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EQUAL

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

Vol. XIX No. 1

MARCH-JUNE 2010

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.*

WHY DO WE DO IT?

A Reflection on Our Holy Thursday Witness Outside of Philadelphia's Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul.

By Ellie Harty

Last year was my first time.

I stood with over thirty others chanting, praying, singing, respectfully, but also firmly and proudly, once again announcing our protest and lamentation that only men could participate in the celebration of Holy Orders happening across the street in the Cathedral.

As we sang, a few people began trickling outside the church indicating that the Mass inside was over when suddenly "Jesus" himself walked out. "Come over here, Jesus," some of us called. "You know this is where you belong!" "Jesus" briefly glared at us and then haughtily walked on without a backward glance. He, or more accurately the actor who had played him in whatever pageant that had gone on inside a Church that had definitely not included the likes of us that day, was not the only one. All of the priests from throughout the diocese who had gathered to receive the holy oils managed to whisk themselves, or were whisked by the organizers, out a side door into waiting buses and cars as soon as the Mass was over, a process obviously designed to avoid their having to see us with our signs and hear us with our protests and songs. The few priests who came out the front doors with their families seemed surprised and perplexed by us, and a few lay attendees were outright hostile, shaking fists or heads in their own protest, but most people seemed disinterested, unaware, or uncaring. We were the

lunatic fringe, the marginalized, ironically the ones the real Jesus had so lovingly nurtured and cared for. No wonder we remained convinced that had the acting "Jesus" been the actual Jesus, He would have come over to us.

One parishioner, however, did come over. He was sincere and affable (not always the combination that greets these yearly protests). "What is the highest rank of holiness a person can reach?" he asked us all. "Saint," he quickly answered for us, "and all of you, men and women, can be saints; we can all equally reach the highest rank in the church and that's what's really important." Having made that point, he was obviously quite pleased with himself and ready to leave in triumph when one of our wiser protesters replied, "It's not about rank; it's about ministry." This time words failed him, and he left in silence as we continued singing.

In the end though, what did it all mean? Why put ourselves out year after year only to be argued with, glared at, avoided, or, even worse, totally ignored? Fr. Daniel Berrigan may have one answer. He tells about his reply to those who point out to him that he has protested and worked for peace for almost all of his eighty year lifetime, and the world is not only not more peaceful but maybe even less peaceful than ever. He said that we continue the work of peacemaking, the work of bringing about change for the better, not because this work has produced great results in our lifetimes, but because this is who we are.

And who are we? We are the people who, although often angry and frustrated, love the church; we are the people who hope for the full inclusion of women in the church and especially in all the sacraments; we are the people who con-

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VATICAN'S INVESTIGATION OF THE AMERICAN NUNS

Sandra Schneiders Reflecting on Prophetic Ministry and Church Authority

By Richard Taylor

Sr. Sandra Schneiders has been writing a series of essays in *National Catholic Reporter*, commenting on the Vatican "visitation" of American nuns. It seems to me that her thoughts apply equally to us who struggle so mightily with the institutional church. Her thoughts focus on the necessary tension between prophetic ministry and church authority. She writes:

1. We need to "pray our way, personally and corporately, into a peaceful and courageous acceptance that the tension between institutional authority and prophetic ministry is and will always be part of the life of the Body of Christ, the journey of the People of God through history."

2. In doing so, we are acting in a way that is "structurally intrinsic to Jesus' own prophetic life and ministry." Jesus' own ministerial struggles "came most often from the religious rather than the secular authorities" of his day. We "cannot expect to experience Jesus' Resurrection if we are unwilling to share his passion."

3. "Prophetic ministry is absolutely necessary for the Church in every age," but such ministry "will never be welcomed by institutional authority."

4. The exercise of prophetic ministry "will always involve misunderstanding of one's best intentions, persecution and suffering, and sometimes even crucifixion."

5. Remember that "Jesus told his disciples at the last supper" that such suffering "often may be at the hands of the religious authorities who think that thereby 'they are giving glory to God' (Jn. 16:2)."

6. "We do not always have the luxury of choosing whether we will suffer at the hands of secular powers or of the Church's power structure."

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7. We can find hope and strength in St. Paul's words: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9).

Thanks to all of you out there who practice prophetic ministry and/or support it.

Richard K. Taylor's latest book is Love In Action: A Direct Handbook for Catholics using Gospel Nonviolence.

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MOVING RIGHT ALONG....

A commentary by *Mary Whelan*

On many days as I read the latest news about the Catholic Church I just want to weep. Let me qualify that. I am speaking of the news from Rome. I feel more connected to a rowdy group of Catholics who are "faithfully, if not obediently Catholic" (to quote the title of an article in the *Washington Post* 1/11/10). These are the folks who work for reform in the church, believing that change is possible. They give me hope. My closest allies are in Women's Ordination Conference, a cause near and dear to my heart. But I am in solidarity with other reform groups as well.

I find myself most unexpectedly and humbly working as a co-editor of *EqualwRites*. I understand from the SEPAWOC "long timers" that *EqualwRites* is beginning its 19th year with this issue. I have been perusing past issues to learn more of SEPAWOC history and it is inspiring reading. *EqualwRites* has been a "brave and constant voice of reform" as Mary Byrne wrote in the March-May 2007 issue. In spite of the fact that Pope John Paul II put an end to any official debate of female ordination by his papal authority in the letter *Ordination Sacerdotalis* in 1994, shortly after *EqualwRites* began publication, we have never stopped discussing it. We have never been silent about women's ordination as well as many other issues.

So, what is on my mind these days? Let me tell you.

