

SEXTON IN SORRENTO

by *Marguerite Sexton*

My husband, Tom, and I slept in on Holy Thursday, opting to take a day off from our tour in order to enjoy a quiet, lazy day. When I awoke, realizing what day it was, I felt a mixture of guilt and relief: guilt because I wouldn't be present to WOC for the witness at the cathedral in Philadelphia, and relief for the same reason.

Ah, Italy, I thought, free from the angst that invariably grips me at the Philadelphia witness. We decided to walk into Sorrento, buy an English-language newspaper and find a

restaurant for breakfast. We set about the ten-minute walk into town, stopping here and there to buy a paper or to figure out a restaurant menu in our limited Italian.

Suddenly we realized that we were directly next to the cathedral beside the courtyard where the priests were lined up in procession ready to enter for the Chrism Mass. We decided to step into the courtyard for a closer look. Tom, being the language student, figured out the Italian words for *Where are the ordained women?*

So as Tom pulled out the camera, I stepped

up to the beginning of the procession and said, "Dove sono le donne presbiteriane?" (Where are the ordained women?) The priests turned and looked at me, puzzled and confused. So I repeated, this time in a louder voice, "Dove sono le donne presbiteriane?" They looked at me, looked away and looked back at me again, confounded. Some would shrug their shoulders or tap one another on the arm and point to me. A few gave the "thumbs up" signal. Some avoided looking in my direction, determined to look serious and pious while

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	EQUAL	Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women and Men in the Philadelphia Area
Vol. XIII No 1	WRITES	JUNE - AUGUST 2004
		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 THURSDAY MARKED BY PROTEST, PRAYER, AND ACTION

IN PHILADELPHIA INSIDE THE CATHEDRAL

by *Gabriela Assagioli*

It was during the 1970s that I first felt the inclination toward priesthood. It took me until this last Holy Thursday to go into Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral and speak my truth as Jesus did in his temple. Over the years of being brought up Catholic, I have had some pretty intimidating experiences with Catholic priests. The power of religious patriarchy to silence the truth in the wee people such as myself and most lay people, especially women, is unacceptable to me now.

Before and during Lent I began to ask myself if I were ever going to do anything concrete to bring about change in the Catholic church. I have long felt that the wonderful symbols and as Rahner wrote, "symbolic reality," have been diminished by the various scandals as well as the inability of the Catholic hierarchy to examine itself in order to grow. During the final week before Holy Thursday, I decided that now was the time for Gabriela to put her body where her heart and mind had been moving her.

I made efforts to contact WOC members

to be sure that what I did would not interfere with their plans. I was not going to do an action inside the cathedral if WOC had planned something strong this year. Once I found out that my plans would not interfere with WOC's action, I knew that I had only to deal with whatever inner self-doubts I might have.

So I prepared materials to be handed out while I was in the cathedral. I created a kind of prayer booklet. On the front I placed a copy of a black and white photo of Van Eyck's painting of "Our Lady as Priest." This 1437 painting was condemned by the hierarchy. It is lovely. Inside I included my poem, "Waiting for Ecclesiastical Enlightenment," that was in *Equal wRites* a few

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IN PHILADELPHIA OUTSIDE THE CATHEDRAL

by *Annette McMenamin Bakley*

I went to the protest that morning. I thought that there was a good turnout—thirty maybe forty people at least. They shut the

doors of the cathedral—that tells me that they know they're wrong to close women out of leadership roles!

Some woman came out with a sign that said, "We LOVE our Priests" and I thought, "She just doesn't get it!" It isn't about loving or not loving the priests we have—it's about recognizing the people who cannot answer their call to Holy Orders because of their gender. Aha moment #789.

HOLY THURSDAY HAIKU

THIS YEAR

*the priests
disdained our challenge, blind
to Him Who stood with us*

NEXT YEAR

*for Gabriela
let's all go in
justice and truth
the bread and wine we bring*

...karenblenz

IN SORRENTO

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pretending not to hear my ever louder shouts of “Dove sono le donne presbiteriane?”

One stepped out of the line pointing excitedly at the “Kerry for President” button I wore everywhere in Italy. “American?” he asked. “No more Bush!” he stated forcefully. I smiled, took his hand and replied, “Dove sono le donne presbiteriane?” Off he went.

Finally, along came the bishop wearing the all-too-familiar self-important scowl, pretending not to hear. I wasn’t more than ten feet from him. It didn’t matter that he wasn’t looking. There was no question but that he heard loud and clear: “Dove sono le donne presbiteriane?”



Marge Sexton confronts the procession of priests outside the Cathedral in Sorrento, Italy on Holy Thursday.

Finally they were inside with “Dove sono le donne presbiteriane?” echoing behind the final one. Tom and I did a happy *high five* before going to breakfast, aware that there truly are no coincidences and giving thanks that we were called once again on Holy Thursday to be faithful witnesses to the church’s terrible sin against its holy women.

Marge Sexton, a life-long Catholic feminist, is founder and president of Journeys of the Heart, a non-denominational ministry that provides wedding ceremonies for people who are unaffiliated with a religious organization.

IN PHILADELPHIA

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years back and appears again here. I also included an essay that I wrote, “Mariology for the New Millenium” that discusses the distorted imaging of Mary and therefore women. Men and especially priests control the role of women so much that the expression of God in women is invisible. How can the male hierarchy see the grace of Jesus in women when they have systematically eradicated it?

With 75 copies of my booklet tucked un-

der my sweater, I entered the cathedral an hour and a half early to position myself up front. I had never been to the cathedral for this service although I had attended other places. Little by little, schools arrived with students. Few of the general laity were there. Most of the pews were blocked off for the priests. Eventually a woman and man sang and made gestures as if leading the multitude in song, although few joined in the singing. The service began with the long procession of priests from the side church. It took about twenty minutes for all the priests in their ornate garb to process to their places. The incense and cardinal were the last to enter the inner sanctum near the altar.

The priests filled the main areas of the church in their gold and white dresses. The faithful bused in from outside the city and schools were wedged into pews without good views of the service. Closed circuit TVs were placed in significant places so the faithful could see even if they were behind a column or too far back.

Women from Norristown were complaining that they couldn’t see anything. My pew was in the front to the far right. I began to shake a little while watching the long procession of priests.

I listened carefully to the readings from Scripture and then became calm. The Gospel again told the story of Jesus in the temple challenging the leaders. On hearing that passage again, I felt solidarity with Jesus. There was no more appropriate time or place to speak to the hierarchy than during the liturgy of the Word. I felt like putty in the warm arms of truth.

Then the new cardinal, Justin Rigali, walked over and climbed the stair around the huge column at the front of the cathedral and said, “This is quite a sight up here.” The sea of men spread out in front of him laughed warmly. He began to speak of Holy Thursday and the priesthood.

I knew that this was the time to move. I quietly walked over and began giving out the booklet to the press and a few of those near me. Then I started down the aisles, stooped over, and handed them to the priests. I was soft-spoken and said to each priest at the end of the pew, “Here, father.” They took the images I had created. I worked my way around to the front of the main aisle and continued until all the copies were given out. I was about a fifth of the way down the center aisle when I had no more. I then turned round and stood straight up.

I called out to the cardinal who was speaking from his lofty place, “Rabboni!” He looked up slightly and I began again,

“Rabboni, Why is today different from any other?” I said this because of our Jewish heritage and out of respect for the man the cardinal was representing. He began reading his text rather than responding to me. He did not look up again. I began to sing, “Women are priests today, women are priests today, women are priests today and always.”

Priests in their fancy garb got up, took my arms, and turned me toward the back of the cathedral. I kept on singing. “Deep in my heart, I do believe, women are priests today and always.” The priests escorted me out and as I neared the exit singing a few women clapped and smiled. The men were unable to recognize either the truth in me or the pathetic irony of their situation.

Following this action I have been filled with the certainty of the importance for me to continue to place my body where my heart and mind lead me. Let us continue to invite the truth to move us to the full female expression of grace alive. With the condition of the world and the continued silencing of women, I know of no more important cause than the liberation of the Spirit alive in women.

Gabriela Assagioli, MA, MFA, MSW writes poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. She is the author of *Escaping the Red Black Terror: a Testimony of Owning and Transforming the Borderline Personality Disorder*.

Waiting for Ecclesiastical Enlightenment

by **Gabriela Assagioli**

To touch and know the slow, the subtle,
the suspended time measured
by the drifting
shadows of pines over green seconds,
here is a dream of a transformed want;
for time is not a floating abstraction,
no, time is iron: fired, poured,
hammered then frozen into a train
that clicks out metal seconds and carries
a passenger who, lingering by an open
window, glances forward to find herself
chasing after parallel lines; and
while the rhythmic clicking of the iron train
promises no destination, she waits.



St. Brigid joins protesters in front of Philadelphia's Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul during SEPA/WOC'S annual Holy Thursday witness. The puppet is the work of SEPA/WOC members Tom and Marianne Tucker of Tuckers' Tales Puppet Theater.

