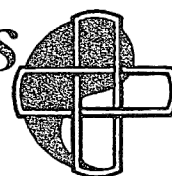


History of Women Religious

News and Notes



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FEBRUARY 2004

HWR Network News

Carol Coburn, Program Chair, and Judith Sutera, OSB, Local Arrangements Chair, are continuing to plan for the upcoming Sixth Triennial Conference on the History of Women Religious at the Atchison Heritage Center, Atchison, Kansas, June 27-30, 2004. Hosted by the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica, the conference will include many interesting and exciting sessions. Participants are expected from seven countries and will present research about the lives and activities of women religious on four continents. There will be a book exhibit sponsored by the Benedictine College Bookstore. If you need table space for privately published books or want the bookstore to acquire copies of your published books for the exhibit, contact Judith Sutera (jsutera@mountosb.org) and provide the author, title, publisher and year of publication. The HWR program with registration and other information will be mailed to *News and Notes* subscribers in late March. The conference Web site (<http://www.mountosb.org/hwr>) will continue to provide updated information about the program, travel, and accommodations. We expect this to be a very exciting conference in America's Heartland and hope you will make plans to attend!

Some conference highlights are the opening keynote address by Elizabeth Rapley, Professor of History at the University of Ottawa and author of *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (1990) and *A Social History of the Cloister: Daily Life in the Teaching Monasteries of the Old Regime* (2001). She will speak on "A Boundary Crossed: Apostolic Women in Early New France." An "early cut" for the film, *Sisters of Selma*, set to premier on National Public Television in March, 2005, will be screened by award-winning director, Jayasri Hart of Hart Productions, Los Angeles. The film features the activities of some of the women religious who participated in the Selma marches in 1965 and their lives and reflections forty years later. For more information about

the director, the film, and the participants, go to <http://home.earthlink.net/~sistersofselma>. The honors banquet keynote address will be given by Anne Butler, Professor Emerita of History at Utah State University. Author and co-author of many books about the American West, including *The Frontiers and Catholic Identities* (2001) and numerous articles and essays on women religious including Katherine Drexel, Blandina Segale, and the Daughters of Charity in Virginia City, she will speak on "There Are Exceptions to Every Rule": Adjusting the Boundaries—Catholic Sisters and the American West."

Please submit your nominations for the Outstanding Book Award for the book judged to have made an outstanding contribution to the history of women religious since the last conference (2000), and for the Outstanding Historian Award given from time to time to recognize individuals for lifetime contributions to research and publication pertaining to the history of women religious, to Elizabeth Kolmer, ASC, Awards Committee Chair, at 5914 Suson Place #1, St. Louis, MO 63139, or to kolmere@SLU.EDU. The deadline for nominations for awards is March 1, 2004. Nominations should include a description of the specific contribution the nominee has made to the understanding of women religious, and a brief vita of the nominee.

Publications

Christina Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church: Ireland 450-1150* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) argues for a kind of gender symmetry unique in medieval Europe as she examines the evolution of gender relationships from the initial period of Christianity through the golden age of Irish nunneries in the seventh and eighth centuries and the period of reform and decline.

Shelley Amiste Wolbrink, "Women in the Premonstratensian Order of Northwestern Germany, 1120-1250," *The Catholic Historical Review*, July,

2003, pp. 387-408, examines primary source materials from twenty-three monasteries to reveal the flourishing state of women's monasticism in this region and period.

Agnes Blannbekin, Viennese Beguine: Life and Revelations, trans. from the Latin by Ulrike Wiethaus (Library of Medieval Women, Rochester, New York: D.S. Brewer, 2002) is a welcome addition to readily accessible texts on medieval women mystics.

Marcel Bernos, *Femmes et gens d'Église dans la France classique XVII^e-XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2003) examines the formation of social attitudes affecting attitudes toward women and the complexities and tensions characteristic of the relationship between churchmen and women as of the classical epoch in France.

Suzanne H. Schrems, *Uncommon Women, Unmarked Trails: The Courageous Journey of Catholic Missionary Sisters in Frontier Montana* (Norman, Oklahoma: Horse Creek Publications, 2003) focuses on the work of Sisters of Providence and Ursulines in a missionary field dominated by accounts of Jesuit missions.