Ministry to Gay & Lesbian Catholics

On February 5, 2010, Cardinal Francis George, President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement saying that **New Ways Ministry** does not provide an "authentic interpretation of Catholic teaching." New Ways Ministry, founded 33 years ago, is a "gay-positive ministry of advocacy and justice for lesbian and gay Catholics and reconciliation within the larger Christian and civil communities." (newwaysministry.org) I will not make any attempt to enter the mindset of Cardinal George, and I will not wring my hands. I simply suggest you go to the website and learn what actions you can take. There are letters to write, and if you are concerned, as I am, you will write. Addresses are provided. While we cannot discern, explain or condone the actions of Bishop George we can certainly stand up for lesbian and gay Catholics, many of whom have been supportive of women seeking ordination. We are not separate groups, but are a community of people who have been marginalized for some inexplicable reason by the official Church. That is simply not acceptable.

Sister Jeannine Gramick, co-founder of New Ways Ministry, wrote a statement that was published in *EqualwRites* in the September-November 2000 issue. At that time she had been under Vatican investigation for 11 years and was ordered by the Vatican as well as her religious superiors to cease her pastoral ministry to lesbian and gay persons. It is a deeply moving article in which she describes the process of finding her voice and telling her story. At that time she asked for us to write to the Vatican. "Church law states

(the Christian faithful) have the right and even at times a duty to manifest to their sacred pastors their opinion (canon 212,3)... Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Freedom states that 'every one of us will render an account of oneself to God' (Rom. 14:12), and for this reason (one is bound to obey one's conscience" (par. 11). These words speak to a personal responsibility to stay with the movement.

The New Roman Missal

The proposed changes to the New Roman Missal will soon be presented to us. The changes in our liturgical language are interpreted by some as a systematic dismantling of Vatican II's liberating document *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. "It has become painfully clear that the liturgy, the prayer of the people, is being used as a tool—some would even say as a weapon—to advance specific agendas." (Michael G. Ryan in *America Magazine*, 12/14/09). I am suggesting that you access the website whatifwejustsaidwait.org to read the "statement of concern."

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TREASURER'S REPORT

SEPAWOC Financial Statement 2009:

Beginning Cash Balance:	\$1,984.
Revenues (Donations) Received:	4,443.
Expenses:	
Printing & Postage:	3,882.
Web Management:	344.
Donations:	481.
Bank Charges:	25.
Total:	\$4,732.
Ending Cash Balance: 12/31/09	\$1,695.

Bernie McBride is the Treasurer for SEPAWOC

Editorial Staff of *Equal wRites*

A Publication of SEPAWOC

Editor: **Ellie Harty, Mary Whelan**

Regular Columnists: **Judith A. Heffernan, Jim Plastaras, Marian Ronan**

HOW HAVE THEIR LIVES CHANGED?

The First of a Series Focusing on Women Answering the Call to Ministry

We have written extensively about some of the Roman Catholic Women Priests' and other women's journeys to ordination and ministry but have not heard as much about their ongoing journeys as priests. How have their lives changed? What challenges and joys have defined their ministries? What are they doing now?

Since our newsletter originates from Philadelphia, we decided to start by interviewing our own native Roman Catholic Woman Priest and frequent *EqualwRites* contributor, Eileen DiFranco.

EwR: Please describe your feelings when you first realized that you were finally an ordained priest.

Eileen: Our organization had a retreat in a beautiful monastery not far from Pittsburgh, where I was going to be ordained in a couple of days. I spent quite a bit of time walking in the garden, thinking and praying. At one point in time, the wind began to blow really hard, right in the middle of a warm, sunny day. The wind blew so hard that I backed up against a wall, feeling the warm wind on my entire body. I recall saying, "Here I am Lord. I have heard you calling. I am ready." This day prepared me for the ordination, which was a very humbling experience. I was aware of the historical importance of our ordination on the three rivers in Pittsburgh, but I was also aware of the fact that I stood on the shoulders of countless generations of wise, Spirit-filled women who had prepared the way for us. I continue to feel humbled.

EwR: How has your ministry evolved over the past four years?

Eileen: I have long believed that "if we build it, they will come." I truly believe that many people are interested in doing church in a more egalitarian fashion where there really isn't a line between men and women, ordained and non-ordained. And so they come to us by way of publications like *EqualwRites*, our website and from word-of-mouth. St. Mary Magdalene (an intentional Eucharistic Catholic community that meets every Sunday at 9am in the Drexel Hill United Methodist Church and where Eileen often leads the worship) has continued to blossom in ways that are very life-giving for all of us. We have grown appreciably over the last two years. We have a large contingent of people who come from Delaware and one couple who comes all the way from Albany, New York! We pray and worship together in an egalitarian fashion. We recognize the gifts of our members. All voices are heard without the need to measure their worth against an institutional standard. We are a community owned and operated by the People of God. My goal is to follow the model of ministry promulgated by the Dutch Dominicans where the entire congregation is responsible for the well-being of the community.

EwR: What have been your most memorable moments?

Eileen: Just being together in prayer each and every week is memorable. Our growth and development has been so amazing. We have been a work in progress, a people on the move. It is remarkable what people will do when asked. They will preach, pray, plan, preside, and progress.

Our community has also shared interfaith worship services with two United Methodist communities where we break bread together because we share one faith, one creed, and one baptism. We shared Thanksgiving and Ash Wednesday. We will come together again on Holy Thursday where we will wash each other's feet. The Body of Christ has been fractured for far too long. Surely Christ is present where people are actively engaged in building bridges.

EwR: What has been most challenging?