HOLY THURSDAY AND THE GREAT CATHOLIC SONGBOOK

by *Mary Byrne*

The article that I was going to write was titled, “Holy Week in Exile”—a dramatic opener befitting the high pathos of that very somber week. I began the article on Holy Thursday morning in a Philadelphia diner right after joining over 60 other “refugees” in prayerful protest in support of women’s ordination outside the cathedral. The only problem with that catchy title was that it simply wasn’t true. Although I had been hoarding those words through many agonizing Holy Weeks of feeling ostracized from the church of my pious youth, waiting for just the right moment to announce them to a sympathetic audience, the moment had vanished. For the first time in many, many years I didn’t feel like a refugee; I didn’t feel like I was in exile. And as I called to mind the mood of that small but righteously raucous crowd outside the cathedral nobody else felt that way either. In fact, the folks were downright jubilant.

That’s when I heard Rod Stewart in the background. Somewhere in the diner, a still small sultry voice was crooning from a nondescript CD player, “*Oh, no, they can’t take that away from me...*” No matter what you might think of Rod, it was truly the voice of divine inspiration. I took a right turn off the pity path, dropped the exile whine and, no kidding, began to sing along with Rod. Taking my cues from Mr. Stewart, who captures the best of the torch song genre in his album, *The Great American Songbook*, I decided to take up the same tune and give a bow to what it is I love in this tradition that *oh, no, they can’t take away from me* in *The Catholic Songbook: An Ode to Roamin’ Catholicism*. Here’s my rendition of a few classics.

...*That Old Feeling*. One of my favorites. Memories of the whole Irish clan—or at least 75 of us—crooning around the piano into the wee hours...*I saw you last night and got that old feeling*. Kind of the way I felt on Holy Thursday morning in the company of a clan once again still singing. I know that most everyone inside the cathedral saw those of us gathered in the park as on the “outside.” Nothing could have been further from the truth. I, for one, was back home after all these years and getting that old feeling of being a proud Catholic who suddenly remembered the riches of ritual—

those bells, smells and whistles (and in our case, bullhorns and banners)—that transport you to some other place into the company of something much greater and more comforting than yourself. Just a bunch of Catholics celebrating the liturgy....

...*It must have been Moonglow* or maybe just incense coming out of the cathedral when the doors opened and out flew Gabriela waving her hands and exclaiming, “They threw me out!” We were wondering what was happening inside the cathedral amidst rumors that someone was staging an action. No big deal. Gabriela stood in the middle of the aisle and asked to speak with the cardinal—very politely. She even called him “Rabboni” and then asked the question of the moment, “Why is this day unlike any other day?” The cardinal lost the jeopardy challenge when he couldn’t guess it was because there were ordained Catholic women and supporters preaching the Gospel in the park. Oh, well....

...*For All We Know we may never meet again* but don’t count on it. There’s just too many of us outside churches—literally and figuratively—all over the world. Yep, we’re that big! And we aren’t going anywhere anytime soon. Who locked the doors? Whatever happened to that shocking parable of the wedding banquet? Speaking of weddings...Who was the Monsignor seen dashing into the cathedral from a silver limo parked outside the cathedral? Guess he didn’t notice that the banquet had been moved across the street to the park...

But really, can’t you tell, it’s impossible for me to walk away from this church in its life-giving death throes. *Every Time We Say Good-bye* somebody in Rome gets me mad or someone in the trenches gives me hope. I just care too much not to park myself in the middle of the struggle. Besides there are those things that I love, those things *they can’t take away from me*—the rosary, contemplative prayer, the imperative to serve, retreats, the three hours on Good Friday, cold cuts and deli salads for all occasions, monks and nuns and sacred places by the sea, Sunday mass casual, the Berrigans, Joan Chittister, the mystics, the prophets, the laughter in a room full of Catholics, the arguments in a room with at least two Catholics, the way we think, the way we pray, the way we change because inevitably we always do...

...*These Foolish Things* keep reminding me of where I have come from on the road to where I am going. Just when I think that I’ve had enough papal bull, something I learned in the sixth grade catechism suddenly makes sense. Who would have thought that humility or obedience would ever be valuable lessons learned the hard way? But would I even have recognized those much-maligned virtues had not some nun whose name I have long forgotten drilled them into our unconscious for a timely awakening...

So, indeed, it seems that *I’ll Be Seeing You* in all the old familiar places. I am resolutely standing on the “outside” in the hopes that one day there won’t be such a place. It doesn’t feel “outside” to me but as long as we are viewed from the “inside” there will be these awful distinctions. We will be back next Holy Thursday and undoubtedly in between because we are carrying a torch for an ancient tradition that welcomes everyone. That’s what it means to be Catholic. In the meantime, out here in the park, the spirit is roamin’ free.

Correction: In last month’s commentary, Mary Byrne invited Roman Catholic women in ordained ministry to submit their stories for an upcoming book, *Thy Will Be Done*. The e-mail address was incorrect. Please send your submissions to her at: thywillbedonebook@yahoo.com

Mary Byrne is an ordained minister and writer.

A SPIRITED EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

DIOCESAN OFFICIAL RESPONDS TO OUR LEAFLETS: “DISSENTING CATHOLICS” ARE NOT TRULY CATHOLIC

The following letter was e-mailed to SEPA/WOC after a member of our core committee put a letter about the upcoming Holy Thursday protest on the windshields of cars parked during mass.

Today, during mass at Sacred Heart Church in Manoa, Havertown, PA, someone placed letters from your organization on the cars in the parish parking lot. My purpose in writing this to you is twofold.

Firstly, no one has a right to come onto church property and place items on the cars that are there. Both the lot and the cars are private property. No one denies your organization the right to hold the views it holds nor the right to find appropriate ways to spread those views. I take offense, however, when one encroaches on the privacy of others. Hopefully, you would not “toilet paper” our homes. Please do not feel free to trash our cars! My response to this behavior would be the same, regardless of the organization and ideas represented. We don’t appreciate this behavior from politicians, youth groups, other religious communities, etc. Please stop doing this.

Secondly, the letter itself is filled with misrepresentations and outright untruths. I have received mail from you recently, and I have read it. I am deeply concerned over the things you profess and practice.

One who uses the term “Roman Catholic priest” when she/he is not validly ordained in accord with the rites and authorization of the Roman Catholic church is misleading the people she/he is addressing. When Martin Luther, an Augustinian priest, “protested” against the teachings of the Roman Catholic faith, he had the courage of his convictions. He no longer considered himself Roman Catholic (or even a priest in the true sense, since he had issues over the sacrificial nature of the mass). “Dissenting Catholics” are not truly Catholic—they dissent from the teachings and practices of the Catholic church. One cannot speak with such arrogance, disrespect, and disobedience toward the Holy Father—as your organization does so frequently—and still hold to the theory that he is a “Roman Catholic priest.” One of the vows/promises in the ordination ceremony involves swearing respect and obedience to the bishop, who himself has sworn respect and obedience to the Pope. Our Anglican friends have “ordained” women. Sometimes they even use the term “Catholic” to describe themselves—but never do they use the term “Roman Catholic.” They have the courage of their convictions. They believe that they are validly ordained (they are not, of course), but they know and accept the fact that they do not accept certain “Roman Catholic” teachings, including the authority of the Pope! You commit the grave offense of presumption. Some of your members dare to say they have been called to the priesthood! Such a judgement can only be made under the careful scrutiny of the church. Only after nine years of study, prayer, formation, and preparation could I discern whether in fact I was being called to the priesthood, and only after actually receiving the call from my bishop could I say with any certitude that I had in fact been called.

We, as Roman Catholics, believe in a hierarchical church. We must believe in the infallibility of the Pope and the bishops in union with the Pope. The Orthodox do not accept this teaching or this authority. They do not call themselves Roman Catholics, for they know they are not Roman Catholics. They do not believe what Roman Catholics believe. Members of your group are untruthful when

they refer to “ordained” women as “Roman Catholic” priests. Finally, your group seems to disregard the Code of Canon Law as unnecessary and unbinding. Again, this raises the question of your Roman Catholicity. However, according to the present code, which I accept as one who strives to be faithful to the teachings of the Roman Catholic church, only men may validly be ordained to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Women who are “ordained,” even by validly ordained bishops, are not validly ordained Roman Catholic priests. If they must insist on calling themselves priests, they ought to at least courageously admit that they are not priests in the Roman Catholic church. Failure to do so is at least inaccurate, and possibly, even sinfully deceptive.

