

# ORDINATIONS CONTINUE APACE

## MARIA MARLOWE A DEACON

by Regina Bannan

On Sunday, May 6, 2007, Maria Marlowe was ordained a deacon at the Church of the Beatitudes. It was a quiet celebration of a strong but quiet woman. Maria chose the diaconate because she was ready for it—ready to be commissioned to the ministry of service in the church. You may have read her reflections on the SEPA/ WOC web site “A Catholic Woman’s Journey to Vocation” (<http://www.sepawoc.org/articles.htm>). She has overcome the loneliness she described six years ago, and found a way to follow her vocation. We celebrate her choice and her possibilities.

In Roman Catholic church practice today, deacons are allowed in two roles: men who will be ordained to the priesthood the next year and men (most often married) who are ordained permanent deacons to preach, celebrate some sac-

raments, and provide service and leadership beyond what priests are able to do—and whose wives must study with them but who are not ordained. Maria is different: she is a woman, like Phoebe, mentioned by Paul in *Romans* 16:1-2: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchrea. Welcome her, in the name of Our God, in a way worthy of the holy ones, and help her with her needs. She has looked after a great many people, including me.” There is a debate today about the usefulness of seeking ordination as deacons before women are ordained as priests. (See *Equal wRites*, December 2004, March and June 2005 on SEPA/ WOC web site under newsletter.) Maria’s ordination models for us the scriptural role of deacons providing service and it reminds us that this role can be complete in itself, and should be accepted when one experiences the call. For Maria, the diaconate may or may not be a step to priestly ordination, but it is enough for now. *(continued below)*

	<b>EQUAL</b>	<b>Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women and Men in the Philadelphia Area</b>
Vol. XVI No. 1	██████████ ██████████	JUNE - AUGUST 2007
	<b>WRITES</b>	<b>MISSION STATEMENT</b> --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.

Maria fits the model of ordination suggested by Marian Ronan in her keynote address at the SEPA/ WOC/National WOC conference in 2005, echoing Sheila Briggs at the National WOC conference in 2000: “By limiting ordination to those with advanced theological education, we exclude large numbers of God’s people who lack the cultural and financial capital to avail themselves of such training” ([http://www.womensordination.org/pages/art\\_pages/art\\_Ronan3-05.htm](http://www.womensordination.org/pages/art_pages/art_Ronan3-05.htm)). While Maria is not a person of color—their main concern—she is an example of a person marginalized by circumstances—and her calling right now is service.

Maria has already been serving her family: caring for her mother until her death last September, now for her father in her home in West Chester, and as a single mother for Marisa and Rachel, her two daughters. They have been helping us at demonstrations over the years and now Rachel is a college student—and Marisa graduated this year!

Maria has also been serving SEPA/ WOC for years, organizing witnesses, working on the billboard campaign, writing letters to protest egregious church actions and statements, and writing articles for *Equal wRites*. She has also served Feminists for Life and other pro-life causes, and of course she has a full-time job! Maria’s life is service and that’s what she has been ordained to as a deacon.

Chuck Leigh, the bishop ordaining Maria in the Apostolic Catholic Church, stressed her accountability as deacon to the community, the church and the world. I have no doubt about her ability to serve selflessly. To care. To listen. To help others find the way. To preach the Gospel she takes so

seriously. One of the members of the Church of the Beatitudes mentioned explicitly “because she’s a good preacher” when asked for reasons why she should be ordained.

The ceremony itself was characterized by deep caring for Maria. Many in the congregation, composed of Beatitudes and SEPA/WOC members and others, validated her call with specific reasons of their own. All of us laid hands on her, confirming her in service to us, sharing a personal word, and honoring her vocation. She, Bishop Chuck, and Father Bernie Callahan, founder of the Church of the Beatitudes, concelebrated. We all gathered around the altar for the canon and sang our hearts out on “Here I Am” and other favorite

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*Maria Marlowe at her Ordination*

Maria Marlowe

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hymns. Her daughter Rachel and a friend sang "Bless the Beasts and the Children," so appropriate to honor Maria for her love of animals—especially cats, as the Catholic Worker will confirm. Maria brings a huge bag with her each time SEPA/ WOC meets there—lots of cat food and often donations for the other work of the Sister Peter Claver house.

Especially meaningful to Margaret McLaughlin, another witness to the ordination from the Community of the Christian Spirit, was that downstairs after the ceremony, the Lansdowne Methodist community, the Garden Church, joined us for lunch—and prayer. Their pastor led us all in prayer again, his comments were so deeply felt.

Maria characterizes her ordination as "something pure and beautiful." It was: a wonderful fit for her now and a moment of great happiness. Yet the fragility of small communities of faith is brought home to us again. The Church of the Beatitudes has experienced serious difficulties in the last few weeks, and I know how much we hope that the members find the right way out of the differences that have caused some to leave, including Maria and Eileen DiFranco, ordained a priest by RCWP last summer.

In the face of all that, I quote what Karen Lenz, who can always find the right words, wrote to Maria: "I do not for a moment think that the validity of your vocation depends on the Church of the Beatitudes. That community only formalized and ritualized your acceptance of a call from a much higher power. Your vocation has long been clear to those of us who know you even a little—I think the kind of vocation we are talking about is to mirror God's love, to help people feel God's presence—and you have done that as long as I have known you, and you will continue to. The meaning of your vocation and even your ordination transcends whatever happens to the small community that formalized it. The community may be shaky, but your vocation is from God, and God is not shaky."

*Regina Bannan teaches at Temple University and wishes to acknowledge the work of one of her students in researching the diaconate. His name is not shared because he is also pursuing this vocation--within the institutional church.*

## **WOMENPRIEST ORDINATIONS PICK UP SPEED**

"Unofficial" ordinations of women, like that of Maria Marlowe described above, by breakaway branches of the Catholic church or faith communities—including that of SEPA/ WOC's Judy Heffernan twenty-seven years ago by the Community of the Christian Spirit—are occurring with spontaneous and uncoordinated regularity throughout the United States, Europe, and beyond.

Alongside these relatively independent actions, the Roman Catholic Womanpriest movement has accelerated the rate of its ordinations, which began in 2002 aboard a boat on the Danube River, and continued through the Pittsburgh rites last July in which SEPA/WOC's Eileen DiFranco was ordained a priest.

Recently, Dr. Patricia Fresen, the theologian and former Dominican nun who is one of the bishops of the Womanpriest movement, presided at ceremonies in Toronto on May 27 in

which five women and one man were ordained to the diaconate and the priesthood in the seventh of the ongoing series of Womenpriest ordinations.

