city neighborhood on a series of educational and recreational trips to places like a Delaware County farm, the Franklin Institute and the Jersey shore. Financial contributions, bicycles in working condition, and volunteers are welcome.

In September, the Catholic Worker will supply bookbags and basic school supplies, which the school system of Philadelphia does not provide, to as many neighborhood kids as possible.. Your donations of bookbags, composition books, pens, pencils, calculators, etc., or money to purchase them, will be gratefully accepted.

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.



A scene from SEPA/WOC's annual Holy Thursday witness in support of women's ordination in front of the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul. The banners represent women who served as priests in the early church.

JESUS HEALS THE BENT-OVER WOMAN

by *Jim Plastaras*

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit [of infirmity] for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing. (Luke 13:10-17)

This is one of the six narratives describing Jesus' interaction with women that are found only in Luke. It is similar to other Gospel stories where Jesus' healing on the Sabbath comes into conflict with the Jewish leaders. "Which is lawful on the Sabbath," he challenges them, "to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" (Mk 3:4). This is also the central theme of Luke's narrative of Jesus and the bent-over woman, but it includes nuances not found in the other stories of Sabbath healing.

In the other narratives, it is the enemies of Jesus who provoke the confrontation. In the story of Jesus and the man with a withered hand (Mk 3:1; Matt 12:9-14; Lk 6:6-11), the Pharisees set Jesus up. They arranged to have the man with a withered hand sit up front in the synagogue and then waited to see what Jesus would do. Jesus did not disappoint them!

In Luke's story of Jesus and the bent-over woman, it is clearly Jesus who initiates the action. The afflicted woman—being a woman—could hardly have been given a front place in the synagogue. Jesus saw her at the back of the room and called her to come forward. The ruler of the synagogue did not dare complain to Jesus, but rather scolded the people in the congregation who were responsible for bringing the woman in. "There are six days for work," he told them; "Come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."

The ruler of the synagogue did have a valid point. The Mosaic Law recognized the practical necessity of doing the work necessary to tend to the needs of livestock on the Sabbath, but the same rationale could hardly be applied to this woman. She had lived with this chronic condition for eighteen years. Surely, she could have waited one more day, until the Sabbath had passed, before being brought to Jesus.

Jesus rejects their reasoning. "No, not one more day!" Jesus, who had come "to proclaim freedom for the prisoners...to release the oppressed," (Lk 4:18), would now set free this daughter of Abraham who had been in bondage for eighteen years. She would again be allowed to stand upright—not tomorrow—but **today!** By what kind of perverse reasoning did the interpreters of the Law believe that God would be honored by keeping this woman in bondage for yet one more day!

The drama played out in the synagogue that day continues to take place in our own day. There remain three figures: The bent-

over woman stands for all who are oppressed or disenfranchised, whether they be women or men.

The ruler of the synagogue is prototypical of those who pronounce themselves in favor of the goals of change, but who counsel patience and going slow: Change must be gradual! Rome wasn't built in a day! This was their message to the Freedom Riders and to those who marched at Selma, and it is their message for the women working to remove the gender barriers in the faith community: "Not in your lifetime, but perhaps for your daughters or granddaughters."

Jesus is the one who calls the disciples to seize the present moment for the work of liberation and healing. Christian commitment to nonviolence is not to be confused with passivity. Faced with injustice, the disciple is called to action rather than procrastination. Justice delayed is justice denied. Christ calls us to confront injustice and to work for healing NOW, and not at some future time when conditions might be more favorable. The time is NOW!

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

ON SERVICE (AND BUYING SHOES)

by *Cassie McDonald*

Fresh from the Holy Thursday teaching on service of the foot-washing kind, I am shopping for new shoes. Not, perhaps, an entirely Lenten pursuit, but a long-standing family tradition: new shoes for Easter. I am watching the sales clerks, laden with stacked shoe boxes, pass back and forth from the storage room, much like bees or—as we're in a liturgical mood—an Orthodox priest disappearing and reappearing from behind the mysterium. They are friendly enough. Sometimes they do hand me the box, in a handshake once-removed, with a report from the other side.