I do and will continue to pray for the members of WOC. It is my hope that all will humbly submit intellect and will to the will, intellect, and authority of the church. It is the church, not me or you or anyone else, that has been graced in a unique way to govern the celebration of the sacraments. She alone, in the person of Peter and his successor, holds the keys to the kingdom and to the treasury of grace bestowed in the sacraments. Those in the past who reject or resent this authority and who have refused to submit humbly to it have found it necessary to leave and form a church where they could believe whatever they wish. This sad reality can only be healed by the grace of God and the humility to seek conversion. May this Lent be an opportunity for all of us to experience conversion that we may walk humbly with God!

...*Rev. Michael G. Murtha,*
Parochial Vicar
Sacred Heart Church, Havertown

A RESPONSE TO PRIEST’S OBJECTIONS: TERM ‘ROMAN CATHOLIC’ AN OXYMORON

Dear Mr. Murtha,

Thank you for your fervent response to my visit to Sacred Heart on Sunday. Jesus was adept at rattling cages and disturbing comfort zones so it’s gratifying to know that my hard work on his behalf struck a nerve.

Cars in parking lots are frequently leafleted, usually with advertisements, but sometimes for causes. One wonders if you would have been upset if I were promoting a pro-life rally. (Just for the record—lest you draw an erroneous conclusion—I *am* pro-life.) Furthermore, there’s something about referring to a church as “private property” that doesn’t sit right with me and I don’t think it sits right with Jesus, considering this humble itinerant rabbi’s church was the nearest hillside. (I do, however, believe that some Catholic clergy consider *Jesus* their private property.)

You seem to dwell on the term Roman Catholic but that expression, as one priest said, is an oxymoron. If catholic means universal it seems that it would be impossible to be universal and Roman at the same time. We *should be* a universal church open to all and allowing life-giving water to flow. That water flows everywhere—not just in Rome. You also speak of the courage of conviction when you mention Martin Luther and ordained Anglican women. I’d like to challenge your courage (remember those Confirmation vows?) and that of your brothers to put a woman’s priestly vocation out there to be tested by all the people, including the laity, as was done in the church of old. Of course that would mean that the bishops and cardinals would risk their fiefdom, which, I’m sorry to tell you, already rests on shaky ground.

Yes, some of the women in WOC dare to say they are called to priesthood and I am honored to be one of them. You mention nine years of formation that are required to fully discern a call, but that puts the poor unfortunates like me in a spiritual catch-22, doesn't it? On the one hand we need the formation of the seminary, but how can we get that formation when the seminary is not available to us? The process that brought you to the door of the seminary is the same process that has been working in me for years. The difference is the door opened for you.

The fact is that my priesthood is wasted in Catholicism, but not entirely, because I have decided to make my vocation to fight for the priestly vocation of all Catholic women. I will not leave the church of my birth, the church where I learned the *truly infallible truths* of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the beatitudes, and of course Jesus' two simple but sometimes challenging commandments. It is Jesus, not Rome, whom I serve, and I will serve him well in my capacity as a reformer working and praying for desperately-needed change.

Jesus said that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he is there in the midst of them. That statement overrides any canon law. At the Catholic masses I attended where a woman priest presided (and there have been several) we were indeed gathered in his name and, as promised, he was indeed there in the midst of us. Apparently Jesus' standards are not as exclusive as the Vatican's.

The church's canon laws are hurtful and exclusive and represent the very thing that Jesus railed against. They make outcasts of people and force them to the margins of spiritual society, the exact margins where Jesus spent most of his ministry trying to draw people back in. You should be ashamed—you should all be ashamed—for enabling this painful behavior—in the name of Jesus, no less.

How dare you say that women ordained in other denominations are not validly ordained? How dare you say that only Rome holds the keys to the kingdom and has cornered the market on the grace bestowed in the sacraments? This is typical of the arrogant, elitist thinking that continues to get our church in trouble and makes Catholicism the victim of ridicule and disdain. Jesus didn't say anything about sacraments. But, as I recall, he had a lot to say about proud, false leadership that was focused on the wrong things.

To ask people to "submit intellect and will to the will, intellect, and authority of the church" is insulting, disrespectful, and idolatrous. I will submit my intellect to no one but God; I will pledge obedience to no one but God. To expect millions of Catholics to agree on every church teaching is unrealistic (not to mention poor theology). And correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought you and I were the church. Could you define exactly who this church is to which we are all supposed to submit our intellect?

Don't pray for the women and men of WOC. Our vigilance, our speaking truth to power (misguided power at that), our dedication to serving God and not man puts us in full alliance with the founder of the Way who was neither Catholic nor conservative nor the author of any religion. Pray instead for yourself and your brothers who have twisted and manipulated Jesus' message into something that is unrecognizable.

I feel sorry for you and your colleagues and the pure fear in which you live. It must be awful to feel so threatened by the truth. But let me assure you, you'd better get used to living with anxiety, because the truth is rushing at this institution like a runaway train.

Sacred Heart will be leafleted again, of that you may be sure. The more fearful a priest is, the tighter a stranglehold he keeps on his parishioners, the more necessary it becomes to serve the truth.

Sincerely,
Maria Marlowe
West Chester, PA

NO "A" FOR PHILADELPHIA PRIESTS ANSWERING SOME HARD QUESTIONS

by Jim Plastaras

In March, Call to Action-Philadelphia mailed a national survey to 900 priests residing within the Philadelphia archdiocese asking them: "Do you favor an open discussion of the mandatory celibacy rule for diocesan priests?" Of the 130 priests responding to the survey, only 47% said they favored even discussing the issue, with 27% agreeing "*that the People of God would be better served if the discipline of mandatory priestly celibacy were discarded.*"

On the issue of women's ordination, only 25% believed that "*the People of God would be better served if women were ordained.*" There was, however, a ray of hope. Even though John Paul II decreed women's ordination a closed issue in 1994, stating that the church does not have the authority to ordain women, only 50% of all Philadelphia priests, and 29% of the religious priests, said that "*the Church does **not** have authority to ordain women.*"

The one-page survey also included questions regarding several issues of pastoral practice. Responses to questions dealing with contraception were particularly noteworthy. A total of 77% of the priests said that married couples should be instructed "*that they are permitted the use of only natural means of family planning,*" with only 23% agreeing that "*married couples should be encouraged to prayerfully follow their conscience in choosing a method of family planning most appropriate to their individual needs.*" The responses of the priests are in striking contrast to the belief and practice of Catholic married couples. National surveys over the past thirty years have shown that more than 80% of married couples of child-bearing age practice contraception, and that the statistics are virtually the same for Catholic and Protestant couples.

More than 75% of the priests said that the divorced-and-remarried Catholics as well as active homosexuals should not receive the Eucharist. Only one in four priests thought that these Catholics "*should be encouraged prayerfully to follow their conscience regarding participation in the sacramental life of the Church.*"

Priests belonging to religious orders or congregations had viewpoints that differed significantly from those of the diocesan priests on several issues. One question dealt with the changes in the directives for celebrating the Eucharist emphasizing the separation between ordained ministers and non-ordained faithful. Only 26% of religious priests, compared to 67% of the diocesan priests, thought that the changes "*have been pastorally helpful in understanding the meaning of the Eucharist.*"

Some 79% of religious compared to only 36% of diocesan priests were in favor of open discussion of optional celibacy, while 47% of religious compared to 18% of diocesan priests favored ordaining women.

The survey results are sobering. There is no reason to doubt that the responses are an accurate reflection of what Philadelphia priests really think regarding these issues. The use of business reply envelopes without a return address guaranteed anonymity. So treasure the one in four of our brother priests who believe in gender equality

Jim Plastaras, treasurer of CTA-Philadelphia, and project manager of the survey is a parishioner of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Doylestown.

PASSION STIRS PASSIONS: LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

FILM DOES A DISSERVICE TO NOTION OF A LOVING GOD

by *Bud Bretschneider*

Perhaps the single dominant theological (and spiritual) notion that was developing even before Vatican II was the concept that God is a God of love. The righteous and vengeful God of our grandparents and parents was ceding to a forgiving and nurturing parent. Vatican II sought to bring this loving parental relationship between God and man to fruition.

The subsequent years, culminating in Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*, may lead some to wonder about the success of that effort.

Gibson's film does a great disservice to our sense of relationship with our loving God by exaggerating the pain and suffering Christ must endure. It is this distorted and refuted notion that Christ must satisfy the offended divine justice by an infinite amount of reparations that does violence to our consciences and our spiritual sensibilities. This view of God's justice requires that the victim be a god/man to make infinite restitution for the sins of all mankind.

The parable of the prodigal son and the dutiful son (Luke 15:11) exemplifies how a loving God with infinite resources and who does not need our reparations waits as we journey our labyrinthian ways to find his love in our hearts. The father of the prodigal son, who has squandered his inheritance, throws a feast in celebration of the son's return. No talk of reparations. So it is with our God. Justice is really of the civil order and only obliquely relates to the order or vision that is God's and presented by Christ. When the law of love is finally fully attained, fulfilled on earth, we will have the second coming of Christ.