Eileen: For me it's having enough time. All of us in RCWP are "worker priests" like the apostle Paul who have other jobs which are our means of support. In many ways, this is a good thing, because we experience first hand the problems of functioning in the working world. We also associate with people who either don't know or don't care if we are ordained so we get no special treatment.

I take my job of preaching very seriously. It takes countless hours to prepare a homily that resonates with the assembly. This includes countless hours of prayer, scripture reading, and spiritual preparation. So time management is my most pressing challenge.

EwR: Most unexpected?

Eileen: Just being here. If you had asked me twenty years ago what I would be doing at age 58, I can assure you that it would not have been ordained ministry. And yet, it is not surprising at all. Women's paths tend to have a different user's manual. Many of us, especially those of my generation were programmed to do only two things – get married or join the convent. In the last 40 or so years, the scales of many types of prejudice have fallen from the eyes of many, awakening in them possibilities they could only dream about

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Come worship within a discipleship of equals!

The Community of St. Mary Magdalene

Sunday Mass at 9AM

Drexel Hill United Methodist Church

600 Burmount Rd.

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For more information, email Eileen DiFranco,

Roman Catholic Womanpriest at

emdifranco@aol.com.

HOW HAVE THEIR LIVES CHANGED?

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in their younger years. I have been so fortunate to live through the heady days of the civil rights movement which has changed the lives of so many people in a comparatively short time.

EwR: Have you encountered resistance, criticism, or hostility? If so, how have you been able to deal with this?

Eileen: No one has challenged me face-to-face. That takes a great deal of courage which most critics don't seem to have. It amazes me how people feel compelled to throw email bombs or send letters to a complete stranger accusing them of all sorts of things without even knowing them or speaking to them personally. I've been condemned to hell on multiple occasions. My integrity as a person has been impugned. The cardinal archbishop of Philadelphia called me names in a letter he sent via special delivery. And the Pope excommunicated all members of Roman Catholic Womenpriests in a public newspaper article. But the deepest cut I felt came from the pastor of the parish to which I belonged for 20 years, a man who baptized my two youngest children. He sent a member of the parish staff to my home asking me not to come to communion. So much for pastoral care! In the end, this is all really sad but I think their actions hurt them more than they injured me. I know that people sometimes react in uncharitable ways when their deeply held beliefs are challenged. Fear strikes at people's hearts, making them behave in ways that are surprising to everyone. We all know that the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit can be lived out in more loving and merciful ways. There are far more people who act without fear and judgment who prove that this can be done. These are the people who give me sustenance.

EwR: What do you see as the future for your own ministry? For women's ordination in general?

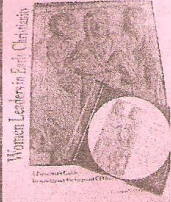
Eileen: As Rabbi Gamaliel said in Acts 5, if a movement is of God, no one can stop it. RCWP has grown from less than 20 people to a hundred people in Europe, Canada, the United States, and South America. The East Region alone will be ordaining six women this spring to the priesthood and the diaconate. I think that women's ordination will continue to grow, perhaps exponentially. No human being can put the lid on the Spirit. We now live in a 21st century world where the language of eminence of degree no longer makes sense, where we know, as scripture indicated so long ago, that God calls everyone to the presence of God and the breaking of the bread. We need to return to the biblical ideal of the discipleship of equals. The institutional church can no longer speak out of both sides of its mouth, demanding equal treatment of all people in the world while continuing to discriminate within the sacred walls of the church.

EwR: Do you have any new insights, thoughts, advice about women taking the route to ordination?

Eileen: As I said earlier, those of us who have been ordained stand on the shoulders of giants; women who have prepared the way for us at great cost to themselves. Those women were often ostracized and condemned by both society and the church. It's easier now because the church has no secular power to back up its ecclesiastical threats. However, women must know that if they work in any capacity in the church and pursue ordination, they will be fired. This is sad because it often precludes younger women from pursuing ordination. It is equally sad for the church as the People of God because they are deprived of a different vision and a new voice that might open them up to previously inaccessible insights in a modern world that takes equal rights seriously, however imperfectly it is implemented. Consequently, the Church lumbers on, handicapped by its refusal to acknowledge the life experiences of one half of its population.

While most of us refuse to recognize and accept excommunication from the hands of frail human beings who, like all of us, have fallen short of the glory of God, priesthood does not come without its slings and arrows. People once considered friends no longer have time for friends who are women priests. Men who passionately preached justice from the pulpit will not support justice for ordained women. Some of our members have been cast out of prayer groups and other long-standing associations within their parishes. While there is support and love for those members of our communities who have committed heinous crimes, there is no such compassion for women priests. Yet, I wouldn't change one thing that has happened. Being on what some might consider the outside has come with its own share of blessings. I am in good company.

Amidst the hurts, the movement grows. Jesus promised us that ministry and discipleship would not be easy. Faith in God rather than fear of the unknown or of change moves us women priests forward. The Holy Spirit has not failed us yet. I trust She never will.



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TOWARDS A TRINITARIAN CATHOLICISM

By *Marian Ronan*

If you're anything like me, the doctrine of the Trinity was not the most galvanizing of the teachings of the church encountered in childhood. For years I assumed this was so because of the very nature of the Trinity. Shaped like a triangle, it was just beyond us in its abstraction and mysteriousness. Far more fitting (and interesting!) for the likes of me were the lives of Christ, the saints, and our brothers and sisters here on earth.

