

	EQUAL	Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women and Men in the Philadelphia Area
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	WRITES	MISSION STATEMENT — <i>As women and men rooted in faith, we call for justice, equality, and full partnership in ministry. We are committed to church renewal and to the transformation of a structure which uses gender rather than gifts as its criterion for ministry.</i>

HOLY RELATIVITY!

by *Eileen McCafferty DiFranco*

While Benedict XVI was celebrating his new job in the Vatican by lifting a few with the yes guys back in the papal apartment, I felt a burning need to put a bee in his tiara before he embarked on his crusade against relativism and secularism.

“Don’t get me wrong, Your Holiness,” I might say while pleading for a papal audience usually reserved for the few, the male, the clerical, the famous, or the wealthy, “But I have something really, really important to tell you. Your fans have been saying what a great listener you are. Will you please listen to me?”

To my everlasting surprise, my dream Pope Benedict answered, “Yes, my child,” and off we went to a local Vatican trattoria. As the waiter placed the menus before us, I could just see the pontiff honing his considerable listening skills as he looked at me expectantly. “One of the best things I learned from *The Baltimore Catechism*,” I said, “was how to examine my conscience. So, when everything around me is going wrong, I take a good look inside and say, ‘is it *me*?’” The pontiff looked down at his snowy robe as if it were now covered with specks of sin. I took a deep breath and dropped my bombshell. “You need to take a long, hard look at your church, Your Grace”. I blurted out, “The Holy Roman Catholic church acts like a secular institution and regularly falls into the trap of relativism, just like the world you like to hold at arm’s length like a rotten fish.” I sat and waited for the sky to fall.

“Holy St. Peter!” he might yell in disagreement, looking surprised. St. Peter, if you recall, was a humble fisherman who is regarded as the first supreme Roman pontiff, even though he never wore a silk cassock, a crown, or a beanie and never once in his life had the opportunity to sit on a throne. Since the remainder of Peter’s co-workers in the vineyard took off for parts unknown during those thrilling days of early Christendom, St. Peter never had a chance to sit in a court with a bunch of men sporting big rings who think of themselves as princes and respond only to the title, “Your Eminence.”

“But what about Constantine?” I might counter. Constantine is the guy who stopped feeding Christians to the lions and put the bishop of Rome on the throne in the old imperial palace. Constantine needed some help keeping his big restive empire together so he used the fledgling Christian church as cement. Along with their “Te Deums,” the church started to sing something to the tune of, “One Empire, One Emperor, One Faith.”

“You might also remember,” Benedict might offer in response to my Constantine rant, as he bends over his lobster ravioli during our mythical dinner, “that Gregory the Great and the bishops of Rome stepped up to the plate when the western

empire fell apart in the fifth century. The Roman people would have starved to death had the Pope not paid for food out of his own personal fortune.”

“I am really glad that the Pope had enough money to feed the starving people, because I am a firm supporter of feeding the hungry, Your Holiness,” I would reply, “but I was wondering how and why a pope happened to have such a large personal fortune, especially since Jesus told all of his followers to sell their possessions and give the money to the poor in order to follow him. Didn’t Jesus say that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich person to enter heaven?”

“Not quite,” he might say, sipping the fine imported French wine. “That story and all those diatribes against the rich are called ‘the Hard Sayings of Jesus’ because they’re just too hard to follow, I’m afraid. We pay less attention to Jesus’ frequent condemnation of the rich because after all, where would the church be without money? How could this beautiful Basilica of St. Peter have been built and maintained without vast sums of money? How could we have kept my predecessor alive for so long without the money to pay for all those doctors standing around his bedside for weeks at a time or buried him in the style to which the church is accustomed, without money? How could we cardinals have managed during the two-day conclave if we had to live in dormitories sleeping on cots and eating fast food?”

“And how would we pay for our clothes? The cassocks of the princes of the church must be made from watered silk and fine white lace, lest wearing that nasty secular garb corrupt the cardinals. Imagine the cardinals and the Pope wearing trousers and ties like secular men! Newly appointed cardinals from

continued on page 2

SEPA/WOC ON THE PAPAL ELECTION

The news of the election of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Pope cements the determination of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Women’s Ordination Conference to continue to support, by every means at our disposal, women’s quests to obtain their rightful place in the Roman Catholic church. Catholic women will continue to reconnect to the early tradition of female priests and bishops that has been denied them for centuries because of the obstinacy of a misogynous patriarchy. The ordinations of Catholic women will continue apace because the women called and the church, so long denied the gifts of the feminine spirit, can no longer wait for the institution and the hierarchy to recognize their error.

Holy Relativity

continued from page 1

foreign countries must travel all the way to Rome in order to be measured and fitted properly for their clothes, their rings, and their pectoral crosses. Did you see videos of the conclave? All the cardinals sitting in neat rows, all dressed exactly the same, thinking the same thoughts? This is the tradition of the church. The money we spend on ourselves is holy money, spent on men of God. We are what God has chosen us to be and all the money spent on us has not been spent in vain. I am sure that the millions of people who have followed the events in Rome these last couple of weeks would agree with me. They want their Pope and their cardinals to look different from ordinary men because they understand that we have been set apart by God."

He continued. "No, we learned a long time ago that the church needs money. Because we priests are dedicated totally to God, we don't let the secular god mammon influence us like it does the laity who misuse money by squandering it on their own hedonistic, individual pleasures, like paying for divorces. Now, the divorce issue," he said, stabbing the pasta penne, "that's one saying of Jesus on which Holy Mother Church will never budge. After all," he said, adjusting his white woolen cassock and wiping his lips with a damask napkin, "the celibate life is available to everyone. Most modern people are just too weak and absorbed with the things of the world to choose it." A waiter brought us another bottle of French wine. "We ordained priests have offered up everything for God. We stand with God and for God's rules in a little boat of Christian thought that sails in a sea of godless materialism. You secular people

are just too caught up in consumerism to climb aboard. When you don't get what you want, like a divorce, you whine."

"I have one last question for you, Holy Father, but I am afraid it might make you choke on your veal medallions."

He sighed. "I know, I know, the sex scandal. You Americans and your media have just blown the entire thing out of proportion. The American church has been forced to pay billions because of your greedy people. We sort of said we were sorry. What do those people want? Blood? Our staff of canon lawyers, civil lawyers, our publicists and media spokesmen, our insurance companies all require tidy sums. Some dioceses had to pay out so much money that the bishops had to lay off their wait staff. The new bishop in Belleville couldn't even manage \$150,000 to refurbish the bishop's mansion. My men are hurting.

"And your godless political system! My secretary of state approached your secretary of state to get the Vatican off the hook in the Kentucky priest sex scandal. Your American secularism insists so strongly on the separation of church and state, even a good Christian like Ms. Rice was prevented from exercising her authority on our behalf." His voice sounded a bit petulant, but it passed once the waiter brought our dessert.

When we finished our imaginary dinner, the new Pope extended his hand for me to kiss his ring. I cordially shook it. Then, what the heck, I swept him into my arms, planted a big, wet sloppy kiss on his cheek, and accidentally got red lipstick on the neck of his snowy white cassock. As he handed me the check, I said, "My brother Benedict, it's been real."

Eileen McCafferty DiFranco is a registered nurse and seminar student. She is a core committee member of SEPA/WOC.

DIALOGUE BOX

RE: THE FEMALE DIACONATE

To the Editor:

... [Your recent issue] in which 'Chris Schenk spoke to the point of including women deacons in calls for women's ordination caught my eye this evening. I thought it might be well to add my own two cents. I recognize and understand the focus on priesthood in WOC. But I think it wise to recognize that there are many ministries in the church. Permanent diaconate and priesthood are separate and distinct vocations. Women have been ordained to what was then a permanent diaconate by the bishop inside the sanctuary with the imposition of hands, and received the chalice and stole as sign of their sacramental ordination. At least two churches with which Rome has common declarations relative to the validity of sacraments and orders—the Armenian church and the Orthodox church of Greece—have moved to restore this sacramental order. And

SEPA/WOC E-MAIL LISTSERV

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

the whole church has not said anything definitive about women deacons in the past fifteen hundred years or so. That is, there is no Vatican document higher than those council documents of the fourth and fifth centuries, which delimit the circumstances for the ordination of women to the diaconate.

My work is on women deacons, on restoring an ancient tradition for which the church as a whole cries out. What the church once did the church can do again, and if the church is willing to make a contemporary public statement that women are indeed made in the image and likeness of God—can serve *in persona Christi*—as deacons, it will have made a statement as well about the horrific abuses of women worldwide—from kidnapping and forced sex-slavery in Uganda, to dowry fires in India, to female infanticide in China, to the relatively tame problems of underemployment and disrespect in more developed nations.