It is impossible to imagine or conceive the satisfying of divine justice for all the sins of all mankind for all time! Worse to portray. Now that I am a father, a parent of two children and the grandparent of three, I am all the more convinced in my heart that the scales of justice are not even on the radar screen of love. The death of Jesus is the culmination of a life of love, of sharing and caring that brooked no compromise. Jesus' love for the Father was a commitment undeterred by intimidation, force or crucifixion. The brutality of Jesus's death does not give it significance, it is what he stood for and what his life signified.

This past emphasis on justice and sin's debt has resulted in an exaggerated sense of unworthiness that has kept us locked into out petty sinfulness and repentance. The God of love calls us to recognize that we are temples of the Holy Spirit, to rejoice in the great talents we have been given and share them with others as we work for social justice, i.e. the second coming of the Christ.

Bud Bretschneider is a graduate of the Pontifical Gregorian University and an active member of St. Vincent dePaul Parish and Voice of the Faithful.

MISSING THE POINT

by *Gaile Pohlhaus*

My overall impressions (of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*) were that the violence, while extensive and brutal, was less than I had thought it would be. The portrayal of the various women (both the biblically-based versions and the non-biblically-based versions) was strong and, I thought, on target. The treatment of Jesus convinced me yet again that humanity's inhumanity is horrible whether

you are a believing Christian or not.

The film could certainly cause anti-Semitic feelings although it is not anti-Semitic in itself (and Mr. Gibson attests, not anti-Semitic in intent.) Since most Christians think the following were Christians: Jesus, the Marys, the apostles, and anyone who was frightened or against such treatment of Jesus, they will not see any sympathetic Jews (although all of the preceding were in fact Jewish.) Christians could easily see only the Sanhedrin and the mob calling for the crucifixion of Jesus as Jews, whereas the Romans clearly had both sympathetic characters and beastly characters.

There were some things that offended me: the bodily appearance of Satan (or the devil or personified evil—played by a woman although the portrayal seemed androgynous), the bird pecking out the eyes of the 'bad' thief after he repudiated Jesus, and Jesus dangling over a cliff at the end of a chain on his way to his trial.

As my daughter reminded me, this was Gibson's portrayal of the Stations of the Cross. The Stations of the Cross, like the mystery plays of medieval times, portray the belief that Jesus conquered sin and evil through his death and crucifixion.

This points to the most serious defect in the film from a Christian point of view—although it is one the Catholic church has tried to remedy in a serious way since Vatican II. The point is not that Jesus died on a cross but that he died and rose again. Many Stations of the Cross no longer end with the thirteenth station—*Jesus is taken down from the cross*, followed by the fourteenth—*Jesus is laid in a tomb*. Rather they now end with a fifteenth station—*Jesus rose again from the dead*.

If one doesn't buy into a dualistic world view of a monumental fight of good versus evil, but rather sees creation as separated from its Source, then it is not the crucifixion which defeats evil, but the resurrection which reunites us with our Creator.

Gaile Pohlhaus is a member of the Church in Philadelphia.

GIBSON'S PASSION AND THE LEGACY OF VATICAN II

by *Marian Ronan*

I had some understanding about why millions of evangelical American Protestants responded enthusiastically to Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*. Out of curiosity regarding Catholic responses to the film, I attended a discussion at a parish here in the Bay Area, a fairly progressive, middle-class parish on the boundary between Oakland and Berkeley.

About ten people took part in the discussion, including the pastoral associate, a friendly middle-aged white woman with a degree from a liberation-oriented Catholic seminary. In preparation for a talk I was giving at the Baptist seminary where I teach, I had identified some positive things to say about the film, but I was genuinely astounded to find that not one person in the group, including the leader, had any concerns about the anti-Judaism of the movie. The chief topic of conversation was how the participants had failed to realize how much Jesus loved them until they saw the film. When I raised questions about the anti-Judaism in the film, everyone in the group assured me that it "didn't feel anti-Jewish" to him/her.

Two asked if I had heard “Mel,” as they called him, say in his interview with Diane Sawyer that he had been called by God to make the film, as if that settled the question. Another said that a friend who accompanied her, a Jew, didn’t find the film anti-Jewish. “Some of my best friends,” as Americans used to say, “are black...”

Experts on anti-Jewish renditions of the passion assure us, without much hesitation, that a passion portrayal is anti-Jewish if it meets certain criteria. One is if the crowd and the Jewish leadership are shown to represent the Jews as a whole. Another is if Pilate is portrayed sympathetically. A third is if the rendition attributes Jesus’ death to his having claimed to be the Son of God instead of situating it within the historical context of the time. Gibson’s film does all these things; it is unambiguously anti-Jewish. But this group of Catholics, and, I have no doubt, millions of others, are totally ignorant of what constitutes an anti-Jewish rendition of the passion, or else don’t think that it makes any difference.

What might it mean that large numbers of American Catholics—including several bishops—“feel” this way? It suggests that the American church has failed to communicate effectively one of the most historic teachings to emerge from the Second Vatican Council, the repudiation of the “teaching of contempt,” the widespread, ancient Catholic-Christian belief that the Jews were responsible for the death of Christ. Some would argue that this is the only real doctrinal change instituted by the council. Of course, we Americans are such friendly, good-hearted people, it is inconceivable that we would be prejudiced against the Jews. Why, then, would it be important for preachers and religious educators to convey the impact of the Christian teaching of contempt on six million Jews killed within the lifespan of men and women who are still living?

The apathy of a large number of American Catholics toward Gibson’s anti-Judaic portrayal of the death of Jesus also tells us that many of these individuals know little and care less about the politics of the Catholic church since Vatican II. What does it matter if they give their money to a schismatic, traditionalist sectarian who is utterly dedicated to undermining the teaching of the Second Vatican Council regarding the salvation, not only of Jews, but of Protestants as well? One of the more perceptive commentaries I read on *The Passion of the Christ* argued that it is, at bottom, a rebuttal of James Carroll’s *Constantine’s Sword*. But what difference does that make, as long as our hearts are warmed by Jesus’ love for us?

Marian Ronan is currently at work on a book, Sexuality and Mourning in US Catholicism: Voices of the Postwar Generation.

VIOLENCE AND THE PASSION

by *Karen B. Lenz*

The older I get, the more aware I become of how very precious each passing moment is, and the more determined I get to waste as few of them as possible. (Although it seems to me I am describing a state of enlightenment, others have described it—when they thought I was safely out of earshot—as simple crankiness.)

Enlightened or cranky, then—or both: they are not mutually exclusive—I have resolved to spend no more time listening to or dialoguing with the holders of strongly-felt and vehemently-expressed opinions about books, plays, movies or works or art (the Madonna of elephant dung comes immediately to mind) who have not read or attended or viewed the work in question.

Which brings me to Mel Gibson’s film *The Passion of the Christ*, about which virtually everyone seems to have a strong opinion.

Let me start by saying that I have seen the film.

And yes, it was violent. Jesus was beaten to a bloody quivering pulp by sadistic Roman guards until it defied credibility to think he could have made the walk to Calvary, much less carry a heavy cross.

And yes, there were doubtless historical inaccuracies and additions to the Gospel accounts—most of them the filmmaker’s prerogative, I could suggest—like Mary sopping up the puddles of Jesus’ blood with linens compassionately proffered by Pilate’s wife, and the sporadic peeiaboo appearances of the androgynous devil. And yes, Pilate was, contrary to the historical record, portrayed relatively sympathetically. And while I am not totally ready to concede the film was anti-Semitic either in intent or in reality, there is no question that the Jewish high priest and the Sanhedrin were the villains of the piece, with no attempt to explore their motivation. *The Passion* is not the movie I would have made.

And having said that, I must say it was also an extraordinarily powerful piece of filmmaking, which seemed to me a clear, if flawed, expression of the director’s devotion to his subject.

I am particularly struck by the howls of outrage over what some viewers consider the overstated and, they suggest, unnecessary violence of the film.

If we believe, as Dorothy Day and Mother Theresa and others have taught us, that Jesus presents himself to us today in the person of the poor and oppressed among us, then the beating administered by sadistic guards to their divine prisoner pales beside the suffering—to cite only one example—that the United States has inflicted upon a totally innocent Iraqi civilian population whose members have been killed (the lucky ones) or mangled by smart bombs and missies; whose families have been torn apart; and whose mothers of sorrows have watched helpless as Mary as their children died BY THE MILLIONS from violence and starvation and preventable diseases for which no medicine was available—at the hands of their American liberators, which is spelled US.

I am amused by those who express their horror at the brutality of Gibson’s film. The passion of the Christ is ongoing in our world today and that reality is far more horrifying than anything that appeared on the screen. Worse still is the fact that, like most Roman citizens, we simply avert our eyes.

Karen B. Lenz, editor of Equal wRites, is a member of the Philadelphia Catholic Worker, the Brandywine Peace Community, COR/Philadelphia, and the core committee of SEPA/WOC.