Turns out that a big part of the reason for the triangular abstractness of the doctrine of the Trinity was that much of its energy had gotten sucked out of it centuries before, at least here in the West. Central to this sucking out was the Great Schism of 1054 between Eastern and Western Christianity. To greatly oversimplify what some historians spend their lives researching, toward the end of the first Christian millennium, the Western Church decided to revise the creed of the councils of Nicea and Constantinople to read, as it does today: "I believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*," rather than "who proceeds from the Father," as it had read since its formulation. (These events are referred to as the "filioque" controversy, named after the Latin phrase that got inserted into the creed.)

To complicate things further, this change occurred in a period when the Vatican was intent on establishing the absolute power of the papacy even as the Eastern churches remained committed to the shared authority of councils. If a council had accepted the insertion of the "filioque" into the creed, the Eastern churches might well have accepted it. But the Western church ordered it inserted on the authority of the pope, and in 1054, the two branches of Christianity excommunicated each other.

The impact on the Western church of the insertion of the "filioque" into the creed is by no means theoretical. It signals the (at least practical) subordination of the Spirit to the Son, resulting in what is sometimes called "Christomonism" or "practical binitarianism."

You should not be daunted by these big words. If during the liturgy sometime you just listen for references to the Holy Spirit, you'll grasp exactly what they mean. The "Father and the Son," or just the Son, are very nearly the only games in town. The Holy Spirit is mentioned much less frequently, and often quite formulaically. Nor is it a coincidence that this reduction of the Spirit within the Trinity took place as the Vatican was trying to establish the power of the pope

over the Eastern patriarchs after centuries of a more equal relationship. The new Trinitarian hierarchy paralleled the new governmental hierarchy. And unfortunately, although John XXIII called Vatican II a "New Pentecost," and the mutual excommunications of East and West were lifted at that Council, the role of the Holy Spirit in the overall schema of the Council went on being marginal and insufficient, as historian Giuseppe Alberigo has argued. (See a review of his *Brief History of Vatican II* on page 8.)

The reestablishment within Catholicism of the Holy Spirit as a full member of the Trinity would contribute a great deal toward the renewal of the church. As Kirsteen Kim argues in her splendid book, *The Holy Spirit in the World, A Global Conversation* (Orbis 2007), the Holy Spirit is at the heart of the church's mission and brings the power and intuition necessary to move us beyond the exclusive rationality and hierarchical control that has long characterized the institutional churches. The Spirit is that "multi-colored bird of fire" who will enable us to heal the divisions and conflicts in which the church and the world are currently mired.

It is important to realize, however, that this call for a more than theoretical reinsertion of the Holy Spirit into the doctrine of the Trinity is not the same as advocating a shift to an exclusive emphasis on the Spirit. At the very least, such an attempt could result in the marginalization of the Spirit, and at worst, the establishment of an apparently new but functionally identical hierarchy of power in the church. For this reason, I think it ill advised, for example, for Christian feminists to declare the Spirit (exclusively) female. This kind of reversal may also underpin the problems of the US Catholic Charismatic movement, which doesn't exactly come across as flexible and intuitive in its practices.

At the heart of a new genuinely Trinitarian Trinity, as distinguished from our current amputated 2.2 version, is the full relationality of the persons involved. It is precisely the Holy Spirit, according to Kim, who gives us the power to move toward such relationality here on earth, not by converting people, or triumphing over them, or even "liberating" them, but by being reconciled with them. And reconciliation demands repentance. May the Holy Spirit, that transforming bird of fire, lead all of us in the church and in the wider creation to such repentance and reconciliation.

Marian Ronan is the author of *Tracing the Sign of the Cross: Sexuality, Mourning, and the Future of American Catholicism* (Columbia 2009). She blogs at <http://marianronan.wordpress.com>.

We don't want this to be your last issue of *EqualwRites!*

Hopefully, you feel the same way. Please don't let your subscription lapse. Help us meet our printing and mailing costs by sending us whatever you feel you can contribute: \$5, \$10, \$15 or more. To renew (or begin) your subscription, send your contribution, along with your name and address, to our treasurer: **Bernie McBride, P.O. Box 27195, Philadelphia, PA 19118**. We don't want you to miss even one of our thought provoking articles, news analysis, commentaries, notifications of future events, or scripture reflections. Don't let this be your last issue! Let us hear from you before May 1. Thanks.

WHY DO WE DO IT? *continued from page 1*

tinue to ask for, work quietly for, and loudly call out for that change. We may not see results in our lifetimes (Let's heave a collective sigh here for the centuries it sometimes takes the church to change), but it is important to us and to the church community, the men and the women whom we love that we keep saying: This is who we are; this is who we are.

One final note: On that day, two large buses parked in front partially blocked our view of the cathedral and the parishioners' view of us. One bus was obviously for a group of Catholic school children who had attended the Mass. As the children waited to board, they were the only group who actually paid close attention to us, who seemed to listen, to be interested. If all they managed to understand of what we were saying was that what went on inside the cathedral is not the only way to be Catholic, that Catholic ministry can be larger and brighter and even more magnificent than they could imagine, the day was a success. With that small bright spot, and with the blessing always conferred by our expressing who we are, perhaps Jesus, the real one, really did make the journey over to us that day. Please come and be with us this year.

Ellie Harty is co-editor of EqualwRites.

MOVING RIGHT ALONG . . . *cont from page 3*

In the March 1st issue of *America* Bishop Arthur Sarratelli, Chair of the U.S.C.C.B. Committee on Divine Worship attempts to quell fears by pointing out that the changes "provide us with prayers that are theologically accurate, in a language with dignity and beauty that can be understood..." He assures us that "the content of the... texts may be evident and comprehensible even to the faithful who lack any special intellectual formation..." (I am wondering who among us would admit to lacking special intellectual formation? Is this another example of a special group who possess special knowledge? But I digress.) He assures us that there are massive programs underway to educate the "flock." I assume that's where the educational formation will take place. Sarratelli warns that those who have been already critical have possibly read "a few examples out of context." Having read critiques of the changes I believe it is more complex than that. I will be writing more about it in our next issue.