But I am remembering when, to try on shoes, I received the bending service of a (usually male) salesperson. Standing and submitting to the careful measuring of one's foot on that thrillingly cold scale; the brisk unsheathing of tissue as the shoe was lifted out; the pincer-like removal of bits of plastic and gauze packets that represented some form of sustenance for this: this pristine leather vessel into which I was about to be the first to invest. The maiden voyager in this brown oxford or saddle shoe or, at Easter, the special white patent leather. Or, dear hope, maybe red this year?

How perfectly the two mates nestled in the box, one on its side and the other upright. With what authority he uncoiled the laces and deftly braided them through each eyelet, across, through, across again and finally tied them with a firm tug. Then the assessment: pressing the sides and then his thumb inquiring of the stiff rounded toe the position of my own toe inside.

Now I would be allowed to get up and walk gingerly around, examining myself from the ankles down in every available mirror, as though they might appear different here, or there; front face, profile, oblique. How like a princess I felt, though self-consciously so. It was a pleasant sort of awkwardness, giving myself over to the touch that was professional and ordered, but still human. This was an intimacy that marked many aspects of our lives then, but hardly thought of. It was a part of life: placing one's feet in the hands of the man. For the shy among us, days were fraught with embarrassing possibilities, but held together with a rich tangle of connections to the people who served us, and whom we served.

How, remembering those days, I feel the poverty of this room this day in a shoe store like many others. I feel the

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On service

continued from page 7

loneliness of self-serve. How contrary to the Gospel is the idea of self-service! How we strive to erase this challenging and precious commandment—to serve one another—by asserting our right to do for ourselves everything and to have for each one an individual serving.

Once life has been parsed out into (increasingly oversized) individual servings—hygienic and free of risk but also devoid of zest and chaos and surprise, not to mention the opportunity to give thanks—once we decide to wander out of the desert of vending machines, security codes, disposable gloves and the individually wrapped and safety-sealed meal, we may remember again the gift of being servant, which will also be the gift (yes, you also, Peter) of being served. Which is companionship. Which is the kinship of the broken bread and the shared cup. Amen. So I believe. Thank you.

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

ON FAITH

As a knight was returning home from a crusade, he was startled to find the road blocked by a small bird lying on its back, legs pointing upward.

“Little bird!” the knight exclaimed, reining in his horse. “Whatever are you doing?”

“My lord,” the little bird replied, “the sky is falling. I am doing everything I can.”

The knight laughed. “Foolish little bird,” he said, “to think you can hold up the sky with those two small spindly legs!”

“Which of us is foolish?” demanded the bird. “It hasn’t fallen, has it?”

BENEDICT’S FIRST YEAR

by **Gaile Pohlhaus**

For over a year Pope Benedict XVI has been wearing the shoes of the fisherman (although they often look like Dorothy’s slippers). He has issued an encyclical, *Deus est Caritas*, appointed several ordinaries (seaTs have not been left vacant), named new cardinals (no surprises in the names), and traveled to Germany and Poland. Perhaps the most surprising event during the year, at least for those of us concerned about the sexual abuse in the church, was the remanding of Marcel Maciel to private prayer and penitence. Maciel is the founder of the Legionaires, a society one of whose vows is never to speak ill of the founder, and has been accused of sexually abusing young seminarians in the order’s high school. Although most people found the accusations credible it was not until April that the Congregation for the Defense of the Faith released its statement of the disposition of Maciel. (Cf: Jason Berry and Gerald Renner *Vows of Silence*)

A companion volume to *The Compendium of the Social Teachings of the Church* which was published in March of 2005, *The Compendium of The Catholic Catechism* edited by Cardinal Ratzinger before his election to Pope, was also released this year. Pope Benedict is well known for his critical commentaries on the documents of the Second Council of the Vatican. He has authored many other theological books as well which show the influence of Bonventure and Augustine on his thought.