The church—the people of God—is in dire need of ministry by women. And women are in dire need of ministry by the church—the hierarchy—who must be called to account for not meeting the needs of the whole body of Christ.

Phyllis Zagano, PhD.

*Aquinas Chair of Catholic Studies
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MARGE SEXTON UPDATE: “I HAVE BECOME MY OWN PRIEST”

Here are some new thoughts on my evolving spiritual journey.

I am realizing these days how free I feel since I left the Catholic church, like I’ve escaped from some kind of a trap.

As long as I remained within the tradition I lived in relationship to it, not unlike a bad marriage. So long as I was within it, I would react personally and viscerally to pronouncements from the Vatican, from various bishops or priests or news stories about the church. As anyone who read my statement of leaving knows, it was the church’s involvement in the November election of George Bush that was my “final straw.” I was so Catholic I took everything the larger church did very personally. I really did believe it to be my church.

Now I view those people and their stories more from the stance of an observer and that feels ever so much better for me.

My statement of leaving the church was my personal Emancipation Proclamation. In it and through it my world, and my worldview, shifted. The church lost its power over me.

As a younger woman I was in a painful marriage. There came one day when I said, first to myself and then aloud, “He will never cause me to cry again.” What I did not immediately realize was that my marriage ended right then and there, even though it took me several more years to actually leave.

There were many such moments in my relationship with the church. I was recently reading through a journal I kept in 1978. In it I wrote, “I am seriously thinking of leaving the Catholic church.” Gary Zukov, in *The Seat of the Soul* wrote, “*The soul has its own time.*” I so believe that to be true, but twenty-six years? Ah, still I am so grateful for the years I hung in there or I would have never experienced the gifts and the blessings of St. Vincent’s.

But now I am free! If I were to join one of the alternative Catholic communities or reform groups (even WOC) I would still be in relationship to the church. Even with the wonderful new Catholic communities forming (such as the Church of the Beatitudes) my sense is that even they have one ear

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP FORMING

The SEPA/WOC core committee is starting a book discussion group, and invites all members and friends to join. We will begin by reading the texts of the presentations by Patricia Fresen and Marian Ronan at the March 12 conference (excerpted on pages 8-9 of this issue). Then we will read Angela Bonavoglia’s book, *Good Catholic Girls*, which many of us bought at the conference. We still have a few copies, which we can sell at the first meeting for the conference discount, which includes a donation to SEPA/WOC. The full text of the presentations will be distributed by e-mail to those who would like to join.

We know we span a wide geographic area. If you are interested, please respond to me individually at bannan@temple.edu or 215-545-9649. Tell us whether you’d prefer to be in an online group or an in-person group. If the latter, tell us where you are located. My fantasy is a few groups of about ten, but there may not be that level of interest. Also tell us what times you’d prefer. We are thinking of every month or every two weeks, starting soon. Tell us what would work best for you.

attuned to the movements of the wider church. They are ever hoping, praying and working for it to change. I have removed myself from that mindset, even as I deeply respect all the fine people who choose otherwise.

I was recently considering checking out two local Episcopal churches. Then yesterday I read that they have a moratorium on the appointment of bishops because of gay issues. Who needs that aggravation? Not me. Been there, done that.

I discovered a lay Buddhist gathering that meets monthly in my neighborhood. I have twice attended. They tell me that the entire purpose of their existence, their theology, is the happiness of their people. They believe that if the individual is happy, she will create happiness around her and bring peace to the world. No hierarchy, no structure there. I’ve told them how wonderful the teachings are because Buddha consciousness is essentially the same as Christ consciousness. (I’m not sure they can hear that any more than Christians could hear it if I said it in reverse in a Christian setting.) More and more I realize that we’re all one at the deepest level. They’ve taught me the chant “*Nam yoho rengo kyo*” and I chant it for a while most days. When they gather and chant you can feel the vibration through your entire body.

One Sunday I attended a meeting for worship at Abington Friends. I suppose I will go there again at some point.

I’ve also formed a small faith-sharing group called “The Gathering” which meets one Sunday evening a month. Our purpose is to support each other’s faith journeys. We sip tea and discuss meaningful spiritual topics.

The other day my husband and I had lunch with a friend from St. Vincent’s. She and Tom chatted about church all throughout the lunch. I realized through the rest of the day that the conversation took me back into church stuff and that it doesn’t really help me to do that.

As much as I miss many of the St. Vincent’s people (for a while I toyed with the idea of having a tea and inviting a bunch of them, just to see them again), I am so tired of all things Catholic, I am willing to forego the connection to those dear faces in order to ensure my own serenity. I suspect there will be a time when I will wish to see them again, when my doing so would not be painful, disturbing or distracting. That I can find serenity without my beloved faith community has been God’s great reward and blessing to me during this time of my life. I have become my own priest.

I spend more time in day-to-day prayer and meditation than I ever have and make Sunday mornings a deliberate Sabbath time. My spiritual reading has become more eclectic. I highly recommend a little book called *Ten Poems to Change Your Life* by Roger Housden. Lately I have been meditating on one paragraph of one poem by Rumi. It reminds me so much of the final struggle of making the decision to leave the church last fall and early winter. I think of those sad and painful days as like the moments just before birth, when every fiber of the new being is struggling to be free.

*Be helpless, dumbfounded Unable to say yes or no
Then a stretcher will come from grace to gather you up.*

Marge Sexton’s account of her decision to leave the Catholic church, “Why I Am Leaving,” appeared in the last issue of Equal wRites.

MOSTLY INCLUSIVE

by *Karen B. Lenz*

Inclusivity—the open door that proclaims welcome to all who would enter—is for me an essential, even defining characteristic of any organization or group or church that claims to be Christian. To reduce the matter to the simplest of terms, Jesus came for *everyone*. His life was a model of inclusivity: championing the poor and the marginalized, healing the lame and the blind, even while being supported, at least in part, by financially comfortable female followers. He multiplied loaves and fishes to feed the crowd but on other occasions dined with tax-collectors and Pharisees. And he used the parable of the Good Samaritan to teach us who our neighbor is.

It is no news to most of us that many of the problems of the official Roman Catholic church today stem from its extreme exclusivity—its obdurate and most unchristian refusal to recognize and value equally all followers of the inclusive Jesus. Gays and lesbians, those who are divorced, married priests, women—examples abound.

But we must be careful that our own structures and alliances, formed to challenge the hierarchical church’s exclusivity, do not unwittingly replicate it. The women’s ordination movement, on levels ranging from international to local, needs to make a concerted effort to become more inclusive, to provide a warm and sincere welcome into our ranks for all who share our convictions—particularly those different from us by virtue of race, class, ethnic background, economic status, educational level, or age. The most cursory survey of our demographics demonstrates clearly our abject failure in this regard.

At SEPA/WOC’s March 12 event, *Celebrating Women Called*, wonderful in many ways, people under the age of thirty were in noticeably short supply. Intent on our own agenda, we will pay an enormous price indeed if we continue to fail to recognize that without a solid base of young people, our movement runs the risk of dying with us. In addition, in a geographic area nearly half African-American, with a large Hispanic population, the conference attracted only one Latina woman and three or four persons of color. *We simply must try harder.*

Similarly, I think, worshiping assemblies—liturgical celebrations—lose meaning unless they are open to anyone who wants to participate. Few of us would have any patience, or perhaps even participate in, a mass or liturgy that excluded native Americans, say, or people of a particular nationality—ANY nationality—or which required participants to have a high school diploma or a savings account.

But as a member of another minority—a relatively quiet and easily overlooked one, whose members are often hesitant to assert themselves out of a misplaced sense of deficiency or even shame—I cannot attend mass at my parish church. When a priest who had often led liturgies at the Catholic Worker where I live—a man I both respected and admired—died recently, I was ex-

cluded from attending his funeral. When a guest of our community, who had waged a long and painful struggle with AIDS, finally succumbed in the early spring, I could not go to her memorial service and offer my feeble words of comfort to her family. And I cannot attend worship on Sunday morning at a newly-firmed “alternative” Catholic congregation in the area, which gives voice to many of the issues I hold most dear. Excluded, I better understand the frustration, and yes, the pain and even anger, of all who have been excluded, for so many reasons, for so long.

The reason for my plight? I am in a wheelchair. I cannot get into the two churches I mentioned (thank God for the wonderful Community of the Christian Spirit!) Neither of course can anybody else—and our members are far larger than you might suspect—who cannot climb the steps. Interestingly, the solution is relatively easy, in most cases at least—a simple ramp leading into the church is often all that is required. So easy, so inexpensive, that I think it is unconscionable for any church or worshiping assembly to fail to provide one. (The mosque two blocks from our house is beautifully handicapped-accessible.) And equally unconscionable, I might add, for the able-bodied members of the congregations in question not to join in raising a ruckus loud enough to get the job done.