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MARCH FOR WOMEN'S LIVES, WASHINGTON, APRIL 25, 2004

by Regina Bannan

This is where the young women are. Outrageous signs. Lots of babies. We older women talked to each other—but we weren't the dominant presence. I was marching with Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) and I can't tell you how many young women came up and asked for a sticker for their mothers. Are we the last Catholic generation?

I came with Joy Barnes, national WOC's executive director, and her mid-twenties friends. Those two Senate staffers had a crucifix in their kitchen. This generation is Catholic in another way.

Delores Huerta, feisty Latina organizer, colleague of Cesar Chavez. A photo of Dorothy Height, YWCA and National Council of Negro Women, too frail to come. Gloria Steinem, who is 70. "How did that happen?" she said. Many young women speakers, too, whose names are not yet well known. All races, all parts of the country. I think we are finding new leaders, whose issues will not necessarily be our issues. These new entertainers sang our songs, though! And of course, there were many celebrities. Our group got to the mall when Whoopi Goldberg was speaking and I left hours later hearing Julian Bond echoing in the mall.

CFFC had flags and representatives from 57 countries. Kids from a Bucks County family wound up carrying a couple of flags and probably got to march in front of the stage. This is not only a United States, white women's movement. The lips that were the logo of CFFC—"Your voice is fundamental against fundamentalism"—were near the front of the march. Others were very glad to see us, espe-

cially since this was the Sunday after Cardinal Arinze politicized the Eucharist by threatening to deny it to Catholic politicians who don't follow the church's line. How deeply unsacramental. How to solidify the non-fundamental Catholic vote.

As we marched, the loudest, most consistent cheering was about the election. The march was an excellent strategy to energize voters seven months in advance.

I have always said WOC is more pro-choice than the average Catholic organization and more pro-life than the average feminist one. We stay away from abortion so as not to divide. Our common ground is commitment to women's lives and to the church. How we split that up is our own choice.

Regina Bannan teaches at Temple University and is part of the SEPA/WOC core committee, COR/Philadelphia, and the Community of the Christian Spirit.

DISCIPLINED PITTSBURGH PRIEST FORMS BREAKAWAY CHURCH

A 64-year-old Roman Catholic priest with a history of civil rights and antiwar activism, on administrative leave from the Diocese of Pittsburgh for unspecified reasons, has established the Christ Hope Eccumenical Catholic Church, which began regular Sunday liturgies in early May.

The Rev. William Hausen, who believes women and married men should be ordained as priests, says on a web site that has drawn the ire of diocesan officials, that two young men have joined the church as seminarians, and that the congregation is now looking for women to ordain.

"Christ Hope Church is a new way to be "Catholic," the web site, www.christhope.com, proclaims, adding that the sacrament of the Eucharist will be offered to all who attend liturgy.

A Pittsburgh diocesan spokesman, Rev. Ronald Lengwin, said Hausen would be excommunicated if he realized his plans to start the church, according to an article which appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in early April. Also facing excommunication would be anyone who attended the breakaway church knowing that Bishop Donald Wuerl of Pittsburgh disapproved of it.

Some 700 people were present at the church's first two Sunday liturgies, according to its web site, which added, "Christ Hope church professes no dogmas and we reject absolute statements and decrees. We believe that autocratic and despotic utterances are the weakest of arguments. The word 'excommunication,' therefore, has become meaningless in the 21st century."

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<input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Regular <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 International <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Student/Low-Income	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am called to ordination. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am willing to be a contact in my local area.	
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Compiled by staff

SWIDLER *FESTSCHRIFT* DEADLINE EXTENDED

There is still time for colleagues, students and friends of activist theologians Leonard and Arlene Swidler, both of whom are celebrating their 75th birthdays this year, to contribute to a *festschrift* of memories in the form of “small vignettes, illustrative moments in the worlds of Leonard and Arlene.

“The moments could be personal or professional, serious or humorous, but they should be incidents you consider significant,” according to Dr. Ingrid Shafer, who is compiling the tribute to the couple.

For more information, or to submit a contribution (suggested length: a couple of paragraphs to a page or two) contact Dr. Shafer at lhs@ionet.net.

IN GOOD COMPANY

From the December 21 newsletter of the Danube ordinands: “if the religious strictures of his day had been the same as we now have in the church, Jesus would definitely have been excommunicated even as a young man, just as Galileo would be, and then Luther and then those who are divorced and remarried and now women who are ordained.”

GRAMICK FILM PREMIERES

The United States premiere of a new film, *In Good Conscience: Sister Jeannine Gramick's Journey of Faith*, was scheduled for Wednesday, June 9, at 6:30 p.m. at New York's Lincoln Center.

The film, by Peabody and Emmy award-winning director/producer Barbara Risk, tells the story of Sr. Jeannine's formation of a compassionate and groundbreaking ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics, the attempts of the Vatican to silence her, and her firm refusal to be silenced.

Billed as “the story of a gentle revolutionary—one of the few women in history to take on the Vatican..and win,” the film will be shown locally, at a date and time not yet announced as *Equal wRites* went to press, during the Philadelphia Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, July 15-22.

VOTF CONFRONTS BISHOPS OVER HOLY WEEK ACTIONS

Members of the group Voice of the Faithful expressed their dismay recently over decisions by two American bishops, Archbishop Sean O'Malley of Boston and Archbishop John Donoghue of Atlanta, to exclude women from sacred rituals during Holy Week. “We are seeing a pattern of words and actions emerge on the part of some bishops that ignore the wounds of the clergy sexual abuse crises,” said Steve Krueger, executive director of Voice of the Faithful.

“At a time when bishops should especially demonstrate pastoral outreach to all Catholics, recent actions excluding the participation of women in the ritual of foot washing and the divisive rhetoric expressed in our churches surrounding the constitutional debate of gay marriage have only served to create further division in these dioceses, as well as throughout the Church nationally. We need to move forward, not back. The actions and words these bishops have taken are unnecessarily painful for women and men of all ages and persuasions. Such actions re divisive, not unifying.”

O'MALLEY DEFENDS HIMSELF

Archbishop Sean O'Malley of Boston, writing in the April 30 edition of *The Pilot*, the diocesan newspaper, made a vigorous attempt at damage control in the wake of a controversy that has erupted over his remarks and actions involving women during Holy Week.

At issue, according to an article in the May 14 *National Catholic Reporter*, were the fact that O'Malley washed only the feet of men in the Holy Thursday ritual, and remarks he made during his homily to the archdiocese's priests during the Mass of the Christn.

Calling the baby boomer generation the most educated and affluent in America's history, he added that its members are also “heirs to Woodstock, the drug culture, the sexual revolution, feminism, the breakdown of authority, and divorce.”

Regarding the all-male footwashing, O'Malley said that it is “the rubric of the church,” and one he had followed since being ordained. However, he promised to raise the question when he goes to Rome this summer.

He also said that his listing “feminism” with other obviously negative influences caused the remark to be misconstrued as an attack on feminism.

In fact, he said, “There is a feminism which is a Christian imperative...Thank God we have many noble examples of Christian feminism in our church. Two such women who have had a profound influence on my life are Dorothy Day and Blessed Mother Theresa.”

INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC GROUP GROWING

Six faith communities have officially applied for membership and a number of other churches have made inquiries, to the Eccumenical Catholic Communion, a national ecclesial body featuring such reforms to traditional Catholic practice as optional celibacy and the orination of women.

The national group, formed in September, 2003, elected Peter Hickman to the newly-established office of presiding bishop, and approved a governing board composed of a house of laity and a house of pastors, which will share decision-making authority. A lay woman, Allison Sansone, was appointed chancellor of the group.

“The independent Catholic movement is a source of healing where people who are disenfranchised from traditional church life will find a new opportunity to realize that the gospel is really present for them,” Bishop Hickman explained. “These independent communities serve as an alternative for Catholics who feel they are no longer welcome to participate in the Roman Catholic Church.”

RECEIVING COMMUNION

As to who should receive communion and who shouldn't, now that I think of it, Jesus shared the cup with Judas, knowing full well what he was up to. Thank you, Jesus!

...Marge Sexton

CORPUS CONFERENCE

Eugene Kennedy and Phyllis Zagoren will be among the keynote speakers at this year's Thirtieth Anniversary Corpus Conference, “Reforming the Church, Renewing the Priesthood,” to be held in Lansdowne, VA. From June 25-27.

Continued on page 10

DID YOU KNOW?

Continued from page 9

The group advocates for “a reformed and renewed inclusive priestly ministry.” For information, www.corpus.org.

MAKING GOD AN IDOL

“Using male images of God to the exclusion of female ones, makes God-talk rigid and literal,” thereby making God an idol, according to Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, as quoted in the May issue of *Bread Rising*.

“The truth of God is more greatly honored when the meaning of God is not limited,” Johnson says, adding, “Only when the reality of women of all races and classes enters into our God symbol, can all of us be transferred into a discipleship of a community of equals.”