Four other ordinations are scheduled in the United States this summer including Santa Barbara, California on July 22; Portland, Oregon on July 28; Minneapolis, Minnesota on August 12; and one at a date and location in the Northeast, deliberately unannounced to avoid excessive publicity.

According to an account by Rosemary Ganley, who was present at the Toronto ceremony which was held in the West Hill United Church, the occasion was a "joyful" one, attended by many women—Roman Catholic nuns, theologians, and Anglican priests among them—"in strong solidarity and with a sense of calm."

Ordained to the priesthood were Marie Bouclin, a married social worker and author from Sudbury, Ontario; (*editor's note: Marie Bouclin spoke in Philadelphia at the May 2003 SEPA/WOC event*) Mary Ellen Robertson, a health care worker and palliative care counselor from Michigan; and Cheryl Bristow, a teacher from the Detroit area.

The candidates for the diaconate were Jim Lauder of Victoria, British Columbia, a psychologist and liturgist who develops end-of-life ceremonies; Monica Kilburn-Smith, a theology student and pastoral care worker from Calgary; and Alice Iaquina from the United States.

In what Ganley describes as a "powerful moment" demonstrating ecumenical solidarity, Rev. Gretta Vosper of the church and Islamic feminist writer Irshad Manji laid out the red carpet on which the ordinands prostrated themselves for service.

In the weekend conference which preceded the ordination, a group of some one hundred women, led by Sr. Brenda Pettigrew and addressed by Jewish historian Natalie Davis, discussed the theme "We Are Made for These Times."

Aisha Taylor, executive director of the national Women's Ordination Conference, says that WOC supports these ordinations "wholeheartedly, as one of the ways women are renewing the church.

"As we have seen with the women ordained in recent years, Catholics are accepting them as priests and vibrant communities are being formed. Catholic women are ministering to the needs that were not being met, and together, these groups are working to improve their communities and bring about social justice. This is changing the Church in profound ways," she added.

For further information on upcoming ordinations, see web site [www.romancatholicwomenpriests.com](http://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.com).

### **Editorial Board of *Equal wRites***

*A Publication of SEPA/WOC*

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**LIKE THE SUFFRAGETTES**

Dear Karen,

Mary Byrne in her last essay for *Equal wRites*, “The Long and Winding Road (Revisited),” speaks to the experience of many of us who have worked for justice and equality in the church. Like her, some of my friends and I pine for those early post Vatican II days where the church seemed so alive, green and accepting. That open window closed soon enough and we were summarily caught up in a harsh reversal of events.

When I reflect upon that winding road of our women’s journey for equality within the church, I recall the road that goes from my old home in Lake Ridge, Virginia, to the Occoquan Workhouse just across the river. It always reminds me of what once happened to some very brave women in that jail. Alice Paul and thirty other tenacious suffragettes were imprisoned there in 1917, ostensibly for obstructing traffic. But the real reason was that they had been picketing the White House day after day in spite of being ordered to stop that walking, stop that talking, stop that never-ending pressure on Congress to pass a 19<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote—the Susan B. Anthony amendment. Since the suffrage movement’s inception at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, statehouses across the country and both political parties had resisted all pressure to extend the vote. Now public pressure had come too close for comfort, too close to the White House, too close to the hallowed halls of Congress.

For the women in the workhouse, though, being jailed was a serious setback, or so it seemed. The experience of gagging on nearly raw salt pork, then going on a hunger strike and being force fed nearly killed Alice Paul and several others including Dorothy Day. Years spent building national support groundwork, however, actually insured their survival in spite of the horrible conditions they endured. Their plight caused a public protest of nationwide proportions, which, when coupled with a lot of lobbying by influential suffrage women, finally secured their release. Again on August 6, 1918, holding banners with Inez Milholland’s memorable last words, “*How Long Must Women Wait for Liberty?*” they were again arrested one after another and sent to a men’s defunct workhouse in the district where conditions were even worse than those in Occoquan. The women became very ill before being released again. The all-male Congress, embarrassed by publicity surrounding the jailings, began to support the measure, finally approving it on May 10, 1919. A reluctant President Wilson signed it before submitting it to the states for ratification a month later.

The parallels between this suffrage story and women’s struggle for equality within the Roman Catholic church are many. While the effort for the vote spanned at least seventy years, women did not vote until 1920 in the United States. Catholic women have been overtly struggling at least as long, if not sporadically for what seems an eternity, to have equal say with men and equal chance of being ordained. The point is that male institutional power bases (whether it be our Senate/House or the Virginia Military Institute or the Catholic church) never want to change and will not unless forced to do so by higher law. Like the senators and representatives

who staunchly opposed women’s right to vote, the male hierarchy will only relent if shamed into it by strong public protests carried out by hundreds of thousands of protesters, some of whom may have to be jailed for what they do. Speaking on college campuses, withholding substantial moneys, standing at mass, organizing strikes, disrupting ordinations, setting up more action internet sites, and sit-ins during parish closures are among the many actions available to committed reformers. Whereas the suffrage movement had gained thousands of supporters over time by speaking in public forums in every state, the women’s ordination movement has yet to gain that kind of momentum. Sojourner Truth, Carrie Chapman Catt, Susan B. Anthony and so many others convinced the news media and eventually the populace that “failure is impossible.” In our time, grants to fund WOC actions are few and far between, not enough parishioners are demanding justice along with us and major newspapers just yawn when WOC demonstrates at annual Bishops Conference or on cathedral steps.

Mary Byrne puts it bluntly, “the sordid abuses of power” just become too much for us to bear and there seems no hope of redeeming the church despite all the energy we put into our efforts. I don’t think this is battered woman syndrome as Mary suggests, but part of the suffering that seems to be required before an institution changes, like being forced to eat swill as though we too are imprisoned in the Occoquan Workhouse, or a kind of dying while trying to see that necessary reforms take place even when our own deaths don’t seem to have mattered a whit in the scheme of things.

As each of us who works to transform a dysfunctional institution becomes disillusioned and eventually loses hope of having any effect, I hope each does offer one last essential saving action: passing the torch to another person so the pressure for change never ends. Eventually, all our combined actions along with the censored, but powerful, writings of current women theo- and thea-logians—that haven’t swayed the rigid mindsets of enough bishops and cardinals yet—will eventually, by the sheer strength of their spoken and written truths, press unceasingly on the hollow pillars of the

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## THANK YOU FOR NON-RENEWING!

