
HISTORY OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

NEWS AND NOTES

Volume 6, Number 1 February 1993

CONFERENCE

The conference begins its sixth year with this issue of News and Notes. Its purpose, to facilitate networking among those interested in the history of women religious, is global in scope. The predominance of members from Canada and the United States has meant that both the triennial conferences and the newsletter have featured research relating to religious congregations in the United States and Canada. Subscriptions to the newsletter now number nearly 500. A note on subscription trends: the IHM congregation from Monroe, Michigan, has the largest number of subscribers, 15. This is very much in keeping with the grassroots approach being taken by that congregation to the researching and writing of its history. Newsletter content depends on subscribers' communications! Please be sure to let us know what you are doing by way of current research, programs, and publications when you renew your subscription or by letter between times.

PUBLICATIONS

Giancarlo Rocca's *DONNE RELIGIOSE: Contributo a una storia della condizione femminile in Italia nei secoli XIX-XX*, Edizioni Paoline, 1992, places the development of women's religious congregations within the context of the women's movement. Ordering of the 400-page volume, Lire 40.000, is through the Dizionario degli

istituti di perfezione, via Domenico Fontana, 12-00185, Rome, Italy.

Another recent publication on feminism and religion in Italy, for an earlier period and with more tangential implications for the history of religious life, is Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum's *BLACK MADONNAS: Feminism, Religion, and Politics in Italy*, Northeastern University Press, 1992. Ordering is from the Press, 360 Huntington Avenue, 272HN, Boston, MA, 02115. Birnbaum, an Affiliated Scholar at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at Stanford University, is the author of *LIBERAZIONE DELLA DONNA: FEMINISM IN ITALY*, winner of the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.

The Sisters of Mercy in Kentucky are the focus of Mary Prisca Pfeffer, RSM, *IN LOVE AND MERCY, A History of the Sisters of Mercy*, Louisville, Kentucky, 1869-1989, privately printed, 1992. Ordering is from Sisters of Mercy of Louisville, Ky., Inc., 1176 East Broadway, Louisville, KY 40204. The 630-page account sells for \$28 incl. shipping and handling.

Margaret Rose O'Neill, CSJP, has given us in *THE LIFE OF MOTHER CLARE, Out From the Shadow of the Upas Tree* (1992), a lively, well researched biography of Margaret Anna Cusack, nineteenth century promoter of women's rights, advocate for the poor and disenfranchised of all faiths, pioneer in the struggle for social justice, and founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. Ordering is from the author, Box 1763, Bellevue, WA 98009.

Linda Sharman, *A MEASURE OF LEAVEN: THE DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPOKANE* (1991), is a 26-page photo essay, indexed, on the history of the Dominican women who came from Speyer, Germany in 1925 to Montana. Ordering is from the Dominican Sisters of Spokane, 3102 West Fort Wright Drive, Spokane, WA 99204.

MOTHER CABRINI, "ITALIAN IMMIGRANT OF THE CENTURY" (1992), Mary Louise Sullivan, MSC, the first well-documented account of Mother Cabrini and her work among Italian immigrants in the U.S. from 1889 to 1917, is available from the Center for Migration Studies, 209 Flagg Place, Staten Island, NY 10304.

Maria M. Lannon, *RESPONSE TO LOVE: THE STORY OF MOTHER MARY ELIZABETH LANGE, OSP* (1992) recounts the life of the founder of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first religious order of Black women to be founded in the U.S. Ordering is from the Josephite Pastoral Center, 1200 Varnum St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017.

SISTERS OF MERCY SPIRITUALITY IN AMERICA, ed. by Kathleen Healy, RSM, 1843-1900, (Paulist Press, 1992), is now off the press (see HWR News and Notes, June, 1992).

Susan Carol Peterson and Courtney Ann Vaughn-Roberson, *WOMEN WITH VISION; THE PRESENTATION SISTERS OF SOUTH DAKOTA, 1880-1895*, University of Illinois, 1988, document the pioneer work of another of the handful of women's congregations which put down roots in South Dakota in the nineteenth century.

Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ, "Women Religious in the Americas: 1492-1992," *SISTERS TODAY* 64:6 (Nov. 1992), 431-441, draws some broad comparisons between the evolution of religious life for women in North and South America.

