

## **YOU ARE INVITED TO**

*A Celebration of the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala*

*Sunday, July 24 at 9:00 am*

*Mass at 9 am (Eileen DiFranco, RCWP presiding)*

*followed by conversation and refreshments*

*Community of St. Mary Magdalene*

*Drexel Hill United Methodist Church*

*600 Burmont Road • Drexel Hill, PA 19026*

**EQUAL**

**Catholic Feminist Newsletter for Women  
and Men in the Philadelphia Area**

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**WRITES**

**MISSION STATEMENT** - As women and men rooted in faith, we call for justice, equality, and full partnership in ministry. We are committed to church renewal and to the transformation of a structure which uses gender rather than gifts as its criterion for ministry.

### **The World Is About To Turn!**

#### **Reflections on the American Catholic Council Conference June 10-12, 2011**

*By Ellie Hart*

Two thousand voices joyously sang "The Cantic of the Turning," the gathering hymn of the Pentecost Mass at the American Catholic Council's June convention celebrating (and invoking!) the Spirit of Vatican II. We had just spent the previous two days listening to inspiring and wise speakers: Hans Kung, Jeanette Rodriguez, Anthony Padovano, James Carroll, Matthew Fox, Joan Chittister, and, as importantly, each other. Who then could blame us for loudly proclaiming, the world is about to turn!

I believe what was said at the conference is critical for all of you who could not be there to hear, and so I (humbly, believe me) offer my impressions. Please note: You can order CDs and/or DVDs of all presentations at [americancatholiccouncil.org](http://americancatholiccouncil.org) and form your own impressions and challenge mine. We at *EqualWRites* would love to hear from you.

In her homily at the Mass, Janet Hauer challenged Joan Chittister's remark, "No seed ever sees the flower," all the while knowing, she laughed, that challenging someone like the great Joan Chittister **must** be a mortal sin. We were seeing the flowering everywhere, she maintained; moreover, we were not only the seeds but the flowers themselves. I, at the risk of the same mortal sin, could not have agreed more. Here, in what our wise leaders and mentors told us, is why:

#### **Hans Kung**

Described as a world renowned theologian and educator, an important advisor at Vatican II, and tireless champion of the reforms it introduced, Dr. Hans Kung encouraged us by reminding us that "all change comes with, or out of, suffering...and if we do not act now, more suffering will come. The Curia will be able to stop - though not completely - every reform of Vatican II." Our task is daunting, he warned; "we have to change an absolutist system without the benefits of the French Revolution and guillotine!" Reform movements, however, must keep up the spirit because the hierarchical Roman Church is now just "a façade, a Potemkin church," that will come crashing down at the least provocation. Everyone has his/her own charisma, and, together, our individual contributions, our open, ecumenical spirit, and our dedication to treating all humans in a human way, will forge a new church. His advice to us was the same advice he gave to the bishops in a recent letter (never answered, of course): "Speak out and tell the truth; act on a local level... Unconditional obedience is due only to God." Always remember, he said, "We, the people, are the Church, and the bishops (and Pope) are its servants."

#### **Jeanette Rodriguez**

Her background was strong - professor and chair of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Seattle University, author, previous vice chair of Pax Christi - as were her words. She brought to vibrant life the critical contributions, past and present and for the future, of the Latino community and its particular take on theology. Latino theologians, Dr. Rodriguez asserted, fully embrace the special option for the poor, the inclusion of women and the "ethnically

*continued on page 5*

**THE ACC CONFERENCE HOSTS A SUBVERSIVE MASS? JUDGE FOR YOURSELF! (with some welcome guidance by our own Gaile Pohlhaus)**

Here's how the June 14, 2011 edition of the *Detroit Free Press* described the reaction of the Archbishop of Detroit and his minions to the Pentecost Sunday Mass that closed the American Catholic Council convention, followed by Gaile Pohlhaus' inspired description of what really happened:

*The mass, held at a conference of liberal Catholics at Cobo Center, drew up to 50 priests from metro Detroit who came despite warnings last week from Archbishop of Detroit Allen Vigneron that they could be defrocked for attending.*

*The diocese said Sunday that there were "serious liturgical abuses" in the mass and it will convene a group to review what happened. Mass and the Eucharist are taken seriously by Catholic leaders because they are a central part of their beliefs, the idea that a community is taking part in consuming the body of Christ. It's supposed to be done according to strict rules laid out by Catholic law. Any deviation can lead to punishment of clergy.*

*Ned McGrath, spokesman for the Archdiocese of Detroit, said the mass had "serious liturgical abuses," but did not specify what. Catholic experts said it appears that the mass violated some basic rules, such as making sure that clergy and laypeople are treated as distinct groups.*

*During the mass, everyone who attended was given a red stole to be draped around his or her neck — something usually worn only by clergy. On the stoles, there was a drawing of a dove with the words: "Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love." Organizers said they wanted to symbolize equality and the idea that all Catholics, not just the leaders, represent the church. It's part of their overall challenge to the church and the Vatican, which they say needs to be democratized. But the red stoles were a violation of mass rules, said Rocco Palmo, a noted Catholic expert who blogs at <http://whispersinthebloggia.blogspot.com/>. Palmo did not attend the mass, but was told about what was observed by a *Free Press* reporter. "That's something that is normally worn by priests or deacons," Palmo said. For laypeople to wear them, "it would symbolize a conflation of roles."*

*Another possible abuse would be the fact that a layperson — Janet Houter (sic), a co-organizer of the conference from suburban Chicago — delivered a homily during the mass. "That's a clear violation," Palmo said. "No layperson can preach the homily." The language used during the Eucharistic prayer at the mass — described as "inclusive" — also could have been a possible abuse, Palmo said.*

*Wurm (celebrant, Reverend Robert Wurm, retired Catholic priest) said he has not been contacted by the archdiocese about the mass. But he said, "I don't think there were any serious abuses. They're welcome to any review they want."*

Here, according to Gaile Pohlhaus is what they would be reviewing:

We sang "All are Welcome."

Over 2,000 of us sang.

A stole was placed on the presider recognizing him as the facilitator of our worship. Then confirmation stoles were placed on all of us in the gathered assembly. The presider, a Benedictine priest, read the opening prayer.

And the Baptismal Rite over the congregation was done by using ferns to bless the people with holy water.

And we sang. We sang "Baptized in Water."

Over 2,000 of us sang.

The first reading from the Acts of the Apostle was read by a woman.

And we sang "Lord send forth your spirit and renew the face of the earth"

Over 2,000 of us sang.

The reading from First Corinthians was read by a man.

And we sang the Sequence for Pentecost and then "Alleluia".

Over 2,000 of us sang.

The Gospel (John 20) was proclaimed by a male deacon.

And we sang "Alleluia".

Over 2,000 of us sang.

After a brief introduction by the presider, a woman gave the homily/reflection.

We recited an inclusive Creed and Prayers from the Faithful received from listening sessions held over the past year-and-a-half.

And we sang "God whose purpose is to kindle."

Over 2,000 of us sang.

(The offertory gathering was split among the social justice actions in parishes of Detroit.)

And we and the presider sang the Eucharistic prayer adapted from Marty Haugen's "Mass of Creation." And when the presider's voice gave out after the Consecration, the community helped him.

And we prayed as Jesus taught us.

Over 2,000 of us prayed.

And we exchanged peace as Jesus taught us.

Over 2,000 of us exchanged peace.

And we received Communion under both species while we sang "One Bread, One Body."

Over 2,000 of us sang and received Christ.

And there was a closing prayer and blessing.

And we sang "Sing a New Church into Creation."

Over 2,000 of us sang.

And we went forth renewed with energy and actions to bring back to our parishes and worship groups, not wishing to stay on top of the mountain, but ready to work.