In the end, it’s not just about me, you know, Philadelphia’s Project Home understands the issue when it proclaims, “None of us is home until all of us are home.” Mostly inclusive is an oxymoron.

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

she walks

she walks
 aching from birth
 dripping with every child ever born,
 hers.
 she walks
 opens doors
 sings responses where instead
 she might lift bread;
 reminder of sacred meals she cooked for centuries,
 she only tastes.
 she walks
 sweeping cleaning washing
 the dirt left behind
 of those rustling in testosterobes.
 she walks
 so subtly, still
 a little more than shadow
 beneath crusting murals
 of women Mary Sainted She
 multitasking miracle, she
 walks, closing doors
 between the church and garden
 and she blesses breaks consecrates
 where she truly walks. . .

...Sr. Char Pavlik

Franciscan Sister Charleen Pavlik is co-founder and co-director of Angelspring Farm Wellness Retreat in Fayette City, PA.

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ORDINATION DAY 2005 WE PRAY WITH ALL WE ARE

by Regina Bannan

Mark May 20, 2006, on your calendar now. You don't want to miss the Ordination Day witness next year. Part of it is about being seen by those going into the cathedral to celebrate the few male ordinands—this year, five—but more of it is about praying together. We don't change this wonderful eucharistic liturgy because those of us who attend each year would miss it too much. It is too inspiring.

We proclaim women's unique role in salvation, starting with Mary, who said "This is my body, this is my blood," and going through Miriam Therese Winter's *Gospel of Mary*, with its Pentecost gathering of women. We pray the Woman's Creed and we celebrate that the "BREAD IS RISING." We do amend Carter Heyward's prayers of consecration in the well-known "Bakerwoman God" liturgy to include various breads which connect our cause with the dispossessed and disadvantaged around the world—and even with the children of Philadelphia, so needlessly condemned to violence. We sing "WE ARE THE CHURCH" and "SISTER, CARRY ON!" with gusto. We go out to live dangerously.

Usually on Ordination Day we have about twelve, and it

always feels like the upper room: small, committed, sharing. There are always three or four new people who make it special; this year Diane, Kathleen, Doris, and Jean came for the first time. Judy presides and we all celebrate: Karen, Magda, Jim, Regina, Bart, Eileen, Bern, and Peg. One man came and joined our group and then wandered away, and then another. A family with young children played nearby, probably connected to one of the new priests inside. As we arrive, a Christian group from Phoenixville finishes distributing food to the homeless. Even the police, there to protect us, talk with us.

We drape a purple stole on an empty chair facing the cathedral and we stand in a circle around the altar—the round altar, this year with a bold lavender hydrangea. When it got long for one of our group, someone else thought to give him the empty chair. Symbols, sharing, caring—we pray with all we are, we use what we have.

And again, beautiful morning that it was, we had the outdoors to ourselves, as we have had since 1980, our first Ordination Day witness. The cathedral doors were closed when the procession began and we assume continued inside. Why would those going to the grand altar want to see our signs: "Ordain Women Now"? They might have too much to think about.

Regina Bannan teaches at Temple University.

The Legacy of John Paul II: Two Views

J P II AND TODAY'S LEPERS

by Maria Marlowe

It was a spectacular moment unlike any other I could remember. When the pallbearers tipped John Paul's casket for one final goodbye before taking him to his final resting place, the emotion in St. Peter's seemed to reach unearthly proportion. Heaven and earth touched in this historical moment forever etched in time.

No other head of a state could have gathered an audience of this magnitude, every type of power on earth assembled in one place to honor the life of one singular man. No human walking the world could have commanded the unprecedented media coverage that the funeral of John Paul II received. Praise upon praise, adulation upon adulation, honor upon honor seemed to pour in from every part of the globe. Those who lead and those who follow all seemed to be struggling to reach inside themselves to express the deepest emotions. There just didn't seem to be enough words.

This was Roman Catholicism's time to shine and I was determined to hold my tongue, not judge, and not get ticked off. *Honestly*. Then came the story of a local man who sang and played the guitar for John Paul when he visited Philadelphia in 1979. He performed beautifully and had only one desire—to be a priest—a desire denied because he was disabled, imperfect. His mother had taken thalidomide when she was pregnant with him and the medication resulted in his being born without arms. Undaunted by such a challenge, this determined man learned to play the guitar with his feet. He would later marry and have a child. But the priesthood would not happen for him because, as he said in an interview, he was told that "you need a thumb and an index." In the midst of abundant praise over John Paul, I remembered what it was about this institution that drives me up a spiritual wall.

The image that comes to mind? Jesus with the lepers. Jesus

continued on page 6

J P II: A PERSONALIST PHILOSOPHER

by Gaile Pohlhaus

Karol Wojtyla was born in 1920 to a former school teacher and an administrative officer in the Polish army. His mother died shortly before Karol turned nine and his brother died nearly four years later. Karol's father raised his son with strict discipline but died before the future Pope was ordained. A brilliant student, Karol was a philosopher who wrote his habilitation under Max Scheler, a disciple of Husserl, the father of phenomenology. Karol grounded phenomenology in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. In lay person's terms phenomenology is the study of essences as they present themselves to consciousness using pure descriptions. In other words, this is an attempt to talk about phenomena without using abstract terms. This led Karol to formulate his personalist philosophy.

According to Christopher West, the preeminent commentator on Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, "personalism treats ethical questions from this insider's point of view; as persons we are conscious of our acts." And so the philosopher Karol Wojtyla who became the Pope John Paul II treated moral life from his own "insider's" point of view, the point of view of a young man who grew up through adolescence without a mother or sister in his home, in a country first overrun by Nazis and then controlled by Communists, who turned in 1941 to an underground education in the Catholic church for ordination. Karol Wojtyla was a complex person: a philosopher who would use pure descriptions to talk about *Love and Responsibility* as a philosopher and *Theology of the Body* as a pope; a man who was known for his devotion to Mary of Nazareth under many titles; a leader who was beloved by many and followed completely by few.

In *Love and Responsibility* Karol Wojtyla used this personalistic norm—the only proper response to a person is love;

continued on page 6

J P II AND TODAY'S LEPERS

continued from page 5

touching the lepers. Knowing that image and the way it is so strongly expressed in the Gospels, knowing the lengths that Jesus went to to restore dignity to the “misbegotten” of mind, body, and soul, knowing the message that this radical action sends down through the ages, how could any institution proclaiming him betray him in such a way? Is this not the gravest of sins—to use Christ’s ministry to reenforce an attitude that he railed against and fought so hard by word and example to expunge? Come to me all you who labor...*exist...languish...and find life burdensome...hurtful...draining...and I will give you rest...hope...acceptance...peace.*

I have a thumb and an index—in fact I have two. But my leprosy is of a different nature: my calling is housed inside a female body. Do you think if this man and I combined our deficiencies we could together make one acceptable vocation? Do you think if I did the arm work for him and he did the speech work for me, the elders would find us worthy of the sandals of Christ? What behavior do you think is more offensive to Christ—being handled by the armless and the maleless or making lepers of them? If Jesus touched the lepers, could not the lepers touch him?

You have to wonder at a religion that can turn its founder’s simple yet profound message into a Ph.D. curriculum. You have to wonder at a religion that can drag his all-inclusive ministry down to the lowest common denominator of missing arms and female bodies and communion wafers made of rice, not wheat.

The failure of this papacy, at least for me, is that priesthood for many Catholics is still a dream. John Paul had the opportunity to breathe new life into a stagnant clergy and revive it for a people in desperate need. But under his watch, priesthood remained what Jesus never intended it to be—an elitist neighborhood into which the “unclean” need not wander.

Having said all of that I want to say this. John Paul was a courageous and charismatic leader and a compassionate and humble disciple. He was a man of unambiguous peace who spoke ferociously for the poor and had the tremendous courage to deliver that most unpopular message the world refuses to hear: that all human life in *every* stage and in *every* form is a direct reflection of the face of God.

Go in peace, Karol Wojtyła.

Maria Marlowe is a member of the core committee of SEPA/WOC.

J P II: A PERSONALIST PHILOSOPHER

continued from page 5

negatively put, a person must never be used as a means to an end. He would go on to say “personal order is the only proper plane for all debate on matters of sexual morality.” However, he would insist that this would not separate us from objective truth. This brings us to the Pope’s views on woman. As a personalist he is looking for the essence of woman which he then universalizes.