Elizabeth Mary Strub, SHCJ, *Yes, Lord, Always Yes: A Life of Cornelia Connelly, 1809-1879, Founder of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus* (San Diego: Casa Cornelia Publications, 2003), is a popularly written biography intended particularly for the English-speaking associates of the congregation. For more information, contact the Society at Via della Maglianella 379, 00166 Rome, Italy.

Religious Pioneers: Building Faith in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, ed. Dorothy Dawes, OP, a project of the Religious Community Archivists of Greater New Orleans, is scheduled for publication in March-April, 2003. An anthology of the lives of thirty-one religious women and men connected with the founding and development of the Catholic Church in New Orleans, the project was supported by a grant from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities and a gift from the Greater New Orleans Archivists. For more information, see the Web site <www.religiouspioneers.org>

A session entitled "Religious Women and the Church in the Nineteenth Century" at The American Catholic Historical Association Jan. 9-11, 2004, included

papers by Ann M. Harrington, "Mary Frances Clark and Her Sisters: Patriarchy and the Will of God in the Nineteenth Century"; Mary Roger Madden, SP, "Partners in Providence: Blessed Mother Theodore Guerin and the Church in Indiana, 1844-1856"; and Carmen Mangion, "The Strong Heart of a Man: Testing Clerical Authority in Nineteenth-Century England." HWR member Margaret Susan Thompson was a commentator.

Ilana DeBare, *Where Girls Come First: The Rise, Fall and Surprising Revival of Girls' Schools*, due off the press in early 2004 by Tarcher/Putnam Books, Penguin Group (USA) Inc., is a lively, well documented account of the subject with appendices listing girls' private schools in the United States and prominent alumnae of girls' schools.

Susan L. Poulson and Loretta P. Higgins, "Gender, Coeducation, and the Transformation of Catholic Identity in American Catholic Higher Education," *The American Catholic Historical Review*, July, 2003, pp. 489-510, build a case for regarding profound changes in gender norms in Catholic higher education as significant contributing factors in the loss of a distinctive Catholic culture.

The Crossing of Two Roads: Being Catholic and Native in the United States, eds. Marie Therese Archambault, Mark G. Thiel, and Christopher Vecsey (American Catholic Identities: A documentary History, Orbis Press, 2003), groups primary sources, many hitherto unpublished, into three sections: Spanish heritage; French heritage; and leadership, urban ministry, and inculturation. Vecsey's masterful general introduction provides a helpful context for a history that includes establishment of religious congregations by and for Indian women.

Suellen Hoy's collected, edited, and expanded essays on Catholic sisters in Chicago are due to be published later this year under the title of *Good Hearts: Catholic Sisters in Chicago's Past*, by the University of Illinois Press.

Debra Campbell, *Graceful Exits: Catholic Women and the Art of Departure* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004) explores themes of reversals, boundary crossings, diaspora, renaming, and recycling in the personal narratives of nine twentieth-century Catholic women writers who departed from

the church and its institutions (Catholic families, convents, or convent schools).

CORRECTION: Incorrect editors' names were given for *Mountain Sisters* in the October 2003 issue. Please see the book review section of this issue for the correct attribution.

Research in Progress

Eve Troutt Powell, Associate Professor of History at the University of Georgia and recipient of one of the prestigious MacArthur Fellowships for 2003, will be working in Cairo this summer on a biography of Josephine Bakhita (1869-1947), a Sudanese-born woman who became a Catholic nun in Italy where she had been transported as a slave. Bakhita was canonized in 2000.

