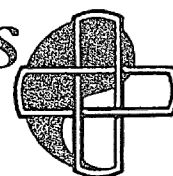


History of Women Religious News and Notes



Volume 19—Number 2

June 2006

HWR Network News

The Network invites paper and session proposals for the Seventh Triennial Conference on the History of Women Religious, to be convened at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, June 24-27, 2007. The Conference theme, "Local Cultures/Global Church: Challenge and Mission in the History of Women Religious," invites papers on women religious from all faith traditions. Cultural differences broadly interpreted include differences relating to religion, gender, nationality/ethnicity, race, social class, age, legal status, and education. Send proposals in the form of a one-page abstract accompanied by a one page C.V. by July 15, 2006 to Prudence Moylan, HWR Program Chair, c/o Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, University of Notre Dame, 1135 Flanner Hall, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556. Email cushwa.1@nd.edu; Fax 574-631-8471.

Two awards are conferred at the Triennial Conference. The Distinguished Book Award is given for outstanding books on any aspect of the history of women religious since the last conference in 2004. The Distinguished Historian Award is given to recognize lifetime achievement for research and publication in the field of the history of women religious. Past recipients of the latter award are Evangeline Thomas; Marie Augusta Neal; Karen M. Kennelly; Mary Ewens; JoAnn McNamara; Mary Oates; Hermenia Muldrey and Elizabeth Rapley.

The Awards Committee invites nominations for these awards. Please send a one-page summary of your reasons for nominating individuals for either award by **January 15, 2007** to Awards Committee Chair Elizabeth Kolmer, ASC, 5914 Suson Place #1, St. Louis, MO 63139. Email KOLMERE@SLU.EDU.

Publications

Nancy Bradley Warren, *Women of God and Arms: Female Spirituality and Political Conflict, 1380-1600* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), asserts that female spirituality has been an avenue for political action for nuns and laywomen in England and continental Europe as well as in the New World.

Thomas Carr, Jr., *Voix des Abbesses du Grand-Siècle: La prédication au féminin à Port-Royal* [Voices of Seventeenth-Century Abbesses: Women Preaching at Port-Royal] (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2006) situates the discourses given by the three Arnaud abbesses to their nuns over a 70-year period—to promote reform, instruct novices, correct faults, and finally to resist signing the formulary against Jansen—in the context of the stress on the superior's responsibilities in the reformed convents of seventeenth-century France and in the long tradition of preaching by women.

Else-Britt Nilsen, "Rites for Perpetual Commitment to Religious and Monastic Life in the Nordic Countries," in *Rites of Ordination and Commitment in the Churches of the Nordic Countries* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2006), 327-354, contributes her expertise on women's religious life in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden to an account by 17 scholars of more than 200 rites of ordination and commitment from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and other Protestant traditions.

Patricia Simpson, *Marguerite Bourgeoys and the Congregation of Notre Dame, 1665-1700* (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 2005) explores the obstacles Bourgeoys (1610-1700) encountered in her struggle to establish a new type of religious community of women in New France.

Guy Laparrière, *Les congregations religieuses: De la France au Québec, 1880-1914*, Tome 3: *Vers des eaux plus calmes 1905-1914* (Laval: University of Laval Press, 2005), concludes a three-volume series (I, 1996; II, 1999) documenting the migration of hundreds of sisters, brothers, and priests—members of several dozen Catholic religious congregations, in reaction to laws adopted by French republican governments restricting or banning the establishment and conduct of schools by religious.

Ellen Gunnarsdóttir, *Mexican Karismata: The Baroque Vocation of Francisca de los Angeles, 1674-1744* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), portrays this Mexican holy woman or *beata* from an impoverished but respectable family as a reluctant foundress of a *beaterio* driven by financial need

and the pressures of Querétero's upper class society, as well as the adviser and confidant of educated Spanish missionaries.