Over 2,000 of us went forth.

**Gaile M. Pohlhaus, PhD** is a Practical Theologian and currently teaches at Villanova University.

## DR. PATRICIA FRESEN CELEBRATES WOMEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPASSION

by Ellie Harty

What would it be like to be "transformed by compassion"? At a special presentation in Drexel Hill on April 15, Dr. Patricia Fresen, scholar, educator, former Dominican sister, current ordained Roman Catholic priest and consecrated Roman Catholic bishop, gave us a preview. Drawing on both medieval and contemporary sources, she described how compassion can transform our lives and the lives of all around us: "Releasing the energy of compassion into our world is possibly the most important calling each of us has."

She focused on the wisdom we have received from two powerful women in two very different ages: Hildegard of Bingen and Karen Armstrong. Hildegard, she said, "links compassion very closely with wisdom. For her, compassion is not only good energy, but is active: it responds to real need, understands, cleanses, binds, supports, nourishes, celebrates. The ultimate power of God, of the universe, of humanity, is compassion. It constitutes the way we see the world." Dr. Fresen then challenged us: "Do we see it (the world) as interconnected, as it most profoundly is?"

Feminine wisdom is also critical to Hildegard. For her, the circular shape of the mandala, for example, represents the Godhead. It is God embracing all, "a deeply maternal image." Hildegard writes about God embracing us and in so doing, "You are encircled by the arms of the mystery of God." In fact, Dr. Fresen pointed out, "The Hebrew word for compassion has the same root as the word for womb: *rechem*(womb); *rechemet*(compassion). A very maternal image." In Christianity, "Jesus the Christ is the revelation of the compassion of God. We are truly 'other Christs'."

Patricia Fresen also drew on another wise and inspiring female leader, this time our contemporary, Karen Armstrong, author of *The History of God, The Case for God, Twelve Steps to A Compassionate Life*, and numerous other books as well as the famous "Charter for Compassion" which Dr. Fresen distributed. Going beyond Christianity and even Judaism, the Charter captures the essence of all religions. Here are some excerpts:

*The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equality and respect.*

*We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdepen-*

*dence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.*

By 2009, over 1,000 religious and secular leaders had signed the Charter. Are we ready to do the same - and distribute it - and, most importantly, to live by it? You can begin by signing at [charterforcompassion.org](http://charterforcompassion.org).

Ellie Harty is a co-editor of EqualwRites

### JANUARY WAS SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL MONTH FOR EQUALWRITES.

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## THE "NEW" TRANSLATION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL

By Marion Ronan

For some time now, we have been hearing about the new English translation of the Roman Missal, which will begin to be used in English-speaking Catholic churches at the beginning of Advent. Efforts to slow the implementation of the new translation, such as the "What If We Just Said Wait?" campaign and more dispersed critiques of the language of the translation, have come to naught. Now we have reached the point where the translation is actually being introduced in parishes and dioceses, with priests and bishops giving enthusiastic talks and writing books and articles urging us to accept it. In the May 23 issue of *America*, the former archbishop of Los Angeles, Roger Mahony, urges readers to "welcome" the new translation, perhaps as we will welcome the baby Jesus at the end of Advent.

Along these same lines, this past week, the pastor of my Caribbean-Latino-Haitian parish here in Brooklyn, who is a really good man, told the English-speaking parishioners that it's necessary to have a more contemporary translation from time to time. I decided not to ask him how "consubstantial" qualifies as contemporary. Caribbean New Yorkers, by and large, are more formal than those of us who grew up speaking American English, so maybe they will welcome the translation. In any case, something like half the members of the parish are undocumented, and many of them and their neighbors constitute a great long line up to the church on Wednesday when the food pantry is open, so I have a feeling the new translation won't be eliciting much protest here.