The website I mentioned takes both viewpoints under consideration and has started a campaign with an opportunity for you to sign a petition urging the bishops to "undertake a pilot program by which the new translation... can be introduced into some carefully selected parishes... for a period of one (liturgical) year, after which they can be objectively evaluated." This seems like a perfectly legitimate request. See, no hand wringing. Again, take action.

Vatican Investigation of U.S. Women Religious

We continue to follow the study which I wrote about in our last issue. It enters its third phase after Easter. The first part involved a series of interviews with major superiors. The

second phase required the answering of questionnaires. It is to be noted that not all congregations were compliant in answering all the questions and as a result some questions were amended or deleted. Sister Mary Clare Millea, who heads the study, gave an extensive interview to John Allen which can be read at ncronline.org (click the heading "women").

Cardinal Rode, who instigated the investigation, spoke on Vatican Radio in November, 2009. In responding to the question of what prompted the study he replied, "most of all you could say, it involves a certain secular mentality that has spread in these religious families and perhaps, also a certain 'feminist' spirit." I have to wonder if he has a bias! Will that affect the outcome? Sister Mary Clare in her interview states she cannot control how the results will be used. She is doing her work with "integrity, fairness and without bias." I am more impressed with her response than with Cardinal Rode's. (But then I have a certain "feminist spirit" and probably cannot be impartial!)

Year of the Priest and Women's Ordinations

And lastly, how will YOU be celebrating this year-long Jubilee which began on 6/19/09, as announced by Pope Benedict XVI? It is intended to strengthen and reinvigorate the male, clerical priesthood. (I am wondering why in the Year of the Priest Rome is investigating the nuns? Just curious).

FutureChurch gives us a Novena to the Holy Spirit for an Inclusive Priesthood. "Holy Spirit, I believe in your work among us and within us." (And I do!) The Novena can be found at www.futurechurch.org.

Another way to celebrate is with Roman Catholic Women Priests. Three women were ordained in Sarasota in February, 2010. My friend, Marie Bouclin, told me of the ordinations scheduled for April in Victoria, British Columbia. And on May 1, Chava Redonnet will be ordained a priest. Chava became a deacon here in Philadelphia on 4/26/09. Three other women will also be ordained and one woman made a deacon. These ordinations will occur at Spiritus Christi in Rochester, New York. All are invited.

I want to remind you to contribute to *EqualwRites*. We want you to be part of the conversations. What issues speak to your heart? How have you actively promoted change or supported those who are living the changes they want to see?

I take comfort in Judy Heffernan's image in her Lenten reflection which is on the last page of this issue and I imagine swirling in energy, believing as Mary Daly that "we guard against stagnation by continuing to move." I am awed by those who continue to advocate for reform despite the odds, despite the lack of visible progress. I find hope and strength in the community in which I locate myself.

Mary Whelan is a co-editor of EqualwRites.

Book Reviews

***Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* Edited by David G. Schultenover. Continuum, 2008. 186 pp. Paperback. \$19.95.**

***A Brief History of Vatican II* by Giuseppe Alberigo, with a foreword by John W. O'Malley. Orbis, 2006. 141 pp. Paperback. \$24.00.**

Reviewed by Marian Ronan

With the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council approaching, revisiting what happened there seems timely. But it's not just the passage of time that makes reconsideration of Vatican II imperative. Longstanding disputes over the interpretation of Vatican II underpin many conflicts in the church today, from liturgy, to parish closings, to the disciplining of Catholic sisters.* The question confronting us, then, is whether the Council changed anything at all. The two books reviewed here may help us to answer this question.

The articles collected in *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* begin with church historian Joseph Komonchak's discussion of Vatican II as an "event," a notion that also underpins the magisterial five volume *History of Vatican II* that he and Giuseppe Alberigo edited between 1995 and 2006. An event, according to Komonchak, is a rupture, part of a sequence of occurrences leading to structural transformation (28).

Vatican officials, we learn, have rejected this reading of Vatican II as an event, proclaiming that the Council did no more than reaffirm the perennial teachings of the church. They cite the conciliar documents to support their position. But the meaning of a document depends also, Komonchak reminds us, on which historical events or plot elements we take into account as we read it. A certain understanding of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, emerges when we recall, for example, that the Council Fathers rejected the draft of that document that was presented to them by the Curia and wrote *Dei Verbum* from scratch. They clearly intended to do more than "reaffirm the continuity of Catholicism" (33).

In the second essay, Jesuit historian John W. O'Malley extends this argument. Because councils were, historically, imperial/legislative/judicial gatherings, their dominant written form before Vatican II was the canon, or ordinance: "If anyone should...let him be anathema" (69-70). The style of Vatican II documents, however, is persuasive and reconciliatory, as befits the Council's ecumenical and collegial goals; not one "anathema" appears in any Vatican II document. Another essay, by Jesuit Stephen Schloesser, goes on to situate Vatican II in the context of the twentieth century: two world wars, the Holocaust, nuclear weapons, the Cold War, and the violent effects of colonialism. In light of all this, the Council introduced changes which were not only real, but ethically essential.