On April 25 in his weekly audience Benedict said “In the new series of catecheses, recently begun, we are seeking to understand the original plan of the church which the Lord desired, in order to understand better our place, our Christian life, in the great communion of the church.” (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060426_en.html) In subsequent *Equal wRites* I will offer reflections and commentaries on these addresses.

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

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AS THE RIVER FLOWS

by Mary Byrne

The following article is an excerpt from the author's book-in-progress, *As the River Flows: Stories of Roman Catholic Women in Ministry*.

*If you ask me where I live, I will answer, "by the river."
If you ask me how I live, I will answer, "with the river."
If you ask me how I came here, I will answer, "through the river."*

In 1994, two weeks after my ordination, I moved to a funky little river town on the great Hudson waterway. Although I had lived most of my adult life near the Hudson, this was my moment with the river. Before that time and since that time, I have never been so close to the mystery that winds its way through my soul.

The eight precious years that I spent with the river were coincidentally the same years that I struggled to come to terms with my Roman Catholic proclivities and the seemingly dissonant call to ordained ministry. At that time, everything about being a womanpriest was exhilarating and confounding, daring and defiant, alternatively a reason for hope and an occasion for despair. There was no discernible path. There was no clarity.

As Maureen Murdock states in *The Heroine's Journey*, "When a woman decides not to play by the patriarchal rules anymore, she has no guidelines telling her how to act or feel." There were a few predecessors buried in the canons of ecclesial censorship and a smattering of us hiding out in our "church" jobs. In the background of all the uncertainty were haunting old voices of disapproval and unrelenting new voices of encouragement. Looking back, the most important task lay hidden and waiting in the cacophony of dissent—to discern the call of God amidst the contrary voices of prohibition and permission.

In the confusion, I went to the river almost daily. Standing on the edge of her banks, looking across the span to the horizon, the river's bounty humbled me. Lying opulent and sensual, she flowed through a womb world of bystanders, all of us gasping for air. And indeed, as I walked with her, the breaths would rise up like small voices, each one a pure prayer dissolving doubts and hesitations. Drawn into her depths, I emerged more complete and resolved.

The river running through me became my teacher. She does only what she is supposed to do, what she was created to do. She simply flows. That is her calling. A singular gesture. An indisputable fact of nature. And in her surrender to that one thing, and one thing only, she released me from the complexities of my hesitations. My sense of ministry became a journey of inner movements choreographed by the river with unexpected leaps toward certainty.

This book, inspired by the river, is the story of women who follow the flow of their lives into ordained ministry. It is a chronicle of our long and winding journey through the holy but treacherous landscape of divine calling mined by institutional hypocrisy. We are a sundry lot coming from all corners of the world, traveling different routes, weathering the harsh climate of a church frozen in time and in spirit. We teeter on the brink of the unfamiliar but remain firmly grounded in our faithfulness to the Gospel. The unknown, for many of us, is no longer the externalized "if" or "when" of ordination, it is the internalized "how." We have the audacity to remember that there was a time when we were called to ministry and that therein lies the authority to reclaim the call.

The unknown that beckons is no longer the externalized legitimacy of our ministry but the internalized direction of our ministry.

Who are we? The question supplants the institutionalized "How dare we!" and begs a response to uphold the loose but growing community of Catholic women in ordained ministry. We are women who are not waiting anymore. We are called ministers and we are called priests but most importantly we are called to serve. We are teachers, preachers, liturgists, healers, writers, artists, lovers, mothers, daughters. We have been anointed into ordained ministry by small faith communities and by bishops in apostolic succession within the Roman, Old, Orthodox, Independent and American Catholic churches. We are Roman Catholic priests, denominational ministers, interfaith ministers, Buddhist priests and Wicca priestesses. We baptize. We marry. We bury. In between, we celebrate and console in the name of the Divine Compassionate One. This is our work. This is who we are.

