
History Of Women Religious

News and Notes

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CONFERENCE JUNE 21-24, 1998

Programs including registration forms were mailed to News and Notes subscribers in April. Highlights for the fourth triennial gathering include 30 simultaneous sessions distributed over the Sunday through Wednesday morning program; a keynote address Sunday afternoon on "The Creation of Gender Identity Among American Women Religious," by Paula Kane; and a plenary session Monday to help determine future directions for the History of Women Religious Conference. The award banquet Monday evening continues the HWR tradition of recognizing distinguished contributors to the history of women religious since the last triennial gathering. Several very creative after-dinner choices carry forward another tradition of providing some light-hearted moments for participants.

Program planners have taken advantage of the location at Loyola University, Chicago, to provide for a visit to the Women and Leadership Archives of the Ann Ida Gannon Center and a tour of the original Mundelein College building—an outstanding example of Art Deco design—on Tuesday evening, after which participants are invited to generate their own topics of discussion for magnet sessions. Suggestions for magnet groups will be accepted at Registration, but sending in suggestions along with your registration form would ensure maximum publicity.

See you in Chicago for what promises to be a very stimulating opportunity to deepen and extend the networking goals of the HWR Conference.



PUBLICATIONS

Barbara Misner, SMHC, The Living Love of Christ Among Us (privately printed for the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, 1998), deals with the origins of her congregation in Switzerland (1845-1888) in what is volume I of a series to encompass additional volumes on developments 1888-1938, and 1938-1990. Volumes II and III are planned to complete the account. The founding era has extraordinary interest, having resulted in expansion of this group of women devoted to a wide variety of works including vocational schools, orphanages, almshouses and hospitals, boarding homes for apprentices and children working in factories, detention homes and prison work. By the time of the death of founder Mother Theresa (Maria Theresia) Scherer in 1888, motherhouses in Switzerland, Bohemia, Upper Austria, Slavonia, Styria, and Moravia had a total of 1,658 sisters living in 435 local communities. Scholars will appreciate the footnoting of extensive archival sources, bibliography, and index. Order from author at 511 Cottage St., Merrill, WI 54452.

The Encyclopedia of American Catholic History, ed. Michael Glazier and Thomas J. Shelley (A Michael Glazier Book published by The Liturgical Press, Collegetown, MN, 1997) includes contributions by some 40 members of the History of Women Religious, on a wide range of topics. Particularly valuable for those interested in the history of women religious are the longer entries on women religious in America and on families of religious such as the Daughters and Sisters of Charity, Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of St. Joseph, and the Religious of Jesus and Mary; as well as shorter entries on women founders and on individual congregations. The reference value of the 1,567-page work is further enhanced by essays on monasticism, on the spirituality of Ameri-

can Catholics; on development of the church by period and by each state of the union; on the expression of Catholicity characteristic of such immigrant groups as the Irish, German, Polish, Italian, Slovenian, Czech, Hungarian, Lithuanian, and French-Canadian; and on Native American, African American, and Hispanic experience with Catholicism.

Emmanuel College, Boston, celebrated its 75th anniversary with publication of collected essays by one of its distinguished faculty, Sister of Notre Dame de Namur Marie Augusta Neal, past recipient of the History of Women Religious Distinguished Historian Award. The collection, entitled Themes of a Lifetime, includes "Social Encyclicals: Role of Women"; "Social Justice and the Right to Use Power"; "Recent Development in Catholic Thinking on Work and the Economy"; and "The Church, Women and Society."

Angels of Mercy: An Eyewitness Account of Civil War and Yellow Fever, edited and annotated by Mary Paulinus Oakes, RSM (Cathedral Foundation Press, Baltimore, 1998) brings into print the journal of Sister of Mercy Ignatius Sumner, recounting her experience of the Civil War and its aftermath, 1860-1882. (Note: the June Conference features an imaginatively staged "interview" with Sister Ignatius, drawing on her journal.) Order from Sister Emmanuel Harper, 103 McAuley Drive, Vicksburg, MS 39180, checks for \$16.00 payable to Sisters of Mercy).

Mary Serbacki, OSF, et al., eds., Called by God's Goodness: A History of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity in the Twentieth Century (privately printed for the Sisters of St. Francis, 1998), presents the twentieth-century story of the "Daughters of Mother Magdalen" through a series of essays researched and written by members and friends of the congregation. Orders may be placed (\$23.00 plus shipping and handling) to the Sisters of St. Francis archives, 4421 Lower River Rd, Stella Niagara, NY 14144.