WASSUP? HISTORIC VATICAN APPOINTMENT

In a historic break with precedent, the implications of which remain to be seen, Pope John Paul II has appointed a female religious, Salesian Sister Enrica Rosanna, as undersecretary to the Vatican’s Congregation for Religious, a post traditionally held by a priest.

The appointment of Sr. Enrica, who wears a full habit, is only one of several recent female “firsts” in Vatican positions: two women have been appointed to the International Theological Commission and in March Harvard law professor May Anne Glendon was named president of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

As to whether her duties will include decision-making, Sr. Enrica, in a *National Catholic Reporter* interview, said, “...who knows exactly what I’ll have to decide? No one has yet explained to me exactly what I have to do. We’ll have to see.”

Rumors that making coffee, and posing, at photo sessions, fully habited, for the international press corps, will constitute the bulk of the nun’s responsibilities, have not been confirmed.

STICKS AND STONES

Charges have been filed against newly-appointed eighty-year-old Cardinal Gustaof for calling homosexual people “perverts” in a magazine interview. A Belgian Center for Equal Opportunity and the Fight Against Recision, decided early this year to press charges after the prelate defended the interview in remarks to television reporters. (from *Focus of FutureChurch*)

EARLY CHURCH A RELIGION OF THE POOR ROME, THE SITE OF THEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Excerpt from a review by Bernard Green of *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians in Rome in the First Two Centuries* by Peter Lampe of Tubingen University. In *The Tablet* 21 Feb 2004, and quoted in *Bread Rising*.

The papacy only emerged in the third quarter of the second century—a full century after the death of St. Peter. The early Christian Communities in Rome were varied and diverse and only came together organizationally under one head after 150 AD.

His view is that early Christianity was a religion of the poor, concentrated strongly in working-class areas. They were overwhelmingly Greek-speaking until the third century. The very earliest communities were indistinguishable from Jewish communities except for their belief that Jesus was the Messiah.

Different communities developed, some of them reflecting different national groups, and different practices developed—such as when to keep Easter. Slowly, Christianity began to penetrate even

the upper classes; here, it was overwhelmingly women who led the way. With a population estimated at a million, and packed with immigrants from every corner of the Mediterranean, it need cause little surprise that there was such variety. By the middle of the second century, Rome was the place to be if you wanted to find theological diversity.

AUTHENTIC FEMININITY, PHILADELPHIA STYLE

An article in *The Catholic Standard and Times*, entitled “Forming Authentic Catholic Women,” reports that an organization called the Little Flowers Catholic Girls Clubs has been started to school Catholic girls aged four through twelve about the Catholic faith as well as to provide “instruction in the fine art of Christian womanhood.”

The little darlings are taught “how to practice virtues such as self-control, orderliness, patience, responsibility, kindness and generosity...In addition, the girls are taught the ‘feminine arts’ such as sewing, embroidery, baking, as well as good posture and simple etiquette.” (Womanly skills that are fast fading away).

“Authentic femininity” is how it is described. While I agree that there is a lot for young women to learn from the great female saints of the church (no shrinking violets there!) I don’t see the link with the “feminine arts.” After all, I tried diligently to instill those values (self-control, orderliness, patience, responsibility, kindness and generosity) in my son. Could it be just another way to distract us from our full potential as ordained women? Can I knit and still say mass?

..Mary Whelan

WHY ARE WE NOT SURPRISED: VATICAN REWARDS LAW

Cardinal Bernard F. Law, who was forced to resign as leader of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston after a long and painful sexual abuse scandal involving clergy members, was chosen by Pope John Paul II on Thursday to head a basilica in Rome.

A statement released in the Vatican’s daily bulletin announced that Cardinal Law, who resigned in 2002, would become the archpriest of St. Mary Major Basilica, a church in a downtown neighborhood of Rome that is under direct Vatican jurisdiction. (from *The New York Times*, May 28, 2004)

And the courageous Danube ordinands have been excommunicated. What is there to say?

We welcome your submissions to Did You Know. Send them to the editor, Karen B. Lenz, at 430 West Jefferson Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19122.



A scene from SEPA/WOC’s Holy Thursday witness outside the Cathedral of Ss. Peter and Paul.

NATIONAL NUNS' GROUP APPLAUDS FRESEN ORDINATION

The National Coalition of American Nuns, a group founded "to study and speak out on issues of justice in church and society," responded to the ordination of South African Dominican Sister Patricia Fresen in Barcelona on August 7, 2003 at the Second European Worlds' Syod by Bishop Christine Mayr-lumetzburger and Gisela Forster with the following letters sent early this year to Rev. Fresen, and the religious community to which she belonged prior to her historic ordination. The letters are reprinted here with the permission of the National Coalition of American Nuns.

Sister Patricia Fresen

Dear Trish,

On behalf of the Board of the National Coalition of American Nuns, I commend you for choosing ordination within the Roman Catholic Church, even though it is contrary to canon law.

You remind us of Rosa Parks, a black woman in the U.S., who could not abide by a law that forced black people to sit in the back of the bus. If she complied with the law, she would proclaim her second-class status and lose her self-respect. If she sat where she believed she belonged, she would incur the punishment to those who broke the law; namely, imprisonment. Either way, suffering was to be her lot. Rosa chose to be true to herself and to break the law. She became a gift not only for black people in the U.S. but also for others, both black and non-black, throughout the world.

You could have chosen to remain in your prestigious and acceptable teaching position within the Church in South Africa; yet you chose to be ordained with the other women in Europe. You chose to accept the principle of gender equality you were teaching your students and not hold back on the basis of your womanhood, risking excommunication from the Church and expulsion from your religious Congregation. As painful as these actions might be, you resolved to follow God's call to you. It is this strength that evokes our admiration.

Like Rosa Parks, your action speaks loudly to our Church and the world. Like Rosa Parks, you will nudge our Church in changing an unjust law that restrains women and ignores their full personhood. With ordination, we as women can claim the same position as men in the Church's social structure much like Rosa Parks did in the civil society in the United States.

Attached is a letter that the NCAN board has sent to the leadership of your community. Our prayers and best wishes are with you and the other women with whom you were ordained in Europe. May God continue to lead all of you with gentleness and strength.

Sincerely,

Sister Beth Rindler, SFP

Executive Committee of the Board

For the National Coalition of American Nuns

Dear Sisters,

On the occasion of the ordination of Sister Patricia Fresen, the board of the National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN), commends you for stating publicly that the "research and discussion about the role of women in the church, ordained priesthood as a

specific ministry and ordination of women must continue." We also applaud your support for dialogue and actions in this regard.

NCAN is an organization founded in the United States in 1969 by women religious for the purpose of working, studying and speaking out on human rights and justice issues in the church and society.

In the United States, women religious who have made similar remarks have lost their teaching positions, even tenured ones, in Catholic institutions. Therefore, for you, as people in the leadership position of your congregation, to make this statement publicly is a courageous step in addressing a persistent issue in our church.

It is unfortunate, however, that you felt the need to distance yourself from Patricia Fresen when she wanted to fulfill her call to the priesthood. You believed the men in the Vatican would excommunicate her if she chose to be ordained. Does not excommunication require our participation? No authority figure can pronounce a sentence of excommunication upon a person if the community of faith continues to embrace and include the person within the community. Such an act would be meaningless because excommunication requires the cooperation of the whole community.

We wish you could have stood with Sister Patricia rather than asking her to withdraw from your congregation. However, we do recognize your anguish and desire for sisterhood because you state, "We respect Trish's personal decision, and even if she is no longer a member of our Congregation, we hope to continue relating with Trish with sisterliness and acceptance of her as a person." It seems this time could have been a tremendous opportunity for you as a congregation to counteract patriarchy. Was this not the factor that was impinging upon you as a congregation when one of your own Sisters sought ordination? Was it not patriarchy, rather than Trish's seeking ordination, that placed you in your present dilemma?

The National Coalition of American Nuns believes that we, as Sisters in community, need to stand together rather than succumb to the pressures we experience from those outside our congregations, even if this pressure comes from a patriarchy in official leadership positions in our Church. In this way, we can exercise once more the prophetic role for which our very congregations were founded.

Again, we thank you for your boldness in stating publicly that the ordination of women needs to be discussed, even though the male leaders of our church have declared it is a closed matter.

Blessings on you and yours.

Sister Beth Rindler, SFP

National Coalition of American Nuns,

Executive Committee of the Board

Dignity Celebrates Mary Magdalene

Dignity Philadelphia will observe the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, the Apostle to the Apostles, at its Sunday liturgy on July 18 at St. Luke and the Epiphany Church, 330 S. 13th Street, Philadelphia. Mary Magdalene is generally considered the patron saint of the women's ordination movement. *Equal wRites* editor Karen B. Lenz will be homilist.