We are not tired, impatient or frustrated as present-day misogynists who would silence us claim. We are not heretics, harlots or witches as patriarchy has condemned us. We are disciples of the universal experience of a way of life embodied by Jesus the Christ more than 2000 years ago. Like Mary the Mother, we walk with new life in the womb to birth a renewed community. Like Mary of Bethany, we sit at table with the discipleship of equals to anoint and sanctify. Like Mary of Magdala, we stand vigilant at the tomb to witness to the continuing resurrection of the Spirit. And so, we go forth as bidden. We are getting on with the ministry that has been asked of us through the ages. We understand what it is that we have to do. Without communicating our inner ultimatum to one another in any organized fashion, we are simply stepping out of the hesitations of our calling and into the necessities of our ministries.

This is our story. We are the many faces of womanpriest. We come forth so that none can turn away and say we do not and cannot exist. Indeed, we persist. We follow in the footsteps of women called throughout time who answer the call to be priest. This is our song.

Mary Byrne is a writer and a minister.

THIS IS MY BODY

In the swirling silence
of the silver slivered space
that started with startled
peasant girls
unhesitant assent
(to an admittedly
bizarre proposal)
"Ancilla Domini!"
and ended with weary
Magdalene's
outcry incredulous
with joy:
"Rabboni!"
the chaos coalesced
the cosmos cracked
Spirit took form
and there is singing still
clear as angel song
in midnight skies
all there will ever be to know
about whom it is He calls
to be His priests.

karenblenz

A Servant of Slaves: The Life of Henriette Delille: A Historical Novel by William Kelley. Crossroad, 2003. 223 pp. \$19.95.

Henriette Delille: Servant of Slaves, Witness to the Poor by Cyprian Davis, OSB. The Archdiocese of New Orleans in cooperation with the Sisters of the Holy Family, 2004. 159 pp. No price indicated.

by Marian Ronan

A decade and a half before Hurricane Katrina made New Orleans a focus of national attention, the gazes of many African-American Catholics were directed toward that city. In 1989 the cause of the canonization of Henriette Delille, New Orleans resident and founder of the second congregation of black women religious in the US, the Sisters of the Holy Family, was put forward by that congregation and subsequently deemed viable by the Vatican.

Born in 1812 or 1813, Delille was the mulatto descendant of a slave and a slave owner, and the child of a prosperous family of free people of color in New Orleans. Educated by French nuns, at the age of 24 Delille underwent a religious experience of some intensity, after which she became determined to devote her life to God. Since even free women of color were unwelcome in Catholic religious communities of the time, Delille, like the founders of the first US congregation of black sisters, the Oblates Sisters of Providence, began by founding a non-residential society of "devout ladies." This society of free women of color was initially dedicated to "nursing the sick among their members, and teaching (others) the principal mysteries of the religion and the most important points of Christian morality."

In these early years, Delille put a good deal of energy into serving as a sponsor for slaves wanting to receive the sacraments. She collaborated with Etienne Rousselon, the vicar general of the archdiocese, in raising money to build and then staff a new church, St. Augustine's, today one of the oldest black Catholic parishes in the United States. After Delille and her companions received approval for their devotional society from Rome, they moved in together to form what comprised the first convent of the Holy Family Sisters. A major part of their ministry was service to the poor, and especially to sick, destitute and homeless slaves. They also offered instruction in the Catholic faith, especially to slaves and free people of color. Although there are no exact records, it's likely that the community of the Holy Family was established in the Archdiocese of New Orleans in 1850. Twelve years later, after doubtless exhausting service, Henriette Delille died of tuberculosis, during the Union occupation of New Orleans. The congregation she founded did not receive official Vatican recognition until the 1870s. Perhaps because of the movement for her canonization, a number of books about Delille and the Sisters of the Holy Family have appeared in recent years. One was *No Cross, No Crown* (Indiana University Press, 2001), a scholarly edition of the journal of Sister Mary Bernard Deggs, a Holy Family sister who witnessed the foundation and growth of the community. * By virtue of their very different goals and genres, two more recent books, William Kelley's *Servant of Slaves* and Cyprian Davis's *Henriette Delille* may be thought of almost as bookends, or parentheses, around the mother of

Published first, *Servant of Slaves* is a historical novel that conveys a sense of what life might have been like for a free woman of color serving slaves and the poor in antebellum New Orleans. Beginning with Delille's 1862 obituary—"who for the love of Jesus Christ had made herself the servant of slaves" (11)—and ending with the introduction of her cause for canonization in 1989, the book proceeds by narrating Delille's life and work in her own voice and that of her priestly collaborator, Etienne Rousselon. It goes down easily, a perfect Sunday afternoon read. Kelley's portrayal of the 1853 Yellow Fever epidemic alone convinced me that not only Delille, but half the population of New Orleans at the time ought to be canonized without delay.