But if Vatican II was such an unambiguously direction-changing event, how can Vatican officials say the things they say about it? Giuseppe Alberigo's wonderful *A Brief History*

of Vatican II helps to answer this question. On the one hand, Pope John XXIII clearly intended the council to be a vehicle of change, calling it a "new Pentecost." And a huge majority of the bishops—ninety per cent or more—supported the crucial developments that we associate with the council—from episcopal collegiality to a new ecumenical spirit to the centrality of the Bible to religious liberty to new relations with the Jewish people (129). But with the death of Pope John XXIII quite early in the process and the election of Paul VI, the pace of change slowed perceptibly. As Alberigo observes, the new pope intervened frequently "in order to moderate and restrain the convictions of his brother bishops" (125).

Nonetheless, Alberigo argues that Vatican II did change the church: "In the long term what characterizes the shift begun by the Council is the abandonment of the Counter-Reformation and the Constantinian Age." Refusals to take into account these "historic transformations," he tells us, are "just little bursts of nostalgia" (129). Alas, he illustrates this argument with the separation from the church of the traditionalist followers of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (130), a separation reversed last June by Pope Benedict XVI.

This, however, is where the interpretation of Vatican II as "event" can make a great difference. And it is where we come in as well. For an event is an episode in a plot, one in an infinite series of episodes. The Council did not end in 1965, then. What happens after Vatican II "legitimately influences one's study of what happened *during* the Council" (41). This "enlarged context" yields new questions for the sake of an ongoing different story.

With this notion of Vatican II as event, Komonchak and Alberigo are not arguing that the liberal bishops at Vatican II were right, or that we are. They do suggest, however, that change is real, and inevitable, and that those participating in that change have an impact on it. With this in mind, let us continue to enact our interpretation of Vatican II for the sake of a Gospel-based, mission-driven, and profoundly collegial Catholic church.

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* For a discussion of the current visitation in light of Vatican II, see Francine Cardman, "Vatican II Revisited," (http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=12075)

***From the Pews in the Back: Young Women and Catholicism*, edited by Kate Dugan and Jennifer Owens. (Liturgical Press, 2009). Paperback. 256 pp. \$19.95.**

Reviewed by *Patricia A. Way*

The voices of young women are so seldom heard within the Roman Catholic Church that older generations of Catholics, particularly in the U.S., sometimes wonder where these young women are. They seem to be absent from the pews on Sunday. Yet the title of a new book, and its contents, challenge this notion.

The book is called *From the Pews in the Back: Young Women and Catholicism*, and it suggests that young women “have been ‘sitting there’—so to speak—participating in Catholic traditions all along, right under everyone’s noses,” but they have been “hidden, overlooked, even alienated by older generations so quick to make assumptions about their so-called absence and silence” (236). This book begins to fill that silence and challenges taken-for-granted notions of Catholic identity by providing a platform for a number of young Catholic women to tell their stories.

The inspiration for *From the Pews in the Back* came after the editors, Kate Dugan and Jennifer Owens, attended a meeting about Catholic identity in higher education that was comprised of Catholic women old enough to have experienced the changes wrought by the Second Vatican Council as young people or adults. During the meeting, Dugan and Owens had remained rather quiet—not wanting to speak for a whole generation of young women—as the older women fretted over why young people weren’t at Mass, why they weren’t “*really* acting very catholic,” and where they went after graduating from Catholic colleges (xv).

Yet after the meeting, Dugan and Owens had much more to say to one another and, later, to others: they wondered why Mass attendance is the standard against which Catholic identity is measured, why a commitment to social justice might not also be a valid measure, and whether their deeply internalized Catholicity is misunderstood or assumed to be absent because they grew up after the Second Vatican Council. They wondered, too, if a collection of essays by young Catholic women describing their Catholic identities might begin to bridge this gap in communication and allow some of these women to speak for themselves. They were not wrong.

As members of a generation that does not confine itself to print media, Dugan and Owens started a blog, www.fromthepewsintheback.com, and began soliciting the written reflections of Catholic women born in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Eventually they secured the twenty-nine memoirs that comprise *From the Pews in the Back*, organizing them into five sections: Growing Up Catholic, Faith in Action, Being a Catholic Woman, Vocation, and Spiritual Identity. Each section begins with an essay by the editors on that particular aspect of Catholic identity.

Along with their categorization into particular sections, the memoirs in *From the Pews in the Back* share certain common themes. These themes point toward the presence of a

strong Catholic identity in the writers in spite of the passionate ambivalences that, at times, profoundly threaten that identity, and they speak directly to the concerns of the older women who unwittingly inspired the creation of this book.

Most emblematically, the memoirs refer to the deep inroads that Catholicism makes within the minds and bodies of the writers. Repeatedly, the women assert that Catholicism is “home,” part of the air they breathe, in their bones, in their blood, in their flesh, an inheritance they cannot deny, something within, just what they “are.” Much of this seems to come from their deeply internalized sense of the sacrality and mystery embodied in Catholic rituals and beliefs. At the conclusion of the book, Dugan and Owens write that the “physicality of this Catholicism is incredible—and it makes us pause in wonder at the depth of Catholic identity” (228). It was this entrenched aspect of the ways of being Catholic that struck me the most as I read each of the chapters.

As a young Catholic woman who fits into the age demographic described in this book, one who now finds herself in “the pews in the front” of a Unitarian Universalist church in Philadelphia, I am aware of the ways in which I bring an imprinted Catholicism with me to that space as well as my social justice work and my scholarship. Yet several of the memoirs pushed me to go farther and realize that the very way I interpret the world is through a Catholic lens. One of the memoirists, Sarah Keller, puts it most poignantly in her essay, entitled “No French Kisses”:

The thing about Catholic school, about growing up Catholic, is that it prioritizes the sacred, the ceremonious, the ability to create something holy out of otherwise profane time. What we are taught as easily as biology, as matter-of-factly as mathematics, is a sense of wonder, that there is a transcendent and overarching God at play, that love is what propels the universe (39).