Through the miracle of Excel, my heart has been warmed by so many of you—our loyal local friends and even family (literally), people I don't know from near and far, people I do know who have moved or are far away—THANK YOU. You contributed \$1825 to our non-renewal appeal in the last *Equal wRites*, and \$300 MORE after Karen Lenz's impassioned plea on the SEPA/WOC listserv ([WOC-SEPA@yahoo.com](mailto:WOC-SEPA@yahoo.com)).

And there are many who have contributed before and have not yet helped us out this year. The current \$2125 is about one-third of what we need to operate at the level we have been, with four issues of *Equal wRites* per year. You can check out the financial statement in the March 2007 newsletter, page 8 (<http://www.sepawoc.org/>). We sent an envelope along with that issue; if you don't have it, mail your contribution to SEPA/ WOC, c/o Marianne Jann, Treasurer, 49 Driscoll Drive, Ivyland, PA 18974. And again, whatever you can do, we thank you so much for your consistent support.

... Regina Bannan, President.

### DIALOGUE BOX *cont.*

male-only clerical monarchy and cause it to crumble into dust. Then both the women and the theology of inclusion can be absorbed into a more kindly tradition rising from those ruins. In the meantime, my heart is lifted when I hear that the number of extraordinary womenpriest ordinations is rising each year. These are powerful actions of change, because those women and all they serve will also push against the stubborn institutional dead wood by offering Catholics an inclusive alternative.

I once met with five WOC women in a room with a sympathetic bishop. We talked about the ordination issue once again and then he asked us for our blessing. Willingly we stood, he bowed, and we laid hands on him singing through our tears. At a later time I suggested that he ordain women like the Episcopal bishops had done a few years earlier. He seemed surprised, then refused and made sure with a follow-up call to the director that he did not want to risk excommunication on WOC's behalf.

So, it is with sadness and peace that I join Mary Byrne in the garden, literally planting bushes for the birds and trying to offset my carbon footprint by planting trees, hundreds of them. For me too, dirt therapy seems to heal a heart broken by the very ones who betrayed the parish families we once loved so much. Still I take heart from the words and actions of suffragette Katharine Fisher, "*At Occoquan, as at the Capitol and the White House, we faced hypocrisy, trickery and treachery on the part of those in power.*" Yet she, Lucy Burns, Rose Winslow, Alice Paul and the others, who endured prison sentences in the Occoquan Workhouse, prevailed. In the 1920

election they stood in the voting line and cast their ballots. All of us now follow on their heels, voting, becoming Congresswomen, Speaker of the House of Representatives, heads of Cabinets, and developing into exactly who we want to be. (source: Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*)

Blessings,  
**Rosemary Luckett**,  
Second River Studio,  
12379 Hunters Grove Rd.,  
Manassas, Va.

## In Memory of Her Rev. Celia Langlieb (1938-2007)

by Mary Byrne

As *Equal wRites* was going to press, Rev. Celia Langlieb quietly surrendered to a long and valiant struggle with ovarian cancer. Celia was one of three women ordained by the small faith community, *Spirit Rising*, on the banks of the Hudson River on May 15, 2005. Many of us remember her as a concelebrant with Patricia Fresen (among others) at the March 2005 SEPA/WOC liturgy in Philadelphia. Celia was a woman of great courage and conviction who never blinked in her vision of a just church where all are welcome at the table. In acquiescing to the will of the community to be commissioned into sacramental ministry, Celia's only hesitancy was a fear that ordination would seat her at the head of the table—a position she eschewed in principle and in practice. Indeed, her life of service is witnessed in the following statement of intention presented to the community at the time of her commissioning.

*In response to my many years of Christian living, which led me along numerous parallel paths and included a significant stint with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood, a degree in theology, an extended career teaching religion to teenagers, a certificate program in spiritual direction, a twelve week course as a hospital chaplain, training in emotional education, work facilitating bereavement groups and groups for women with ovarian cancer, I come before you today and publicly acknowledge that led by the Spirit and grounded in faith, particularly within this liturgical prayer community, that I be called forth and ordained into public sacramental ministry. By doing this I wish to expand my ministry to include not only weddings and spiritual direction but also the Rites of Christian Initiation, Burial and Reconciliation along with continued celebration of the Eucharist. In the end, as it should be, ordination was simply a response to a call to deepen her life's work as healer, teacher, liturgist and ultimately through her acceptance of this call, prophet. In her living and her dying, Celia gave us and leaves us with hope!*

Mary Byrne, is a co-founder with Celia and four others of Spirit Rising

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## ORDINATION DAY ALL DOWNHILL FROM BAPTISM

by *Bern McBride*

May 19 was a beautiful sunny Saturday despite the nip in the air and the wind gusts that worked all morning to make sails out of our banners. This was the eighteenth or nineteenth Ordination Day gathering sponsored by SEPA/ WOC.

Under the watchful and protective eye of our trusty and so far always-courteous Philadelphia Civil Disobedience officers, we stood on the sidewalk in front of the cathedral and used our new Radio Shack bull horn to remind those going in to celebrate the ordinations that more than half of the church's members couldn't join them as equal participants. We reminded them that many institutions had managed to confront the evil and injustice of gender-based exclusion—from Central High School and Jefferson Medical College to the Union League and the Episcopal church. All had emerged from their sexist histories more fair—and certainly better—for the change.

Some present thought it a bit over the top for us to suggest that the Catholic church stands right alongside the Taliban in continuing its abusive practices toward women. It's probably only fair then that, juxtaposed with the many thumbs ups and supportive honks from passersby and ordination guests, one woman took the time to come and personally chastise us as "jihadists" for ruining this day for the ordinands and their families and friends. She didn't seem to want to hear about the many women whose callings had been ruined by the church's insistence it knows better than God her will for women and men. Anyway, the church guys soon enough closed those big oak doors to shut us out and we retired to the center of Triangle Park to celebrate a wonderful liturgy in the priestly presence of our Judith Heffernan.

Just two weeks later I participated in one of St. Vincent's wonderful community baptism ceremonies. This one was for two young male toddlers and Ingrid, who looked about four. As is the custom, after the baptisms and after the community had promised to support and nurture these young ones in their faith, the proud parents and godparents paraded their offspring around the church, held high for all to applaud. Ingrid, obviously old enough to have been to a parade, or at least seen one on TV, began to wave with one hand as she passed up the main aisle, perched on a strong shoulder.