Historical fiction brings with it certain hazards, however, so *Henriette Delille*, the archival study of Delille's life by the distinguished historian of African-American Catholicism, Benedictine Father Cyprian Davis, brings needed nuance to Kelley's narrative. The reader cannot fail to be impressed, for example, by Etienne Rousselon's devotion to and conviction of the sanctity of Henriette Delille in Kelley's treatment of him. It is sobering, therefore, to learn in Davis's study of Rousselon's conviction that slaves were absolutely obligated to serve and protect their owners even after the Union Army had occupied the city. Similarly, Kelley's benign references to St. Augustine's take on a different slant when Davis observes that although parishioners, white and black, had pews there, the slaves had their own "special seats" (46). And were not, one presumes, "parishioners."

After the Vatican reviewed the cause for the canonization of Henriette Delille, we learn at the end of Kelley's novel, it authorized the Sister of the Holy Family to move on to prepare an official biography and a "closer study of (Delille's) life and virtue" (222). One wonders if Cyprian Davis's book is, in fact, one of these, since it was issued by the sisters themselves. If this is the case, they may want to send a copy of Kelley's novel along with it to Rome, for while that book lacks accuracy, there is also something peculiarly oblique about Davis's book. I suspect this obliqueness reflects the gaps in the historical record of the life of Henriette Delille. Davis, ever the scholar, never makes a statement he cannot support, so his presentation of Delille's life is cautious and indirect. Still, one derives from his book a sense of the religious intensity and devotion to the poor that drove Henriette Delille, a woman who might just as easily have frittered her life away at New Orleans balls. American Catholics will be the richer for reading about her.

*Reviewed by Marian Ronan in *Equal wRites*, Sept.2004.

Marian Ronan teaches contemporary theology and American religion at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA.

Good Catholic Girls by Angela Bonavoglia. Regan Books, Harper Collins Publishers, 2005.

328 pp. Paper. \$15.95.

by Joe Ruane

Due to an inadvertent computer glitch, the following review, as printed in the last issue of Equal wRites, was incomplete. The entire review follows.

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 scolding negative letter reserving priesthood to men only, *Ordinatio Sacerdotis*, further demonstrating the hierarchy's myopic fear of women as rule after rule, whether birth control, infertility treatment, ordination of women, inclusive language, 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 episcopal cover-ups became the most profound level of the scandal.

Bonavoglia perceives VOTF, or 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 laypeople's voice echo Joan Chittister's identification of clericalization 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 on older female teens and women is consistent with actions of a church that sees women as second-

class citizens. Even 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. In discussing Good Tidings, the support organization for women and priests who have been involved in romantic relationships, Bonavoglia reports that many priests don't want to live a double life of promised celibacy while in love with a woman, a conflict Good Tidings aims to help resolve with integrity. I doubt that all such priests join CORPUS, as Bonavoglia implies, however. A good number of married or laicized priests want no part of ministry in their new life. A narrative about "Father Tom," a diocesan priest breaking a "vow" of celibacy, overlooks the fact that diocesan priests make "solemn promises" to remain celibate, not vows. In the mind of many priests the level of ownership between a vow and a promise differs, especially if they feel the promise has been imposed.

Bonavoglia, having been a board member of Catholics for a Free Choice, gives somewhat of an insider's view of that organization. The fight for women's health care rights and the clash with church teachings and institutions is narrated effectively, as are Fran Kissling's attempts to close the rift between the pro-choice and pro-life movements. The author questions why abortion has become the sin of the twenty-first century as opposed to nuclear proliferation, ethnic cleansing or one of many other evils. She also delineates the work of Jeannine Gramick and Bob Nugent who strove in their ministry to help gays and lesbians gain dignity and respect. They with others argue that the church must move from a sexuality based on fear of the body, and always open to procreation, to a sexual theology concerned with the dignity and welfare of the individual in a relational context. *Good Catholic Girls* also takes on the annulment process, which as Charles Davis puts it, is another area of hypocrisy.