A number of the changes in the language of the liturgy to be implemented in November are posted on the webpage of the USCCB (<http://usccb.org/romanmissal/examples.shtml>). I don't have a lot to add to what's already been said about the stilted quality of some of this new language. It does seem aimed at creating more distance between the congregation and God, as at the beginning of Eucharistic Prayer I, where the priest will now say, "To you then, most merciful Father, we make this most humble prayer and petition," where he used to say, "We come to you, Father, with praise and thanksgiving." This strikes me as an expression of much the same

attitude that undergirds the recent attack on Elizabeth Johnson's book: who do (Quest for the Living God (Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God): we think we are to sound as if we are close to God, when God vastly transcends us, as do his chosen representatives?

I do think it's worth noting, however, that the previous translation was also sadly lacking in gender-inclusive language. For those of us committed to the enactment and expression of the equality of women and men (and now transgendered people as well) in the Roman Catholic tradition, the new translation is in many respects a lateral move. For those of us who have plodded on, saying "for us and for our salvation" instead of "for us men and for our salvation," or referring to the Holy Spirit as "She," the situation has not changed. Perhaps, in some ways, the forcing of a cumbersome and remote translation onto, for example, male liturgists, or priests with an ear for the English language, or with a theology not centered on God's impassability, serves as a reminder that those who are able to enforce a hierarchy of power on some can enforce a hierarchy of power on others as well. Welcome to our world, fellas.

The real problem, then, is not the "new" translation. Its original goal, that the English translation of the Catholic liturgy should more closely resemble the translation of the liturgy in other languages, is not a bad one. When I'm in Paris, I say "Et avec votre esprit." Why should I be opposed to saying "And with your spirit" here?

The problem once again, and always, is the political process by which the translation came about. A few at the top of the Catholic Church are forcing this translation onto the English-speaking church, just as it has forced an all-male celibate priesthood on us, and has forced any number of practices and expressions on Catholics around the world. If this cumbersome and distancing translation gets more Catholics to recognize and resist this untenable situation, maybe it's not such a bad thing after all.

*Marion Ronan* is Research Professor of Catholic Studies at New York Theological Seminary, a multi-racial, multi-lingual Protestant seminary on the upper west side of Manhattan.

### 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

and gendered other;" they look to transcend race, culture, and class. They see Jesus, "not just as the Word, but as the Verb," his life becoming "real flesh in real history," integrating doctrine with practice in the spirit of liberation theology, to deal with harsh problems like poverty, peace and justice, and "the political dimension of faith." Latino theologies, therefore, especially celebrate these contributions of Vatican II: 1) Use of the vernacular in worship - "By singing and praying in our own language, we add our own spirit to the praise of God, accessing and celebrating our own unique history and culture as we join with others." 2) The priesthood of all the baptized - "Central to dignity is justice and to see all as God's creatures. Anything in the way of that is an affront to God." 3) Social justice emphasis - By ensuring "the concerns of the family are the concerns of the Church," we affirm "accompanying the poor and marginalized" as our primary task. Dr. Rodriguez reminded us that 16% of the population (not counting undocumented immigrants) is now Latino/Latina, and of that population, a disproportionate number are young people, i.e. our future, those to whom, therefore, we should continue to pay special attention.