Jennifer Eich, *The Other Mexican Muse, Sor María Anna Agueda de San Ignacio (1695-1756)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2004), gives us the first book-length critical study of this significant colonial writer, often eclipsed by her near-contemporary, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (d. the year of Agueda's birth).

HWR member Helen McDonald, SHCJ, has a chapter, "Affectionate bonds hold us together.' SHCJ 1980-2000," in Issue VII: *Unity in Diversity for Mission, SHJC Government and Administration from the 1st to the 25th General Chapter, 1874-2004* (privately printed by the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, 2005). This issue is part of a series under the general title of *History: Society of the Holy Child Jesus*.

Merrie Ann Nall, *Women of Hope: The Story of the Little Company of Mary Sisters in America* (privately printed by the Little Company of Mary Sisters, 2005), traces the history of a congregation founded in England (1877) by Mary Potter. Within decades of its foundation the group had established missions in Italy and the U.S. and was on its way toward gaining an international reputation as an order of trained hospital-nurses and administrators of hospitals. For more information contact the American Province, 9350 S. California Ave., Evergreen Park, IL, 60805.

Jean Richardson, *A History of the Sisters of Charity Hospital, Buffalo, New York, 1848-1900* (Pittsburgh: Mellon Press, 2005), analyzes the exercise of authority by Sister-administrators and nurses throughout the nineteenth-century professionalization and modernization of health care and within the context of a patriarchal church.

Mary Ellen Doyle, SCN, *Pioneer Spirit: Catherine Spalding, Sister of Charity of Nazareth* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006) provides the first book-length scholarly biography of this remarkable Kentucky pioneer woman.

Maureen Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nuns and the Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1830-1920* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), advances the thesis that working class Irish Catholic Sisters fundamentally shaped what has come to be called the welfare state, a development commonly attributed to the "activism of white, Protestant, middle class and elite women." The Cushwa Center, University of Notre Dame, will feature Fitzgerald's book at its Seminar in American Religion September 23, 2006.

Patricia Wittberg, SC, *From Piety to Professionalism—And Back? Transformations in Organized Religious Virtuosity* (Lexington Books, 2006), examines the impact of a religious sponsor's loosening ties to its sponsored schools, hospitals, and social service agencies (impact not on the institutions, but on the sponsor itself) through a study of three Catholic religious congregations of women, one order of Protestant deaconesses, and a Protestant women's missionary society.

M. C. (Connie) Devilbiss, *Nun Like Me: A Participant-Observation Study of Religious Life in the Episcopal Church* (manuscript copies available through the library at Wesley Theological Seminary, 4500 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20016), employs an ethnographic approach in her doctoral dissertation study of the historical origins, contemporary living experiences, and future prospects of Episcopal women's religious congregations. Further information is available from the author at Devilbiss7@aol.com.

Raymond Arroyo, *Mother Angelica: The Remarkable Story of a Nun, Her Nerve, and a Network of Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), is a biography of the cloistered nun who created the multimillion-dollar Eternal Word Television Network now celebrating its twenty-fifth year.

Connie Gaynor, *Peacemaking—Our Journey, A History of the Franciscan Sisters of Peace* (privately printed by the Franciscan Sisters of Peace, 2006, limited edition; no sale price, but a \$20 contribution welcome to help defray cost), relates the history of this congregation on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary of founding. Further information is available from the Development Office, Franciscan Sisters of Peace, 20 Ridge St., Haverstraw, NY 10927, or connieg720@hotmail.com.

Suellen Hoy, *Good Hearts: Catholic Sisters in Chicago's Past* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), describes and analyzes the activities and contributions of Catholic Sisters in Chicago beginning with their arrival in 1846 and concluding with the decade of the 1960s, making extensive use of primary documents and personal interviews as well as secondary literature.