Good Catholic Girls does a good job of documenting the roles played by women throughout the history of the church, in the Scriptures as well as the catacombs and in church mosaics. The work of Dorothy Irvin, which has contributed much to this understanding, is highlighted.

The chapter on women in ministry in Catholic churches today is strong, in my estimation, and is followed by a chapter on Mary Ramerman and her road to ordination. Ramerman first received her credentials from the Federation of Christian Ministries (FCM) and then pursued ordination. Mary's courageous move from a secondary to central role at Spiritus Christi has not changed her. She still understands her role as serving God in serving her people.

Women's ordination is the topic of the culminating chapter in *Good Catholic Girls*. Anyone who grapples honestly with Bonavoglia's arguments will find it hard to argue against the ordination of women in the Catholic church. An appendix of progressive Catholic organizations adds even more to the value of this book.

Joe Ruane, a former president of FCM, is professor of sociology and health policy at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, and Dean of Religious Studies for GlobalMinistriesUniversity.com.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Summer 2006

by *Judith A. Heffernan*

A joke in our community is that whenever I attempt to clean, I find stacks of articles that I want to share with everyone...and it's that time again!

As I write this, we are preparing both for our Ordination Day Witness in Philadelphia and the Ordination Day gathering and celebration in Pittsburgh.

Ordination Day Philadelphia: I am in the midst of a work crisis. Whenever this happens to me I say (ahem..don't you mean shout?), "Downsizing does not work in human services!"

As I think about ordination and the few men being ordained in Philadelphia, I wonder why the church has chosen the path of downsizing—it could have many good ordinands if it were more inclusive.

As I struggle against my discouragement I read the remembrance of Eileen Storey by Sr. Anne Montgomery in *The Catholic Worker*. Eileen was a professor, writer, poet, world traveler, healer, a person of prayer and a peace activist. In her last book she wrote, "I see a church where there is neither male nor female, where men and women work lovingly together to bind up hearts that are broken, proclaim the Good News, anoint with the oil of gladness and say to the spirits who hunger, 'Body of Christ.'"

Summer Scripture: many of the Gospels this year highlight

Jesus feeding and healing—physically and spiritually. On July 30, the day before the Pittsburgh ordinations, we read from John of the compassion of Jesus toward the large crowd who had come to him.

In these times, we read of large crowds of women called to ordained ministry—many of whom are also Roman Catholic. There are millions of women and men who want, who long for, the ministry of these women.

Listen to the prophet Sr. Teresa Kane quoting John Paul II on the eve of the 1995 UN Conference on Women: "Situations where women are prevented from developing their full potential and from offering the wealth of their gifts should be considered profoundly unjust—not only to women themselves, but to society as a whole."

Ordination Day, Pittsburgh: on this day crowds of people joyfully will say yes to justice, yes to celebrating the ordained ministry of women, yes to their full acceptance.

Let all those who work for justice take comfort from John Dear, SJ., in his work for peace proclaiming: "Don't be discouraged. Don't despair. Don't be afraid. Don't give up. There is too much work to do!"

Ordination Day, July 31, is the feast of St. Ignatius whose motto was, "For the greater honor and glory of God!" Let it be so.

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

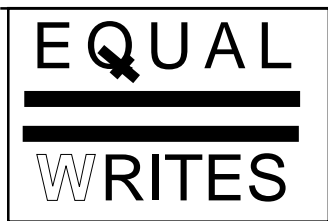
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MANUSCRIPTS AND CORRESPONDENCE: If you would like to contribute an article, letter, or anything else to *Equal wRites*, please send it double-spaced, with your name, phone number, and a short biographical note. The next issue will be September 2006. Final deadline for submissions is July 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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