#### Anthony Padovano

Dr. Padovano has a long list of credits, distinguished professor of literature and philosophy, author, theologian, first president of CORPUS, former Catholic priest, current pastor of The Inclusive Community embracing both Catholics and Protestants, and his dynamic presentation reflected both the need for, and power of, scholarly research and analysis on the topic of church reform. He began by reminding us that Luke, who liked to focus on historical facts, says the **community** gathered on Pentecost, not just the apostles, and all, not just a few, were given the spirit. This led to his central point: "The community, not the episcopacy, makes us one holy Catholic Church, and baptism, not ordination, makes us the Church." Since the spirit has entered all and expands the mission started with the apostles, the church is apostolic only because the community accepts that it is. Vatican I taught us that "the Church, not the Pope, is infallible," and so "the community as well as the Pope, must participate in the discernment of issues of faith, scripture, and law." The same applies to pronouncements by Councils: "It is impossible to reverse what has been agreed upon and affirmed by the community." Moreover, in canon law, "if a custom prevails for 30 years, even if against canon law, it becomes law if there is no official response against it." Custom takes precedence (e.g. the Eastern Church never accepted celibacy), and non-compliance can force change (e.g. eating meat on Friday). Two current examples of community responses to laws not working are: 1) Intentional Communities - "The faithful have the right to apostolic action because there is equality among the faithful." 2) Only baptism is necessary for church membership - "No member of the hierarchy has the right to say who does or doesn't have membership in the church." The power truly is with the people of God.

#### James Carroll

James Carroll, author, scholar, former priest, Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, at the Center for the Study of Values in Public Life at Harvard Divinity School, and at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, addressed the topic much on all of our minds, "Why Am I A

Catholic?" He answered immediately with a deceptively simple reply: "Because of you." We, the people, he explained, are the true agents for change in the Church, and this fact is profoundly significant. "Change this institution," he said, "and you can change the world and the course of history." The experience and influence of the laity, in fact, has already effected major changes in doctrine. He related a story about Cardinal Cushing, then an archbishop, who heard of a priest, preaching daily in a public area, vilifying the Jews who, as non-Catholics, were beyond salvation. His beloved Jewish brother-in-law, who owned a business nearby, had to hear this vitriol constantly. It was this actual real life experience, and his witnessing the pain the experience caused to both his brother-in-law and sister, that inspired the Cardinal to forge the *Dignitatis Humanae* portion of Vatican II which did away with the assertion that only Catholics could be saved. As James Carroll emphasized, "Doctrine can (and must) be changed by contesting experience." His most poignant example of why we must use our power to change the Church based on experience, however, involved the Holocaust. That this monumentally horrific experience was allowed was the direct consequence of the Church's, throughout the ages, doctrinal demonization of the Jews as killers of Jesus, and, because Church doctrine had contributed so extensively to this horrific experience, it had to change. The resulting doctrine shift in Vatican II was "the greatest shift in Church history because it overturned the Gospel of John." Significantly, this profound change was able to happen because of the experience of the people. James Carroll reminded us, "The Word of God is profoundly incarnational, made flesh in the community of believers. The 'real presence' is in us!" Because the Catholic Church is so large and far-reaching, into all areas of the world, all ages, all cultures, our task is to stay Catholics and reform this Church. We have the power to make sure its influence is for the good of all people.

#### Joan Chittister

Joan Chittister, one of the most influential religious leaders and spokespersons today, member of the Benedictine community, author of 40 books, winner of numerous awards, regular columnist for *National Catholic Reporter*, quoted an ancient philosopher, "Every age that is dying is a new age coming to life." In this new age of our own Church, she challenged us to be like Judith, Esther, Joseph, and Jesus, the outcast and invisible, who dared to rise up and overturn the oppressive system of their time. Theirs is our legacy and from them we receive our nurture as we work against injustice and oppression, refusing, like Judith, to abandon ourselves to "moral invisibility." We must, Joan Chittister said, go "from passive consumers to dynamic communities" questioning ("If scripture says nothing negative about women's ordination, why do they use Jesus to obstruct it?") and challenging (Should we really return to the Latin Mass "where mystique is confused with mystery?"). Three percent of the Church is clergy, 97% laity; 6 lay people are in training for ministry for every 1 priest and "65% of them are women!" What does that say to us? She related the story of an elder Native American giving advice to a younger tribe member about to set off on a perilous journey, "Remember, when you see a great chasm, jump!"

Ellie Harty is co-editor of *EqualwRites*.

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## Book Reviews

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*A New Spiritual Home: Progressive Christianity at the Grass Roots.* By Hal Taussig, Polebridge Press, 2006. 203pp. Paperback. \$20.00.