It occurred to me at that moment we could not yet deliver on our promise of justice and opportunity. Ingrid would find soon enough that this church full of cheering souls was really not for her—at least not fully. Benedict our pope, Justin our bishop and yes, even John our pastor and all of us at St. Vincent's, are still party to a lie. We come together to pray for justice and equality but we really mostly, or at least too often, accept or forget to speak up about those very close to home everyday instances when there is no justice.

There are something like 1.4 million Catholics in the Philadelphia archdiocese. In poll after poll, a majority of us say we support and believe in the rights of women to be ordained. By my rough calculation, that would be more than 700,000 people who believe that women should have the right to be priests. Thirteen found the time to stand in front of the cathedral on Ordination Day.

We at St. Vincent's and elsewhere need to remember our promise to Ingrid—and the other young women in various

stages of experiencing the denial of their baptismal rights—and the 1.4 million Catholics in Philadelphia alone who are personally diminished by their exclusion.

Ordination Day 2008: May 17 at 9am in front of the cathedral. Put it in your calendar.

## HOLY THURSDAY AND THE DISRUPTION OF THE GOOD ORDER

by *Karen B. Lenz*

I once heard Elizabeth McAllister say it is not so much that our age is characterized by unprecedented cruelty, injustice, and the arrogant and unfeeling misuse of power—every era of human history, she observed, has had its share of the horrors that result from misappropriated and misused power—but that our age seems to be one of silence in the face of such abuse. Of silence, of the reluctance to make waves or to disturb the good order, of the discreet aversion of the eyes, of refraining from asking difficult questions.

To note that this public response has become endemic and a consistent and widespread reaction to matters as grave and global as the holocaust the United States has engineered in Iraq or the attempt by communist China to obliterate the spiritual legacy and indeed the very existence of the small and peaceful country called Tibet, as well as to matters as specific and localized as the unapologetic corruption of Philadelphia's municipal government or the mistreatment of various groups, including women, by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church, is NOT—Marian Ronan, please note—to compare the situations or to imply they are of equal importance.

I have cheerfully and industriously worked at disrupting the good order all of my adult life—a calling which brought me, along with perhaps fifty others, to the park across from the Cathedral of Ss. Peter and Paul on the chilly April morning that was Holy Thursday this year, for SEPA/WOC's annual Witness for Women's Ordination.

Many of the elements of the day were pleasantly familiar—I have been there eight or ten times by now—including the strong sense of determined solidarity among the mostly gray-ing, mostly female group; the earnest shared prayers compiled and composed this year by Maria Marlowe, so fittingly ordained a deacon weeks later; the strummed guitar—thank you, Joe Sannino—leading the spirited, if sometimes off-key (I speak only for myself here) singing; the smiles from several curious passersby, and a few honks and thumbs-ups from passing cars; and the long yellow school buses lingering after disgorging their loads in what seems a deliberate attempt to shield the people quickly entering the cathedral for the Mass of the Chrism from the sight and sounds of us.

I want to note here that some participants in the witness experienced that we were once again a small group, standing literally and figuratively outside the church. That is not my perception. The movement of the Spirit was as palpable to me as we gathered in the name of justice, calling the church to accountability, as the brisk spring wind that whipped the program pages in our hands. In those moments there is no

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Holy Thursday *continued*

place I would rather be—and it is all of THEM, the priests representing every parish in the archdiocese, the habited nuns and devout laity, and the cardinal himself—who are outside (but not unwelcome in) a very special, very sacred (and this year very chilly) place.

And then this year there was something new—the presentation of the 2007 SEPA/WOC Mary Magdalene Awards to nineteen! women and men whose lives and actions exemplify the day's theme: Be Not Afraid; Celebrating and Honoring People of Courage.

And what a grand list of spirited, inspiring disrupters of the good order it was! The recipients of this year's Mary Magdalene Awards (in no particular order) were:

**Joan Chittister, Jeannine Gramick and Theresa Kane**, Roman Catholic sisters who took significant personal risks to publicly tell truth to power.

**Jim Callan, Denise Donato and Mary Ramerman**, leaders of the vibrant breakaway Spiritus Christi Community in Rochester.

SEPA/WOC's **Judy Heffernan** and **Eileen DiFranco**, ordained priests twenty-seven years and one year ago, respectively.

Medical Mission Sister **Margaret McKenna** and Muslim Sister **Falaka Chattah**, both of whom have lived lives of nonviolence by establishing and leading communities designed to guide young people and recovering addicts along a positive path.

Methodist minister **Beth Stroud**, who announced to the congregation she served that she is a gay woman in a committed relationship, and was disciplined by her church, and Methodist minister **Karen Onesti**, who donated one of her kidneys to fellow cleric Rabbi Andrew Bossov.

Anti-war activists **Jaice Sevre-Duszinska**, who has also has demonstrated and been arrested in the cause of women's ordination, **Roy Bourgeois, MM, Johanna Berrigan, Carroll Clay, Bernadette Cronin-Geller, Mary Ellen Norpel** and **Liz Walz**.

In the end, such witnesses are for me a matter of fidelity—of actively protesting injustice, of saying a loud and public No! to actions carried out in my name by institutions in which I claim membership, of refusing to assent to the intolerable with my silence.

There are many things I love, despite everything that has happened, about the Catholic church. As long as I am able, I shall be in the park outside the cathedral on Holy Thursday, with the others, and I am certain we shall not be there alone.

#### JUST THINKING

Every time I enter a Roman Catholic church and watch poor people put change or folded single dollar bills into the collection basket and understand that the money will go toward million-dollar settlements to people who were sexually abused as children by the officials of the church; every time I see people--gays and lesbians, divorced individuals, priests who have married, women--terribly hurt by exclusion and discrimination performed in the name of the Christ who was anointed by a woman, who dialogued with women, and whose public ministry was supported by women, I hear him as clearly as Francis did in the Church of San Damiano, saying "Fix my church.":

And I pray that Francis will support and guide me and the many others who hear the same plea, and that together we can bring about a new order, in which love and welcome are more important than control and rules and regulations and punishments and penalties. As Judy Heffernan says, Let it be so

editor

## ELEGY FOR WINTER

for Al Gore

by Cassie McDonald

What color was that bear?

The one in the riddle of the house  
with all its windows facing south?

I imagined a Dali-esque landscape:

a broad wash of blue-tinged snow  
and the house, barely bigger than four windows  
squatting there alone at the top of the world.