Recently published articles of note are those by Amy Koehlinger, " 'Race Relations needs and the Nun': Sources of Continuity and Change in the Racial Apostolate of the 1960s," in *U. S. Catholic Historian* 23:4 (Fall 2005), 39-59; Carmen Mangion, " 'Good Teacher' or 'Good Religious'? : The Professional Identity of Catholic Women Religious in

Nineteenth-Century England and Wales," in *Women's History Review* 14:2 (2005); Anne M. Butler, "There are Exceptions to Every Rule: Adjusting the Boundaries—Catholic Sisters and the American West," in *American Catholic Studies* 116: 3 (Fall, 2005), 1-22; Sally Brasher, "Toward a Revised View of Medieval Women and the *Vita Apostolica*: The Humiliati and the Beguines Compared," in *Magistra: A Journal of Women's Spirituality in History* 11:2 (Winter 2005), 3-33; and Carol Coburn, "Coming of Age in the 21st Century: Writing the History of Women Religious," *American Catholic Studies Newsletter*, 33:1 (Spring 2006), 1+. The Coburn article, first published as "An Overview of the Historiography of Women Religious: A Twenty-five Year Retrospective," in the *U.S. Catholic Historian* (Winter 2004), 1-26, may be accessed on the Cushwa Center web site www.nd.edu/~cushwa, click on "Newsletter."

Correction

The title of Grace Donovan's work given in the February issue should read *Holy Women on Holy Ground*.

Research in Progress

Several neglected areas of research received attention at the Spring 2005 meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association, including work on female Orthodox monasticism in Imperial Russia: papers by William G. Wagner, Williams College, "The Transformation of Female Orthodox Monasticism in Nizhnii Novgorod Diocese, 1764-1929, in Comparative Perspective;" Nadieszda Kizenko, SUNY at Albany, "Nuns' Confessions in Imperial Russia;" and Marlyn L. Miller, Brandeis, "Mothers Superior: Authority, Hierarchy and Obedience in the Imperial Russian Convent."

Charlene Kalinoski, Roanoke College, presented a paper at the same conference relating to the somewhat more explored area of female Spanish mystics, "Something about Mary (of Agreda): The Complex Legacy of a 17th Century Spanish Mystic."

Barbara Schamber, SP, is currently writing the 150-year history of the Sisters of Providence in the West, five of whom, led by Mother Joseph Periseau, went to the Pacific Northwest (Fort Vancouver, Washington Territory) from Montreal in 1856.

Book Reviews

Sisters of the North Country: The History of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, Watertown, New York, by Sally Witt, CSJ (Watertown: Sisters of St Joseph, 2005).

Pp. 288. (Available from Sisters of St. Joseph, Administration, 1425 Washington, Watertown, NY 13601, \$27 including postage.)

Sally Witt's history of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Watertown, New York is a fine addition to the growing body of scholarship on the history of women religious in general and the Sisters of St. Joseph in particular. For too long, the historical significance of congregations of women religious has been ignored not only by secular historians and the public at large, but also by the religious themselves. Witt's commissioned study speaks to the fact that this congregation has begun, in a systematic and professional way, to interrogate its own history and to analyze its impact on the larger secular and religious societies of which it was and continues to be a part.

As a Sister of St. Joseph of Baden, Witt brings an insider/outsider perspective to her writing. Her community shares a common ancestry with that of her Watertown subjects (as well as with over 13,000 sisters in 41 congregations worldwide). All these congregations trace their roots to seventeenth century LePuy, France, where six women gathered as the Daughters of St. Joseph to perform much needed "service of neighbor." How the leadership and individual members of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Watertown performed "service of neighbor" as a small diocesan community, with the majority of its members living in and working out of the diocesan motherhouse, is the focus of this book.