Reviewed by James R. Kelly

There are many reasons to write a book, and Hal Taussig, a New Testament professor and active Philadelphia pastor, has some good ones. He wants to bring attention to a relatively new (the last two decades or so) Christian emergent that, he writes, represents the last best hope for a declining Christianity in our increasingly diverse, global, postmodern world. He designates this developing grassroots spirituality as "progressive Christianity" and distinguishes it from the irrelevant thees represented by the dying denominationalism of Protestantism, a reactionary Evangelicalism, and an authoritarian Roman Catholicism. His method is inductive and includes sixteen profiles of local progressive Christian churches (though their names are the commonplace, such as the first listed, St. Vincent de Paul RC Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the last, Shalom United Church of Christ, Lafayette, Indiana) and then identifies 963 more progressive churches in an appendix. I was pleased to find five in Brooklyn.

Although Taussig displays a good appreciation for the empirical focus of sociology, my own judgment is that a closer attention to some of sociology's insights, especially those of its most famous sociologist of religion, Max Weber, would have made for a more persuasive and less celebratory analysis. The book will be appreciated by those who can match their own pilgrim journey with Taussig's general characterization of "progressive Christian." But those with, however complicated, loyalist or even nascent appreciations of the human capital represented by historically rooted ecclesial identities and the ongoing re-reception of traditions will, ironically, feel excluded from what Taussig calls the new inclusivity of progressive Christianity. I'm undoubtedly biased. In Brooklyn "progressive" is not a term that can be non-mockingly self-applied.

In Part One, Taussig devotes five chapters to each of his defining characteristics of progressive Christianity: 1. Spiritual Vitality; 2. Intellectual Integrity; 3. Transgressing Gender Boundaries; 4. Vitality without Superiority; 5. Justice and Ecology. Appearing in almost each of the book's 17 chapters are such progressive Christianity descriptors as: *gender-bending; cutting edge; welcoming; open-minded; openhearted; non-creedal; participatory; exciting.* These characteristics are contrasted with the *staid, creedal and exclusivist* religious expression Taussig finds in a "dying Protestant denominationalism", a "reactionary evangelicalism", and a "hierarchically driven Roman Catholic neo-conservatism."

Since Taussig wants to make explicit what he claims is ignored, let's be more specific. In the words of what he identifies as the sole national cross-denominational progressive institution, *The Center for Progressive Christianity* ([www.tpc.org](http://www.tpc.org)), when we call ourselves or our local church "progressive Christian" we say we embody the following eight qualities. *We: 1. Have found an approach to God through the life and teachings of Jesus; 2. Recognize the faithfulness of other people who have other names for the way to God's realm, and acknowledge that their ways are true for them, as our ways are true for us; 3. Understand the sharing of bread and wine in Jesus's name to be a representation of an ancient vision of God's feast for all people; 4. Invite all people to partici-*

*pate in our community and worship life without insisting that they become like us in order to be acceptable (including but not limited to believers and agnostics, conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, women and men, those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, those of all races and cultures, those of all classes and abilities, those who hope for a better world and those who have lost hope); 5. Know that the way we behave toward one another and toward other people is the fullest expression of what we believe; 6. Find more grace in the search for understanding than we do in dogmatic certainty – more value in questioning than in absolutes; 7. Form ourselves into communities dedicated to equipping one another for the work we feel called to do: striving for peace and justice among all people, protecting and restoring the integrity of all God's creation, bringing hope to those Jesus called the least of his sisters and brothers; and 8. Recognize that being followers of Jesus is costly, and entails selfless love, conscientious resistance to evil, and renunciation of privilege" (102).* While Taussig recommends that progressive Christians and their leaders practice a *benign neglect* as they diminish their denominational ties (save for their health and pension benefits!), it seems to me that, if respectfully invited, a whole lot of more traditionalist, "a-progressive" religious folks might be pleased to sign on to those eight aspirations.