A bear walks by.

Where did it come from,

wonders the gnome-like person who lives in the little square  
house—

clearly a residential area.

Nevertheless.

Here he comes, the archetype of bear

with his immensity, his shoulders and his fur

that bends in the wind like wheat, his placid heavy stride.

Fierce, and yet the soul of comfort

and the rightness of things,

the comfort of cold things.

White, of course.

I remember white.

The white of my childhood:

awakening to a transfigured world after a night of kaleido-  
scopic beauty,

the white that made even a suburban street exotic.

The white that hurt the eyes wonderfully, that did strike the eye  
the way a cymbal strikes the ear.

The color has fled even from the

heavens, we are on another planet with a wan old sun  
hanging ghostly.

Here on this new earth we run and burrow, bundled  
until the snow finds the crevices between our clothes and  
makes a hot cold hurt

on wrists, ankles, necks and wherever we have managed to  
shove it

onto our brothers and friends.

When we get inside, shed our coats

the hot drinks, the dripping hair, the mess.

There is no mess, you see

on the sad bed where the glacier once was

now shamefully exposed like an old man deprived of his  
clothes and hair.

The wind does not stroke the fur of the bear

obliged to swim thirty, forty, sixty miles  
searching for ice that is not there.

He will never find the house at the top of the world.

There is no house.

The riddle will cease to be,

replaced by a terrible certainty

and an irredeemable hole.

*Cassie McDonald is a poet and peace activist who lives and works in Philadelphia.*

 <b>Women's Justice Coalition</b>		<h1>Report Card</h1>	
Explanation of Marks A – Outstanding    C – Fair    F – Unacceptable B – Good            D – Needs Improvement			Grade
<b>Justice in Education</b>			
1. Education in diocesan seminaries about the scriptural and theological foundations for the equality of women, and the history of the roles of women in the church, including the U.S. church.	F		
2. Percent of women to men teaching at seminaries where future priests are educated.	F		
3. Percent of women teaching core courses in seminaries.	F		
4. Inclusion of education about the history of women in the Church—and in the U.S. church—for elementary through high school students, and adult faith formation in diocesan religious education guidelines.	F		
5. Diocesan subsidies for education for lay ministers.	A		
<b>Justice in the Liturgy</b>			
6 a) Participation of girl altar servers at Cathedrals.	B		
6 b) Participation of girl altar servers when the bishop presides.	C		
7. Inclusion of women in the ritual foot washing ceremony on Holy Thursday.	B		
8. Inclusion of women and men as Eucharistic ministers and lectors at Cathedral liturgies.	A		
<b>Justice in Representation</b>			
9a. Percent women on Diocesan Pastoral Councils.		B	
9b. Selection method to serve on the Diocesan Pastoral Council, percent appointed vs. elected.		F	
9c. Percent women on the Catholic Charities Board.		C	
9d. Selection method to serve on the Catholic Charities Board, percent appointed vs. elected.		F	
9e. Number of women on the Diocesan Finance Council.		D	
9f. Selection method to serve on the Diocesan Finance Council, percent appointed vs. elected.		F	
10. Diocesan offices on women's concerns.		F	
11 a. Diocesan offices to serve the following minorities: 73% African American 30% American Indian 35% Asian-American 73% Latino/Hispanic 30% Gay/Lesbian		F	
11 b. Percent women directing existing offices		A	
<b>Justice in Employment &amp; Conflict Resolution</b>			
12. Existence of diocesan offices of conciliation and arbitration, with grievance procedures and / or processes for negotiating solutions to conflict in parishes or other groups.		F	
13. Existence of diocesan grievance procedures for its own employees.		B	
14. Percent women at Level 1* employment in dioceses.		D	
<small>*Typically report directly to the Arch/Bishop and oversee a major segment of the Arch/Diocese's central office including several major offices or departments. *Source: WJ? Assn. Church Personnel Administrators</small>			

## A Report Card for the Catholic Bishops: Do They Make the Grade When It Comes to Women's Equality?

As a child, I was an obsessed perfectionist. My crisp white uniform blouse was always tucked in; my desk was perfectly in line in the row; I never colored outside of the lines; I studied my spelling words time and again even though I knew them the first time around. I was consumed by getting good grades. When report card time came I saw that my perfectionism could become opportunity! My friends' parents gave 1 dollar for every A on their report cards. I could be rich! But, much to my disappointment, my dad had a different perspective. He said, "Emily, you worry too much about grades. I'm not giving you a dollar for every A. I'll give you 5 dollars for every B!"

It's report card time again. Millions of children across the country will be bringing their grades home. Some will take a quick glance at it and run off and play. Others will count the As and Bs and begin negotiating for rewards. Some will cry and lament their failures. This year, a coalition of Catholic Church reform organizations has issued its own report card on the status of women in the U.S. Catholic Church. The grades were compiled from a survey of 23 U.S. dioceses that gives us a snapshot of what is happening to women in the Church. The survey found that while Catholic females have become more publicly equal alongside men and boys as altar girls and cathedral lectors, women still face significant discrimination behind closed doors in Catholic education and church employment settings. And it goes without saying, women remain barred from any leadership positions as clergy, where the real power remains concentrated. *(for complete report card results, go to [www.womensjusticecoalition.org](http://www.womensjusticecoalition.org))*

Unfortunately, the bishops failed miserably when it came

to educating about women's history in the Church, having inclusive ministry offices for minorities, and having an elected system for serving on diocesan pastoral councils and finance councils (Currently most dioceses appoint members.). But the news isn't all bad: The bishops got As for including women in liturgical ministries at the cathedral, for subsidizing lay ministry education, and for hiring women to direct offices for minorities. They received Bs for hiring female teachers in the seminaries, allowing girl altar servers at the cathedral, welcoming women to have their feet washed on Holy Thursday, naming women to serve on diocesan pastoral councils and Catholic Charities Boards, and for having grievance procedures to settle employee problems.

I'm wondering what the bishops will do when they get their report card. Will they lament their mistakes and the disappointment they caused to women and men in the pews awaiting a church of justice and equality? My fear is that the bishops won't care at all, even though it was women who first taught them about loving God and loving others. In fact women probably gave them their very first report cards. I realize that centuries of discrimination and injustice cannot be overturned overnight. However, I'd love to see our bishops at least get all Bs. I'd gladly give them 5 dollars for each one...and so would my dad!