Drawing from several sources written by the Pope, Christopher West devotes a whole section of his commentary on the Pope’s “Eulogy of Femininity:” (CW, 121)

John Paul is a man who loves woman with a purity as close to the beginning as it seems possible to reach in this life. It can even be said in light of the above analysis that he is a man who knows woman (in a celibate way, of course). He knows her distinctive beauty and

dignity, and he stands in awe of the mystery of God’s creative love revealed in her. The Holy Father does not intend merely to state the obvious when he notes that the “constitution of the woman is different as compared with the man”(TB, 81) He believes it is of great significance, and of particular credit to woman, that God has chosen her body to be the place of conception, the shrine of new life. The whole constitution of woman’s body is made for motherhood. Since the body reveals the person, John Paul believes that this speaks volumes, not only about feminine biology, but about the dignity and nature of woman as a person. This is why he takes special care to note that the Bible (and subsequently the liturgy) “honors and praises throughout the centuries ‘the womb that bore you and the breasts you sucked’ (Lk 11:27). These words,” he continues, “constitute a eulogy of motherhood, of femininity, of the female body in its typical expressions of creative love”(82) In her joyous proclamation, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord,” woman expresses the whole theological depth of the function of begetting and procreating. Furthermore, in giving birth the first woman is fully aware of the mystery of creation—of everything we have been discussing about man’s “beginning”—which is renewed in human generation. Yes, according to the Holy Father, the entire mystery, dignity, goodness, vocation, and destiny of man as revealed “in the beginning” is reproduced in some sense every time a child is conceived under the heart of a woman.

Given this philosophical, personalistic, phenomenologic understanding of woman it is not surprising that for the Pope function follows form. According to the Pope, the essential form of woman is to (potentially) give birth—thus this is how her life is to be ordered. He says “Feminine and masculine are different in a way that enables true community.” “Without the difference of the sexes an incarnate, life-giving communion would be impossible.” There is an intentionality which is important in sexual intimacy that allows for the male to make a donation to the female which she willingly accepts. This particular view of *woman* reinforces the view of *women* as passive. In *Mulieris Dignitatem* the Pope stresses the need for women to be treated equally in the workplace with respect to wages and dignity as human beings, but he repeatedly focuses on woman’s first vocation to be mother either actually or symbolically, a role he sees modeled in Mary of Nazareth.

In the end it is the view of woman outlined above which leads the Pope to assert: “I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful.” The form of woman is different from the form of man and since Christ was a man, woman cannot properly model him as priest. This despite the fact that the very first person who could truly and completely say “this is my body, this is my blood” was Mary of Nazareth.

The Pope’s argument follows logically from his original assumptions. Therefore, since my experience shows me that his conclusion is false, I use the logical tool of *reductio ad absurdum* to question and reject his assumption concerning the form of woman.

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

OTTAWA WOW CONFERENCE, ORDINATIONS SET FOR JULY

The Second International Ecumenical Conference sponsored by WOW (Women's Ordination Worldwide) is scheduled for July 22-24 in Ottawa, Canada.

The conference will include workshops, lectures, panel discussions and keynote addresses by Rosemary Radford-Ruether and Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza.

In early July, a Witness Wagon will travel along the East Coast, stopping at sites which are significant in the history of the women's ordination movement in the United States, before arriving in Ottawa for the conference. The witness wagon will be in Philadelphia on Saturday, June 16th.

A post-conference leadership day will be held, in Ottawa on Monday, July 25.

In a July 26 event related to, but not actually part of, the conference, at least three North American women plan to seek ordination to the Roman catholic priesthood and four to the diaconate. Bishops Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger of Austria and Gisela Forster of Germany, members of the Danube Ordination Movement, who were ordained to the priesthood in June 2002 and consecrated as bishops in a secret ceremony in the spring of 2003, will perform the ordinations on a boat in the international waters at the mouth of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

For information, wow2005@rogers.com or contact Dr. Judy Johnson at judyajohnson@earthling.net.

SEPA/WOC, COR TO PARTICIPATE IN DIGNITY CONVENTIONS PANEL

A panel composed of representatives from five COR/Philadelphia (Catholic Organizations for Renewal) groups, including SEPA/WOC, is scheduled for Saturday, July 9, at the national convention of Dignity, which will be held July 7-10 in Philadelphia.

Bernie McBride will represent SEPA/WOC, and Regina Bannan, a SEPA/WOC core committee member, will act as panel moderator.

Other COR groups participating in the panel are Call To Action-Philadelphia, Dignity-Philadelphia, Catholic Parents of the Delaware Valley, and the Community of the Christian Spirit.

For convention information, conv2005@dignityusa.org or 1-800-877-8797. For information about COR/Philadelphia, <http://cor-philadelphia.tripod.com> or 1-215-232-7823.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT?

I was watching the Sunday Novemdiales Mass at St. Peter's Basilica for the late Pope celebrated by Cardinal Ruini. There was a lay choir singing made up of women and men. All the women were wearing purple scarves around their necks—which looked like purple stoles. The men did not wear them. Were all these women wearing the purple stoles in support women's ordination? It sure looked like it to me. Just an observation on my part, but it sure looked obvious to me.

...*Eileen McCafferty DiFranco*

Q: What is the basic unit of a poem?

The basic unit of a poem is truth
The basic unit of a poem is a question
The basic unit of a poem is unknowing
is a breath
is a sound, a soul

The basic unit of a poem is the holy spirit
the tongue
one heartbeat
the welcome

The basic unit of a poem is the blade of grass in the
pavement crack
is a tear, is love

The basic unit is the fall
the spring
the fall, again

The basic unit of a poem is my hand
The basic unit of a poem is my eye
The basic unit of a poem is my voice

It is a shadow, the edge of a shadow
is death

The basic unit of a poem is the call of an unseen bird
the hand of the wind on tall grass, tender
a goosebump
fear

The basic unit of a poem is the shoot splitting the acorn
the creak in the floor, the last gasp
The basic unit of a poem is the trail of my hand on your
back
and sweat
It is the wordless place, the deepest *yes*
The basic unit of the poem is the thing you will only say
in the dark
carried into the light

...*Cassie MacDonald*

*Cassie MacDonald is a lawyer and peace activist
who lives and works in Philadelphia.*

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Excerpts From Keynote Addresses

At SEPA/WOC'S *Celebrating Women Called*

On March 12, SEPA/WOC sponsored a conference, *Celebrating Women Called*, as part of the series of events marking the thirtieth anniversary of the women's ordination movement. The day included two keynote addresses, a panel discussion, break-out groups and a concluding liturgy concelebrated by eight ordained women and one man. Following are excerpts from the keynote addresses by Patricia Fresen, PhD, ordained a priest in 2003 in Europe as part of the Danube Ordination Movement, and Marian Ronan, PhD, who teaches at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA.

from **PROPHETIC OBEDIENCE: THE EXPERIENCE AND VISION OF R.C. WOMENPRIESTS**

It is really exciting for me to be here as SEPA/WOC celebrates its thirtieth anniversary. Thirty years of taking a stand for justice and equality between women and men in our church, of striving to abolish all forms of domination and discrimination in the Catholic church, advocating inclusive church practices, and supporting and affirming women's talents, gifts and calls to ministry. Congratulations!

Here in the North American continent and in Europe, many groups have come together in the last twenty to thirty years, groups working towards church reform from within, groups such as WOC and WOW and Call to Action. In Europe, there are groups in Austria, Germany, France, Spain, and Holland that I know of and there are probably similar movements in other European countries as well. It was in fact out of one of these initiatives, *Kirche von unten*, in Austria and Germany that the so-called Danube Ordination Movement began.

One of the aims of *Kirche von unten* was to take a stand for women's rights within the church, including the right to be ordained. Gertrud May, a woman of eighty three who lives in Munich and whom I know and respect, was active within *Kirche von unten* and she decided to bring together the two women who she foresaw could become, movers and shakers: Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger of Austria and Dr. Gisela Forster of Germany. In 1998 Gertud held a salon in her apartment to which she invited women who she knew were particularly interested in moving towards women's ordination. Gisela and Christine met that evening and that was indeed when things started happening.

Groups were formed and they began preparing directly for ordination. Those who needed more theology enrolled at various universities for further study, a program of preparation for ordination was created and the women met regularly in three groups to prepare themselves and plan for their ordination and future priestly ministry.

Their big question was always: where will we find a bishop brave enough to ordain us? They knew some bishops and priests who supported women's ordination, but one with the courage to ordain women publicly would be very hard to find.