Book Reviews

Roman Catholics and Shi'i Muslims: Prayer, Passion & Politics by James A. Bill and John Alden Williams. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC, 2003, 194 pp. \$17.95.

reviewed by Magda Eliasova

A prophetic voice, divine revelation, martyrdom and the foundation of a major religious movement: in a Eurocentric setting one could not be talking about anyone other than Jesus of Nazareth. Yet the same characteristics are attributed to another historical figure, this one named Muhammad. The coincidence did not escape the attention of two academics, James A. Bill and John Alden Williams, professors of International Studies and Government and (emeritus) the Humanities in Religion, respectively, who set out in *Roman Catholics and Shi'i Muslims* to compare two religions that are too often considered to occupy adversarial positions.

Even though the authors were correct to point out in the opening of their book that Christians are rarely knowledgeable about Islam and its values, one could suspect that Muslims as a group are not any more informed about Christianity. At any rate, the authors obligingly provide an overview of both, with a focus on specific sects or divisions within each tradition: Roman Catholicism and Twelver Shi'ism.

Sketching the historical background of Islam, Bill and Williams report that Muslims believe God revealed himself through prophets, including the prophets of the Old Testament. Jesus is seen as a prophet whose message became somewhat skewed after his death and as a result, Muslims believe, God chose Muhammad to clarify the misinterpretations. Muhammad is considered to be the last in the line of prophets and the divine revelations assembled in the Qu'ran are a kind of newest testament. The final aspect of Islam was the creation of a new community—the *umma*—whose existence under the leadership of a religious commander or *Imam*, would prevent any misinterpretation.

Immediately after Muhammad's death, the question of the identity of the legitimate Imam arose, and two groups came into being: Sunni and Shi'i Muslims. Shi'is claimed that God intended a direct descendant of Muhammad to be the Imam, as opposed to Sunnis who chose to make a close associate of Muhammad their new leader. The role and origin of the Imam were central to Shi'is due to his unique position as the interpreter of the Qu'ran. However, even within the Shi'i community there were disagreements about the Imam's fallibility and corruptibility, and eventually Shi'is formed three divisions. The Twelver Shi'i was the last to emerge after the disappearance of the twelfth Imam in 874 C.E. In the group's belief the twelfth Imam will appear again at the end of time and will establish the kingdom of God.

Since the death of Muhammad, Shi'is have been oppressed and persecuted by the Sunni majority. With the exception of the twelfth Shi'i Imam, all of the sect's leaders were either martyred or died mysteriously while being held in Sunni captivity. Their suffering was considered to have redemptive value for the sins of their fellow Muslims, and to grant them power to intercede on behalf of sinners.

The resemblance to Catholic belief is apparent.

Bill and Williams claim that the similarities between Roman Catholicism and Twelver Shi'ism extend to comparable qualities of Husayn, the martyred third Imam, and Jesus himself. Both lived poor and marginalized lives; both challenged the status quo; and

both subsequently died as martyrs. There is also a parallel noted between the Virgin Mary and Muhammad's daughter Fatima, *vis a vis* their respective importance within each tradition. For Shi'is, Fatima is the necessary link between the prophet himself and the other Imams, and serves as a model for women and men who must endure hardship and suffering. Both Fatima and Mary are considered immaculate and impeccable; both are extensions of their fathers and sons; both are mothers of sorrows; and both are believed to have been visited by angels.

Saints play a role in each tradition; the chosen individuals are believed to possess protective and interceptive powers. The two religions share a deep commitment to mysticism, with Sufi poets and philosophers on the one hand and Catholic poets and contemplatives on the other. In the search for the ultimate reality, both traditions examine the relationship between reason and revelation, with variations of emphasis on one and/or the other.

The most striking resemblance, however, is in the concept of the framework of law. For lack of mutual terminology, Bill and Williams pair Aquinas' natural law classification with Islam's to demonstrate their compatibility. However, unlike Christianity, Islam makes a claim for the creation of a political entity which must be governed by a religious leader. And depending on the specific division of Islam and its literal or metaphorical interpretation of the eternal and divine law—*Shari'a*—the polities are for that reason vulnerable to tyrannical leadership. Theoretically, both traditions describe communities where law is administered to equals under just terms. But as the authors concede, it is a rather utopian scenario.

Even though Jesus clearly declined to lay the groundwork for a polity, his message was still very political, because the issue of power and the distribution of resources is a political one.

Regarding the similar position of women in the two traditions, the authors observe that females in both groups are denied authority and therefore lack power. They are also treated as inferiors, as secondary at all levels of religious life. However, Muslim women have been known to achieve the position of *mujtahid*, interpreter of religion, and in some instances played an integral part in political events. As in the case of Catholic women, however, unless Muslim women gain open access to scholarly and clerical positions, and the exclusively male-centered interpretations of holy scriptures become discredited, one doubts that they can successfully establish any legitimate claim as equals.

Bill and Williams conclude that religion will keep playing an essential role in people's lives by shaping their opinions, their societies and their relations to other countries. In the increasing globalization of the world, it is thus even more crucial to pursue the understanding of other traditions that leads to mutual respect.

Roman Catholics and Shi'i Muslims is a well-researched and well-organized study of two distinct traditions. It is cohesive and objective but a dense read for anyone without prior knowledge of Islam. Nonetheless, it provides a major contribution to comparative religious thought at a level accessible to the ordinary reader.

Magda Eliasova lives and works at the Philadelphia Catholic Worker.

Praying with Celtic Holy Women by Bridget Mary Meehan and Regina Madonna Oliver.
Liguori/Triumph: Liguori, Missouri. 2003. \$22.95.

reviewed by Mary E. Gindhart

In *Praying with Celtic Holy Women*, Bridget Mary Meehan and Regina Madonna Oliver provide a way to access the living stream of Celtic Christianity that is flowing among the renewed and renewing spiritualities that are alive today.

They introduce us to women of the fifth to eighth centuries who shaped the spiritual universe of their own times and have a message of hope and encouragement for 21st century pilgrims who seek them out: St. Brigit of Kildare: a reflection of God's mercy, St. Ita of Killeedy: foster mother of the saints of Ireland, St. Monena of Killeevy: Intercessor for Peace, St. Cannera of Bantry Bay: Patron of Celtic Persistence, St. Gobnait of Ballyvourney: God-seeker and pursuer of justice, St. Dymphna of Achill Island: survivor and healer, St. Hilda of Whitby: mentor and teacher, and others. Searching for the rich legacy of these saints, this book invites pilgrims on a journey through Ireland, Wales and Cornwall to places sacred to their memories.

The authors put the Celtic holy women in the context of the early encounters of the Celtic peoples—who had their own deities, holy places, societies, relation to the land and sea and understanding of the natural world—with the Christian Gospel. The sites where these women had their monasteries are considered holy by the people of the area who still come to pray, collect water from the holy wells, take care of the sites and share the story of the saint with pilgrims.

The chapters about each saint contain: tour information, the life of the saint, a prayer to celebrate the saint's gifts and some questions for reflection and discussion on the life of the saint. I first got to know the prayers when I was on a pilgrimage with Bridget Mary Meehan in Ireland. I have found the prayers very enlivening when I used them with groups and in my own meditation. I find that putting myself in a particular place, either physically or in my imagination, gives a local character to prayer and opens me to a new way of seeing. This book really evokes the power of these Celtic holy women and the settings where they lived their lives.

For example, Gobnait is a saint greatly revered in the immediate vicinity of Ballyvourney in County Cork. The authors say: "Our journey took us over circuitous country roads until, with some pointing by local residents and a few false turns, we saw signs for a holy well

off to the right, and guideposts indicating that a little further on would be a cemetery, chapel, shrine, and additional holy well sacred to this saint. At the top of the hill and to the left was a modern cemetery guarded by a large white statue of Gobnait and a marker indicating what had been 'Gobnait's house.' Praying the rosary there we met a local woman who comes daily to pray at her patron's shrine. Across the road is a more ancient cemetery where the grave of this seventh-century saint is clearly marked. Here, also are the walls of her chapel, still intact. The shrine-keeper, Donald O'Herlihy, who faithfully oversees the care of the property, filled us in on details we might otherwise have missed. The O'Herlihy family, we learned, as leaders of the clan, were entrusted with this duty from earliest times; and have continued it faithfully, to this day."

Several miracles are attributed to Gobnait. Once a band of cattle thieves attempted to steal the cattle of the neighborhood; but Gobnait let loose a swarm of bees from her hives, and the rustlers ran away in terror. Another time an enemy began to build a defense on a high rock, to control the people in the vicinity. The legend says that Gobnait hurled her heavy agate bowl at the edifice again and again until the enemy abandoned the effort and left the territory. The bowl is kept sealed in a cavity in her church and is one of the places where pilgrims pray. Gobnait was also credited with stopping the plague through her prayer and fasting.