Jonathan Zimmerman, director of the history of education program at New York University, is writing a book entitled "Educating the Globe: Teachers in the American Century, 1898-1998." It examines the work of Americans who went abroad to teach as missionaries, as volunteers in agencies such as the Peace Corps, and in government schools in American territories. He is especially interested in locating personal correspondence and testimony from missionary teachers. If you know of collections containing correspondence or other records from missionary teachers please contact Zimmerman at <jlzimmer@aol.com>

Tom Carr, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is studying the discourses superiors and abbesses gave their communities in seventeenth-century France. He is interested in learning of examples of such preaching in other countries or periods and in locating manuscript collections in France and Canada. His article, "Les Abbesses et la Parole au dix-septième siècle: les discours monastiques à la lumière des interdictions pauliniennes," *Rhetorica. A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 21 (2003), 1-23, deals with the issues involved. He may be contacted at <tcarr1@unlnotes.unl.edu>

Book Reviews

Witness to Integrity: The Crisis of the Immaculate Heart Community of California, by Anita M. Caspary (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003). Pp. 287.

Mountain Sisters: From Convent to Community in Appalachia, by Helen M. Lewis and Monica Appleby (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003). Pp. 299.

The authors of these accounts undertook an identical research task, namely, identifying and interpreting the causes and outcomes of the crisis over Vatican II-inspired renewal experienced by the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Los Angeles and the Home Mission (Glenmary) Sisters of America.

The similarities between the IHM and Glenmary stories are striking despite their having arrived at the fateful crossroad of renewal in the 1960s from very different directions. Founded in Spain in 1848 as a semi-cloistered order dedicated to catechetical work among the poor, the group had quickly added members, adapted its ministry to teaching in Spain's urban schools, and had sent its first mission abroad—to California—by 1871. By the time they proposed experimental changes in dress, horarium, and governance structures at their renewal chapters in the 1960s, the IHMs had functioned for the better part of a century as a congregation of pontifical right (autonomous from Spain since 1924); were sponsoring several institutions including Immaculate Heart College; and were a significant presence in parochial schools in the archdiocese of Los Angeles as well as in many other dioceses of western United States and Canada. Their membership stood at around 600, ranging in age from newly professed in their 20s to retired sisters in their 80s and 90s.

Glenmary, on the other hand, was a recently founded congregation still in its formative years, dating unofficially to 1941 and officially to 1952 when the group gained canonical recognition as a diocesan congregation, the Home Mission Sisters of America. The sisters, mostly in their 20s and 30s and numbering around 100 by the time of the Vatican II decree on renewal (*Perfectae caritatis*, 28 Oct. 1965), engaged in a variety of catechetical and social service ministries among the impoverished rural population of Appalachia.

These differences seemingly mattered little once the women took up the challenges of reaching internal consensus on renewal and external Church approval. Dissidence from within and intransigence from without drove each congregation to similar compromises

with a kind of tragic inexorability. The women's actions throughout were truly a "witness to integrity." Some 50 sisters who preferred the traditional IHM lifestyle to the modified habit, horarium, and changes in governance adopted by the renewal chapters continued as the canonically recognized IHM congregation; another 450 who wished to live by the renewal chapter decrees were dispensed from their vows and formed the non-canonical Immaculate Heart Community of California.

Glenmary likewise honored the preference of a few of their members for the traditional religious life they had learned from Dominican sisters responsible for their early novitiate formation, while some 50 members formed a non-canonical Federation of Communities in Service (FOCIS) after being dispensed from their vows. Behind the two sequences of events lay a tangled mass of motivations, intentions, persons and personalities, and emotions exposed with rare perceptiveness by Caspary, superior of the IHMs before and during enactment of the renewal decrees, and editors Lewis and Appleby, the latter a former Glenmary sister who became the first president of FOCIS.

Tragic elements in both stories should not blind us to the signs of hope reflected in the women's capacity for fidelity to the ideals of renewal, for forgiveness and reconciliation, and for creating new forms of community. Still, one cannot help but deplore and grieve over the ambiguous attitude toward the Vatican II call to renewal held by so many key Church officials on both sides of the Atlantic and their inability to trust women's spiritual vision.

A major strength and limitation of both volumes lies in methodology. Caspary's autobiographical approach and the near-exclusive use of interviews and personal papers of FOCIS members as sources by authors of the Glenmary account, lend a valuable personal authenticity to each story while leaving readers in the dark regarding the thinking of those women in each congregation who chose to remain in the canonical groups.

Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

Meet Katharine Drexel: Heiress and God's Servant of the Oppressed, by Mary van Balen Holt (Meet the Saints Series, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Charis Servant

Publications, 2002). Pp. 135.

In *Meet Katharine Drexel*, Mary van Balen Holt introduces the reader to Katharine Drexel and provides a look into the various aspects of her life that led to her becoming the foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and ultimately Saint Katharine.

Meet Katharine Drexel is, as its title implies, an introduction to the life of this recent American saint. Van Balen Holt examines Katharine Drexel's life from early childhood to her death in 1955, with a focus on key moments in Drexel's childhood such as her early religious formation, the death of her mother and later her father, and the close bond she had with her sisters, to show how she came to the religious life. The author also discusses the importance of particular friends, such as Father (later Bishop) James O'Connor who was Drexel's spiritual advisor. The author draws upon Drexel's own writings and personal documents to provide a more intimate look into her life and employs primary sources such as letters of Drexel's friends and family to show the depth of her faith and commitment to helping others.

Drexel, founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and champion of the missions to Native and African Americans in the American West and South, used her own wealth to fund her work. Van Balen Holt illustrates various stages of Drexel's life where she became increasingly dedicated not only to religious life, but to a mission that removed her from the comforts of her home in Philadelphia. Of particular interest is the author's exploration of Drexel's spirituality. Chapter Nine depicts Drexel as a contemplative and analyzes her relationship with the Blessed Sacrament, her views on "Poverty," "Joy and Happiness," and "Social Justice." Van Balen Holt ends her book with a selection of Drexel's prayers to complete this brief study of her life.

Meet Katharine Drexel is an excellent addition to the Meet the Saints Series. This short volume is not meant to be an extensive work on Katharine Drexel's life, but rather an introduction that enlivens the reader's curiosity and inspires one to learn more about her and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

Regina Siegfried, ASC
St. Louis University

Announcements

The Western Association of Women Historians annual conference will be May 21-23, 2004, at the University of California, Santa Barbara. For more information check the WAWH Web site <www.wawh.org>

A conference jointly sponsored by Cambridge and The Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, entitled "Consecrated Women: Towards a History of Women Religious of Britain and Ireland," will convene in Cambridge Sept. 16-17, 2004. Proposals on the following themes are of special interest: women religious in the community; assessing social and pastoral activism; authority and governance; and writing biography: challenges, issues and approaches. Proposal deadline is Feb. 14, 2004. Send to

conference coordinator, Ruth Manning, University College, Oxford OX1 4BH, or Dr. Susan O'Brien, 26 Emery St., Cambridge CB1 2AX. Email addresses are <ruth.manning@univ.ox.ac.uk> and <susan.obrien4@btopenworld.com>

A conference entitled "Envisioning the Church Women Want: A Conference on Women and Church," will convene at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, April 16-17, 2004. Featured speakers include Jeannette Rodriguez; Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ; Miriam Therese Winter; Edwina Gately. For more information and to register, see the conference Web site <www.bc.edu;church21> or call 617-552-0470.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia celebrated the culmination of a multi-year merger process last

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News item for ***HWR News and Notes***, Recent Publication, Research, Interests, etc.

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August by welcoming the twenty-eight members of the Franciscan Sisters of Ringwood, New Jersey. With a combined membership of 740, the Philadelphia congregation looks forward to celebrating the 150th anniversary of its coming to the United States in 2005. *HWR* subscribers may also be interested in knowing of the collection of 42 figures in authentic nuns' habits representing a cross section of nursing and social service in the U.S. The collection is housed at Neumann College in Aston, Pennsylvania.

The U.S. Province Archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart has a new location, a former public library in St. Louis. The new space has ample facilities for the collection and for researchers. The collection would be of special interest to those working in the history of the Church in the Midwest in the nineteenth century, on Catholic education, and on the religious life. For more information contact Frances M. Gimber, RSCJ by email <archives@rscj.org> or at 4537 West Pine Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63108.

Newsletter Deadline

Please have copy for June, 2004, issue to the editor by May 1, 2004.

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