Witt builds an analysis of a community that has been shaped by its geographic and diocesan environment. Her research base is wide and includes archival evidence drawn from thirteen congregations of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the Wheeling Visitation and the dioceses of Ogdensburg and Pittsburg. She describes her work as "a study of faithfulness ... women desiring to be faithful to God, through difficulties of the human condition and the human heart. But more than that, it is a study of God's faithfulness to these women and to those who have been close to their hearts" (265). She documents how the variety of interpretations of "faithfulness to God" has shaped the congregation's history from the arrival of the first three sisters in Watertown on December 28, 1880 to the beginning of the twenty-first century. She includes as a part of the monograph a number of photographs, an index, an extensive bibliography and lists of current (2005) and deceased sisters that will undoubtedly assist future scholars in meeting the challenge that she sets forth "to name the particular fruits of the gifts [of that faithfulness]" (265).

Witt's approach to this congregational history strikes a balance among the biography of key individuals, a chronology of mission activity, and description the culture of the community. Her treatment of congregational leaders is especially noteworthy. The Watertown community was gifted with strong leaders – some of whom were no strangers to controversy. Witt's analysis of the career of the founding superior, Mother Margaret Mary Lacey, is fascinating. It is a tale of a religious leader reinventing herself within several provinces of one congregation, as well as across congregations. Witt has reconstructed Mother Margaret's history using a variety of sources (and cautions that gaps remain). Mother Margaret began her life in religion as Sister Mary Herman, a member of the Sisters of St Joseph of Carondelet (Troy Province). A dispute with a superior and the Bishop of Albany led Sister Herman to leave that community and join the Religious of the Sacred Heart. Four years later, as Mother Margaret Mary, and once again a Sister of St Joseph, she journeyed from Buffalo with three companions to establish the Watertown community.

The small group of pioneering sisters faced many challenges, especially in the financial and personnel sectors. The future looked so bleak that by 1889, Mother Margaret questioned the viability of the foundation and left Watertown to establish a foundation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Her life as Mother Margaret ends in 1890, when, as the result of another dispute, she transferred as Sister Mary Herman to the St Louis Province of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. In 1908, she transferred once again – this time to that congregation's Los Angeles Province, where she remained until her death in 1926. Witt concludes that Mother Margaret's life history is not "a settled one, either in proven fact or legend" (32). Yet, hers is a life that speaks to earlier, more flexible times before the codification of Canon Law and is one that has parallels in the experience of women across many congregations.

The Watertown community survived the loss of its founding superior and overcame further challenges to build a powerful presence in "the North Country." At its largest, the community included 207 sisters whose primary missions were in social service and in education (including music education and higher education at the congregation's Mater Dei College). The community's pioneering work in teacher education merits special mention. In 1924, it established the Sisters' Normal School – a first in the state.

Witt is a fine writer. She leaves her reader with insights, questions and ideas for future research. Her assessment of Mother Assumpta's interactions with the Federation of the

Sisters of St Joseph and the Conference of Major Superiors of Women contains just enough details to alert the reader to the fact that much more research is needed on how the visions and direction of a superior impacts at local, national and international level. Let us all hope that others will pick up the challenges that Witt issued.

Dr. Elizabeth Smyth
University of Toronto

Unlikely Entrepreneurs: Catholic Sisters and the Hospital Marketplace, 1865-1925, by Barbra Mann Wall. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005). Pp. 267. \$49.95.

As religious communities in health care ministry today make the difficult and often courageous movement from individual, free-standing hospital to community health system to merging with other health systems to exploring other methods of canonical sponsorship such as public juridic persons in order to continue ministry with fewer and fewer Sisters, it is instructive to review the beginnings of Catholic hospitals and the entrepreneurial Sisters who ran them.

A nurse and trained historian, Barbra Mann Wall provides a rich context of social, immigration, and medical history, gender issues, and economics for her analysis of Catholic Sisters as entrepreneurs in the development of nearly 500 hospitals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the US. Grouping her treatment of the subject into three parts—Backgrounds of Catholic Sisters in Health Care; Hospital Establishments in the Midwest, Texas, and Utah; and Religion, Gender, and Autonomy in Catholic Hospitals—Wall focuses on the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Ind.; the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Paul, Minn.; the Sisters of Providence, St. Mary of the Woods; and the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas, who collectively owned and operated more than forty hospitals in the Mid-west and Trans-Mississippi West. Seven representative hospitals, developed before 1880, were chosen for this study of the development of hospitals as community-based, religious institutions in 1865 to their transformation as expensive modern hospitals focusing on technology and science. Ultimately, four were successful and three unsuccessful,