CMI Graduates and Faculty Remember Nurse-Midwifery in Santa Fe, New Mexico is a collection of accounts regarding lay and religious graduates of

the Catholic Maternity Institute, operated by the Medical Mission Sisters from 1944 to 1969. One of only four such schools in the U.S., it was the only one affiliated with a university. Graduates of the school worked as nurse midwives in various parts of the world, for example, Paula D'Errico, MMS, worked in Ghana after her graduation; Sheila McGinnis, MMS, in Vietnam. A limited numbers of books are available, as well as two videos of interviews (with the founding staff, and with graduates; archival photographs accompany the second video), from Stephanie Morris, Medical Mission Sisters Archives, 8400 Pine Rd, Philadelphia, PA 19111.

Mary Olga McKenna, SC, Charity Alive: the Sisters of Charity, Halifax, 1950-1980 (University Press of America, Lanham, MD, 1998), is the first full-fledged work in English-speaking Canada to address the institutional and individual strategies adopted by a women's congregation in response to Vatican II's challenge to return to Gospel values and the founding charism.

Ursula Clarke, OSU, has available a small number of copies of The Ursulines of Cork: 1771-1996 (\$23, plus \$8 shipping and handling: send orders to the author at Ursuline Convent, Blackrock, Cork, Ireland). U.S. connections of the order whose foundations included New York City 1812-1815; Charleston, South Carolina in 1834; and later Cincinnati and Columbus, Georgia, are well covered in the illustrated text.

Colleen Kelly, A Journey Through Light and Shadow: Sisters of Mercy Singleton 1875-1995 (privately printed for the Sisters of Mercy, Newcastle, 1997) traces the many-branched Mercy family stemming from Ennis, Ireland, in 1875. The original Australian foundation in Singleton, Maitland diocese, gave rise to independent foundations in New Zealand as well as to numerous branch houses in Australia.

Marie T. Kelly, The Federation Story (privately printed for the Australia-New Zealand Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, 1997), is a detailed account of the formation of the federation in 1968 encompassing five independent, initially diocesan institutes of Josephite Sisters tracing their origin to a mission

established at Perthville from Adelaide in 1872. Inclusion of letters and other primary sources enhance the book's value as a case study of unification in post-war Australia.

The development of women's religious communities in Norway is the subject of Knut Aukrust and Else-Britt Nilsen's Bak klosterets port (Behind Cloister Walls): Nonner I Norge forteller (Solum Forlag, Oslo, 1996). The authors, both of whom are sociologists of religion at Oslo University, used interviews with the multinational members (from Norway, the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Denmark) of seven congregations as a means of examining the meaning of religious vocation in the context of the historical and contemporary Scandinavian milieu. Nilsen, an HWR News and Notes subscriber and a Dominican, also counts among her publications, "Situation de la vie religieuse féminine dans la diaspora des pays nordiques," Vie consacrée, 1996, pp.389-392; and "Comment un couvent devient norvégien: Sankta Katarinahjemmet," Mémoire Dominicaine: Histoire, Documents, Vie dominicaine, Fondations et missions: Les initiatives missionnaires dominicaines des frères et des soeurs de langue française (6: Spring, 1955). We welcome these and future contributions to the history of women religious in northern Europe, and hope translation of the recent Norwegian work will make it more accessible to a broader reading public.

Sister Margherita Marchione, Yours is a Precious Witness: Memoirs of Jews and Catholics in Wartime Italy (Paulist Press, 1997), makes extensive use of primary sources in this masterful effort to tell the story of Jews who sought and found help from Catholics during the Holocaust. Many took shelter within the walls of convents for which Pope Pius XII suspended cloister regulations so Jews might be rescued.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Anne McLay of the Sisters of Mercy in Brisbane, Australia, is facilitating a "congregational conversation" regarding her congregation's past, present, and future. 1997 was spent identifying and exploring contemporary questions which became collected under the themes of power, passion, and place. This

year conversation is focusing on place—Celtic heritage, family origins, and aboriginal connections with Mercy places.

Mary David Fraine, OSC, has a huge project underway: preparing a history of the Poor Clare Order in the U.S. Her research encompasses four branches of the Order, begun 125 years ago in this country, including 50 distinctive foundations. Sister Mary David took up the task as archivist for the Holy Name Federation of Poor Clare Nuns, and plans to follow up an initial stage of written request for basic data with a series of archival visits beginning this spring. A spiral-bound volume entitled Clarion Call was her contribution to the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Clare—and eloquent testimony to the magnitude of the task facing any historian seeking to interpret this long and rich record. It places brief accounts of Poor Clare foundations around the world in the context of a general introduction and brief statistical information.

Patricia Jean Manion, SL, is researching the work of the Sisters of Loretto in China from 1923 to 1951. She recently visited Hankow and Hanyang in Wuhan, Hubei Province, where the sisters, worked with the Irish Columban priests and sisters, and is currently into the writing stage of the project.

Sally Witt, CSJ, is working on the history of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Watertown, New York, from the time of the sisters' arrival in 1880 in the Ogdenburg diocese to the contemporary period. She would welcome information pertinent to her research, at 1425 Washington St., Watertown, NY 13601.