Well, they found a bishop: Romulo Braschi of Argentina. Of the fourteen women who had been in the groups, seven remained to the end. The ordination of the first seven Roman Catholic Womenpriests (as the group is now referred to in English) took place on 29 June 2002 on the ship, "Passau" on the River Danube. It was a tremendous breakthrough for justice and for claiming the equality of women with men in the Roman Catholic church. The media took up the story and it sent ripples all around the world and brought hope to many of us. Photographs and articles appeared in newspapers

and journals in many countries and dozens of television programs were made about the ordination. The world was aware that something of the utmost importance had taken place. That the Vatican took this very seriously is shown by the subsequent excommunication of the seven women, on 27 January 2003, signed by twelve cardinals and archbishops. If it had been of no consequence, the Vatican could simply have ignored it.

Two of the seven womenpriests, Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger and Gisela Forster, were later ordained as bishops by several (male) bishops whose identities must be protected. The reason for ordaining women as bishops was really only so that they in turn can ordain priests, not to get locked into the hierarchical structures of the church.

I believe that initiatives, such as WOC, WOW, CTA, *Kirche von unten* and *Wir sind Kirche* have emerged out of the great paradigm-shift of our times, as we move away from dualism, hierarchy and patriarchy. We—the ordained women in Austria and Germany, and initiatives such as WOC—are part of this paradigm-shift and, whether we know it or not, we are doing our bit to move it along.

It is a pity that the official Roman Catholic church clings largely to the values and the worldview of many centuries ago and still organizes itself as a feudal society. It is a pity that the Roman Catholic church is still influenced by the Greco-Roman and later the Augustinian view of women, regarding them as intrinsically inferior to men. This worldview is reflected in canon law and in church structures.

Prophetic obedience springs from, and leads us towards, a different worldview.

In summary:

- Prophetic obedience often involves taking a stand for justice in the face of injustice or discrimination.
- In prophetic obedience, our understanding of authority and of obedience changes. The role of leadership is not to give orders but to call the community to be about what they have said they are about, challenging them to be who they are. Prophetic obedience leads us towards the recognition of equality: Schüssler-Fiorenza's "discipleship of equals, rather than the older family model (father, mother, superior-subject) still often found in the church. In prophetic obedience, we are moving away from this older model towards co-authority, co-obedience and interdependence.
- We each live out of our personal centre, our inner authority but at the same time within the framework of the vision we hold in common.
- Prophetic obedience may at times require disobedience to an unjust law for the sake of God's reign (In Europe we are often called the, "*contra legem*" group, because our way is to break what we regard as an unjust law).

...Patricia Fresen

from CELEBRATING OUR TRIUMPHS, COMMITTING OURSELVES TO CHANGE

When, in 1974, nineteen hundred Roman Catholic women, myself included, gathered in Detroit for the first Women's Ordination Conference, we could hardly imagine the impact that that meeting, and the movement that grew out of it, would have. Thirty years later, we gather here in Philadelphia to celebrate the most significant of those achievements, and to thank those who have labored for them over the years. . .

It is apparent, then, that we have much to celebrate.

But we must acknowledge that if we have much to celebrate, we also have much to mourn. For many of the hopes that were born in us that first weekend in Detroit have not come to fruition.

Some of these losses stem from the fact that, after the electrifying breakthroughs of Vatican II, many aspects of Roman Catholicism in this country and around the world have become increasingly conservative in the worst senses of that word.

...For us in the women's ordination movement, this move to the right has meant the institution's total refusal to enter into public dialogue with us. At the same time, Vatican statements on women and women's ordination have become ever more repressive. And after years of condemnation, the Vatican now attempts to appropriate feminist theology, repackaged as "the new feminism," for its own purposes.

Decisions by Catholic communities like Spiritus Christi in Rochester, the Community of the Christian Spirit here in Philadelphia, and our sisters in Europe, to ordain Catholic women, are, in part responses to this steady move to the right by the institutional church. However much we celebrate the ordinations of our sisters, then, we must also acknowledge that there is much here for us to grieve—losses and divisions we deeply regret...

We see then, that with the best intentions in the world, those of us in the women's ordination movement, and reform Catholics more broadly, have some problems that we need to address.

With the ordination of Mary Ramerman at Spiritus Christi in 2001 and of Ida Raming and her companions on the Danube in 2002, the movement for Catholic women's ordination entered a new era. Actions undertaken previously by a few small faith communities have now become public. Excommunicated or not, these ordained women and their successors remind those within and on the margins of the institution that women can be Catholic priests.

This new era also offers us in the women's ordination movement an opportunity to contest the institution's minimization of the Gospel and social justice since Vatican II. We can do this by living out our own Catholic feminist hierarchy of values. That is, we must explicitly integrate the struggle for women's ordination and gender equality in the church with other struggles for social justice.

How do we do this? I have two recommendations.

First of all, Catholic faith communities that now ordain women should go out of their way to ordain women—and men—who do not have academic theological training, that is to say, who do not have seminary degrees or even college educations. In saying this, I am echoing the recommendation made by the African American Catholic scholar, Sheila Briggs, at the WOC conference in Milwaukee in the year 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. Some of these excluded Catholics will be people of color.

In saying this I am not recommending that we stop ordaining people with seminary educations. But it is essential that the eucharist sometimes be celebrated in Catholic communities by those whom Jesus came to call: the poor and the marginalized. Baptist churches practice what they call "local ordination." They ordain members of a local congregation who are leaders by virtue of their long-term commitment and moral example. Clergy with local ordination cannot carry their ordination to another church, but they do play liturgical roles in their home churches. National WOC has taken a step in this direction by offering scholarships to women in ministry certificate programs as well as in graduate seminary programs. We need to move farther in this direction.

My second recommendation is that we expand our concept of ordination to explicitly include women with prophetic as well as ritual and pastoral gifts. The Jewish and Christian scriptures offer multiple examples of prophets who stood up for the poor and the oppressed. We must take prophetic traditions as much into account as priestly ones when we choose leaders for our Catholic communities.

When I say that we must begin to anoint the women prophets among us, I am not thinking primarily of those involved in charitable endeavors—that is to say, the works of mercy. We must do the works of mercy, of course, but that is not enough. I mean, rather, that we should recognize and ordain women who, as followers of Jesus Christ, critique, teach and organize against the social and economic forces that oppress women and men around the world.

Since the invasion of Iraq and last November's presidential election it has become evident that the United States and the global community face life and death challenges. In response to these challenges, we in the movement for women's ordination must commit ourselves to bringing together prophecy and priesthood in our work for women's equality in the church. The Gospel of Jesus Christ requires nothing less of us.

...*Marian Ronan*

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AND NOW A WORD

FROM RAHNER ON REFORM...Part 1

by Mary Byrne

After a long famine of media coverage on any good news coming out of the Roman church, we have been treated to a royal fete of Catholicism following the death of Pope John Paul II and the official election of Cardinal Ratzinger to the papacy. Missing in the miasma of adulation has been any real semblance of balanced reporting on the state of the church—past, present and future—by the mainstream media. (NPR made feeble attempts but ended up genuflecting like everyone else.) That being said, the tidbits that were offered were encouraging. Women’s ordination was positioned pivotally and prominently as a major reform issue *to be taken seriously* as a matter of justice. And, around the edges, the internet buzzed with simultaneous combustion as people bristled with indignation and yet held out for hope.

So, here is my contribution to the continuing discussion on the state of the church (or as some might observe, the *church of the state*). The article below is an imagined interview with Karl Rahner based on his writings on the future of the church. It is my attempt to counter the voice of orthodoxy as fashioned in great part by Ratzinger with the voice of reform as pioneered by Karl Rahner—the late great twentieth-century theologian. Interestingly enough, Rahner and Ratzinger, both highly visible German clerics at the time of Vatican II, were colleagues and close friends. In fact, they shared very similar theological viewpoints until the mid-1960s when their paths diverged over interpretations of Vatican reforms. Rahner died twenty years ago. How I wish he were alive today to speak for himself and once again inspire our imagination!

(The sentiments and ideas attributed to Rahner in this article have been paraphrased, for the most part, from a collection of his writings, *Abstracts of Karl Rahner’s Theological Investigations 1-23* by Daniel T. Pekarske, SDS. Italics are used to indicate direct quotes from Rahner.)

MB: Father Rahner, as you are well aware, the church today is ransacked with scandal and schism although the latter strikes a note of temerity in both orthodox and reform circles. In your writings going back to the late 60s, you seem to have a certain prescience of this dissension albeit marked with a definite sense of hope. How do you see it now?

KR: In the years following the Second Vatican Council, reform was the energy of the church. In fact, given the rapidity with which many Vatican II changes were quickly absorbed into the daily life of the church, I would have to say that the council made kinetic a dormant energy that was already stirring Catholic consciousness and was joyfully released by John XXIII and his open windows. Windows onto the world would be the best way to phrase it because that is precisely what Vatican II did—it made us a world-church with a pluralistic theology, ecumenically oriented, eschewing coercive power, and optimistic about God’s will to save all people. In a sense, we were called to grow up and beyond our parochial phobias and be an open-window modern church instead of a walled-in medieval church. This was both an historic and incarnational event that transcended any residual hierarchical and communal resistance resulting in significant changes in terms of theology and praxis within faith communities.