Miriam Ukeritis, CSJ, and David Nygren, CM, have completed a comprehensive study, entitled the "Future of Religious Orders in the United States" (FORUS). The first such study to investigate the opinions, beliefs, attitudes and practices of both men and women who belong to religious congregations, it is available in a media kit version, from Sheila King Public Relations, Inc., 20 West Hubbard 3W, Chicago, IL 60610.

ARCHIVES

Sally A. Witt, CSJ, and Anthony P. Joseph, Jr., have compiled a bibliography of references on communities of men and women in the Pittsburgh, PA, diocese, entitled "A Beginning Reference on Religious Communities in the Diocese of Pittsburgh." Available for \$3.00 as a fall, 1992 Occasional Paper from the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, 614 Hesburgh Library, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556.

Barbara Miles, archivist for the North American Sector of the Medical Missionary Sisters, announces completion of a published guide to the Medical Mission Sisters Archives, Sector North America. Sub-titled "A Testimony to the Historical Influence of the Feminine," the guide is available from Miles at 8400 Pine Road, Philadelphia, PA 19111.

TALKS AND SEMINARS

Gerda Lerner, Professor Emerita of History, University of Wisconsin, Madison, will give a lecture entitled "Women's Creativity Across the Centuries: From Hildegard of Bingen to Emily Dickinson," at Occidental College, Los Angeles, February 18, 1993.

Mary Oates, CSJ, opened the 1992 lecture series co-sponsored by the Cambridge Center and *The Pilot* (Boston) with a talk, "The Evolution of Catholic Giving in America," based on the study she has been doing on Catholic philanthropy in the U.S. Results of her research, supported by a grant from the Lilly Foundation, indicate among other major findings, that "By the 1850s women religious were undoubtedly the most distinctive and visible feature of the Church's charity system, and indeed, represented an original development in American religious philanthropy."

Major presentations given at the conference, "Elizabeth Seton in Dialogue with Her Times and Ours" (October, Bergamo Center, Dayton Ohio; November, Xavier Center, Convent Station, New Jersey), will appear in the Fall, 1993 issue of *VINCENTIAN HERITAGE*, a publication of the Vincentian Studies Institute. The two sessions of the conference, sponsored by the 11 congregations which form the Elizabeth Seton Federation, drew over 500 religious and lay participants. For further information on the published papers, contact Regina Bechtle, SC, 6301 Riverdale Ave., Bronx, NY 10471.

The seventh summer seminar on Carmelite spirituality will convene at StMary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana,

June 18-27, 1993. For more information on the 1993 seminar, which will explore the Carmelite Tradition of Prayer, contact the Center for Spirituality at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN 46556-5027.

P. Renee Baernstein, Harvard University, presented a paper, "The Fortunes of the Female Apostolate: New Orders for Women in Sixteenth-Century Italy," at the annual meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association, Dec. 28-30, in Washington, D.C. Several papers on parish history given at the same conference by Mary Elizabeth Brown, Kutztown University ("Our Lady of Pompeii, New York, 1892-1992"), Dorothy Ann Blatnica, VSC, Ursuline College, Ohio ("Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Cleveland, Ohio, 1922-1961"), and Sandra Y. Mize, University of Dayton ("Little Flower, South Bend, Indiana, 1937-1987") contained significant allusions to women's religious congregations.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Ann Harrington, BVM, Associate Professor of History at Loyola University Chicago, is doing research on the work of women religious in Japan before World War II. If anyone has any information about sources she might tap, please contact her at Loyola, 6525 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60626. Phone number (312) 508-8486; FAX (312) 508-8492.

Sue Schrems continues work on her dissertation at the University of Oklahoma. The study, "Lady Black Robes: Establishment of Indian Mission Schools in Montana, 1860-1900," focuses particularly on the Sisters of Providence and the Ursulines.

Debra Campbell is concentrating during a sabbatical year on the centennial history of the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, first Catholic women's college to award the baccalaureate degree.

MISCELLANY

Religious life continues to evolve: the Sisters of the Living Word gathered at their Center in Arlington Heights, Illinois, last August to celebrate their official recognition by the Roman Catholic Church as a new religious congregation of diocesan right. The older congregation from which they separated in 1975, the Sisters of Christian Charity, were on hand to wish them well, a sure sign of sisterly love and unity. Congratulations to this newest member of the family of vowed religious in the Roman Catholic tradition.