Prayers and reflections drawn by the authors from Gobnait's life celebrate her as a healer, faith-seeker and pursuer of justice. They ask, "Can we, in simple faith, span the years and greet Gobnait as a dear friend? Use the pilgrim prayer with simplicity of faith, and ask God humbly, through the intercession of this holy woman, for blessing for people who are in need."

I hope many people will join the authors on their holy pursuit of Celtic heroines and find the journey to be full of unexpected discoveries, little miracles and constant surprises.

Mary Gindhart is a Philadelphia resident who is so inspired by Meehan's book that she now wants to make a pilgrimage to sites on the East Coast related to holy women like Katharine Drexel, Elizabeth Seton, Frances Cabrini, Theresa Maxis and Kateri Teckawitha. Those interested can contact her at mgindhart@juno.com.

Community of the Christian Spirit

Committed to peace and social justice, CCS welcomes you to join in our Sunday morning celebrations, liturgies in the Roman Catholic tradition which explore Scripture and contemporary readings.

For information, call Roberta Brunner or Margaret McLaughlin, (215) 572-5623,
or write P.O. Box 353, Abington, PA 19001

CALENDAR

Centers for Spiritual Growth and Support

The following centers and groups offer programs and activities of interest to progressive Catholics. To include your group or submit information for the Sept.-Nov. issue, call Cassie at 215-467-8898 or e-mail kgalalelo2001@yahoo.com.

Franciscan Spiritual Center, a contemplative place of simple beauty, respectful of creation, and reflective of the Franciscan values of hospitality, mutuality and Gospel living, other programs which 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 offers a quiet place for contemplation, guided retreat weekends and directed prayer. This summer, come to the center for a guided retreat on the Tree of Life, Transcendent Eldering or Meeting God in Our Images. A Franciscan Solitude Extended Experience will also be offered at Clare House this July. For more information, call 610 527-4813 or check the web site at www.osphila.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. Kirkridge's many summer programs this year include Life's Losses; Speaking Truth to Power; Disarming the Heart: Spirituality and the Practice of Nonviolence; the Heart of Henri Nouwen; and Steps Along the Labyrinth Way. For more information, call 610-588-1793 or e-mail kirkridge@fast.net. Kirkridge is located at 2495 Fox Gap Road in Bangor, PA.

The **Lourdes Wellness Center**, a ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegheny, New York, is sponsored by Our Lady of Lourdes Health System. The center hosts a wide variety of wellness workshops, offering programs on yoga, meditation, feng shui, hypnosis, aromatherapy, guided imagery for pain management, Feldenkrais method, reiki, shiatsu and reflexology. The Lourdes Wellness Center is on 900 Haddon Avenue, Suite 100 in Collingswood, NJ. Please call 856-869-3125 for information, or check the web site at www.lourdeswellnesscenter.org.

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. Summer programs in the vineyard this year include Praying with your Feet and day-long "environmental savvy" workshops about renewable energy incentives and the Cooper River basin. All are welcome to open house/library hours on Friday evenings, June 4 and August 6, 6-9 pm. For information about 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. The summer is devoted to spiritual practice and the arts, this year including workshops on Liberating the Master Musician Within; the Clay Odyssey; Kado, the Way of Flowers; Painting for Joy; Drumming and Loving Yoga; Spiritual Discernment; the Peaceful Power of Story; and the Art of Paying Attention. 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. Programming at the center resumes in the fall. 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. Come to Temenos for ongoing Yoga classes on Mondays and Thursdays or for Mindfulness Meditation on Tuesdays. This summer, come on Tuesday nights in June to study the Enneagram and the Kabbalah or Wednesday nights in June to Explore Your Dreams. Other summer programs include Wholistic Integrative Breathing, Interfaith Worship and drumming. For information call 610 696-8145 or e-mail programs@temenosretreat.org. Temenos is at 1564 Telegraph Road in West Chester, PA.

Groups Working for Peace, Justice and Equality

ANCHOR (A Non-Denominational Community Harvesting Our Resources) is a group of Christians committed to living their lives 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.) On June 13, hear author Craig Eisendrath on "The Bush Debacle: Where the Bush Administration is Taking Us in World Affairs" and July 11, hear the story of Yoko Nishimura, daughter of a Hiroshima survivor. July 16 and August 6, join in protest at Lockheed Martin on the anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. 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

Contact the house for details: 215 426-0364.

Philadelphia Catholic Worker hosts liturgy and potluck every Wednesday 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 are urgently needed to accompany inner-city kids on recreational and educational trips during the group's summer program, June 22-July 31. 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.

Spirituality and Healing Workshop

*Level 1 - Understanding and Benefiting from the Connection between
The Spiritual and the Physical*

We welcome people of any faith who want to explore the connection between spiritual and physical well-being. You will spend the day with like-minded people, exploring some of the different modalities that exist to support the mind/body connection. Through hands-on exercises, scripture readings, and reflection, we will learn how to stop being so busy and start being more present to ourselves. If we learn to listen to our bodies, it can be a guide for our spirits.

Saturday, June 19, 2004

**9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. - St. Joseph's University, Carriage House
5600 City Line Ave., Philadelphia, PA.19131**

Presented by:

The Time Out Center - Jenny and Jim Ratigan, Facilitators

Fee for the Workshop Day is \$85.

**The fee is inclusive, covering registration, materials and luncheon.
Partial Scholarships are available.**

If you would like further information or if you would like registration materials please contact us at [610-695-9780](tel:610-695-9780) or info@thetimeoutcenter.com



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SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

13th Sunday of Ordinary Time

June 27, 2004

Gal. 5:13-18, Lk.9

by *Judith A. Heffernan*

In Galatians we hear that Christ set us free, so we should stand firm and not submit to the yoke of slavery. We should use this freedom to serve one another through love.

In Luke we hear that Jesus sent messengers ahead to a Samaritan village, but the messengers were not welcome. The disciples then ask Jesus if he wants to call down fire from heaven to consume the village—but Jesus turns and rebukes the disciples.

Outside the cathedral, Holy Thursday 2004: a holy day, a warm welcome to all visitors and newcomers and a grand reunion of prayerful, joyful, hopeful, singing, suffering, sharing, embracing people from ten feet tall to babies in arms who witness together for women's ordination.

Then a messenger went ahead but was not welcome and was sent away.

The next day I read a quote from someone inside the cathedral: "You should make the comparison of how many people are out there and how many people are in here."

I still haven't been able to shake that quote. What more can we do? How do we get more of the seventy percent of US Catholics who support women's ordination to stand with us? Let's begin by marking Holy Thursday, March 24, 2005, on our calendars and do whatever we can to be there—to "stand firm and not submit to the yoke of slavery."

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.

In working through this I watch a movie about Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). Matthew Fox wrote that she was a doctor, a poet, and artist, a musician, a composer, a mystic, an abbess and a woman who attacked church corruption. At one point in her life, she and the sisters were put under church interdict and were prohibited from receiving the Eucharist and from singing!

Hildegard prayed, "What must we do? Good and gentle God, teach us what we ought to say;" and Hildegard said, "We are all disciples...Now is the time to make all things new...God is good and manifests herself in every creature...We are encircled by the arms of the mystery of God..."

I am writing this a week from Easter between Earth Day and Mother's Day and now the news of our torture of the detainees and prisoners in Iraq is brought forward—the horror within the horror that is war.

I listen to our mothers in faith.

Helen Caldicatt, M.D. in *Missile Envy* invites us to rise to our full moral and spiritual height and proclaim, "I will save the earth!" She continues, "We are the curators of life on earth...Peace is the ultimate medical issue, the ultimate parenting issue, the ultimate political issue, the ultimate religious issue and the ultimate feminist issue."

"Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" Jesus turned and rebuked the disciples.

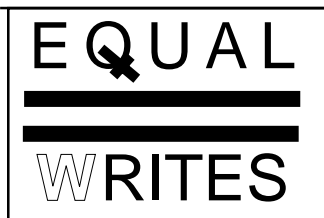
Dorothy Solle in *Reflection on God* writes that we must save God from patriarchy's clutch.

"Gonna lay down my sword and shield...ain't gonna study war no more...Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me..." Amen. Alleluia.

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

MANUSCRIPTS AND CORRESPONDENCE: If you would like to contribute an article, letter, or anything else to *Equal wRites*, please send it double-spaced, with your name, phone number, and a short biographical note. The next issue will be September 2004. Final deadline for submissions is July 15. Send to the editor: Karen B. Lenz, 430 W. Jefferson St., Philadelphia, PA 19122 (215) 232-7823.

ADVERTISING: Advertising helps us support *Equal wRites* and helps you find people who support us. Our ad rates are \$25 for a quarter-page (\$75, four issues) and \$15 for a business-card size (\$45, four issues). Additional rates on request. To place an ad contact Marianne Jann, 49 Driscoll Drive, Ivyland, PA 18974, or e-mail: mejann@comcast.com



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