Keller taught me something about myself in this passage, and I think her words might go a long way to ease some of the anxieties of those who fear that young Catholic women lack a sense of Catholic identity, or that we could somehow dispose of it lightly.

Other themes that recur strongly throughout the text are the struggles that the authors confront in trying to negotiate the conflicts that arise from being a woman and being Catholic, being excluded from Church leadership, and identifying with a Church that does not enact the message of inclusion it teaches. Again and again, the women in the book wrestle with reconciling their Catholic selves with their equally feminist selves.

Many of the contributors had also at one time felt the call to ordination and the disappointment and sense of disgrace that exclusion from the priesthood instilled in them. In many

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REFLECTION ON THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF JESUS

By Jim Plastaras

When I was 14, I took the train by myself into New York City on Good Friday to hear Bishop Fulton Sheen preach on the "Seven Last Words." I remember waiting on line outside the cathedral for a place in the standing room only crowd. I don't remember anything about the actual content of the good bishop's sermons, but the marvelously dramatic way in which he declaimed each of the Seven Last Words made a lasting impression on me.

I tell this by way of background to help you understand my surprise when years later I had the opportunity for in-depth study of the Gospels. If these words of Jesus were so important, why weren't they found in all the Gospels? Mark and Matthew had only one of the Lord's last words. One had to go through all the Gospels and cut and paste in order to come up with all seven last words. My initial reaction of surprise and disappointment would eventually give way to an "Aha" moment when I realized that the different Evangelists each had something important to communicate in the way they shaped the narrative to reflect their own point of view. In this reflection, rather than take up the seven words one-on-one, or attempt to establish the proper sequence among the seven words, I will focus on the distinctive viewpoints of three of the four Evangelists.

The Gospel According to Mark

Mark was the first one to create a coherent written narrative of the Good News. Matthew and Luke would later use Mark's narrative as a prime resource. Mark's account of the crucifixion is the shortest and sparsest of the four Gospel narratives. His account focuses on four aspects of the event:

1. The mockery of chief priests: "He saved others; he cannot save himself. . . Let him come down from the cross that we may see and believe." (Mk 15:31) The Evangelist does not want us to miss the parallel with Peter's reaction when Jesus first told them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be killed. "Peter took him aside and to rebuke him. But Jesus rebuked Peter, and said, 'Get behind me, Satan!'" (Mk 8:32)

2. The words of Jesus at the moment of death: "And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' . . . and Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last." (Mk 15:34) These are the only words of Jesus in Mark's narrative. He adds nothing that would soften the starkness of Jesus' agony and sense of abandonment. Mark gives us the exact words of Jesus in Aramaic as he cried out the opening words of Psalm 22. Aramaic was the everyday language spoken by Jesus and his contemporaries. When they prayed this Psalm in the synagogue, the language would have been Hebrew. Pious commentators have attempted to soften the sense of agonized abandonment portrayed by Mark's narrative by stating that Jesus was in fact praying Psalm 22 which ends with a prayer of confi-

dence and thanksgiving. This hardly appears to be the Evangelist's intention.

Mark tells us twice that Jesus shouted out with loud voice, rather than groaning softly or whispering. For all the agony and suffering, it was a cry of victory.

The verb he uses to describe the moment of death is *ekpneo* means to "ex-spire" or breath out one's last. (The Fourth Gospel, as will be seen, changes this verb to convey the underlying meaning more explicitly. "He gave up [or handed over] his spirit.")

3. The words of the Centurion: "Truly this man was the Son of God." Some manuscripts of Mark 15:38 present the words of the Centurion as "Truly this man was a Son of God." meaning, "Truly this was a just man." No matter which manuscript reading is correct, the Evangelist's intention is clear. Mark presents his narrative as the story of the progressive revelation of the 'Messianic secret.' He anchors his narrative on three pivotal events where Jesus is revealed as the Son of God: At the baptism at the Jordan "A voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'" (Mk 1:11) In Mark, the words of revelation are addressed to Jesus and Jesus only.

At the transfiguration, the mid-point of Mark's narrative, the same words are repeated, but now are addressed to Peter, James, and John: "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." (Mk 9:7)

The full revelation of the Messianic Secret takes place at the moment of Jesus' death when the Centurion, who stands in the place of all those who would come to believe in Jesus, declares that Jesus is truly Son of God.

The Gospel According to Matthew

Matthew's narrative adheres closely to Mark. There are no other additional "words of Jesus."

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke's version of the Good News is preeminently the Gospel of Jesus' Compassion, a theme which comes to the fore throughout Luke's passion narrative. Luke is one who tells of Jesus' words of compassion to the women of Jerusalem on the way to Golgotha. (Lk 23:26-32). He omits words of abandonment, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," but substitutes other words that reveal the compassion of Jesus: He prays for those putting him to death: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." (Lk 23:34) He says to the repentant thief, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." (Lk 23:43)

Mark's description of the moment of Jesus' death was: "Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last." Luke, as is his custom, softens the narrative. The anguished cry of agony becomes a prayer: "Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!' and having said this, he breathed his last." (Lk 23:46)

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Seven Last Words *continued from page 10*

The Gospel According to John

The Fourth Gospel stands apart from the *Synoptic* Gospels in a number of ways. The most striking difference is way the glory of the Risen Christ radiates throughout John's account of the public ministry. The same holds true in John's telling of the passion narrative. Jesus remains in total control of events. In the Garden, the guards fall backward when he says "I am." He is arrested only because he allows it. The words of Jesus' abandonment recorded in Mark and Matthew appear nowhere in John. The three 'words of Jesus' recounted in the Fourth Gospel are consistent with the viewpoint that Jesus was the principle actor, in control of events rather than a passive victim: "Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Dear woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home." (Jn 19:25-27)