However, in terms of Taussig's rendering of the essence of progressive Christianity, this would be naïve even as a speculation. For membership in Taussig's progressive Christianity, a full and uncomplicated and immediate endorsement of the advocacy of a national gender equality movement GLBT (such as WITNESS OUR WELCOME -WOW- or Soul Force) and of the women's ordination movement is required. Now. No ongoing discernment, no dialogue, no patience for the sympathetic but still unsure. To remain *pre-postmodern* is to remain irrevocably a spiritual juvenile.

Taussig himself, to be sure, expresses more than a few criticisms about the style of progressive Christianity he empirically finds. For instance, he notes that the progressive churches he lists have few blacks, few working class families, few of the less educated. Indeed, he reports that the groups most likely to have the desired more inclusive progressiveness are orders of religious nuns, with their traditional vows of poverty, and Catholic Worker houses, both of which expend some energy at retaining their strained affiliations with an unappreciative hierarchy. Indeed, he suggests that a flourishing national movement of grass roots progressive Christians "might look much more like the plethora of monastic movements that spread across Europe in the middle ages..." (161).

In Max Weber's sociology of religion, the charismatic – the unplanned and unanticipated emergent that provides new resources for identity and community in times of flux and disorientation – inevitably succumbs to the stabilizing but routinizing forces of a bureaucratization that defines its rationality more as efficient management than as the search for more justice and a deeper solidarity. Taussig acknowledges that the perennial flaws of American Christianity are Protestant individualism and sectarianism. Perhaps in his revised edition Taussig will include some chapters on those reluctant to self-describe themselves as non-creedal progressives

**The Look of Catholics: Portrayals in Popular Culture from the Great Depression to the Cold War**, by Anthony Burke Smith. University Press of Kansas, 2010. 225 pp, with photographs, plus notes, bibliography, and index. Hardback. \$34.95.

Reviewed by Regina Bannan

What Anthony Burke Smith adds to our ideas about changes in the Roman Catholic community from the 1930s to the 1960s is the popular culture evidence. Sources as varied as *Life* magazine's photographs, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen's television show, and John Ford's Western movies reveal shifts in attitudes held by – and about – Catholics. We understand quite well the acculturation of ethnic Catholics after World War II. Many of us lived it. The positive treatment of these Catholics by American media surprised me, as did Smith's larger argument: that Catholics brought their Catholicism – mostly Irish – with them as they played a key role in American popular culture during this period. This was no underground church. Think Bishop Sheen.

Perhaps I keep mentioning him because I have no desire to revisit those TV programs of my youth, though apparently that's possible. You can even participate in a movement for Sheen's sainthood. Smith does not mention this; rather, he stresses how Sheen presented himself and his individualistic message of the redemptive value of suffering to an audience beyond Catholics who were searching for meaning in a new consumerist age.

*Going My Way*, the 1940s Bing Crosby hit, is at the center of this book and delivers a similar message – "Swinging on a Star." Crosby's Father O'Malley is the idealized priest we now long for in this age of scandal. The leader of the parish who teaches the boys to sing, affirms sinners coming back to the church, and is less a brother and more a father to the ethnic parishioners – this easy-to-follow man is who we believed our priests all to be. The certainty and believability of this character – did he sustain us or blind us?

*Life* magazine is the third icon of a mainstream American Catholicism in the 1940s. The most striking image among the many photographs in the book is a Jesuit missionary in white cassock on the front deck of a small sailboat, like Jesus on the Sea of Galilee – more like Jesus than the photo of Cardinal Spellman on a *Life* cover with Pius XII's portrait in the background. Smith describes how *Life* coverage changed from criticizing the activist and leftist Catholics of the 1930s to highlighting the assimilated leaders of the 1940s who moved with the country from supporting World War II to attacking communism in the 1950s.