MB: Can you give us an example of these changes?

KR: In 1974, I wrote *The Shape of the Church to Come* in which I posited that the church of the future would be formed from below—from the practicing faithful not the dictating hierarchy. (This is the rejection of “coercive power” I mentioned earlier). That is indeed happening today. It is not officially condoned or recognized but nonetheless, small faith communities are gathering and growing in astonishing numbers throughout the world. These faith-based communities first emerged out of the liberation theology movement in Latin America in the 70s. Although ultimately dismissed by the official church for their secular political implications, their prophetic witness to the changing nature of community could not be silenced. Ironically, the repression of small faith-based communities has led to an underground mentality spurning even more radical notions of community and leadership.

MB: You might not have imagined the circumstances or the repercussion of this movement but you certainly articulated the need for change in both the formation and the priestly leadership of faith communities. Can you speak first to formation?

KR: In 1968, I addressed the Conference of the Catholic Academy in Bavaria on the topic of priestly image—today and tomorrow. At that time, I asserted, among other things, that the old image of “priest” had come into question and that a new image had not yet emerged. It is an indication of the complex symbiosis between priesthood and church mission that almost fifty years later, priestly image is still undergoing transformation with no clear resolution in sight. Are we at the beginning, the middle or the end of the process? History will provide that perspective; grace will sustain us along the way. Suffice to say that *the activities of the priest are always determined by the mission of the church*. That is the starting point for the discussion on priesthood. Does the mission of the church warrant a renewed priestly ministry?

MB: How would you define the mission of the church? Is it static or does it respond to the constant variables of time and culture?

KR: The essence of the church is and always will be salvific. It is *the historical and symbolic manifestation of God’s offer of salvation*. The mission of the church is to make this offer available and accessible to humanity across time and culture through the word which finds its supreme proclamation in the eucharist. The priest is the minister of that word and priesthood is defined by its commitment to mediating the word to the faithful. If the faithful are deprived of the word, then one has to look not only to the image but to the viability of the priesthood as it exists in a given time or culture. For this reason, the church is free throughout time to evaluate, renew and evolve the priesthood. Just like the Gospel which it spreads to the ends of the earth, the church has to live afresh.

MB: OK, let’s take this one step at a time because it feels like we are entering a bold new landscape here. Possibly even forbidden territory in terms of church discourse. Based on your description of the relationship between priestly ministry and church mission, where does the renewal begin?

KR: First of all, renewal is not decided by theologians or by popes. It comes from the community of the faithful—from *experimentation from below* as I have stated earlier. Going back again to *The Shape of the Church to Come*, I began an

exploration of the church of tomorrow with the premise that the church *will no longer exist as formerly through the mere persistence of her office, of socially firm structures and through an awareness of being taken for granted by public opinion, recruiting new members because children adopt and maintain the life-style of their parents and are baptized and indoctrinated by the Church.* I refer to this statement because the conditions mentioned have been further compromised today. At this time, the church is not enjoying the public perception of possessing much social integrity—at least not in America. Children are indeed adopting the lifestyles of their parents—parents who are totally indifferent to the idea of belonging to any faith community whatsoever. Under these circumstances and many others that have been slowly corroding the viability of the parish for many years, church indoctrination cannot spare the present parochial configuration. Something else is happening and it is still the church. And that's fine. *It is clear for theological reasons and in light of the testimony of history that parishes constituted by a particular territory simply could not be the sole basic elements of the Church.*

MB: Well, then, with what are we left? I don't mean to sound a note of despair because I don't feel that at all. Out there, on the edges of the so-called fringe, the faithful are coming together for worship and community in more shapes, sizes and configurations than Rome can possibly dismiss. What do you think of these communities?

KR: I am well aware that in this time there is a plethora of communities being formed either in response to the changing needs of the faithful and/or against what is deemed to be the repressive actions of the church. Without making any judgments, let me speak to what I call basic communities. They are formed as a result of free initiative while maintaining an integral doctrinal and sacramental association with the church. It is no secret that I have long held that these types of communities—*living Christian communities formed by Christians themselves*—are perfectly valid as long as they *sustain the essential, basic functions of the Church (organized proclamation of the gospel, administration of the sacraments, Christian charity and so on) and can be taken for granted as the place of the constantly renewed eucharistic celebration.*

MB: It seems to follow that we now talk about priestly renewal. The reform of the parochial structure of faith communities does not change by itself. Basic communities have relocated ecclesial authority and necessarily challenged priestly leadership. Who are the leaders of these new communities? Are we looking at priesthood of the hierarchy as it has been defined for eons from above or priesthood of the people as it is re-forming from below?

KR: I am not sure that I agree with the inherent dichotomy of your question. Hierarchy and the church are not mutually inclusive—at least not in any theological sense. Perhaps, not even in an historical sense if you go back to the very early days of Christianity in its diverse cultic expressions throughout the Middle East. But to simply answer your question, let me say that priesthood of the people is the priesthood of the church. And, *the Church has at her disposal an extremely wide scope for developing variations within her necessary and ultimately single ministry in accordance with the needs of a particular age and the variations of cultural milieu, etc.* If, for instance, basic communities meet the criteria I men-

tioned before—in terms of gospel, sacrament and charity, *then they have the right to be recognized by the Church as well as their community leader.* And this is wholly compatible with the hierarchical church.

MB: OK, we have a different way of being community and we have a different way of leadership within that community—both being “ordained” from below, in response to the changing needs of the faithful which you suggest is fully in line with the hierarchical church. The next question is how different can this leadership be? I'll be specific. Does the community leader have to be a celibate male?

KR: (laughter) I knew that was coming! Pardon me if we take one issue at a time. Let's start with celibacy. The necessity of eucharistic and sacramental leadership in a community—and they should never be separated—is primary. Should it occur that *the Church in a concrete situation cannot find a sufficient number of priestly congregational leaders who are bound to celibacy, it is obvious and requires no theological discussion that the obligation of celibacy must not be imposed.* Because then what you have on your hands is a scandal far greater than a priest who is not celibate; what you have is a church that denies the eucharist and the sacraments on the basis of marital status. And that is a complete distortion of the essence of mission of the church—from which all else derives. Now, I know you have another question—as you rightly should...

MB: Well, really, it is a logical conclusion. If a community is entitled to a leader whether or not that person is celibate, does it not follow that a community might also be entitled to a leader whether or not that person is a male? It is a scandal to deny the sacraments on the basis on marital status, surely it is a greater scandal to deny the sacraments on the basis of gender—a God-given condition—and in some circles even considered a gift.

KR: My qualification for the priesthood was based on many things but never my essential maleness. I do empathize with what must be a great sorrow in the lives of many women. However, we need to see this with a clarity unclouded by emotion. (I have just proved my essential maleness, no?) Well, perhaps it is better said that *we are in period of transition requiring all to exercise patience in light of the terminus a quo and courage in light of the terminus ad quem.* In light of the changing times that we live in, yes, *a women could be considered just as much as a man for leadership of a basic community and therefore should be ordained to priestly office.* And obviously I held this position before the 1994 apostolic letter, *Ordination Sacerdotalis* (“On Reserving Priestly Ordination for Men Alone”) which effectively imposed a ban of silence on the issue. Which I think is most unfortunate. It has forced the issue underground where the Spirit will continue to work in mysterious ways even in the absence of dialogue which is an act of acquiescence on our part to be the vehicles of God's communication. So, we are being willful in this matter and there will be a price to pay for that. How easily we forget the Garden! At any rate, the bottom line is that there is no reason in principle to deny women ordination. However, her right to ordination, as in the case of the non-celibate male, must be in response to the needs of the basic community not according to her personal wishes or self-understanding. *(to be continued in next issue)*

Mary Byrne is an ordained minister and a writer.

Book Reviews

SACRED LONGINGS: THE ECOLOGICAL SPIRIT AND GLOBAL CULTURE by Mary C. Grey. Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2004. 272pp. Paper. \$19.00

reviewed by Eileen M. Harrington

The first thing to note about Mary Grey's newest work is that it is published under different titles in the United States and in Britain. While the main title of the book—*Sacred Longings*—remains the same, the subtitle of the British version is *Ecofeminist Theology and Globalisation*. The subtitle of the US version, however, is *The Ecological Spirit and Global Culture*. This difference suggests what marketers think will and will not sell in the US today. What is an "ecological spirit" anyway? The good news is that Grey's book delivers on what both subtitles seem to imply, delving into the ecofeminist response to globalization as well as the spiritual needs of the so-called "first world."