Scripture scholars have struggled with this passage more than any of the other "Last Words." In the synoptic Gospels, the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee are relegated to "looking on from afar," and come forward only after the death of Jesus. Four women are named, but Mary, the mother of Jesus, is not one of them. In the synoptic Gospels, the disciples are nowhere to be seen at the crucifixion. Why does John include this dialogue found nowhere in any of the other three Gospels? One suspects what the Evangelist sees is an important symbolism in the event, but what is it? The Mother of Jesus appears in the Fourth Gospel just twice, at Cana, and at the foot of the cross. She is never referred to as *Mary* but simply as the *Mother of Jesus*. Bultmann and others have suggested that the *Mother of Jesus* stands in the place of the Jewish Christian community, the mother Church, that at the time the Gospels were written had fallen on hard times. Jesus commits her to the care of the disciple whom he loved. The words of Jesus become a kind of coda to the Last Will and Testament of Jesus contained in John 13-17, where Jesus prays that all might be one."

The next of the Johannine last words, "I thirst" reprises and closes a recurring theme of the Fourth Gospel. Jesus had asked the women at the well: "Will you give me a drink?... If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.... Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

At the feast of Tabernacles Jesus cried out: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet

been glorified.

The final "Last Word" lets us know that Jesus remains in charge and chose the moment of his death. "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and handed over the Spirit." He did not simply die or "ex-spire." He handed over the Spirit. In John, the "Tradition" is not a body of teaching handed down from Jesus to the Apostles. The Tradition is the Spirit who will lead them in the way of all truth.

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cases, it seems that the sense of being almost "biologically" Catholic is what has kept these women from leaving the Church altogether when faced with its hypocrisies; some left in exasperation and returned out of their deep sense of being inexorably Catholic. The Church's exclusion of gays and lesbians is also an issue for some of these young women. They struggle with what it means to love other women and love Catholicism at the same time.

The stories in *From the Pews in the Back* stirred within me a range of emotions, as they poignantly captured the sense of humor, sadness, loss, hope and wonder that being Catholic powerfully elicits. Not only do I recommend this book to other young Catholic women who wish to peer a little deeper into themselves, I also recommend it to older Catholics who might be mourning the loss of young Catholic women from their own religious homes. In fact, I recommend that members of these cohorts read and discuss *From the Pews in the Back* together.

Of course, the book exercises some of its own exclusions, as every book does; its contributors are well-educated women in the U.S., who, with the exception of one, were raised Roman Catholic. The voices of young women of other classes and educational backgrounds need also to be heard. Additionally, narratives by young women who choose to convert to Catholicism would add an intriguing dimension to the conversation about Catholic identity. Finally, race is not an aspect that is privileged in most of the authors' negotiations of identity, with two exceptions; more explicit attention to the role of race in informing Catholic identity would be helpful.

Yet this fine book opens the door for these other voices to be heard and may be used effectively as a platform from which to begin much needed inter-generational conversations among Catholics in many places.

Patricia A. Way is a Ph.D. candidate in the Religion Department at Temple University. She is currently working on a dissertation which addresses the early globalization resistance work of transnational feminist networks in the 1970's and 80's and the ways in which they drew upon religious and secular idioms.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

By Judith A. Heffernan

This is the Lenten cycle in which we hear the readings from Luke about the temptation in the desert, the transfiguration, the parable of the fig tree, the prodigal son/ the waiting father and the woman brought to Jesus (with answers for the judgment!).

As I was preparing this reflection, I learned of Dr. Mary Daly's death, and I thought of the weekend so long ago when I met Mary Daly and proclaimed the words from the Transfiguration: It is good for us to be here! In the Spring of 1973, while we were Master of Divinity students at a Catholic seminary, I went to Chicago for the opening of the Ecumenical Women's Center with Mary Lynch (Mary Lynch was a member of SEPAWOC before we had a name, and she was also the questioning woman who began the National WOC movement!). Mary Daly was the keynote speaker. She was quite a mind-opener for me, a young Philadelphia Catholic woman, albeit one who felt the call to ordination! I didn't exactly get Mary Daly that day, but I grew into a grateful understanding.

The closing ceremony of that weekend was an ecumenical liturgy celebrated by women ministers. I was transformed that day—there was no going back! I knew in every inch of my being that this was real and true and where the Catholic tradition was meant to be.

Now thirty-seven years later as I write this on Martin Luther King's birthday, I think of his proclamation that the church should be the head light, not the tail light, and I mourn that for women's pastoral ministry. The Roman church *has* been the tail light.

But another Lent comes; we celebrate that change is possible and we draw strength from Mary Daly's work and words... "the women's question is profoundly theological... there are those who think I have gone overboard, and this is correct, probably beyond their wildest imagination... worship is swirling in energy." Robin Morgan said that Mary Daly sometimes gave even her most loving friends indigestion, but it was worth it!... and Rose Berger said that Mary believed that as long as you swim, you might as well swim in the deep end! Mary Daly advised that we reverse the reversals and believed that we get courage by courageous acts... we guard against stagnation by continuing to move.

This Holy Thursday outside the Basilica in Philadelphia please join us in the deep end. Reverse the reversals, swirl in energy, continue to move and help bring the light, as we pray, sing and witness for women's ordination. Please come this year remembering Mary Daly — and sing out loudly for our beloved Karen Lenz. It is good for us to be there.

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

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