*Emily Holtel-Hoag serves on the Women's Justice Coalition as the Special Project Coordinator for FutureChurch.*

### LOOK WHO'S ON THE WEB!

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

## A PHILADELPHIA REPORT CARD

by Regina Bannan

You can see the national report card (on p. 7). You can read Emily Holtel-Hoag's wonderful summary and reflections (p. 7). Then you will wonder how Philadelphia measures up. Emily's father would be out \$10; her friends' fathers would have had to pay \$15—but my father would have been appalled at a C, a D, and eleven Fs and I doubt that he would have been inspired to give any reward at all. There are also three no answers (NA).

Like the national results, Philadelphia is inclusive of women as lectors and eucharistic ministers, but, unlike the national pattern, our reporter did not see girl altar servers. And we all have noticed that only seminarians are included in the Holy Thursday foot washing ritual—and you know how many women are seminarians. One A and three Fs.

At the seminary in the semesters I studied, only one woman taught Dogmatic Theology in the pre-theology program; other women taught subjects to seminarians like math, Spanish, and Latin. Eight men taught theology, philosophy, and humanities. That's 13% women, a clear failing grade. More women teach in the religious studies division, which prepares deacons and is open to other laity as well. There were five women and nine men, 36% women; this would be a C on our grading scale for questions like this, where 50-50 representation is the ideal—but these women are not teaching priests. From the book lists and course descriptions, I concluded that women were rarely a subject of inquiry and study except in courses on marriage, where John Paul II is a prominent source. Three more Fs.

I could not find any guidelines for religious education, so I used interviews and the guidelines for the Catholic schools religion program. Religion in the elementary schools did teach about women saints, especially Mary, and was primarily devotional, though there was always a social justice component that focused on human dignity, the family, and the goodness of creation in the first trimester and "the option for the poor an vulnerable, the dignity of work and the rights of workers, and the solidarity of the human family" in the second. Six women were among the speakers listed by the Office for Youth and Young Adults; most dealt with justice issues. Serrin Foster, president of Feminists for Life America, does not usually speak to high school students, but the office notes "Our young ladies can begin to understand before college that you do not have to be pro-choice to be a feminist." Adult education and faith formation is envisioned as a parish effort with archdiocesan staff providing resources. Overall, the grade is D based on the criteria we established for justice in education.

There are diocesan subsidies for laity seeking a masters' degree who are archdiocesan Catholic elementary and high school teachers, permanent deacons and their wives, and for two members of a religious community, that is new to the seminary. Employees of the seminary and their families receive full tuition, but other parish lay leaders do not seem to receive diocesan subsidies. The first B.

The only information I could not find was about an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and the number of women on the Catholic Charities Board. The latter are appointed, as are the Diocesan Finance Council, whose members are listed in *The Catholic Directory*. There is one woman among the

seven members who are not *ex officio* or consultants (also all men). Three N/A, three Fs.

Philadelphia does not have an archdiocesan office on women's concerns, but does have one for African- Americans and three for Hispanics. The actual offices are directed by women, and another woman directs the certificate program for pastoral ministry to African- Americans at the seminary. There is an office for pastoral care of migrants and refugees, but none for gays/lesbians. We felt that it was important to see what the dioceses were doing for other minorities as well as women. Two F's and the third A for women's leadership in this area.

We found procedures for clients to use to appeal Catholic Charities decisions—not exactly negotiating conflict in parishes but good enough—and grievance procedures for archdiocesan employees. The organization chart places vicars at the top of all pyramids, but 36% of those reporting to the vicars are women heading secretariats and offices. So a B, an A, and a C for justice in employment and conflict resolution.

This was not easy, but I had help compiling our report from four women who wish to remain anonymous: two former employees of the archdiocese, one current employee, and one cathedral parishioner. Most of the information was retrieved from published sources (Archdiocese of Philadelphia, *Catholic Directory 2006*) and on the web sites of the archdiocese and the seminary (<http://www.archdiocese-phl.org/> and [www.scs.edu](http://www.scs.edu)).

*Regina Banna, once a principal analyst of the Women's Coalition report.*

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## LET'S RENOUNCE SELF SERVING ANALOGIES

by *Marian Ronan*

Since the last issue of *Equal wRites*, it happened again. I came face to face with the kind of hair-raising claim by means of analogy that reform Catholics seem unable to resist. You have already heard from me on the subject of women's ordination advocates who compare their exclusion from orders to apartheid. Another article I came across not long ago compares recently ordained Catholic women to Rosa Parks.

Now we have the following, on the subject of the firing of Tom Gumbleton from his inner-city parish in Detroit, forwarded to me by a reform Catholic listserv. It comes from "Hope's Mama," a blog written by "Suzanne," a female educator from Michigan, interested in "peace, music, interdependence, poetry, transformation, sandhill cranes (and) being nice." In the subtitle of her blog, Suzanne asks, "What was God thinking when she made me Catholic?" It's hard not to smile at the intersection of sandhill cranes and such a question.\*

Before I say what I have to say about Suzanne's blog, let me make myself clear: the firing of Bishop Gumbleton does a serious injustice to the Catholics of inner city Detroit, since he is unlikely to be replaced by anyone, much less anyone of his stature. What's more, it was underhanded of the Vatican to fire him in this way. The Vatican's forced-resignation-at-75 procedure is clearly intended to weed out without having to admit it bishops committed to justice and equality, as Tom Gumbleton has been throughout his entire priesthood. Once again, shame on them.

Suzanne's blog, unfortunately, is almost as problematic as the behavior it means to address. It begins, "First they came for the homosexuals, and they threw them out of the seminaries." A few paragraphs later it continues its appropriation of this famous rhetorical frame: "Then they came for the heterosexuals, but just the ones using birth control, which would be most of them under the age of 50, including me." In each case, Suzanne goes into detail about the reprehensible things the church does to the group in question.

Finally, Suzanne arrives at the point to which her rhetoric has been building:

And then they came for my pastor. The official Church told him to get out of our parish. They kicked him out of the little room he lived in at the church too. Problem? They said? What problem? Just normal procedure. You're just too old, nearly as old as the pope. Thanks for your fifty years of service. Good luck finding an apartment, and, uh, we'll certainly call you if we ever need a priest who talks about serving the poor and stopping war and healing the victims of sexual abuse.

"And now," Suzanne continues,

there is nowhere left to go, nowhere to hide from the reality of what the Catholic Church is becoming...For some of us, it got a lot harder to be Catholic last week, to be the Church we feel called to be, and it was already pretty hard.