Grey's introduction clarifies what *Sacred Longings* is about: "the pilgrimage for truth and the recovery of heart" through an examination of economic globalization. Grey believes that all people, everywhere, are searching for the Sacred in their lives—that which connects them deeply with each other, the natural world and something bigger. That Sacred is what many call religion, but Grey won't be limited to this.

Each chapter of *Sacred Longings* is a web of information and stories. Grey's writing style is more poetic than logical. She regales her readers with tales of young burned-out activists, Miriam seeking water in the desert, and the tragedy of Psyche and Eros, all in the interest of leading us on a journey from pain, helplessness, and despair—a journey many in the world make every day—to a place of renewal.

Thus, Grey's book, although filled with helpful material that introduces readers to economic and cultural globalization and ecofeminism, is focused on how so-called "first world" humans have lost their spiritual way under the influence of the "free" market. A disturbing number of the inhabitants of the North and West, Grey observes, are already addicted to alcohol, drugs, gambling, sex and food. Now an additional serious and widespread addiction to the consumption of non-necessary material goods has been added, an addiction that threatens not only Euro-Americans, but the rest of the world as well.

Christian theology, according to Grey, contributes to the development of this addiction by underwriting the divisions between body and spirit, and between women and their own

experience. Disembodied theology or religious belief is as serious a problem as consumer addiction because it leaves many devoid of a connection to the earth, their communities and their own bodies.

Grey's solution to the spiritual/consumer crisis confronting the "first world" begins with water—he reverence for water found in Hebrew scripture, Celtic legends, Celtic Christian hagiography and in many cultures throughout the world. Next comes a spiritual renewal through acknowledgment and reverence for the living Spirit as found in Christianity and other religious traditions. With this water and Spirit, Grey "baptizes" the reader into her chapters on the theology of ecofeminism and on the practice of ecomysticism, two critical pieces of her remedy for the burgeoning spiritual crisis of our time.

A major component of Grey's unique perspective is her dual role as scholar and activist. With her husband, Nicolas Grey, she is co-founder of *Wells for India*, an NGO that supports women and their families in northern India. Her work with *Wells for India* takes her to some of the poorest corners of the Indian subcontinent, while her scholarship takes her back to the UK to teach ecofeminism and globalization courses at the University of Wales, Lampeter. While Lampeter and the nearby larger Welsh city of Cardiff aren't London, consumption at a level familiar to anyone living in any major city of the world is still promoted there. The contrast between northern India and Lampeter clearly informs the philosophy and theology of justice undergirding Grey's writing.

Sacred Longings: The Ecological Spirit and Global Culture is an important addition to the literature on globalization, especially because of its focus on ecofeminism. It is also one of only two books dealing substantively with the spiritual crisis of globalization (the other is Jay McDaniel's *Living from the Center: Spirituality in an Age of Consumerism*). This is an outstanding work, one I strongly recommend to my students and all those concerned about the multiple connections between these important topics.

Eileen M. Harrington is a doctoral student in ecofeminism and globalization at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA; she studied alongside Mary Grey at the University of Wales, Lampeter, in the spring of 2002.



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CALLED TO QUESTION: A SPIRITUAL MEMOIR by Joan Chittister OSB. Sheed & Ward, 2004. 144 pp. Cloth. \$21.95

reviewed by Teresa F. Wilson

Joan Chittister is celebrating her Jubilee year: fifty years as a Benedictine nun known for her questions and for her courage in answering the questions posed by an ever-increasing public. Catholic women's ordination activists know Joan as the keynote speaker at the 2003 Women's Ordination Worldwide conference in Dublin. Others know her as fellow traveler on the Peace Train to Beijing for the Fourth UN World Conference on Women or in her current work with the Global Peace Initiative of Women Religious and Spiritual Leaders. *Called to Question: A Spiritual Memoir* is perhaps her most searching book in a long line published over the years.

As the book cover notes, *Called to Question* is a journal of conversations between Joan and a number of other spiritual writers. In it, Joan shares the questions, doubts and convictions of her own heart. The themes of the book are the inward life, immersion in life, resistance, feminist spirituality, ecology, dailiness. Those headings do not begin to describe the contents of the book. The circularity of Joan's journey's process gives each chapter a complexity that reflects life as it is experienced by many of us, life refusing to stand still to be observed and demanding constant attention to detail, one thought on top of and buried within another. Most of us cannot stop in a remote corner of Ireland to think and pray and write, but we have cause to be grateful that Joan Chittister does.

In her prologue, Joan identifies her effort as a "personal excursion through questions that for years I feared to ask because they had all been answered." Her challenge is to "go beyond the answers, beyond the fear of uncertainty, to that great encompassing mystery of life that is God." Knowing Joan in this book is to know her ever more deeply as the sociologist, theologian, Benedictine nun, rights activist, and spiritual guide that she is to many of us around the world.

In reading *Called to Question* I was particularly struck by Joan's statement, in her chapter on feminist spirituality, that "in our male dominated culture, we don't think things through, we force them through. If anything, what a woman is or has developed is simply overlooked. Or derided." The word, "derided" strikes a memory blow for me and I imagine that many other women can recall times when they were dismissed with words, a gesture or open derision. Sometimes

with utmost politeness; sometimes hostility. Joan's thought that "change could come when men weary of having to pretend forever that they are more than they are, even when they have all the money and power" is a provocative one for me.

With feelings the hallmark of a feminist spirituality, Joan asks, "What do we do with the feelings that clog our souls? It is time to release feelings into the world." Joan's answer to the often asked question, why do you stay in the church? is taken on directly. "And why do we—I—continue to align myself with an institution so closed, so heretical, so sinful? Because Jesus stayed in the synagogue until the synagogue threw him out, that's why." Joan admits "that kind of honesty is dangerous. If we admit to ourselves, that awareness becomes our cross. Awareness is a blessed curse. That is where the spirituality of endurance comes in. Consciousness commits us."

Reading Joan Chittister is like changing by osmosis. Her words are so often our thoughts that it is hard to separate them. I ask her forgiveness for the times in this review when I have failed to make clear the difference; my thanks to her for this book to share and relish.

(Joan's books and daily messages are available at <https://www.benetvision.org/benetvision/joanwelcome.html>)

Teresa Wilson is a member of the Grail and of Peace Links, a Pittsburgh anti-war group through which she and Joan Chittister became friends almost twenty-five years ago. She lives in Claremont, CA.

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CALENDAR

The following centers and groups offer programs and activities of interest to progressive Catholics. If you would like to include events in the **Equal wRites** calendar, please contact Cassie at 215-467-8898 or peacecatphilly@yahoo.com

Centers for Spiritual Growth and Support

Franciscan Spiritual Center, a contemplative place of simple beauty, respectful of creation, and reflective of the Franciscan values of hospitality, mutuality and Gospel living, offers programs that are holistic, ecumenical, collaborative in nature and supportive of nonviolence. The center provides accommodations, space for spiritual direction, prayer, study, art and exercise on a beautiful, handicapped-accessible campus. Clare House is a quiet place for contemplation, guided retreat weekends and directed prayer. This summer, deepen your prayer life with an extended Franciscan solitude experience at Clare House, a retreat on "Instruments of Peace," a guided retreat, "For the Sake of the Heart," a retreat for caregivers of HIV/AIDS sufferers or one of many opportunities for Reiki or Taize prayer. For more information, call 610 527-4813 or check the web site at www.fscaston.org. The center is at 609 S. Convent Rd. in Aston, PA.

Kirkridge is a retreat and study center rooted in Christ close to the earth where people of diverse backgrounds find community and experience the transforming power of the Spirit for personal wholeness, reconciliation and justice in the world. Its work is based on the understanding that the life of faith requires not only action to transform the world toward greater shalom, but also the cultivation of a deep spirituality to sustain that compassionate action. At Kirkridge this summer, slow down for the Summer Sabbath experience, a retreat on living in transition; Write Your Spiritual Autobiography; give Care for the Caregiver; share with other Christian People of the Rainbow living alternative lifestyles; join other women for The DaVinci Dame and the Holy Grail; learn how to help Create a Culture of Peace or try Hiking as a Path to Wholeness. For more information on these among many other programs, check www.kirkridge.org, call 610-588-1793 or e-mail kirkridge@fast.net. Kirkridge is located at 2495 Fox Gap Road in Bangor, PA.