Carol L. Cameron is a religious geographer engaged in research for a book on the historical geography of women religious in the U.S., that is, chronicling the history of the various congregations from a spatial perspective. Questions and information will reach her at 869 N. Sierra St., Reno, NV 89503. Telephone/FAX is (702) 322-0216.

Grace Donovan, SUSC, is on a two-year assignment as general archivist for her congregation in Rome, examining the Holy Union sisters holdings, especially those acquired since Vatican II, in the light of their meaning as we approach the new millennium.

Donna Marie Kessler, FSCC, met the archivist for the diocese of Hildersheim while on an historical pilgrimage visiting her congregation's European roots. The archivist's dissertation was on the Kulturkampf. He is very interested in communities that emigrated to the U.S. in the wake of the Kulturkampf; please contact Kessler at Silver Lake College, 2406 S. Alverno Rd, Manitowoc, WI 54220 if you have pertinent information or questions you would like to share with Hildersheim.

NOTICES

The Coordinating Council for Women in History has selected Frances L. Buss to receive the first \$10,000 CCWH-Prelinger Scholarship Award, to complete an oral history project focusing on Mary Robinson, sharecropper and activist in rural Alabama. Competition for the 1999 scholarship, intended for scholars whose careers have not followed the usual route of graduate degree work leading toward a tenured faculty position, opens in October, 1998. For more information, contact Prof. Marguerite Renner, CCWH Executive Director, 1500 N. Verdugo Rd, Glendale College, Glendale, CA 91208.

The CCWH and the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians have announced the eighth annual competition for two \$500 graduate student awards to assist in the completion of dissertation work. For more information on the award, deadline September 15, 1998, contact Prof. Gina Hames, CCWH Awards Committee Chair, History Dept., Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA 98447.

The Cushwa Center at the University of Notre Dame, with support from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., announces a grant competition for scholars with doctoral dissertations in progress relating to the historical experiences and contributions of Catholic women, both lay and religious, in twentieth-century America. Dissertation fellowships carry a stipend of \$15,000. Deadline is February 1, 1999. For more information write Cushwa Center, 1135 Flanner Hall, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556. E-mail is <cushwa.1@nd.edu>

The Episcopal Women's History Project has made three awards for 1998: the Sugeno Research Award

for \$1,000, to Joan Marie Johnson of Cincinnati, Ohio, for research exploring the role of black and white Episcopal women in the South Carolina Commission on Interracial Cooperation, 1919-1950; and two Travel/Research Grants of \$500 each, to Catherine Faver and Alda Marsh Morgan, for work on Episcopal women and social activism (grant to defray costs of oral interviews); and on the history of St. Margaret's House, a deaconess and women's training school at Berkeley, 1909-1966. Grants can focus on individual women or groups, or female initiated or organized activities in the Episcopal Church in the U.S. and its possessions and territories as well as overseas missionary activity. Applications for 1999 awards are due December 1, 1998. For more information, contact Dr. Barbara Brandon Schorrenberg, Grants Committee, 3824 11th Ave. S., Birmingham, AL 35222.

The Hooley-Bundschu Library at Avila College, Kansas City, Missouri, has received from George Stewart a donation of books and papers collected in the course of research for Marvels of Charity: History of American Sisters and Nuns (Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1995). The collection will become part of the Women Religious Special Collection, acquisitions for which include books on the histories of sisters' congregations, studies on religious life, biographies and autobiographies of founders, prescriptive literature for women religious, memoirs, journals and devotional literature of American sisters and nuns.

Another extensive private collection, that of Richard K. Langlely (11 Lupine Rd, Natick, MA 01760; telephone 508-655-1566) is being made available to persons in the Greater Boston area who may be engaged in research on women religious. The collection includes histories, biographies, vocational brochures, etc., many on French-Canadian congregations.

Religious Life Review comes out six times a year from Dublin. Formerly Supplement to Doctrine and Life, the RLF (1963—) provides a forum concentrating on topics and issues relating to religious life, from a fairly broad ecumenical perspective. For information on subscribing and contributing, write Dominican Publications, 42 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, Ireland.

The American Catholic Historical Association will hold its Spring, 1999 meeting jointly at Cabrini College and Villanova University March 18-20, 1999. Proposals for papers, and preferably full sessions, should be sent to Professor Margaret McGuinness, Religions Studies Department, Cabrini College, Radnor PA, 19087. The deadline for proposals is October 1, 1998.

BOOK REVIEW

SHARING THE BREAD IN SERVICE: SISTERS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT, 1891-1991 by Patricia Lynch, SBS (privately printed for Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1998; address for orders, P.O. Box 8502, Bensalem, Pennsylvania 19020-8502), 742 pp.