Wall offers innumerable examples from these hospitals and the sister administrators to support her belief that these Sisters saw their hospitals as both a charity and a business, and thus they carefully negotiated their roles within gender-based traditions of church and society, adopting business strategies to compete and grow in their cultures. Of particu-

lar interest is her study of ways that the Sisters interacted with doctors to maintain a non-subordinate relationship and to resolve issues of mutual interest, even though they were circumscribed in hierarchical boundaries in both church and society. The Sisters' ability to do this enabled them to succeed.

Drawing on Sisters' letters, annals, and community constitutions for the larger context, Wall also traces the ethnic backgrounds of the Sisters, and shows how religious and ethnic factors could provide an identity that non-Catholic hospitals lacked and garner support from the immigrant community. Conversely, these same factors could be considered "foreign" and work against them. The successful sister administrators and institutions managed to build networks of civic, community, church and physician groups. In addition, large numbers of Irish Sisters influenced their decision to work with railroad workers and miners in Utah and Texas. Though the Sisters welcomed those of any creed, a more difficult challenge arose in regard to African Americans in a segregated society where laws and social pressures caused tension and struggles as Catholic hospitals attempted to welcome all.

Through this fascinating study, Wall weaves multiple examples from minutes of medical staff meetings, statistics of both baptisms and building campaigns, community constitutions prescribing religious and practical directions for the care of the sick, the role of the Sisters in the development of Catholic Health Association (CHA), and the history of the individual hospitals.

A brief epilogue delineates several examples of ways Catholic congregations today are dealing with issues of Catholic identity, new ministries, and financial pressures on a diminishing number of Sisters in health care in spite of the considerable strength of Catholic health care institutions. Wall, who has presented some of her research at HWR conferences, offers a very readable, well-researched, and thoughtful view of the role of early Sisters, who with their ministry values and business acumen, developed the foundations of the Catholic health system which continues to evolve today yet remains focused on the age-old values of compassionate service, respect for human dignity, and commitment to the poor.

Sr. Mary Denis Maher, CSA
Archivist, Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine

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HWR News and Notes is published three times a year, February, June and October.

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Announcements

The new editor of the *Catholic Historical Review*, Nelson H. Minnich, notes the very small backlog of articles approved for publication. Scholarly articles that contribute to the understanding of the history of the Catholic Church are welcome. More information is available from the Editor, 320 Mullen Library, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 20064. Telephone and fax number 202-319-5079. Email CHR@CUA.EDU.

Editors of *Magistra: A Journal of Women's Spirituality in History* welcome manuscripts for publication and books for review. More information is available from editor Judith Sutura, OSB at Mount St. Scholastica, 801 South 8th, Atchison, KS 66002. Telephone 913-360-6200; fax 913-360-6190. Email jsutura@mountosb.org.

The Fifth Triennial Conference of the Archivists for Congregations of Women Religious will convene September 28-October 1, 2006, at the Drawbridge Inn, Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky (near Cincinnati, Ohio). Plenary sessions will develop the topics of copyright laws (William Maher, University of Illinois), disaster planning (Lisa Fox, Missouri State Archives), and spirituality for archivists (Regina Bechtle, SC). Registration materials are available at the ACWR National Office, Trinity University, 125 Michigan Ave., NE, Washington, D.C. 20017. Email acwr@juno.com.

Newsletter Deadline

Please have copy for the October, 2006 issue to the editor by September 1, 2006. KKennelly33@hotmail.com.

The HWR Newsletter

Published by the
Conference on History of Women Religious
2311 So. Lindbergh Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63131

ISSN: 1054-545X

Subscription: \$10.00/1 year

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