The two first chapters detail the communal values Catholics expressed in their response to the Great Depression. The writers in the popular front theater of the 1930s, which continue in the Blackfriars and Catholic University theater programs, are new to me. I am somewhat more familiar with the ethnic gangster and pro-labor films of that era, whose priests are comrades, rather than leaders, of the struggling sinners and workers.

The two last chapters deal with Catholic directors whose

careers spanned the period of the book. Leo McCarey started with *Duck Soup* and ended with anti-communist propaganda films; in addition to *Going My Way* and *The Bells of St. Mary's*, he directed less explicitly Catholic films that carried Catholic moral messages, like *Love Affair*, which he remade as *An Affair to Remember*. But the big surprise is John Ford, whose Western movies I know. Smith is wonderful at detailing the undercover Catholic themes in Ford's films, taking the vast Ford criticism and reinterpreting it in light of Ford's Catholic faith and Irish ethnicity. This is certainly a new look at a familiar body of work.

I have not detailed in this review Smith's discussions of the reaction of the dominant culture, which he calls Anglo-American, Anglo-Protestant, and even Anglo-Puritan, to all this visible Catholicism, which is mostly Irish extended to other ethnic groups. While acknowledging that some anti-Catholic bigotry continued, Smith emphasizes general acceptance of this somewhat sanitized Catholic element in the American fabric. While I certainly would have liked more discussion of gender and I wonder what happens to the Jews in the same period, I found Smith's descriptions and analysis fascinating. And I do want to see all the films Smith describes again, or, often, for the first time. There is an archive here that explicates Catholic life in the middle of the twentieth century, and Smith argues for it convincingly.

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#### A New Spiritual Home (cont. from p. 6)

and then look at their efforts to be spiritually and morally open as, for examples such emergent terms – which find no shelf space in Taussig's *NEW SPIRITUAL HOME* – "common ground" and a "consistent ethic of life" signify. He might also take the occasion to place "the famous Scopes Trial in the late 1800s" in its accurate century, correct the "Intellectual Integrity" misspelled in Chapter 3, and place the *versus* on page 169 where it belongs, between "religious faith" and "scientific reason." His topic and worthy concerns deserve a second edition.

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**Scripture Reflection**  
**Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**August 7, 2011**  
**Psalm 85; Mt:14:22-33**  
**By Judith A. Heffernan, M.Div.**

As I write this, it is Pentecost Sunday. In the 70s, some of us from SEPA/WOC, at the urging of Arlene Swidler, made an audio tape for NCR about the ministry of women preaching. (Imagine, women were "allowed" to preach at Liturgy then—although we were to stand outside the altar rail!)

A student from Temple University wrote a beautiful melody for our tape based on the Pentecost Reading from Joel. "...Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy..." And this is the weekend when sons and daughters who have been prophets for me, people who have preached with their lives as well as their words, people I have loved for a very long time—"your old shall dream dreams!"—were attendees and keynoters in Detroit at the American Catholic Council Conference. The gathered assembly celebrated as an inclusive church, and together reflected on the spirit, the vision, the freedom, the commitment, the joy and the hope of the people of God.

Fast forward to August 7... Our psalm for the Liturgy that day reads, "...God proclaims peace...justice and peace shall kiss..." How very appropriate that this is also Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial Weekend!

I have been going through some of my collections of favorite readings. I found Thich Nhat Hanh's photo and several articles. In his book *Creating True Peace*, he calls upon the United States to see that war is not a necessary condition of life. He argues that there can no more be a "just war" than "just racism"—and I add "just sexism". Justice and peace shall kiss. An inclusive church has an inclusive heart.

Scary? In the Gospel we hear Jesus say, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." This August 7: let us not be afraid. Let us pray the prayer of *Pax Christi, England*: We ask for the courage to question and challenge all things that bring oppression and violence to our world—and, I add, to our church and our prophets.

*Judith Heffernan* is a member of the Community of the Christian Spirit and SEPAWOC Core Committee

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