In February, 1891, less than two months after the massacre of 200 Sioux at Wounded Knee and five years before the Supreme Court handed down the Plessy vs Ferguson decision, Katharine Drexel formally founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, committing herself and her new Congregation to the special purpose of educating Native Americans and African Americans. In addition to their own consecration to the Eucharist, the Sisters were to procure "through Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, living temples for His Divinity among the Indian and Colored races." Thus at this tragic time in United States history when white supremacist values legitimated the system of racial segregation and intimidation, and when official government policy promulgated through the Dawes Act of 1887 undermined the religious, social and political identity of Native Americans, Katharine Drexel and her Sisters began a century-long commitment that would provide the spiritual and temporal means to self-determination and would offer hope to the most oppressed peoples of the nation. In the founding, and through their history the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament became a powerful witness to the racial justice and a sign that contradicted prevailing racial values.

Patricia Lynch, SBS, captures this daring vision of Katharine Drexel in Sharing the Bread in Service: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1891-1991. Her

narrative organizes the history of the Congregation

into four periods beginning with the founding years, 1891-1913, continuing through the time of expansion, 1914-1937, then to the era of transition, 1937-1964, and finally, from the close of Vatican II to the present. In each of these time frames she emphasizes the myriad ways the Sisters have actualized their missionary objective to enable Native Americans and African Americans to control their own destinies and to become self-determining. From the earliest years the Sisters recognized that this autonomy could be achieved only through the development of lay leadership. Lynch stresses this process of community building as she recounts the work of the Sisters stretching from the earliest foundations of the Pueblo peoples of New Mexico to the current ministries with the Haitian peoples of South Florida.

During the founding era, the SBS established missions among the Pueblo and Navajo of the Southwest and Winnebago in Nebraska; they also began urban ministries among African Americans in the North and in Atlanta. They conducted their missions with the Natives through boarding schools located on their reservations. Lynch addresses head-on the contemporary criticism of Indian boarding schools by pointing out that the Sisters viewed their boarding schools both as a means to help the natives preserve their cultures and to offer the education that would enable them to defend themselves against the consequences of the Dawes Act. The evidence supports her argument. Navajos in particular refused to send their children to the government boarding schools yet happily enrolled them with the Sisters. Unlike the government schools which attempted to transform Navajos into Yankees, the Indians recognized that the Sisters respected their values and traditions.

The flexibility apparent in the earliest missions shaped the work the Congregation accepted from 1914 to 1937 when it continued its expansion in the urban North and rural South, concentrating its resources in Louisiana. Simultaneously, the SBS established parish schools in New Orleans, founded Xavier University in 1925, and systematically provided funding to establish 60 missionary schools located in the most isolated corners of the state whose students were the children of sharecroppers and tenant farmers. The SBS built and maintained 22 of these rural schools, trained the lay teachers, contributed to their salaries, provided their teacher

education and supervised their classrooms. Lynch highlights the SBS courage in undertaking this daunting project. Although driven by missionary zeal, it also empowered the young teachers to assume leadership and foreshadowed the partnerships that would be formed by the Sisters and their former students during the Civil Rights era.

In recounting the years from the 1950s to the present, Lynch details the influence of Sister Formation, Vatican II, and Renewal on the SBS, a discussion that generally echoes the experience of most communities; the distinctive feature of the SBS reality in these years is the transforming impact of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Racial oppression had challenged Katharine Drexel to educate African Americans, which in effect meant participating in dual school systems throughout the South; the Brown decision required integration.

Lynch describes the complex process through which the SBS adapted to this new context. They responded with joy to the goals of the Black Power movement; they demonstrated courage in challenging the recalcitrance of segregationists who fought proposals to end the dual school systems; and they assumed leadership, particularly within Louisiana dioceses, by developing bold policies and concrete plans to foster integration. The Congregation did lose schools to integration, but experienced new challenges as it confronted the ironic consequences of the post-Brown years. Although legal and political change had seemingly occurred, too many of the people whom the Sisters served still lived with continuing economic and social inequality. In the North, these inequalities also existed but arose from the grim poverty caused by white flight, urban renewal, and post-industrial shifts. Lynch chronicles the SBS response to these barriers, highlighting the extensive ways the Sisters refocused Katharine Drexel's vision and provided new formulations based on their new understandings of ministry, yet firmly rooted the Congregation's tradition of evangelization and community building. As narrated by Lynch, the history of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament is the story of courageous women whose passion for justice links their past with the future.

Lynch bases her history on prodigious archival research; her endnotes comprise 85 pages of the text. In addition to providing a map of the superb archival resources of the Congregation, the notes offer invaluable leads for research in African American Catholic history. The index is comprehensive and will be supplemented by an errata to correct a computer glitch. Should a second printing become financially feasible, the publisher might want to replace the one-volume hardcover with a two-volume paper edition.

Mary Hayes
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NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

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