Mary's Vineyard welcomes people of all faiths. All those alienated from the traditions of their upbringing will be given opportunities to continue their search for meaning. Although primarily focused on the needs of women, the center is open to all who have accepted the responsibility to form and care for future generations and who desire to share their burdens and joys with others. Enjoy one of the ongoing programs: Weekly yoga on Mondays; QiGong or Pilates on Tuesdays; Reiki Healing on Wednesdays; Meditation on the third Saturday and Peace Prayers on the 11th of each month. Try Creative and Expressive Writing for Women this June, or enjoy an unstructured retreat time in the Vineyard meditation park, labyrinth, or lending library. For information about these and other upcoming programs at Mary's Vineyard, please call 856 428-5495 or check the web site at www.marysvineyard.org. Mary's Vineyard is located at 1812 Haddonfield-Berlin Road in Cherry Hill, NJ.

At **Pendle Hill**, education is envisioned as the transforming of people and society. Programs offer the resources and time for integrated spiritual, intellectual and personal learning. Guests come to Pendle Hill to study, learn more about Quakerism, seek an experience of community living, deepen prayer and spiritual life, or discern a future direction. Summer is a special time for the arts at Pendle Hill. The rich variety of media for artistic/spiritual exploration include poetry by hand and heart, dyeing Japanese papers, photography, fiber arts, and flower arrangement. Or choose from programs on the Psalms, T.S. Eliot, discernment, Celtic spirituality or receiving as a spiritual discipline. Pendle Hill also hosts summer youth programs for high school and college age seekers. For more information on any Pendle Hill programs, call 610 566-4507 or check the web site at www.pendlehill.org. Pendle Hill is located at 338 Plush Mill Road in Wallingford, PA.

The **SSJ Center for Spirituality** is a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill rooted in the charism of unity and reconciliation. In a spirit of hospitality, the center welcomes individuals and groups for spiritual direction, retreats, and other opportunities for deepening one's relationship with God, self, and all creation. This summer, get away for a guided or directed retreat at the SSJ house at Cape May Point. Contact Sr. Catherine Corrigan for details on the beach retreats. For more information on upcoming programs, call 215 248-7231. The SSJ Center is at 9701 Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill, PA.

Temenos, an outreach ministry of the Swedenborgian Church, is a nonprofit conference and retreat center. It exists to facilitate renewal and transformation in human lives in the Swedenborgian spirit of inquiry and personal growth and the belief that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life. Programs are open to persons of all spiritual traditions and the sacred space of Temenos is also available for private individual retreats and for groups wishing to reserve space for their own programs or events. Visitors are welcome at worship Sundays at 10:30 a.m. at the Farm House Chapel followed by a spiritual discussion group at 12:15 p.m. This summer, see Kenny White in concert or participate in Esoteric Colorpuncture training in July. For information call 610 696-8145 or e-mail programs@temenosretreat.org. Temenos is at 1564 Telegraph Road in West Chester, PA.

Local Groups Working for Peace, Justice and Equality

ANCHOR (A Non-Denominational Community Harvesting Our Resources) is a group of Christians committed to living creatively and reflectively. Its mission is to engage in the holistic exploration of contemporary spiritual/religious/moral issues. Communal prayer days and discussion groups, one each in the fall and the spring, address relevant topics of religious and social concern. For particulars on any of the above programs, call 215 233-4929 and request a calendar of events.

The **Brandywine Peace Community** continues its peaceful resistance to the manufacture of weapons by Lockheed Martin and to America's presence in Iraq. Join the community for a monthly potluck supper and program on the second Sunday of each month, 4:30 pm, University Lutheran Church, 3637 Chestnut St., Philadelphia (bring a main dish, salad, or dessert to share). This July and August, Brandywine will commemorate the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the nuclear age. Join the community at Lockheed Martin on July 16 for a vigil marking the anniversary of the first atomic test blast, and on August 6, Hiroshima Day, for a rally and nonviolent civil disobedience. Nagasaki Day will be observed on August 9 with a sundown ceremony, in a place to be announced. For information, call 610 544-1818 or e-mail brandywine@juno.com.

Call to Action/Philadelphia, a group committed to church renewal, serves southeastern Pennsylvania, south Jersey and Delaware. For information on organizational meetings and programs, call 215 345-1176.

COR/Philadelphia (Catholic Organizations for Renewal) is a coalition of individuals and groups, including SEPA/WOC, sharing a commitment to a renewed church. All are most welcome to attend planning meetings. Information: 215 232-7823.

Dignity Sunday Liturgies are at 7 pm at St. Luke and the Epiphany Church, 330 S. 13 St. in Philadelphia. The church is wheelchair-accessible. For information on these and other Dignity programs, call 215 546-2093.

House of Grace Catholic Worker participates in faith-based resistance to the war and all forms of violence while offering health care to our neighbors in need. The house is located at 1826 E. Lehigh Ave. For more information, call 215 426-0364.

Philadelphia Catholic Worker hosts liturgy and potluck every Thursday (excepting August) at 6 pm at 430 W. Jefferson Street. The Philadelphia Catholic Worker is a community striving to follow in the footsteps of Dorothy Day. Volunteers to take part in the house's summer program for neighborhood children are needed. A newsletter, "Common Life," is available upon request. For information, call 215 232-7823.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference core committee meetings with liturgy are held monthly, and all are welcome. For information on time and location, call 215 545-9649.

Women of Faith, a ministry of the Metropolitan Christian Council, is an ecumenical community in the greater Philadelphia area that celebrates women's gifts in Christian ministry and seeks justice and equality for all women in the church and the broader society. Women of Faith endeavors to foster Christian unity through worship and education, bringing together persons from diverse cultures and backgrounds for mutual nurture, support and service to the larger community. Join Women of Faith for a monthly potluck supper. For information, contact the Metropolitan Christian Council at 215 836-7784.

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SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Acts 2

by Judith A. Heffernan

As I wait for AAA to arrive to change my tire, on the day I had to choose a new work location (after twenty-nine years at the present one!), my struggle about what theme to choose for this Scripture Reflections is resolved! CHANGE.

Looking forward to a visit from my West Coast family, I had taken some vacation time in April. While cleaning, I heard the TV announcement—"We have a Pope. Joseph... (No, please don't say it!) Ratzinger." I immediately called three friends for comfort.

I was hurting. Wasn't it Cardinal Ratzinger who wanted John Paul II to declare the non-ordination of women infallible? What will this mean for the church? I wondered and prayed.

A few days later I found myself very down. I thought of Archbishop Romero, whose twenty-fifth anniversary we had just commemorated. Romero was once part of that hierarchical model of not rocking the boat. Then one day a young priest was murdered because of his justice and liberation work and Romero was deeply affected. That was Romero's conversion moment.

I also thought about the communion of saints and prayed to Romero for Benedict XVI to have a conversion—a change of heart. I also prayed to John Paul II and told him I believe he now knows the truth, and, to my way of seeing things, he really made a mess for women in the church—but I also told him that he can now help make the rough way smooth.

When I saw Benedict, he looked more mellow than I remembered and he said he wants to LISTEN. Then let's keep talking and keep hope alive!

FINE POINTS

SUBSCRIPTION: To begin or continue receiving *Equal wRites*, please send a contribution and your name and address to our treasurer, Marianne Jann, 49 Driscoll Drive, Ivyland, PA 18974. We deliberately did not set a specific fee because we wanted people to feel free to contribute what they felt they could afford: \$5, \$10, \$15, or more. If that's really impossible for you just send your name and address and we will start your subscription. When you join WOC as a national member, you do not automatically join us, so if you want to support us both, you need to contribute to us both.

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



SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
WOMEN'S ORDINATION CONFERENCE

c/o Jann
49 Driscoll Drive
Ivyland, PA 18974

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Change. Progressive Catholic people have been quite upset that the editor of *America* has been removed because he encouraged dialogue on "closed" issues.

I am drawn to these reflections: Sr. Elizabeth Johnson: "It is blazingly evident by now that women are capable of serving in ordained ministry...do not quench the Spirit." Sr. Teresa Kane: "Our church community is called to hear and respond to the voices of women, the cry of the poor, and the quest for peace and nonviolence coupled with deep respect for our earth and our environment...This is holy work, God's work."

This is holy work. As another Pope—John XXIII—proclaimed. "Consult not your fears, but your hopes and dreams...concern yourself not with what you tried and failed, but what it is still possible for you to do!"

We hear the words of *Acts 2*: "The Spirit has been poured out...our sons and daughters will prophesy... our old will dream dreams...our young will have vision. God's people will never be afraid!"

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.

YOU ARE INVITED TO JUDY'S JUBILEE

The Community of the Christian Spirit cordially invites you to join the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Judy's ordination to the priesthood on Saturday, June 25, beginning at 4 pm, in Feasterville. For more information, or to RSVP call Roberta Brunner or Margaret McLaughlin at 215 572-5623.

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 Sept. 2005. 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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