As you are perhaps aware, "First they came for...then they came for...then finally they came

for..." is the framework of a poem attributed to the German pastor Martin Niemoeller about himself and others in Germany who didn't do anything when others were being taken away by the Nazis. The last line reads, "When they came for me, there was no one left to speak out."

Now in point of fact, this poem has been adopted by many groups who suffer oppression. It has also been adapted by a number of songwriters.\*\* So why shouldn't Suzanne use it to talk about how the firing of Bishop Gumbleton makes it harder to be a Catholic?

The most obvious reason is that the poem refers to the physical slaughter of millions of persons; when these people were taken away, they were gassed and incinerated. Losing one's parish may be disheartening, even emotionally devastating, but it is an event on an entirely different scale from the Nazi genocide. When Suzanne writes, "And now there is nowhere left to go, nowhere to hide from the reality of what the Catholic Church is becoming..." she is not telling the truth. She is describing how the loss of her parish feels to her. And she is doing it in words that echo the actual experiences of people in wartime, and especially in the face of genocide. Six million Jews really did have no place to go, so they were gassed. Neither Bishop Gumbleton nor his parishioners face anything even remotely similar.

The other problem with the use of this poem as a rhetorical frame for discussing the firing of Bishop Gumbleton is that the poem was an expression of repentance by Martin Niemoeller. Niemoeller was an early supporter of Hitler who managed to avoid the camps until well into the war. He was finally sent to a camp, but he survived. After the war, he became a leading voice of repentance and reconciliation for what he and his fellow Germans had allowed to happen.

Suzanne, however, uses Niemoeller's poem in order to bring attention to her own suffering, not to repent of the suffering she has allowed to happen to others. This is an ethical problem close to heart of the reform movement in the American Catholic church in 2007: too many of us, white US nationals, are vastly more aware of our own suffering at the hands of the institutional church than of the suffering we and our country are causing others. Airplanes emit almost three times the amount of greenhouse gasses that automobiles emit.\*\*\* But when I finish this article I am going to make a reservation for my July vacation on the beach in Hawaii. Well, perhaps I am the only American reform Catholic who flies in airplanes. It is, however, the case that before long global warming will cause entire peoples to be swallowed up in rising water. And we think we have no place to go.

\*The complete blog can be found at <http://hopesmama.blogspot.com/2007/02/on-losing-more-than-bishop-gumbleton.html>

\*\* The Wikipedia treatment of variations on the poem is quite good: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_they\\_came...](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_they_came...)

\*\*\*George Monbiot, "Flying into Trouble." *The Nation*, May 7, 2007, 33-34.

*Marian Ronan* lives, writes and teaches in Berkeley, CA.

***The Sermons of Sister Jane: Believing the Unbelievable***, a documentary film by Irving Saraf, Allie Light and Carol Monpere. New York: Women Make Movies. Color. 2006. 53 minutes. For sale to select groups, or for rental: \$89.00 [www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c700.shtml](http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c700.shtml)

reviewed by **Marian Ronan**

This is the kind of documentary that is likely to be very popular among church reform groups and others concerned with the Roman Catholic hierarchy's role in the sexual abuse of children and young people.

The film profiles Sister Jane Kelly who, at the age of 69, "blew the whistle" on Patrick Ziemann, the Catholic bishop of Santa Rosa, California, after he ignored her reports about sexual abuse and financial misfeasance by a priest in her parish. It eventually came to light that the bishop himself was having sexual relations with the priest. Sister Jane's outing of the priest occurred two years before the Boston Globe "broke" the sex abuse scandal in the American church. The film reviews these events, and also affords Sister Jane a pulpit from which to hold forth on many other contentious Catholic issues.

The filmmakers are skilled and experienced. They intercut the story of Sister Joan's life with the compelling tale of her standing up to the local bishop, and, in fact, to all the priests of the Santa Rosa diocese who boycotted her after she went to the newspapers. There can be no doubt that her actions were courageous and cost her more than she may have anticipated.

Considerable footage about Sister Jane's early years as a nun, and documentation of the colorful characteristics of convent life before Vatican II, will also attract viewers. Nuns, especially nuns in habits, have long been popular with American movie-goers. Indeed, ours would seem to be the era of nun documentaries and quasi-documentaries, including *The Magdalene Sisters*, the (award-winning) *Sister Rose's Passion* (reviewed in the last issue of *Equal wRite*) and *Sisters of Selma*, broadcast by PBS during Black History Month this year.

*The Sermons of Sister Jane* might have been of greater long-term significance if the filmmakers had rearranged some of the film's material, however. At the very end of the film we learn two things about Sister Jane that certainly would have altered my perceptions of her throughout. For it is hard to deny that Sister Jane, despite her characteristic Irish wit, seems unnervingly like the authoritarian priests and nuns of the pre-Vatican II era. As she delivers her "sermons" on various topics, she points and shakes her finger at viewers with unnerving frequency. She also offers a disturbingly unnuanced interpretation of virtually every issue she addresses, calling to mind nothing if not the relentless certitude of the Baltimore Catechism. I was especially struck by her absolute indictment of Cardinal Roger Mahoney of Los Angeles, whose performance in the clergy sex abuse crisis has been less than sterling and whose call for Catholic civil disobedience in the face of government persecution of undocumented immigrants has been deeply inspiring.

The first of the two things viewers learn toward the end of the film is that, as a result of her heroic outing of the bishop of Santa Rosa, Sister Jane was forced to resign from the Sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the religious congregation to which she had belonged for fifty-five

years. Sister Jane is admirably unhesitant when presented with a choice between forced removal to the congregation's motherhouse, clearly in the interest of silencing her, or requesting a dispensation from her vows. News of this brutal amputation inspires at least one viewer to forgive her for her lack of ambiguity during the previous fifty minutes of the film.

The other bit of information about which readers go uninformed until late in the film is that, for eighteen years before she went public about diocesan cover-up of priestly sex abuse, Sister Jane, in collaboration with a local justice and peace group, had been staffing a soup kitchen and service center for the poor. Sister's interactions with the poor and homeless in this center provide much needed context without which her "sermons" could sound righteous and hectoring. This is a woman who walks the walk as well as talks the talk.

One wonders why the filmmakers chose to withhold these two vital bits of information till the end of the film. The news of Sister Jane's dismissal from her congregation certainly provides a dramatic ending to the documentary. But I fear that making Sister Jane's work with the poor a virtual afterthought reveals the filmmakers primary concern. Although *The Sermons of Sister Jane* documents the life of a heroic and singleminded American Catholic sister, it also responds to the profit-making potential of a very hot topic.