BOOK REVIEW

FRONTIER FAITHS: CHURCH, TEMPLE AND SYNAGOGUE IN LOS ANGELES, 1846-1888, by Michael E. Engh, SJ, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992). 352 pp. \$32.50

Michael Engh's *Frontier Faiths* sets an important pattern for writers of religious history and also for HWR writers, for it examines religious history of a place in its complete setting. Many works isolate one denomination (or religious order) or at best treat all Protestants with no reference to movements within Catholicism or vice versa. This work not only refers to Catholic, Protestant and Jewish developments but even includes something on Chinese religion, as well as Christian efforts to evangelize the Chinese in Los Angeles. One of Engh's important themes is that religious people in early Los Angeles worked together, but when the town became a city after the boom of the eighties, religious cooperation turned into competition.

Until the eighties, Los Angeles was a cow town -- with 1600 inhabitants in 1860, 5700 in 1870, 11,000 in 1880, but 50,000 in 1890. The dramatic increase has continued until now. In the beginning most of the people were Hispanic Catholics, Mexicans conquered by the US invasion of 1846. In the next decade, Jews, Chinese, and African-American members arrived, joining a population which had Asian and African-American members from the beginning in 1781.

Engh consulted many archives to round out the story of the different denominations. He also obtained interesting illustrations for the book, which help make some of his points. Besides chronicling the histories of different dominations, Engh has sections on the fate of Hispanic Catholics and the Daughters of Charity, the only sisters in town until the 1880s.

The first bishop of Monterey and Los Angeles, Thaddeus Amat, CM, a native of Catalonia, Spain, brought the Daughters of Charity to Los Angeles in 1856. Led by the intrepid Sister Scholastica Logsdon, the six sisters, three from Emmitsburg and three from Spain, set up a combined boarding school and orphanage and the first hospital in town, predecessor of today's St. Vincent's. Engh points out that the sisters, more numerous than the priests, had more contact with the populace because of their ministries in health care and education both in Spanish and English. (Although not mentioned in the book, Amat brought the Immaculate Heart Sisters from Catalonia in 1871 to the extreme northern part of the diocese. They did not come to Los Angeles until 1886.)

Engh remarks that Amat and most American bishops opposed the public schools. However, Archbishop Joseph S. Alemany of San Francisco urged the three orders of sisters there to join the public system, which they all refused to do. Alemany was also a Catalan.

A sad chapter in the book is the story of Hispanic Catholics in the diocese. Although Amat was of Spanish birth, he had spent most of his adult life in the U.S., most recently in anti-Catholic Philadelphia. He followed the agenda of the American bishops in regard to uniformity of customs throughout the country. The Angelenos were shocked when Amat criticized the beloved Mexican priests and brought in priests from Spain and Ireland, but not Mexico. Amat also suppressed many of the people's devotional customs, developed over the years when priests were few.

This was especially hard at a time when the Mexicans were becoming strangers in their own land, their numbers overcome by immigrants from the Midwest and other parts of the U.S. They became strangers in their own church, too, at the very time when religion should have been a comfort to them. Bishop Francis Mora became coadjutor to Amat in 1871. Another Catalan, he was ordained in California in 1856. Engh doesn't tell much about him. Presumably, he carried on the same policies established by Amat. The diocese today has undergone a re-Hispanization and many old customs are quite alive.

Engh believes, along with many other historians, that the nineteenth century bishops ghettoized Catholics. Perhaps they are reading back into history the present-day American Catholic church, rather than the nineteenth century church of the immigrant and the poor. Bishops then were looking for survival in a hostile setting of anti-Catholicism.

I thought his book excellent. Engh situated religious history in its social and cultural setting, mentioning the religious activities of women of other denominations. Many books are written as if the subject religious order existed in some kind of vacuum. He does

not exclude any ethnic group, but writes sympathetically about them. As a former resident of Los Angeles, I especially enjoyed this book, and as a historian, I hope it sets the pattern for many future books.

Catherine Ann Curry, PBVM
San Francisco

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

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