**Marian Ronan** teaches "Religion and American Film" at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA.

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**Unbowed: A Memoir**, by Wangari Maathai. Anchor, 2007. 352 pp. Paper. \$14.95.

reviewed by *Suzanne Fitzmaurice, OSB*

In *Unbowed: A Memoir*, Wangari Maathai gives an autobiographical account of her journey from life as a young girl in the small village of Ithite, Kenya to becoming that of a world-renowned Noble Peace Prize Winner and founder of the Green Belt Movement. She begins her memoirs with a brief history of her family and the village into which she was born. She continues her account with stories of her early years and of the series of events that enabled her to pursue an education that would shape her future in ways she could never have dreamed.

In 1960, Maathai was in the right place at the right time and became a part of an experimental program designed to educate and train young Kenyans to be future leaders in the newly independent nation. Maathai was sent to Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, KS to receive an undergraduate degree in biology. It was this four year experience that instilled in Maathai a “willingness to listen and learn, to think critically and analytically, and to ask questions.”(92) This was also the springboard to the University of Pittsburgh and a second degree in biological sciences. In obtaining these two degrees Maathai set the course for the passion and determination expressed in her life’s work.

But this was only to be the beginning of Maathai’s journey. *Unbowed* continues to chronicle Maathai’s life as she returns to Kenya, earns a PhD in Anatomy from the University of Nairobi, and begins her life as an educator. After earning her degree, Maathai became the first woman chair of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy and the first woman to be named associate professor at the University of Nairobi. Her gifts and talents were recognized by many, but some saw her only as a woman and despite all her qualifications, still looked down upon her.

Maathai continues her life chronicle by introducing her initial forays into activism through her volunteer work in the 1970’s and 80’s. It was during this time that the seeds of the Green Belt Movement were planted and began to grow. The Green Belt Movement was established to educate and encourage women to plant and tend trees in their local communities. These trees would not only be beneficial to the environment but would be beneficial to the lives of the women as well.

This idea of planting trees continued to grow and through many trials, which included a divorce, raids, beatings, threats and ultimately imprisonment, Maathai persevered in seeking a better Kenya. By the mid 1980’s the struggle for human rights and for a better environment in Kenya began to see the fruits of the many years of work but it wasn’t until 2003, when a new government was elected in Kenya, that Maathai finally received the governmental support she had worked for all those years.

Maathai ends her memoirs with the call that she received in October, 2004, informing her that she would receive the Noble Peace Prize. “I thought of the long journey to this time and place. My mind went back and forth over all the difficult years and great effort when I often felt I was involved in a lonely, futile struggle. I didn’t know that so many people were listening and that such a moment would come.”(292) And what a moment that was for her. *Un-*

*bowed* chronicles not only the life of Wangari Maathai, but it also gives witness to the fact that the seeds planted in the lives of each person can bear much fruit.

Overall, *Unbowed* is well-written and engaging. Wangari Maathai’s book offers each of us a glimpse into the joys and struggles one must face when working for change. Maathai offers a model of how to work for change but she is also realistic in presenting the dangers and challenges that can arise when an individual or group of individuals challenges the status quo. She gives us a glimpse into the struggles that many Kenyan women have faced in the past and are facing today and she shares with us hope for the future through the efforts that are being made to honor their dignity and to improve their lives. *Unbowed* is a call to all women that they too can make a difference in their own lives and in their world.

*Suzanne Fitzmaurice, OSB, is a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Atchison, KS, the religious congregation whose college Wangari Maathai attended in the US. She is also a Master of Theological Studies student at the Franciscan School of Theology in the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA.*

**PHILADELPHIA SPRING**

by *Karen B. Lenz*

bird shit splattered

–impressionistic dabs

of black, translucent green and white–

along the railing

“must be a nest of goddamn pigeons

on your roof”

the man next door

who minds the business of the neighborhood

sucking strength from cans of bud

concealed in paper bags

growls pointedly at me

and calls the landlord to complain

out in the yard

a length of pipe

discarded

by some–penitent?–urban warrior

a plastic grocery bag

snagged on the bush

that should have been cut back

last fall

flapping white

wild dreams of freedom

in the wind

and quiet surprise

of crocus

(defiant

as barbed wire)

proclaiming resurrection

three purple

and one white

## SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

July 22 Psalm 15

by Judith A. Heffernan

“...Those who do justice will live in the presence of God...”

It is Ordination Day 2007, and the celebration of our annual witness for women's ordination. About seventy percent of Catholics support women's ordination, so each year I hope that about 700,000 people will be in the park across from the cathedral with us!! However, each year we have a small gathering—but we are big-hearted people holding all in our prayers.

This year more people positively acknowledged our presence than ever before. After all, we are all in this together.

There was one person who berated us: "Why do you jihadists have to ruin the holiest day of these men's lives!?! Why don't you give it up?"

We are not there to ruin, we are there to witness, to challenge. We will not, we cannot, give it up.

Later I find the confirmation I need in Joan Chittister's *In the Heart of the Temple*, that ministry is to continue the

work of Jesus the Healer and Jesus the Prophet...to comfort and challenge, to attend to pain and to advocate for change, to be a vision and a voice.

Speaking of ordination—on May 6<sup>th</sup> one of our own was ordained a deacon. It is written that a deacon is called to serve, called for the Word, for Sacrament and for the community. The call to preach, baptize, bless...to feed the hungry, help the sick, comfort the oppressed and to work for justice is a real call confirmed and welcomed by bishop and community. It was a glorious day, affirming how Maria lives each day.

Sadly, we have also lost a prophetic voice—Yolanda King, our daughter, our sister.

On her last earthly celebration of her Dad's birthday, she spoke of the power of choice to create change. Yolanda noted that she is still a one hundred percent card-carrying believer in the dream!

Blessed be. Let it be so. For all people everywhere.

*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.*

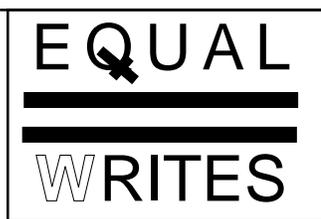
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**AFFILIATION:** *Equal wRites* is published by the core committee of the Southeastern Pennsylvania chapter of the Women's Ordination Conference. We are inspired by but independent of the national office of the Women's Ordination Conference.

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